

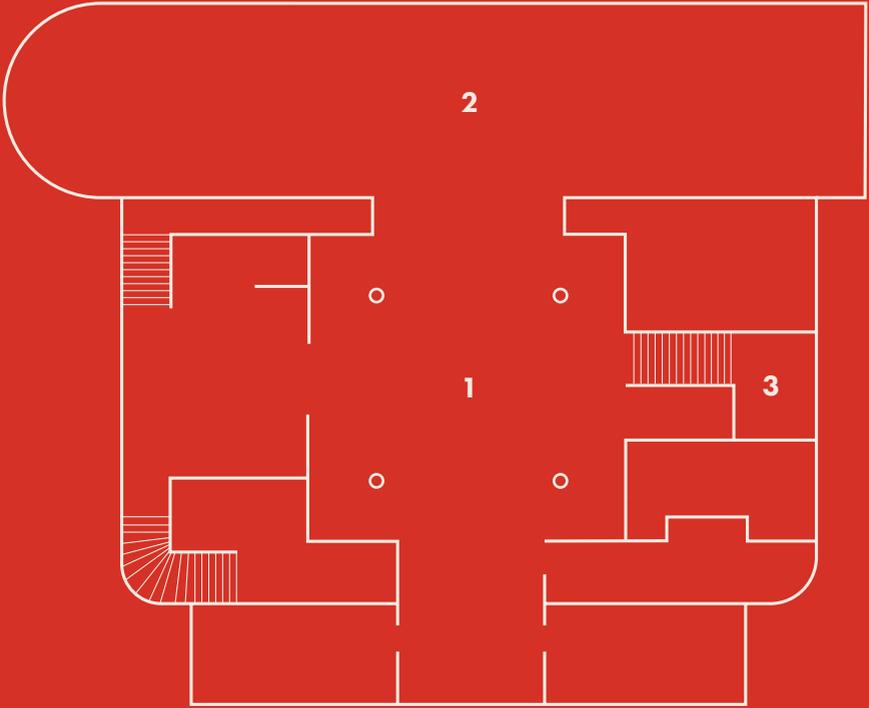
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Lebanon  
لبنان

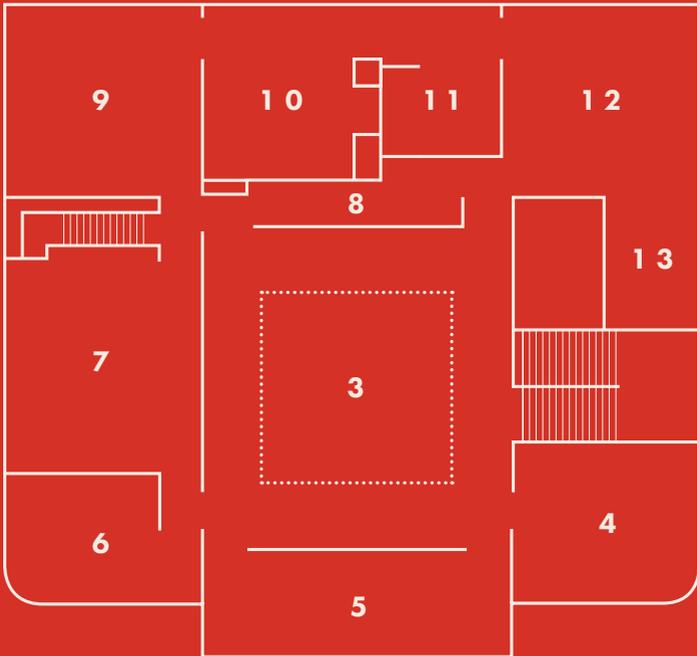
# HOW WILL IT END?

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“REAL  
GENEROSITY  
TOWARDS  
THE FUTURE  
CONSISTS IN  
GIVING ALL  
TO WHAT IS  
PRESENT.”

ALBERT CAMUS



Lebanon  
لبنان

# HOW WILL IT END?

Paola Yacoub's photograph entitled *How will it end is not the question*, that lends its title to the exposition - in collaboration with the Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou - evokes the permanent instability and insecurity that has existed in Lebanon for forty years. *How is it going to end?*, this terrible question haunts the Lebanese and those interested in the country and its people.

Caressing the hope of a better future for the country, this exhibition is dedicated not to the collapse of a nation in the throes of a combat with its funereal demons but rather to an inventory of artists' reactions to the circumstances. It offers, I hope, the opportunity to discover a great diversity of works and sources of inspiration, as well as a new and younger generation of artists – and, lastly, to shed light on the work of reconstruction undertaken by artists as witnesses of history.

The imagery of catastrophe is no stranger to the country's artistic scene, especially to the generation of artists who lived through the civil war of 1975 to 1990 and whose memories of dramatic events have fed their reflection and nourished their artistic production over the years. These fatal events, tragedy after tragedy, without any work of justice, memory or possible reconciliation, have constituted a trauma but also a collective knowledge of the Lebanese in the face of crisis situations, and have influenced the themes and practices of their artists.

