When we look out into the world and ask, “Where is art?” we are really pondering, “When is art?” For contemporary space is reciprocally—and inextricably—bound up with historical time. Such that, art is always in transit; not only in its various spatial adaptations throughout history, where we encounter it, but in its temporal apparitions, once past, present and future. Quantum mechanics has a name for this phenomenon: space-time.

The subject of Beirut Lab: 1975 (2020) – a film installation at UC Irvine’s Room Gallery in Fall 2019 – features contemporary film essays produced by artists living and working in Beirut, a site where time bends and curves, as in a Gödel universe. Here, as elsewhere, historical events are what semioticians call a “signifier,” an image-unit that floats between the past, present and future. Quantum mechanics has a name for this phenomenon: space-time.

The most prominent of these events being the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1991, which has (and continues) to provoke critically minded artists to engage in a type of hermeneutic anaesthesia of past moments in time. For instance, artists of one generation, who were in primary school in the seventies, wrangle with screen memories of that moment, which can be neither completely remembered nor forgotten. Alternately, a younger generation of artists attempt to untangle, but they never knew themselves but have inherited as a gap or caesura, in Lebanon’s state sanctioned national history. But, already, this generational schema is a bit too tidy.

Beirut Lab: 1975 (2020)

In [A] Gödel universe, it is possible that there exist closed timeline curves such that if you travel fast enough, you can, though always heading toward your local future, arrive in the past. These closed loops or circular paths have a more familiar name: time travel. But if it is possible in such worlds, as Gödel argues, to return to one’s past, then what is past never passed at all.

Palle Yourgrau, A World without Time, 2004

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For there are those artists in the region whose artwork critically investigate the more general question of memory, history and, therefore, temporality, by subverting the perspectival positions of the aforementioned generational times. The film essays featured in Beirut Lab: 1975 (2020), showcase all three such perspectives.

Beirut Lab 1975 (2020) productively lies in that intersection between art installation and film program. The exhibition’s installation consists of a montage of images and Arabic text adapted from an exhibition mounted at the American University of Beirut (2019) entitled again, rubbed smooth, a moment in time – caesura, described below. This [re]installation of images at UC Irvine is intended to serve as a conceptual “kings” or “horizons” – in the hermeneutic sense of those words – between the present and the past and, accordingly, between Southern California and Beirut. As such the installation enfolds a program of 30 films, screened five days a week, for ten weeks. Each day’s cinematic grouping, in turn, comprises a curatorial “essay” of film-essays, pondering Beirut’s civil war story. For it is a story that is written – if only in one’s mind – by a myriad of subjects from heterogeneous perspectives. Within this aesthetic multiverse the traumatic events of Lebanon’s civil war regularly surface, disappear, resurface and then submerge, in Lebanon’s state sanctioned national cultural landscape. And if this pulsative operation of repression and return, back and forth, constitutes Beirut’s temporal heartbeat, we must correspondingly contemplate two metaphysical questions: When is Time in Beirut? Where in Beirut is Time? The exhibition Beirut Lab 1975 (2020) is one such attempt at staging this collective censure.

Curators: Juli Carson and Yassine Tukan

Museum of Beirut, 1975 (2020)
In his curatorial endeavor to conserve the past – through the collection of artworks, archives and documents – is to replace the past by way of narrativizing those historical events from which each artifact originates. Again, rubbed smooth, a moment in time – caesura addresses this quagmire by taking

the Permanent Collection as its subject. In so doing, the curatorial team first read The Permanent Collection as a dreamscape, whereas the exhibition's various manifest signifiers – paintings, wall, color, supplemental framing and architectural

were identified and analyzed. Secondly, the team asked: what did these elements signify beneath the exhibition's curatorial intent and beyond the art historical account given to artworks by Khalil Baalbaki, Saliba Droushy, Omar Omni, Mustapha Farroukh, and César Gemayel that are housed in AUB Gallery's permanent collection.

In the course of our reading, three historical events - latent within The Permanent Collection's manifest narrative structure - emerged: the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), AUB's student uprising (1967-1975), and the Famed Milk Bar, which today is the AUB Gallery. The curatorial team

endeavored to displace this latent content to the outside vitrines wrapping the gallery's exterior walls like a membrane, one that pervasively delineates the so-called “exterior” world of materialist history from the “interior” space of aestheticized memory. In so doing, again, rubbed smooth, a moment in time – caesura attempts to enact, as a “supplemental” exhibition to The Permanent Collection, is the return of the “historical repression” within the aesthetic meta-narrative that defines the permanent collection's institutional housing and annual exhibition.

