

WHISTLING IN THE DARK

VARTAN AVAKIAN - DANIEL BARROCA
MAEVE BRENNAN - ILARIA LUPO - JOE NAMY

CURATED BY AISCHA BERG

JAN 21 TILL MAR 01

WHISTLING IN THE DARK

You whistle in the dark to courageously confront an imaginary incertitude. The sound is extending, resonating out of your body while you try and overcome your doubts in the hope that it will turn out well. However, instead of finding shelter, you are exposed in a maze. You might approach a situation with limited understanding or no awareness of its potential results. You talk about matters although lacking sufficient knowledge of them. What will happen if we decide to face the figments of this uncertainty? The uncertainty of knowing what is real...

Moving through time and space, on a continuous quest... artists from other parts of the world come to reside and work here in Beirut for a couple of months or even years... also those artists born and raised in Lebanon... or those who after years return to the country of their origin. What are their linking forces? Whistling in the Dark opens up a dialogue between some of them and seeks new points of entry to their works.

The exhibited artists investigate and raise questions concerning history and reality. In this quest, the medium of recording in all its varieties becomes an indispensable asset. Recordings are traces. A sound piece, a videotape and a drawing convey an image of truth. Is a stone also a container of traces, of time and history?

VARTAN AVAKIAN (1977, BYBLOS)

Vartan Avakian is born 1977 in Byblos, Lebanon and studied Communication Arts at the Lebanese American University in 2002 and pursued graduate studies in Architecture and Urban Culture at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya and the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona in 2012. Avakian lives and works in Beirut and is a founding member of the	art collective Atfal Ahdath. His work has been exhibited in Sfeir Semler, Home Works of Ashkal Alwan, Beirut Art Center, Exposure, The Running Horse Contemporary Art Space in Beirut, and various solo and group exhibitions in Kuwait City, Tokyo, New York, Barcelona, Sharjah, U.A.E., London, Rejkjavik, Berlin, Montpellier, Jakarta, and Cairo.
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_____ Avakian's works evolve around notions and related questions of scale, hyperreality, simulacra, media, action movies, the boundary between real and fiction, and how to access erased (Lebanese) history. He is fascinated by (the) synthetic (material), drawing a parallel to products we hold in our hands from so-called natural material, which are in fact equally constructed and processed by us. His often humorous work emanates from his fascination with historical figures. Tropes of the heroic and the bastardized recur throughout Avakian's oeuvre, appearing unexpectedly and in various guises. "The slippage between things, the lingering gaps between the on and off button, the confusion between the familiar and the alien mark out Avakian's playground of possibilities. Meticulous in his choice of medium, he invites audiences to engage with the material glitches we normally overlook...

It is the inadequacies of a particular technology, the break of flow between speech and silence, the intertwining of public and private, of image and noise, and of the mundane of pop culture and the gravitas of history that interest him" (Nat Muller).



Volume I: Arabic Home Interiors

(2009-12)

THE ARTIST'S TRAWL THROUGH CYBERSPACE SERVES US WITH A PRECISELY EDITED NON-EXHAUSTIVE COMPENDIUM OF ARABIC AMATEUR ADULT MOVIES.

THESE INTIMATE AND PRIVATE SPACES ARE PRESENTED BARE AND IN EXPECTATION, AS ALL HUMAN ACTIVITY HAS BEEN EDITED OUT, LEAVING ONLY SHOTS OF THE HOUSE AND THE DETAILS THAT DEFINE IT.

MUTUALLY DEPENDENT DICHOTOMIES SUCH AS EXPECTATION AND FULFILMENT, THE HIDDEN AND THE VISIBLE, THE INTIMATE AND THE BANAL ARE BROUGHT TO HEAD IN THIS TAUT STRUCTURAL PIECE (HASAN KHAN).

DANIEL BARROCA (1976, LISBON)

Daniel Barroca was born in Lisbon in 1976. He finished his Art studies at the School of Art and Design of Caldas da Rainha in 2001.

Barroca has been resident artist at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 2008 and resident artist at the Rijksakademie Van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam supported by the Dutch Ministry of Culture and Science. He was granted support by Ashkal Alwan to attend Home Work Program 2013/14 'Creating and Dispersing Universes

that Work without Working'. Since 2001 his work has been displayed in venues such as the Serralves Museum (Porto), Reencontres Internacional Paris/Berlin (Paris), NCCA (Moscow), Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), QBox Gallery (Athens), Galleri Image (Aarhus), Gulbenkian Museum (Lisbon), CIAJG (Guimarães), Museum Abteiberg (Mönchengladbach - "Lonelyfingers - Konversationsstücke" Special Exhibition of the Year awarded by AICA Germany in 2013).

