Walid Raad is one of the leading artists of his generation. His works explore historical, political, economic, and aesthetic facts and fictions related to the Lebanese wars and to "Arab" art. This book surveys almost three decades of Raad's practice in a variety of mediums—including photography, video, and performance—while focusing on his groundbreaking project The Atlas Group (1989–2004) and his ongoing work Scratching on things I could disavow (2007–).

Essays by Eva Respini and Finbarr Barry Flood place Raad's art in the international context of contemporary artmaking, and the book includes a special eighteen-page visual contribution by Raad himself. It is published to accompany the first comprehensive exhibition of his work in the United States.

192 pp.; 216 color and black and white images
I Thought I’d Escape My Fate, but Apparently Walid Raad

Slippery Delays and Optical Mysteries: The Work of Walid Raad

Eva Respini

Staging Traces of Histories Not Easily Disavowed

Finbarr Barry Flood

The Atlas Group

Scratching on Things I Could Disavow

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Foreword
Acknowledgments
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New York

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Key to Plates
Selected Exhibition History
Performance Chronology
Lenders to the Exhibition
Trustees of The Museum of Modern Art
Foreword

In an age of increasing Western engagement with art from across the globe, it is a pleasure to present the first American museum survey of one of contemporary art’s most critical figures, Walid Raad. Several years ago I had the opportunity of traveling with Raad in the United Arab Emirates, where we embarked upon an adventure, and for all of us it started with “Pro-write history.” This slogan precipitated a lengthy conversation about what history means in a region with various and often conflicting accounts of past, present, and future. No one has thought more about this problem than Raad; the construction of history—how it is made, received, visualized, and understood—was a central theme for him. A Lebanese national who fled his war-torn country in 1983, Raad emerged from this period with a deep understanding of lived experiences and a palpable sense of art as urgent.

The Museum of Modern Art committed to Raad early in his career, acquiring major works in 2003 and 2004 and including his art in group exhibitions such as Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking (2006). Color Chart: Reinventing Color 1910 to Today (2008), Greater New York 2005 (2008), and several collection installations throughout the last decade. This exhibition, which surveys his output in all media over the last twenty-five years, is the most comprehensive in any museum to date, introducing the full scope of his work to an American audience for the first time. Raad’s art touches on so many areas of curatorial expertise—photography, video, architecture, graphic design, and performance—that it epitomizes the mission of our museum as an institution of cross-disciplinary learning.

I am indebted to MoMA’s Board of Trustees for supporting this important work, acquiring major works in 2003 and 2004 and we owe them an enormous debt. Finally I salute Walid Raad for his extreme generosity and close collaboration in bringing this presentation to fruition. He has been moving, elegant, and provocative, leading us to reflect deeply on the issues of our time.

Glenn D. Lowry
Director, The Museum of Modern Art

Acknowledgments

A project of this scope would have been impossible without the assistance of many dedicated and talented people, both within and outside The Museum of Modern Art. My heartfelt appreciation goes to Glenn D. Lowery, Director, a champion of the show since its inception and a critical sounding board when I needed it; at The ICA/Boston, I am deeply grateful to Jill Medvedow, Ellen Matilda Poss Director, who warmly welcomed me and this project to Boston.

I am honored by the generous support provided for the exhibition by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; The Jill and Peter Kraus Endowed Fund for Contemporary Exhibitions; MoMA’s Wallis Annenberg Fund for Innovation in Contemporary Art through the Annenberg Foundation; The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art; Oya Eczacıbaşı; A. Huda and Samia Farouki; Elham and Tony Salamé, Aïshti Foundation Beirut; Basil and Raghida Rahim; Maya and Ramzy Rasamny; and Rana Sadik and Samer Younis. I am immensely grateful for the research assistance provided by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art. Walid Raad has depended on its success on its lenders, as listed on page 191. The Museum of Modern Art is grateful to these individuals and institutions for their willingness to make important works available to a larger viewing public.