From this perspective the title again, rubbed smooth, a moment in time – caesura intentionally connects a different temporality than the art historical narrative around which The Permanent Collection is structured. Instead, the curatorial team conceptually aimed at the archive's quintessential paradox: to return the past to the present, through its re-presentation, is to erase the past. In this way, all archives move forwards in as much as they move backwards. Analogously, the supplemental exhibition's title – graphically running across the vitrines' surfaces, metaphorically conjuring the historical moments represented therein – can be read forwards and backwards as a palindrome. Linguistically, the title thus performatively enact the philosophical paradoxes at the core of all archives: palimpsest, caesura, historical time. Moreover, the phrase “again rubbed smooth” (itself derived from the literal translation of the Greek origin of “palimpsest”); PALIN. AGAIN PRISÉT; RUBBED SMOOTH) this translation, then, poetically emphasizes the collective action of the exhibition: rubbing history and memory smooth again.

The act of doing that and its paradigmatic nature in this moment in time - is what an actual “caesura” is. Conceptually, the historian-artivist-collector repeats this action when retracing and dealing with the temporal hinge conjointing the “present” to the “past.”

And yet, the curatorial team readily acknowledges that their attempt to deconstruct The Permanent Collection's totalizing narrative inevitably reconstructions elsewhere. It is is up to this acknowledgment that we may critically ponder the palimpsest of discursive and historical layers embodying this and other collections. The curators, in turn, encourage the viewers to ponder whether again, rubbed smooth, a moment in time – caesura therefore creates a dreamscape within a dreamscape. Which is to say, in the course of uncovering the gaps within The Permanent Collection exhibition, might we have further concealed them elsewhere? Moreover, have the vitrines’ three historical signifiers now become subjects for more historical signifiers? To this the curatorial team answers affirmatively: No doubt. Your serve.

Curatorial Team: Luna Awad, Naoula Boubtab, Juli Caron, Philippa Dahrouj, Amal Jaafar, Danielle Krikorian, Nour Maria El Helou, Karen Murad, Alex Sassine, Yasmine Tukan, Maya Turk

The archive will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of origin and structural breakdown of the said memory.
In order by appearance
عمر غندر:
«خيص».
القصة الفصيحة، 1995.

مقدمة:
التقنية تستعمل هنا لتسجيل إختلاف منظري لحدث واحد ومؤد واحد يضاعف في حركة زَوَمان مستمرة وشديدة البطء لعدسة الكاميرا. وتجدر الإشارة إلى أن تقسيم الأملاك المترافقة في حركة زَوَمان، على أمل خلق رابطة من المشاعر والثقافات لحفل موسيقي لم يسبق له مثيل.

الخاتمة:
كل شيء في واقعنا كلفنا بالبحث عن القصص المتحركة، وترجمتها إلى شكل حقيقة، يوما بعد يوم، حتى نتمكن من اكتشاف فنوننا. اكتشفنا أن القصص المتحركة هي رؤية يكتب بها الأفراد أنفسهم، بحيث يعيدون كتابة حياتهم، وينصرون على أنفسهم ويفتحون بأيديهم في بها. في النهاية، إنها رؤية تمكنهم من بناء حياة جديدة، وتوسيع فهمهم للعالم.

إلى الكاتبين:
من نصيب الأرنب روجر.
بايدة: نغمان.}

瓜山.”

أعمال مختارة:

 registrado con "El Silencio" 2003 en el Festival Internacional de Cine de VWA de Brasil, en Palais de la Découverte de París-France Telecom 2003, en el Festival de Video Mapping de Bélgica 2004, en el Festival de Video de la Anton de Vassal de Brasil 2005، وفاز في المهرجان الدولي للفيديو الإبداعي في اليابان 2006، بالإضافة إلى جوائز أخرى في كندا وفرنسا وبريطانيا وسنغافورة وبايروت واليمن.

(click)

عمر غندر:
«خيص».
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إلى الكاتبين:
من نصيب الأرنب روجر.
بايدة: نغمان.}
Ghassan Salhab
La rose de personne, 2000
10 min

In which way is Hanns Steiger in Beirut more particular than another?
A Nothing
we were, are now, and ever
shall be, blooming:
The Nothing—
The No-One—
Bear Celandine.

Ali Cherri
Un Cercle autour du Soleil, 2005
5 min

I was disappointed the day they announced the war had ended. I used to be startled by the idea of living in a city that was eating itself, like excess stomach fluid that digests and gradually eats away the stomach. In a cyclical structure from dark to light, Un Cercle autour du Soleil is a reflection on growing up in Beirut during the civil war years and how to adapt to the “post war” life, accepting the body that is in ruins, and learning to live in the city that, in turn, is always already in ruins.

Abandoned Dwellings.