—— Daniel Barroca is interested in how "the invisible layers (forces) of reality at some point can emerge and shape our reality". He is asking whether cancellation (and erasing) can underline the value of memory and things in themselves. With a frequent use of quotation and negation at the same time, that puts under discussion our present times too, he investigates history and reality. The way we perceive the different layers of an object - as well as of a phenomenon - changes in relation to the context and the media through which we are receiving the information.

**Notes on the vibration
of the nervous system**

(2013/14)

*BEIRUT, I CAN SEE THE EXPOSED
NERVOUS SYSTEM OF THE CITY PULSING
EVERY DAY. THE ENERGY FLOWS THROUGH
THE CITY'S BODY IN WAYS THAT CAN'T
BE RATIONALLY UNDERSTOOD BUT THAT
CAN SOMEHOW BE FOLLOWED UNDERNEATH
ITS SKIN.*

*FROM THE FIRST MOMENT IT IS IMPORTANT TO EMBODY THE CITY'S LOGIC, TO
ATTUNE BODY AND SOUL TO IT, TO INTEGRATE YOURSELF WITH IT.*

*MY NERVOUS SYSTEM IS INCREASINGLY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF
THAT OF THE CITY'S AS I SLOWLY METABOLIZE IT.*

*THE MAP THAT I DRAW, MENTALLY, AS I MOVE THROUGH THE URBAN
GEOGRAPHY GETS INSCRIBES IN MY BRAIN. I WALK AGAIN AND AGAIN
THROUGH THE SAME CONFUSING STREETS;*

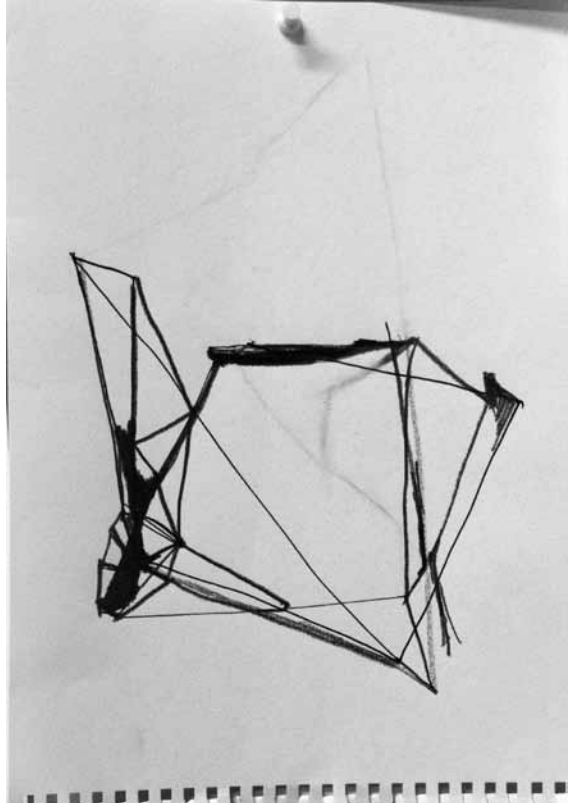
*I GET SYSTEMATICALLY CONFRONTED WITH THE SAME, SOMETIMES
FAMILIAR AND YET INCOMPREHENSIBLE, REALITY OF THE CITY.*

I DRAW AND REDRAW THE SAME MAP IN MY MIND EVERYDAY.