Louma Salamé,  
co-curator of the exhibition



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# LEBANON

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Land of myth and legend, where more than five thousand years of history have been written, Lebanon has passed through troubled periods since its creation. Located in the Middle East, between Israel and Syria, the country has played a central role in relations between the Arab world and the West throughout its history. This strategic position has been a source not only of prestige, but also of covetousness and destruction.

❖ The period between the country's independence in 1943 and the start of the civil war in 1975 is sometimes called the "golden age" of Lebanon. At that time, the country, and Beirut in particular, was the region's main banking, commercial and tourist centre. The capital became a meeting place for artists and intellectuals, creating an abundance conducive to the appearance of cultural initiatives and the flowering of museums and galleries across the country.

The port of Beirut was one of the largest and busiest in the Mediterranean. At the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa, it was an important commercial station connecting Arab countries to the rest of the world.

Starting in 1975 and ending, at least on paper, in 1989, the civil war has determined the disastrous fate of Lebanon in recent history. It is difficult to have a nuanced perspective on this history when the country still finds itself in an extremely vulnerable situation today.

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## CYNTHIA ZAVEN

(Beirut, 1970)

Cynthia Zaven is a composer, pianist and artis. She learned to play the piano from her grandfather. Later, she also received classical piano lessons in Europe.

With her art she explores the relationships between sound, memory and identity. She performs classical, experimental and improvised music in solo shows and in collaboration with other artists, and creates sound designs for theatre, performances, dance, conceptual art projects and movies. *Arsenal* (2018), shows pieces of a dismounted piano: the instrument, deprived of its primary function and mute, becomes a space for formal experimentation. The installation represents the atomization of the mechanism, the dissection of the instrument into many fractions: the connecting joints are pulled out, the soundboard dislocated, sanded down and polished. Each piece becomes independent from the others, rearranged horizontally in a silent congregation and a new order. Zaven lives and works in Beirut.

## DANIELE GENADRY

(Baltimore, 1980)

Daniele Genadry holds a bachelor's degree in studio art and mathematics from Dartmouth College in Hanover (USA), and a Master of Fine Arts from the Slade School of Art in London.

Genadry uses various media to examine how distance, light and movement can affect visual experiences. She focuses on the relationships between painting and photography, as well as themes like movement and memory. Multiple viewpoints, decentralized images and shifting frames are frequent in her work. The representation of landscapes and the contemplation of silent nature, a recurring motif throughout the history of art, at times illustrate the confused interweaving of the inner world and the outer world that is represented: the landscape becomes that of the viewer's state of mind, leading us to explore a psychic space. Genadry lives in Beirut, she received the Prize of the Boghossian Foundation for visual arts in 2020.

## MOUNIRA AL SOLH

(Beirut, 1978)

Mounira Al Solh studied painting at the Lebanese University of Beirut, and visual arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam.

Al Solh works with paint, paper, embroidery and film to explore themes as migration, memory, trauma and loss. Drawing inspiration from her conversations with people living in regions affected by conflict, her works talk about displacement and uncertainty, frequently also reflecting the struggles women face in the Arab world. Irony and self-reflection are also essential components of her work. Her work is socially committed, and is simultaneously political and escapist. This escapism can be experienced through the parasol transformed into a tent, entitled *Lackadaisical Sunset to Sunset* (2021). The artist's intervention with a sound installation transforms this everyday object into a place of preservation and retreat. Al Solh divides her time between Lebanon and the Netherlands.

## SIMONE FATTAL

(Damascus, 1942)

Simone Fattal is a philosopher, painter and sculptor. She grew up in Beirut, where she started to study philosophy before pursuing at the Sorbonne. She started to paint upon her return to Lebanon, but civil war forced her into exile. In the United States she began to sculpt, and enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago. An artist with multiple and archipelagic influences, Fattal quickly refined her approach to this medium by focusing on ceramics and bronze. *Warrior IV* (2011) mixes multiple influences including ancient Mesopotamian art, and is part of an ongoing series. Fattal insists that the warrior, the hero, lives and dies while standing on his two feet. These warriors are linked to the image of the combatant during the Lebanese civil war. Fattal lives in Paris.

## ICONEM

Founded in 2013 by Yves Ubelmann, ICONEM contributes to the conservation and promotion of endangered cultural heritage sites, by digitizing them in 3D.

ICONEM's founders realized that the world's cultural heritage is threatened by many factors that could destroy important and irreplaceable sites. To prevent this, the team works across the globe with modern technologies: photogrammetry, laser scanning and large-scale drone scanning, in order to help protect the endangered spaces, and communicate them to a wider audience. Produced by the ICONEM team during an emergency mission at the request of UNESCO, the images projected in this exhibition expose the extent of the damage caused by the explosions of 4 August 2020 and what remains of the bled-dry city. ICONEM has worked with several international organizations, for some years now, they have been creating digital exhibitions to allow the public access to exceptional heritage sites.

## CALINE AOUN

(Beirut, 1983)

Caline Aoun obtained a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Central Saint Martins in London in 2005, and in 2009 a postgraduate degree at the Royal Academy School in London. She also earned a professional doctorate at the University of East London in 2012.