Gregory Buchakjian & Valerie Cachard
Abandoned Dwellings. Archive, 2018

In the context of a long-term investigation—which included a PhD dissertation and a subsequent book published by Kaph Bouka - Valerie Cachard and Gregory Buchakjian have collected objects and documents left behind in Beirut’s abandoned buildings either by the inhabitants, illegal occupants or by nature. 700 elements were cleaned up, photographed and filed, by Cachard and Buchakjian, with the idea of returning them to their rightful owners, their heirs, or to the city via a public institution. This filmed performance was produced for the exhibition Abandoned Dwellings, Display of Systems, curated by Karima El Helou at B医科大学 Museum, Beirut, 2016.

Directed and produced by: Hala Mousa.
Music by: Sary Moussa.

Basma Alsharif
The Story of Milk and Honey, 2010
10 min

The Story of Milk and Honey is a video narrated by an anonymous man, who one details a failure at attempting to write a love story in Beirut, Lebanon. Those details produce their own story via a montage of secretly taken photographs shot on Beirut’s Corniche, faces erased from family albums, and raw drawn natural illustrations that lack the word “Plant.” Through a deliberate weaving of fact and fiction, a tale of defeat transforms into a multi-layered journey exploring how we collect information, personal facts and recreate history to serve our own desires.

Rania Stephan
Memories For a Private Eye, 2015
31:35 min

The first chapter in a trilogy that investigates the filmmaker’s personal archive, Memories For A Private Eye foregrounds a fictional detective from the Hollywood film noir Laura by Otto Preminger (1946) to help unfold deep and traumatic memories. The narrative spirals around the lost image of the filmmaker’s dead mother. How is absence lived? What remains of love, war and death with the passing of time? These are the questions that are deliberately displayed for contemplation. Weaving together images from different sources - private archive, cinema, television, YouTube - The film investigates the past, unfolding into a labyrinthic means to create a fresh yet profound blueprint of witnessing and remembrance.

Translation & Subtitles: Sharif Sharjeh - Beirut
Edited by: JounFilms - Lebanon

Nadim Mishalawi
Sector Zero, 2019
64 min

On the outskirts of Beirut, between the City’s port and its densely populated center, lies the new, notorious, and radiant, area of Karantina. Through an exploration of this neglected urban wasteland, Sector Zero examines the area’s peculiar history, using it as a metaphor for Lebanon’s own troubled past. Tracing the area’s origins back to the Ottoman built Quarantine Facility after which the area was named, and following its evolution from being a vacant plot of land to a dense, multinational ghetto, Sector Zero analyzes the persistence of this urban void in modern-day Lebanon, and how it’s dark history mirrors Lebanon’s erratic progression as a country in search of its national identity. In this sense, Sector Zero is not so much a documentation as it is an investigation into the dark corners of modern Lebanon’s collective memory, in an attempt to discover how much of who we are is based largely on that part of ourselves we have chosen to forget.

Produced by: Joubert Productions.
and social realities, these sites are examined as triggers of memory, as processes of discovery and analysis, and, more importantly, as a tool for negotiating different kinds of obsession. Oscillating between denial and signs of life, the video addresses the material form and the inherent vision of these modern projects in juxtaposition to one’s own, switching between past, present and various distances and experiences of perception.

Produced by Ashkal Alwan
Text by Mustapha Jundi in collaboration with Carine Doumit
Editing by Carine Doumit
Sound Edited by Lena Sanaya (BB Studios)
Color Correction by Bilal Hili (Lucid)

Mustapha Jundi
I Thought I Knew Where I was Going, 2017
35 min

I Thought I Knew Where I was Going draws from an autobiographical relationship to four seemingly scandals and disparate modern sites built between 1054 and 1073, and around Tripoli, Lebanon. Whether conceived for leisure or industrialization, these sites of varying scales were at the core of the modernization of the city. Constituting a spa conceived for leisure or industrialization, these sites of varying scales built between 1934 and 1973, in and around Tripoli, Lebanon. Whether

Rania Stephan
Westlands, 2005
30 min

Three months after the assassination of Lebanon’s Prime Minister Rafic Hariri by the Syrian Regime, massive popular demonstrations followed in the city centre of Beirut. The film revisits the city and its margins, trying to capture what remains of those historical events.

Produced by: JounFilms - Lebanon
Camera work + Editing Sound & Image: Rania Stephan
Graphic Design: May Ghaybeh
Translation & Subtitles: Stephan Tarnowski/JounFilms - Beirut

Rania Stephan
No: 3 Movements, 2017
17:17 min

Set during the garbage crisis protests that raged through Lebanon for over half a year, NO: 3 Movements reflects on bodies in a space of contestation. How they form and disperse, take on singularity then disappear again, is a pretext for the film to interrogate the idea of contestation. How they form and dissipate, take on singularity for over half a year,