*IN BEIRUT THE SHADOWS CONFUSE ME IN THE NIGHT, THEY PLAY
GAMES ON MY EYES. THEY TELL ME THAT THERE IS NO RIGHT PLACE
TO BE. I SEE THINGS IN FRONT OF ME THAT BELONG SOMEWHERE
ELSE.*

*IN LISBON THE SHADOWS ARE DIFFERENT, THEY HOLD
A DISTURBING THICK LONELY EMPTINESS, YET, SOMEHOW THEY ARE
STABLE, EVEN FROZEN.*

*THE DRAWINGS PRESENTED HERE WERE MADE UNDER THE INFLUENCE
OF THESE TWO PLACES, BEIRUT AND LISBON.*



MAEVE BRENNAN (1990, LONDON)

Maeve Brennan graduated from Goldsmiths, University of London in 2012. Recent exhibitions include: Beit Iksa Boys, Institute of Jamaica, London, 2013; Members Show, Outpost, Norwich, 2012; Graduate Screening, Chisenhale Gallery, London, 2012; Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, Toronto, 2012. She was the recipient of the 2011 Hamad Butt Memorial Prize and the 2012 Nicolas and Andrei Tooth Travelling Scholarship. She is currently taking part in the Home Workspace Program 2013-14 at Ashkal Alwan in Beirut.

_____ Maeve Brennan's work explores sites, figures and objects that condense something of their social, historical and political context. Drawn to politically charged spaces of industry, production and conflict, Brennan adopts an investigative approach, allowing intimate encounters and personal narrative to inform her research. Using the tension between the personal and the political, she produces a form of evidence bound up in subjectivity.



Core Sample

(2012)

IN HER PRACTICE, BRENNAN STARTS OUT FROM RESEARCH PROJECTS, LIKE AN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST. IN THE WORK ON DISPLAY, BRENNAN WAS FASCINATED BY GEOLOGY AND ITS SENSE OF DISCOVERY, SIMILAR TO AN ARTIST'S APPROACH TO THE PRODUCTION OF WORK. WHAT STARTED AS A RESEARCH INTO THE OIL-BEARING ROCKS OF BEACHES IN DORSET, ENGLAND, EVOLVED INTO THE UNCOVERING OF THE WORK OF GEOLOGIST VIC COLTER, WHO NEVER RECEIVED ANY CREDIT FOR THE DISCOVERY OF THE MAJOR OIL FIELD AT WYTCHE FARM IN DORSET AS THATCHER'S GOVERNMENT IMMEDIATELY PRIVATIZED IT. AS THE SCIENTIST DID NOT ALLOW ANY RECORDINGS OF BRENNAN'S ENCOUNTERS WITH HIM AT HIS PRIVATE HOUSE, FILLED WITH 2000 MILLION-YEAR-OLD FOSSILS AND ROCKS IN THE MIDST OF A METICULOUSLY FURNISHED MODERNIST INTERIOR, SHE DEVELOPED A WORK THAT GAVE A SENSE OF THESE ENCOUNTERS. IN THE VIDEO THAT IS REFLECTED UPON CAR OIL, WE SEE A ZOOM IN AND OUT OF A MILLION-YEAR-OLD CORE SAMPLE PRESENTED TO HER AT THE GEOLOGIST'S HOME. THE VIDEO SCREENED ON THE WINDOW SHOWS A ROCK, ALMOST OIL, LIT ON FIRE; BURNING, IT REVEALS WHAT IT IS MADE OF, NAMELY CONDENSED MATTER. THESE BITS OF MATERIAL ENCOMPASS THE WHOLE OF HISTORY; ROCK AS THE CONTAINER OF HISTORY AND THE PHYSICALIZATION OF TIME. IN HER PRACTICE, BRENNAN SEEKS A MATERIAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD AND HISTORY.

ILARIA LUPO (1977, MILAN)

Ilaria Lupo is a Beirut-based visual artist, whose public space practice includes different media, such as performance, installations, publications. Lupo's work aims to put into question official narratives and social boundaries. In her research the space itself becomes the actual material of work, considered as an organic platform, where the energetic interactions play a major role, and influence the work as they can be influenced by it. Her projects have been supported by several organizations in the Middle East

and in Europe, such as Ashkal Alwan, The Beirut Art Center, 98weeks, PlanBey, Al-Mahatta Gallery, The Middelheim Museum, AIaR Antwerpen, FARE/Open Care, Archiviazioni. She also contributes to reviews related to art in the public sphere (A-Journal, Volume Magazine, Under Construction#1-Beirut/Milan). She is currently developing the research platform Public noisance.