Her works talk about issues related to urbanism, architecture, print and digital advertising space, questioning her audience about themes such as over-consumerism, excess, and saturation, and how to deal with these. *Datascapes* (2017) shows the total weight per month of imported and exported goods via the port of Beirut from 2004 until 2015 in the form of graphs. Data however becomes irrelevant as it makes way for dreamy abstract landscapes that occupy an entire wall. Weighty information becomes a topographical representation of commercial exchanges and consumption. Aoun lives and works between Beirut and London.

## OMAR FAKHOURY

(Beit Chabab, 1979)

Omar Fakhoury earned a Bachelor in Painting and Drawing from the Lebanese University, followed in 2004 by a Master of Fine Arts from Paris I-Sorbonne.

Fakhoury works primarily with painting, his interest in public space and the elements that mark territories are clearly noticeable in his latest works. When looking for subjects, he mainly focuses on the complex political and urban situation in Lebanon. *Corn Plant* (2021), exhibited in Monsieur's Bedroom, is dedicated to the explosion, taking as subject a shoot of corn discovered on-site, an unexpected sign of hope, an original substrate of life, a defining symbol, in the midst of the ruins of the immense crime scene. The seed, invisible to the naked eye, was dormant in the earth before the explosion, and despite the disaster, succeeded in coming to life. Fakhoury is a lecturer at the Lebanese University in Beirut, where he works and lives.

## ABED AL KADIRI

(Beirut, 1984)

Abed Al Kadiri majored in Arabic Literature and Fine Arts at the Lebanese University. In 2006, he moved to Kuwait, where he worked as an art critic before establishing the FA Gallery in 2010.

Working mainly with painting and photography, his work reflects the cruelty and beauty of nature, as well as mankind's quintessential impulse to simultaneously create and destroy. Al Kadiri focuses on themes such as cultural heritage, occupation, migration and belonging. The drawing series *October 17, 2019 Diaries of the Lebanese Revolution* is named after the day that the protests in Lebanon began. The works are a snapshot of the dramatic scenes Al Kadiri observed, of the urgency and intensity that lived in those sleepless days and nights. Each drawing has a date and a specific location, mapping Al Kadiri's movements across specific places in Beirut and elsewhere. *It's not black or white* (2021) is an in-situ work realised especially for this exhibition.

# BEIRUT PORT



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On August 4, 2020, a double explosion of hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate stored without proper precautions in the port of Beirut caused one of the biggest blasts in world history. The murderous shock wave that followed left two hundred and seventeen dead, six thousand five hundred wounded and three hundred thousand people homeless, and part of the city utterly destroyed. Artists too are among the victims, not isolated, but witnesses and spokespersons. Most do not speak of their personal problems, they exorcise the moment by freezing it in paint, they portray the collective devastation, aspects of which, both panic and tragedy, they see as incumbent on them to perpetuate.

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## BETTINA KHOURY BADR

(Beirut, 1971)

Bettina Khoury Badr graduated from the Lebanese University in Beirut with a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts in 2001, and a master's degree in Visual Arts in 2012. She spent the years in between these two degrees teaching and developing her artistic practice.

Using traditional painting methods and techniques for works with a very modern aesthetic, she confronts the abstract with the representational. The watercolour mosaic, *August 4 (2021)*, is based on a series of photographs of the Beirut sky taken daily since the start of the pandemic. Working around the different states of the sky allowed Khoury Badr to change her perspective looking at the sky in a subjective and meditative way. The series follows a visual sequence that shows a continuity in pattern and colour evolution which the explosion of 4 August altered brutally. Since 2007, she has been teaching at the Lebanese American University in Beirut, where she works and lives.

## AYMAN BAALBAKI

(Odeissé, 1975)

After studying painting at the Beirut University's Institute of Fine Arts, Baalbaki graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (ENSAD) in Paris, and from the Université Paris VIII with a degree in Art of Images and Contemporary Art.

Ayman Baalbaki's works are hallmarked by their evocative power and his connection with Expressionism. However, his main source of inspiration is drawn directly from his own life, tinged by the violence of war and exodus. These themes are frequently evoked in his installations, which underscore the sufferings of a forced nomadism and those of a world filled with victims and urban ruins. His work *Untitled (2021)*, for example, exorcises the moment of the destruction of the port by freezing it in a painting. Baalbaki currently lives and works in Beirut.

## LAMIA ZIADÉ

(Beirut, 1968)

In 1987, Lamia Ziadé left Lebanon to study graphic arts in Paris, where she then worked for famous fashion designers such as Jean-Paul Gaultier and Issey Miyake. Later, she became an independent illustrator, drawing for children's books, advertising, film and press.

She developed a polymorphous oeuvre ranging from graphic novels (*Ô nuit, ô mes yeux, Ma très grande mélancolie arabe*), to paintings and sculptures. Her work, both intimate and collective, touches upon history and current events in the Arab world. *Mon Port de Beyrouth* (2020) is a collection of texts and watercolor paintings about the events of the August 4 explosions. A visual and literary testament to the numerous victims, it provides a way for the artist to cope with her grief, memories, and her desire for justice. She lives and works in Paris.

## CHARBEL ALKHOURY AND MONICA BASBOUS

(Beirut, 1993) (Venezuela, 1988)

Charbel Alkhoury is a visual artist, photographer and archivist. For this project, he works together with the multi-faceted artist Monica Basbous who is an architect, researcher, educator, as well as a cartographer.