Commissioned by: Sharjah Art Foundation for Sharjah Biennial 13 Tamawuj 2017 – Lebanon
Producers: JounFilms - Lebanon
Camera work + Editing Sound & Image: Rania Stephan
Script: Sava Eid - db Studios Beirut
Mastering: Lucid Post - Beirut
Graphic Design: May Ghaybeh
Translation & Subtitles: Stephan Tarnowski/JounFilms - Beirut

Jalal Toufic
The Lamentations Series: The Ninth Night and Day, 2005
59 min

While the ten-day ceremony "Ashirul" is a commemoration of the slaughter of the grandson of the prophet Muhammad and many of his relatives and companions at Karbala in 680, it is also an invocation of the occulted 'Pa'isha Isham, the Mahdi, in the hope of hurrying his exoteric earthly return. But how would the one invoked, who is (imaginably) present albeit occluded, perceive the ceremony? He would not perceive it the way we see it in the more temporal detail. While the first part of the video appears to be a documentation of the ceremony as it might be perceived by an all too human audience member, the second part of the video, which happens across a lapse of consciousness if not of being (indicated by the cut to black on the sound of the participants’ hands striking their chests), and where time is dilated, implies that the essential spectator of the ceremony is the past to whom it is addressed.

The while the participants’ self-flagellation is excessive, it is even more so when perceived by its essential addressee, the Mahdi, who has keen (ladd) perception. The video’s subtitle subtly implies another condition since its “night and day” refers not only to (something that continues for) one day and one night, the ninth, but also to something that goes on the all the time (“night and day: all the time” [195]).
الذكريات على مداخل البلدات أو على مقربة من الوديان والجبال، وفي الميادين العامة، المستقبلية تمتد بجلال نحو السماء، وكأنها ستبشر بأزمنة قادمة. وتقع تلك النصب لا يحمل اسمًا، ولا يشير إلى حدث أو أشخاص بعينهم، إلا أن أشكالها العمودية تنمو تدريجًا بمقومها، حيث تظهر أشكال الألوان والأشكال المذهلة. وعلى مر السنين، بدأ الساحر شيكو ينسحب من الحيز العام. كما يلتقط عرضًا لأول مرة، وآثار اختفاء ساحر شهير عرف بالتكلم من بطنه، عمل غصين مساعداً له في طفولته.

تناجي لوحة غويا فريق تصوير من مواليد التسعينيات وتجذبهم نحو اكتشاف حرب، حيث تناسل عدد كبير من الأحداث والشخصيات التي تكشفن خلال المشاهدة. يظهر فيلم "المسبح" فن人的 التحول من الحرب إلى السلم، واندلاع النزاعات واندلاع النزاعات، مما يؤثر على الحياة العامة.

للموقع كأيقونة وكنموذج حي يستمر إلى جانب المساحة السياسية التي تم تضمينها. يركز "المسبح" على نظرة المشاهد الذي يصبح المقر للمدينة والساحل. جامعاً مياه من مواقع مختلفة لتصب في مسبح سداسي، ويظهر المسبح الخاص به والذي ظل شكله وسياقه العام على حاله رغم التغيرات والتطورات الحالية.

استوحى فيلم "المسبح" من صورتين لفندق سان جورج في بيروت (حوالي عام 2009)، حيث تم التدوير على موقع مرجعي الطرق، والذي يتشكل من الأبواب الخلفية، والتي تعكس نظرة المشاهد إلى الحياة العامة.

إننا نشهد زمناً يرفض سحر الظهور والختفاء، ويأتي موضع هذا الفيلم ما بين هذين الأطرافين. للموقع كأيقونة وكنموذج حي يستمر إلى جانب المساحة السياسية التي تم تضمينها.

الممثلون:
- جيروم كارم، "المسبح"، مسلسل فرنسي في 2018.
- أحمد غصين في عمله الجديد "المسبح،"، عام 2019.

الإبداعات المعمارية في لبنان:
- "المسبح"، مسرحية فيلم في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.

البطولات: "المسبح"، فيلم فيلم في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.

الإنتاج: "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.

التسجيل:
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.

النشر:
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.

الإنتاج: "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
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ال assistir: "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.
- "المسبح"، فيلم درامي في 2018.

التحرير، تصميم الصوت والموسيقى:
- سارة مشموشي
- ياسمين خليفة
- سارة مشموشي

坚定不وع، أمل، حب، ينبع من التعبيرات المتصلة بأنفسك.
Beirut Lab: 1975(2020)
Curated by Juli Carson and Yasmine Tukan
October 5th - December 14, 2019
Room Gallery
UC Irvine | Claire Trevor School of the Arts
712 Arts Plaza | Irvine, CA 92697-2775
Hours | Tues-Sat 12-6 pm
T 949-824-9854
uag.arts.uci.edu

Juli Carson | Director Emeritus & Professor,
Department of Art
Allyson Unzicker | Associate Director & Curator

Design by Philippa Dahrouj

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