I very much appreciate the collaboration of the exhibition’s four partners. At ICA/Boston: Jill Medvedow, Director, and Abigail Anne Newbold, Exhibitions Manager; and at the Museum of Modern Art: Mexico City: former Director Patrick Charpenel; Director Julieta González, Deputy Director Rosario Nadal, and Exhibition Coordinator Andrea de la Torre. I thank Finbarr Barry Flood, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of the Humanities, Institute of Fine Arts and Department of Art History, New York University, for his illuminating essay in this book. Special thanks are due to Kristin Poor, Museum Research Fellow, for her contributions. In MoMA’s Department of Publications, I am grateful to Christopher Hudson, Publisher; Chul R. Kim, Associate Publisher; David Frankel, Editorial Director; and Marc Sapir, Production Director. My praise and thanks go to Adam Michaels, Prem Krishnamurthy, and Grace Robinson-Leo at Project Projects for their design of the book. This project would certainly have been impossible without the support of the artist’s galleries: Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, and Sfera-Siemler Gallery, Berlin/Hamburg. I am especially grateful to Anthony Allen, Associate Director, Paula Cooper Gallery, and to Andros Styer.

The exhibition is an work of many people. I am thankful for the support of Quentin Bajiec, The Joel and Anne Ehrenkranz Chief Curator of Photography; Peter Reed, Senior Deputy Director; Sonya Shriver, Chief Development Officer; Margaret Doyle, Director of Communications; Todd Bishop, Senior Deputy Director for External Affairs; Lauren Stanis, Director of External and Institutional Affairs; and Richard Woon, Deputy Director for Education; Pablo Helguera, Director of Adult and Academic Education; Sarah Kennedy, Associate Curator, Education, Public and Studio Programs; and, in the Department of Graphic Design and Advertising, Claire Carey, Production Manager; Ingrid Chou, Associate Creative Director; and Vanessa Lam, Senior Designer.

Very warm and sincere thanks are due to Katerina Stathopoulou, Curatorial Assistant in the Museum’s Department of Photography, for her invaluable contributions to the exhibition and catalogue. She was truly my partner in this exhibition and I am deeply grateful to her.

My first and final thanks are reserved for Walid Raad. I am deeply honored to have worked closely with such a brilliant and thoughtful artist. I learned a great amount from Walid and his work, which has profoundly moved and inspired me.

This book is dedicated to my family.

Glenn D. Lowery
Director, The Museum of Modern Art

Eva Respini
Barbara Lee Chief Curator
Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston
I Thought
I’d Escape My Fate,
But Apparently

Walid Raad
"I thought I'd escape my fate, but apparently..."
“People die collectively but mourn alone.”

one life at home and one life in the hospital.

Through the cracks of this system of “not speaking so as not to die”,

Les morts ne meurent pas parce que les vivants ne sont pas encore prêts à supporter de vivre sans père, même si ce père est un cadavre.

Guerre civile, les morts sont ultras présents. Les morts ne meurent pas, ils ne sont pas enterrés. Ils sont dans les slogans, dans les discours, sur les affiches, tous ces posters de morts.

Thinking about it, I can't be secular when I die. If I'm a Christian they'll pray in church, if I'm a Muslim I can't be cremated... But here the dead man has escaped religious branding. Another way to express...

The idea is that to live is a place like Lebanon is to live in the presence of corpses that cannot be said to rest, that rest without proper burial, that prevent the work of mourning, the work of memory, perhaps most importantly, the work of living.
Moreover, portraiture was the first type of "modern" painting to inhabit Lebanon, instead of forming the notion of a nation called Lebanon made up of fully autonomous, rational individuals deserving of national status. Yet since the 1930s or three-quarters of a century ago, that form of figurative painting has fallen completely out of favor to be replaced first by landscapes and later by abstraction.

Concerning contemporary Arabic art, the contradictions were conspicuous. Lebanese art was marking the calendar of the international art circuit at a time when the socio-political situation in the country was worsening, aiming, among others, at nothing but nothingness.