The collective works with various media to explore the social fabrics of urban spaces. *POPG Clanc* (2021), originates from a WhatsApp group of the same name, originally created by a group of online gamers in the aftermath of the popular uprisings of October 2019. The group evolved into a revolutionary cell, an information sharing and verification system, a mutual aid network and a social and emotional support system. Alkhoury and Basbous engaged the members of POPG Clanc in the process of archiving chat, presenting an alternative timeline of the collective and personal events that have shaped the past two years. Both Alkhoury and Basbous currently live and work in Beirut.

“DEATH  
HAS PASSED  
THROUGH  
US.”

JOANA HADJITHOMAS



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# LATENT IMAGES

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The “Tawhra” (*revolution* in Arabic), which began on October 17, 2019, was launched by ordinary citizens of all faiths and ages, demanding the resignation of the entire Lebanese political class. On October 27, 2019, tens of thousands of Tawhra demonstrators succeeded in meeting on the edge of the highway that runs along the Mediterranean Sea, to form a human chain, 170 km long, from the north to the south of the country, from Tripoli to Tyre. Brutally confronted by Lebanese police and armed militias, protests were halted during the pandemic, resuming afterwards. The revolutionary context and the deteriorating situation preceding the explosion in the port of Beirut has been a subject for many artists. August 4, provoked or accidental event, the scene of a crime still unresolved today, seems to many artists to have been long-prophesied, as if they had anticipated the signs, felt its gathering momentum, imagined its coming.

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## JOANA HADJITHOMAS AND KHALIL JOREIGE

(Beirut, 1969)

Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige have been working together as filmmakers and artists since the 1990s.

For the past 15 years, they have centered their work on the visual culture and history of Lebanon and are known for their in-depth research based on personal and political documents, showing a particular interest in stories that have been kept secret. They use these as tools for representing trauma, specifically their personal experience of the devastating Lebanese Civil War. In *Images latentes, troisième volet du projet Wonder Beirut* (1997-2006) Hadjithomas and Joreige present a book containing rolls of film that picture Lebanon's war years. Taken by a fictitious aging photographer named Abdallah Farah, the pictures are not developed but are instead presented with meticulous written descriptions that contextualize them, giving free rein to the viewer's imagination. Hadjithomas and Joreige currently live and work in Beirut.

## MARWAN MOUJAES

(Beirut, 1989)

Marwan Moujaes graduated with a Master of Fine Arts from the Lebanese University in Beirut, which he followed up with a diplôme national supérieur d'expression plastique (DNSEP) from the Valenciennes School of Art and Design, and a Master of Art from the Sorbonne University in Paris.

Moujaes investigates the possible meeting points between contemporary art and the processes of mourning, living, desiring and speaking. His artistic practice mainly works through protocols of delegation, diversion, infiltration and appropriation of existing symbolic codes and allegorical structures. For his work, he derives inspiration from the conflicted history of the Middle East. The video *Before Tomorrow was not Today* (2020) shows the last New Year's Eve before Beirut's partial destruction. Playing it backwards with the sounds and lights of the fireworks introducing the scene is a way for Moujaes to draw a parallel with the turmoil provoked by the explosion. He works and lives between Tours and Rouen (France).

## CHARBEL-JOSEPH H. BOUTROS

(Bickfaya, 1981)

Being born in the middle of the Lebanese civil war, his home country plays an important role in his artistic practice. Boutros works with installation, sculpture and video, often making monochromatic and melancholic pieces that talk about the history of Lebanon. This political story is then mixed with more personal narratives.

As an expression of the intimate, Boutros's œuvre draws on his inner experiences to create a universe of imperceptible, difficult to record realities. *No Light in White Light / Night Cartography* (2011-2020, ongoing series) for example makes a poetic recording of the night or a period of sleep. According to the artist "*darkness erases our differences, erases time, erases the present. It is a natural and vital experience*". Boutros won the Prize of the Boghossian Foundation in 2016, he lives and works in Paris.

## PIERRE KOUKJIAN

(Beirut, 1962)

Pierre Koukjian always had a passion for art, but the Lebanese civil war forced him to flee the country. He went to Germany, where he encountered many artists and designers, who taught him valuable things about design and sculpture.

Koukjian is known for his contemporary works with an often provocative symbolic resonance. He transforms materials such as hammered steel, titanium, brass, industrial foam, neon and glass, giving them new use and meaning. His work *Power on Power off* (2019) lays a parallel with the very poor state of infrastructure in many troubled states of the Middle East. The use of neon lights to write the sarcastic pun underlines the fragile nature of the human being dependent of electricity. He currently lives and works in Geneva.

## JEANNE ET MOREAU

(Beirut, 1978) (Achkout, 1983)

Randa Mirza and Lara Tabet started working together in 2018 under the pseudonym "Jeanne et Moreau". The focus of their artistic practice lies on the theme of identity. They use new digital technologies to question their place in the world as women artists, as well as their relationship to the media they work with and to the production, transmission, sharing and reception of images.