**A level or point at which something
would happen, would cease to happen,
or would take effect, become true,
etc**

'θrɛʃ.həʊld

Impara l'arte e mettila da parte

**The forbidden fruit tastes
the sweetest**

(2014)

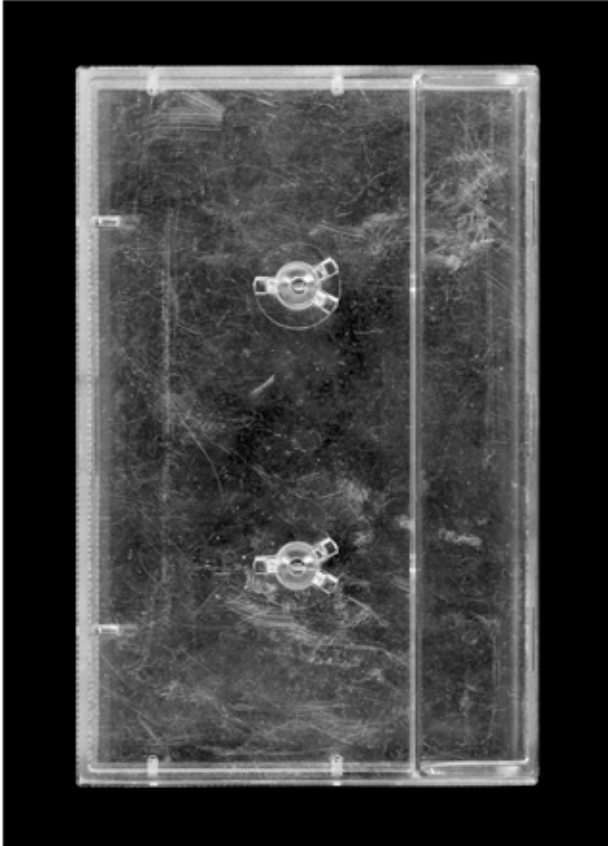
THIS IS A SITE SPECIFIC INTERVENTION ESPECIALLY CONCEIVED FOR THE WORKSHOP GALLERY. A HANDMADE ANTI-CLIMB GLASSES' ROW IS INSTALLED ON TOP OF THE EXHIBITION SPACE'S WALL. THE WALL MEANS TO DEFINE AN 'ELSEWHERE', TO 'SEPARATE' ART AND REALITY. OR TO PROTECT ART? OR TO PROTECT REALITY?

THE WORK DIALOGUES WITH THE CONVENTIONS OF ART'S DISPLAY. ALSO, IT CONFOUNDS THE NOTIONS OF 'INSIDE' AND 'OUTSIDE', QUESTIONING THE POSITION OF THE ARTISTS VIS-À-VIS THE SEMANTICS OF SPACE AND THE PRIVATE-PUBLIC CONTROVERSIAL LIAISON.

THE FOUR TITLES OF THE WORK ARE PLACED IN DIFFERENT SPOTS AROUND THE WORKSHOP, GALLERY, ENTRANCE/EXIT, OFFICES.

JOE NAMY (1978, DETROIT)

Joe Namy is a media artist/
composer; often making art that
exposes and questions aspects
of identity, memory, power,
and currents encoded in music/
organized sound. His work has been
exhibited/screened/amplified at
Ashkal Alwan's Homeworks, Brooklyn
Museum, Beirut Art Center, Detroit
Science Center, Queens Museum, and
various international dance floors.
Some of his projects fall under the
platform titled Electric Kahraba,
which sporadically operates as an
experimental radio program
for the historic Clocktower Radio
on artonair.org.



Constellations

(2012)

ALL MUSIC IS COMPOSED BY HISTORY, BY POLITICS AND ECONOMY. ENCODED WITHIN THE SOUND ARE PROPHETIC ALGORITHMS COMPRESSING THE PAST / THE NOW / TOMORROW. OFTEN WRAPPED IN SYNTHETIC AND VIRTUAL - BITS OF PLASTIC AND DIGITAL - THE MATERIALITY OF SOUND IS EQUALLY AS REVEALING AS THE SOUNDS THEMSELVES. THESE PHOTOGRAPHS PROJECT DIAGRAMS CHARTING THESE EQUATION, CONSTELLATIONS MAPPING OUR FUTURE.

CURATOR

Aischa Berg

EXHIBITION COORDINATOR

Suzanne Sayegh

Walid Nasrallah

TECHNICAL SUPERVISION

Walid Nasrallah

DESIGN

WonderEight

WORK
SHOP_—
GALLERY

Workshop Gallery is a new
contemporary art exhibition space of
14.3 sq.m. located in the suburbs of
Beirut, a platform for Lebanese and
international artists.

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www.workshop-gallery.com