*View from Home #2* (2020) is a photographic work for which the artists used binoculars to take pictures of the view from their window at home overlooking the port of Beirut. Through the two different time spans of their work, one before and one after the explosion, Mirza and Tabet emphasize the cyclical pattern of Lebanon's capital, fluctuating between construction and destruction. Randa Mirza and Lara Tabet are both based in Paris.

## RAYYANE TABET

(Achkout, 1983)

Rayyane Tabet is a visual artist. He obtained a bachelor's degree in Architecture from Cooper Union, New York, and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of California, San Diego.

Tabet's practice explores memory and individual narratives, giving agency to subjective understandings of major socio-historical events. His sculptural works are clearly influenced by his training in architecture, often stark and minimalistic. Tabet's work provides a different lens through which we can view the past, as well as its connections to the present. *La Mano De Dios* (2016) is based on the artist's memory of hearing on the radio about Diego Maradona's infamous goal scored with his hand during the quarterfinals of the 1986 World Cup against England through an anchor who, in order to draw maximum attention to the event, had shared the news by sounding the siren usually used to announce imminent bombings in Beirut. He is based between Beirut and Berlin.

## STÉPHANIE SAADÉ

(Lebanon, 1983)

Stéphanie Saadé graduated in Fine Arts from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and followed a post-graduate program at the China Academy of Arts in Hangzhou.

She works by altering objects and photographs in a very subtle way, measuring growth, decrease, weathering, and other natural phenomena. In her art, she develops a language of suggestion, playing with poetics and metaphors for the viewer to decipher. August 4, with its provoked or accidental event, the scene of a crime still unresolved today, seems to many artists to have been long-prophesied, as if they had anticipated the signs, felt its gathering momentum, imagined its coming. Foreshadowing the catastrophe, *Apocalypse* (2020), *Stage of life* (2019) and *Re-enactment LB* (2012) by Stéphanie Saadé, created before August 4, can, like many works prior to the double explosion, be revisited in the light of events as harbingers of a worse to come. Stéphanie Saadé currently lives and works in Paris.

“WE WERE  
WAITING  
FOR THE  
APOCALYPSE  
AND  
FINALLY THE  
APOCALYPSE  
CAME.”

GREGORY BUCHAKJIAN



# PERMANENCE OF IMPERMANENCE

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The problem of damaged heritage and that of history revisited through the perspective of objects that witness to an impossible rescue, are present in the works of many artists in the exhibition. The spectacle of the ruin, emptiness and silence caused by the double explosion that destroyed the capital and a significant portion of its last traditional heritage homes inspires these artists to create works that link heritage to the soul of objects and to both national and personal archaeologies. The impossibility of forgetting and the work of memory are central to the practices of these artists, both in Lebanon or abroad, who immediately felt the need to collect traces, to document, for the most part frantically or, conversely, despite themselves, endangered heritage, through various media like sculpture, photography, writing.

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## GREGORY BUCHAKJIAN

(Beirut, 1971)

Gregory Buchakjian owns a PhD from the Sorbonne (Paris), and is director of the School of Visual Arts at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA).

Political instability and ruin are among the issues tackled by his doctoral dissertation. His research and work revolve around issues of the city and history, in Beirut, Lebanon and the Arab world. The landscape in mourning and the destruction of public space are frequently explored in the work of Gregory Buchakjian who has long worked on abandoned settlements in Beirut. Besides human and material losses, the explosion was also of great consequence to cultural heritage, the Sursock museum for example was almost completely destroyed and 25 works of art were severely damaged: *Hercule et Omphale d'après Artemisia Gentileschi* (2021) shows one of them. Currently, Buchakjian lives and works in Beirut.

## PAOLA YACOUB

(Lebanon, 1966)

Paola Yacoub studied at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) in Beirut, graduated from the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London in 1994 and worked in the archaeological field for several years.

In her art, Yacoub documents the implications of the use of space and explores the effects of current developments in the Middle East in relation to architecture as a supplier of cultural preservation. The series *Radical grounds* brings together a group of photographs taken between 1990 and 2012 in the region extending from Lebanon to Kurdistan. Even where the images are saturated with information and narratives, the way the artist took them disables the expected pathos in the iconography of the region. There is something poetic about the ground, the mud, the rubble. Yacoub is based in Berlin and Beirut.

## ALI CHERRI

(Beirut, 1976)

Ali Cherri graduated with a diploma in graphic design in 2000 from the American University of Beirut. He also obtained his Performing Arts diploma in Amsterdam in 2005.

In his work, Ali Cherri explores different media such as drawing, film, installation, performance, print, and video. In his videos and sculptural installations, he dissects Lebanon's geopolitical situation as well as that of the neighbouring countries from a distanced yet engaged point of view. His most recent projects deal with the role of archaeological objects in the construction of historical narratives. This is seen in his sculptures *Life after Life* (2021) and *Starring at a Thousand* (2021) where emptiness and silence caused by the double explosion that destroyed the capital and a significant portion of its last traditional heritage homes inspires the artist to create works that link heritage to the soul of objects. He lives and works between Beirut and Paris.

## STÉPHANIE SAADÉ → cf page 20

## DALA NASSER

(Tyr, 1990)

Dala Nasser graduated from the Slade School of Fine Arts in London in 2016, and in 2021 from the Yale School of Art in New Haven.

As an artist, she focuses on the environmental problems in our world and the dramatic need for change in this domain. Nasser uses a wide range of materials in her work to examine the perpetually deteriorating environmental, historical and political conditions. Her interdisciplinary approach is reflected in her paintings, performances and films. In the video production *The Dead Shall Be Raised* (2021), Nasser explores how we witness and record things that cannot really be recorded. She tells a story with an autonomous narrator, one that breaks away from the dominant discourse built on delusion and myth. Dala Nasser lives and works in Beirut.

“THERE ARE  
PEOPLES WHOSE  
EYES HAVE NEVER  
DIED” AS “THE  
CENTURIES OF  
THE INQUISITION  
HAVE NOT  
CRUSHED THE  
LANGUAGE OF  
THE WIND.”

ETEL ADNAN

# LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS



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The home is a space of withdrawal and preservation, in opposition to the tensions and confrontations taking place outside. It lends itself easily to living room conversations and meetings with family, friends and relatives, to sharing time and sometimes lively discussions and games, especially card games - a regular occupation during the bombings of the civil war years. The repetition of intimate rituals, indifferent to the outside world, is vital to supporting daily life but also to enabling artists, both locally and in the diaspora, to renew these essential activities of sharing in community.

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**STÉPHANIE SAADÉ** → cf page 20**GILBERT HAGE**

(Beirut, 1966)

Hage studied at the Holy Spirit University in Kaslik (Lebanon), where he currently teaches. He is also a professor at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA).

Hage's photographic works talk about various societal themes and concerns, often with a link to his home country Lebanon. In *Reality in the Real* (2020), he archives the experiences and feelings of his artistic and intellectual peers that survived August 4, seeking to give agency to individual human experiences in the case of traumatic large-scale events like this. While talking about the explosions, the witnesses Hage portrays in his video project, also reflect on the broader history of their country, and on how this tumultuous and tragic past impacts their lives. Gilbert Hage lives, works and teaches in Beirut.

**VLADIMIR ANTAKI**

(Riyadh, 1980)

Photographer Vladimir Antaki grew up in Paris and studied art history and film at the Sorbonne. In 2003, he moved to Montreal, where he graduated in 2007 with a Bachelor in visual and media arts from the Université du Québec.

Antaki considers himself first and foremost a storyteller, using his camera to tell the stories of the people in our society who are often left behind or forgotten. For *The Guardians*, he traveled around Europe, the Middle East and America to photograph shopkeepers of what he calls "urban temples" - unique spaces in cities otherwise full of cookie-cut corporate shops - that still have a soul and a heart in them. Antaki addresses the fragile nature of the individual work of the "guardians", but also the social value of these so-called "temples", in a time and age that are increasingly homogenized and consumption oriented. The guardian in this picture is Fouad, a fabric seller in Beirut.

## MAHA YAMMINE

(Beirut, 1986)

In 2014, Maha Yammine obtained a Master of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University in Beirut and in 2016 a Master of Arts at the École Supérieure d'Art et de Design de Valenciennes.

Yammine aims to find an intersection of several themes – political, social, cultural and historical, she collects and reactivates the stories lived by anonymous people during the war years in Lebanon. Using these “micro-narratives” she reveals fragments of the past. Games for example are a central subject in her work, often slipping past reality and protocols through the diverting of rules, objects and temporality. Her video performance *14* (2017), for example, refers to a popular card game, a variant of Rummy, played with cards from which numbers and colours have been erased. With no possible winner and no proven outcome, this game reveals its deep nature: providing a space of freedom, tranquillity and shared proximity. She lives in Rouen and received the Prize of the Boghossian Foundation in 2020.

## DANIELLE ARBID

(Beirut, 1970)

Danielle Arbid is a Lebanese and French film director and actress. In 1987, she moved to France to study literature at the Sorbonne, and journalism at the Centre de Formation et de Perfectionnement des Journalistes (CFPJ) in Paris.

As an artist, Arbid is interested in exploring different narrative forms. Her work alternates between fiction, documentaries and video essays, as well as experimenting with the intersections between these genres. In her films, Arbid also explores many different themes. *Conversation de salon II* (2009), that can be translated into “parlour conversations”, is a documentary filming her mother and her friends during their daily ritual of meeting at 4pm to unpack their lives. During their meetings hope follows despair, words flow and secrets come out. Arbid lives between Beirut and Paris.

## SAMAR MOGHARBEL

(Beirut, 1958)

Samar Mogharbel obtained a master degree in ceramics at Goldsmiths College in London. She was involved in the postwar excavations in her home town Beirut, an occupation that greatly influenced her later work.

Mogharbel works mainly with clay, but her artistic practice has also ventured into video art and stop-motion video. She looks at the earth she works with as if it were her key to understanding the world and to understanding life itself. Much of Mogharbel's work has been oriented towards recapturing the emotional memories of the war. The works *Hamra* (2014) and *Watwal I* (2014) take their inspiration from Beirut buildings lost forever to urban development. In bringing them back to life, she plays with the shapes, colours, and memories of a fading era. She says "*If we cannot have them in real life, we can at least preserve them in miniature*". Samar Mogharbel lives and works in Beirut.

## MARIA KASSAB

(Beirut, 1980)

Maria Kassab studied Communication Arts and Fine Arts at the Lebanese American University in Beirut (LAU) and is currently completing a Master of Arts in Photography in Berlin.

Kassab uses a variety of visual languages focusing the contents of her work on the political and cultural climate of the MENA region. She sees images and photographs not as the end result of an artwork, but as blank canvases in need of alteration. Scratched and mutilated objects but also bruised memories are all sources of inspiration for her collages. Her works speak of absence, of a monument, of a feeling, body or place, and summons memories, bad dreams and ghosts. The series *Of Places and Cannons* (2018) explores places and subjects affected by violent war traumas, highlighting ruined and dismantled locations, and recreating a narrative memory about annihilation. Kassab was awarded the Boghossian Foundation Photography Prize in 2017, she lives in Berlin.

# BACK TO THE ROOTS



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In the rubble of the public space, many artists find refuge in a return to their roots. Settling back in their native villages with their families, they find a form of catharsis in the distance from the city and its sinister and suffocating spectacle. Nature then develops a form of respiration for them. Out of a desire for isolation or to escape the tumult of the world, they enter into symbiosis with their natural environment. The representation of landscape and the contemplation of silent nature, a recurring motif throughout the history of art, at times illustrates the confusion of the inner world and the world that is represented: the landscape becomes that of the viewer's state of mind, leading us to explore a psychic space.

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## RAMY SAAD

(Deirmimas, 1989)

Ramy Saad graduated in Visual Arts at the Lebanese University of Beirut in 2016. Saad sees his studies there as the starting point for exploring his own artistic language.

While living in Beirut, Saad's studio was crowded with industrial materials such as oil and acrylic paint, cement, plaster and plastic film. Later in his career, he started looking for more natural recipes and materials. Out of a desire for isolation or to escape the tumult of the world, Ramy Saad enters into symbiosis with his natural environment. This call from nature has been decisive in the practice of his art, he paints on recycled paper, using watercolours made with natural pigments extracted by boiling plants collected in the forests near his grandfather's village in the Lebanese mountains. Ramy Saad lives and works in Lebanon.

## CHAFA GHADDAR

(Lebanon, 1986)

Visual artist Chafa Ghaddar earned her bachelor's degree in Fine Arts in 2007, and her master's degree in Visual Arts in 2009, both at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts (ALBA). In 2012 she attended a course in fresco painting in Florence.

Her works include murals, paintings, drawings, photographs and pieces in mixed media. Ghaddar's practice, using both traditional and modern techniques, can be seen as an investigation into the characteristics of time and its manifestation in objects, spaces and memory, using fragile frescos as the main inspiration for this research. Following the explosion, she felt a need to reconnect with nature, to dissociate herself from the city. This translates into the series of frescoes dedicated to the cacti in her garden. She explains that "*gardening hooks her back into life*". She currently lives and works in Dubai and received the prize for painting of the Boghossian Foundation in 2014.

**OMAR FAKHOURY** → cf page 10

**CALINE AOUN** → cf page 10**CHRISTIAN SLEIMAN**

(Lebanon, 1994)

In 2018, Christian Sleiman completed a Master of Science in Architecture at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (Lebanon), and a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University in the same year.

Sleiman is an artist who focuses his research on plants and vegetation, exploring so-called “vegetative souls” through small rituals, fabulations and recipes. The plants he collects for these projects often come from urban areas. *A City Guide for Tree Huggers* (2020) is a video and photo project that explores the politics of plants in the highly fabricated spaces of Beirut. Sleiman questions the rules and regulations behind the curated way cities deal with plants and especially trees. Instead of in natural settings these Beirut trees can be found in front of a store, next to a parking spot, or often even near a trash bin. Christian Sleiman is based between Lebanon and Paris.

**RAYMOND GEMAYEL**

(Riyadh)

Raymond Gemayel is a Lebanese photographer and visual artist. He graduated from Glendon College in 2009 with a degree in Political Science and Economics, before enrolling in photography and filmmaking classes. Between 2013 and 2015, he also participated in Ashkal Alwan’s Home Workspace Program.

Gemayel refuses to let himself be limited by set conventions of art and the media he uses. As an artist, he has always loved to experiment with different artistic languages, something that is clearly visible in his work. He works with still and moving images, installations, texts and painting, in order to examine the relationships and conflicts between image and sound, image and space, and images to each other. The artist currently lives and works in Paris.

## CHRISTINE SAFA

(Paris, 1994)

Christine Safa graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2018.

Her work often alludes to Lebanon, her country of origin. Safa works with subtle colours that she applies in smooth or slightly powdery layers. Her painting reveals the light that is characteristic of the Mediterranean region, that she has come to know over her many trips to Lebanon. Her paintings are said to be “translations of light”, witnesses of sweet summer-time melancholy. In *L'impression du soleil – toutes les pierres sont chaudes* (2020), the viewer contemplates a poetic painting which seduces through its graphic compositions and whose colours are inspired by the light and intense sun of Beirut. Her paintings are memories of memories, what remains of moments of perfection. To her, the expanse of the sun – like a twilight of trembling dust that settles on figures and entities – mirrors her experience of Lebanon. Safa lives and works in Paris.

## ETEL ADNAN

(Beirut, 1925 - Paris, 2021)

Etel Adnan studied philosophy, first at the Sorbonne (Paris), then at Berkeley and Harvard.

Adnan is known for her literary works, her poetry and essays, but also for her visual artwork, using oil paint, film and tapestry. Intimate and delicate, her work networks a multitude of exterior contributions. These constitute her personal, rhizomatic narrative, expressing at once great poetry and great sensitivity. Through this, a colourful, pastel universe emerges, depicted in watercolour or oil paint. This universe includes Mount Tamalpais, a mountain sacred to the Indians, which she used to see from the window of her house near San Francisco, which presence deeply inhabited her spirit and of which she made many paintings. Each painting is a meditation on the beauty of nature, the power of the elements, but also on creation and painting, which becomes a celebration of the world and humanity.

# LIFE GOES ON



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After the explosion, feverish signs of hope emerged. Hope in life, for some, translates into the need to continue working the same way every day, despite successive shipwrecks. Both inside or outside the country, solidarity was born of chaos. Numerous initiatives emerged and, in the ambient darkness, life resumed thanks to the determination of the Lebanese affected by the situation, their relatives, local associations and many anonymous persons. Solidarity towards those close to them but also between artists has emerged, in particular to archive collective experiences and put dialogue back at the heart of practice. By continuing to represent the simple things of life, landscapes, children's games,... artists highlight the vital momentum that remains despite the disaster.

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## VARTAN AVAKIAN

(Byblos, 1977)

Vartan Avakian is an artist working with video, photography, installation, sculpture and other media. He studied Communication Arts at the Lebanese American University (LAU) and Architecture and Urban Culture at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya and the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona.

Avakian often uses organic materials in his work, which he modifies and alienates from their original context to fit his own artistic vision. He explores different forms of cultural production. In his *Composition(s) with a Recurring Sound*, the sound of a river flows through a sculptural piece of repeated forms. The sculptures capture the movement of materials in the river, which include water and biological life but also industrial waste and other pollutants. This discreet almost inaudible resonance can be tactually felt on the sculpture. Avakian lives and works in Beirut.

## RAED YASSIN

(Beirut, 1979)

Raed Yassin studied theatre in his home town, he created the independent music label Annihaya, as well as the experimental music festival Irtijal in Beirut.

Raed Yassin's visual work draws on pop culture and current events to create video works, performances and musical compositions. His reflections on popular culture and aspirations focus in particular on the specificities of the collective unconscious and consumerist behavior of contemporary Arab societies. *Untitled* (2011) is a photographic series that frames the city through its architectures of artifice. Coloured panels and construction site barriers become the windows to a fantastical landscape beyond, or even in spite of, a massive program of neoliberal urban gentrification. A view of the sea becomes imbued with a green tint and a scene of rubble is laid out in saturated colors, simultaneously radiant and melancholic. Yassin lives and works in Berlin.

## ZIAD ANTAR

(Saida, 1978)

Ziad Antar studied Agricultural Engineering at the American University of Beirut, before deciding to pursue a career in video and arts. He gained a postgraduate degree from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

Antar's artistic approach revolves around questions about the nature of photography, its constraints and limitations. His videos testify to a world in conflict, but in a rather light and playful tone. *Raouche* (2016) for example is extracted from the *After Images* series inspired by the work of Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi, which places the origins of the Bible in the Asir region. The series examines the nature of myth as possible historical narrative and the impossibility of documenting it. In the process Antar lost the lens of his camera, the result is a large series of blurred photographs in which indiscernible silhouettes fade into haloes of pale, luminous colours. Ziad Antar currently lives and works in Beirut.

## MIREILLE KASSAR

(Zahlé-Bequaa, 1963)

Mireille Kassar is a graduate of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and currently a member of the Sorbonne's Research Centre in Plastic Arts.

Her work includes film, sound, painting and drawing, as well as installation art. Themes such as distance, proximity, dispersion and time unfolding are major inspirations for her. Kassar treats her art as an expanded state of consciousness, operating beyond or beneath language. Her work can be seen as some sort of re-adjustment of the senses, shifting away from discursive thought towards our primal cognitive sensation. The video titled *Children of Uzai – Anti Narcissus* (2014) was shot on a public beach. It shows children running towards the sea, an unchanging activity that this country can still offer, presenting to the eyes an almost dreamlike space, far from any deadly narrative. Mireille Kassar lives and works in Paris and Beirut.

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Lebanon  
لبنان

HOW  
WILL  
IT  
END?

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# BOGHOSSIAN FOUNDATION – VILLA EMPAIN

Centre for art and dialogue between Eastern and Western cultures

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In collaboration with the Centre national  
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Alicia Knock

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### PRODUCTION

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Régis Decroos

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Clio Rosenoer

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### GRAPHIC DESIGN

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The Boghossian Foundation thanks her  
partners as well as all those who contributed  
to the organisation of this exhibition.

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