But it was true. Nobody in the region is supposed to have wanted the empty seats of the Rijhs when they came out, but they did. The first post-independence film in Egypt? To recall. The first post-independence film in "Arabia"? To recall.

Another interview with an artist and art critic, who was a Lebanese nationalist, another art critic and writer who was an Arab nationalist, then became a progressive leftist, a collector who was part of elite raising Beirut family but was more interested in Islamic and Arab art, not Lebanese art, a collector whose experience is during the war, which ended outside our time bracket.

All signs suggest an imminent flourishing in the study of contemporary Arabic art.

"As an artist you do everything in English." From Greece

"Out of Breath"

Statements from a round-table discussion between four Lebanese artists and intellectuals.

Is a visual artist and filmmaker who lives
Is the Director of
Is the Editor-in-Chief of
Vice on the editorial board
Currently editing
Is a Consulting Editor
Is an Advisor to the

Where are the Palestinian potters of the Nakba and intifada, such as Suleiman Mansur and Teresa Shammour, or the Libyan artists of the 1970s in the 1980s, such as Salah Hassan Sharif, Ismail Al-Rihai, and saw Mousa? The polymaths, Hisham Matar, Jalal Sial, Abdel Rahman Manif, and Fatimah Matar? It is that they were asking

"In Lebanon, for instance," she says, "there’s an artist named..."
An encounter with Walid Raad’s work can be a profoundly moving experience, shaking the very foundations of what we believe to be true. For Raad, the opposition between fiction and nonfiction does not apply. Fact in his work incorporates fantasy and imagination while fiction is grounded in real events, dates, and statistics. Raad’s career thus far has had two main chapters, The Atlas Group (1989–2004) and Scratching on things I could disavow (2007–); both are large bodies of work that tell a complex composite truth stretching beyond historical fact, and both rely on storytelling and performance to activate imaginary narratives. In both cases, parsing fact from fiction is beside the point.

Raad was born in Lebanon, a republic whose history since its founding, in 1943, is not taught in its schools, and where, during its sixteen-year Civil War (1975–91), sectarian allegiances changed from one day to the next. Having fled the brutal violence of the war, Raad took to photography and theoretical art discourses as a means to reflect on the lived experience of conflict. Investigating how photographs, moving images, documents, and first-person narratives confer authenticity on official histories, be they histories of war or of art, Raad’s work weaves elements of the past, the present, and the future to build narratives that question how history, memory, and geopolitical relationships are constructed. A viewer need not know the history of Lebanon or the Middle East to engage with this art; at its heart is a coming-to-terms with the limits of directly capturing history through images or words.

Perhaps it is more productive to think of Raad’s work in terms of its imaginary dimensions rather than its fictive ones. For Raad, the relationship between image and text is key to unlocking how photographs, videos, and documents occupy the public sphere. He activates this relationship, this interdependence, through wall texts written in the first-person voice or in the guise of an imaginary character. His works are further illuminated by frequent lecture/performances wherein Raad adopts the persona of a scholar or artist. It is through these literary acts—the performance monologue or wall-text narrative—that the work truly comes into its own. In fact, its success hinges on our need to believe in official narratives.

To grasp the complexity of Raad’s work, it is worth revisiting his formative cultural and artistic influences. Born in 1967 to a Palestinian mother and a Lebanese father, Raad grew up in predominantly Christian East Beirut. As a teenager, he dreamed of being a photojournalist, and his father gave him his first camera and helped him to build a home darkroom. Raad subscribed to European photography magazines such as Photo, Zoom, and Photo Reporter, where he saw the work of Eugène Atget, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Man Ray, Diane Arbus, and Helmut Newton.\(^1\) The escalating violence of the Lebanese Civil War, especially with Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982, led to Raad’s emigration the following year to the United States, where he finished high school.

After a brief stint in Boston University’s premed program, Raad enrolled in photography courses at the Rochester Institute of Art. He was introduced to the work of Eugène Atget, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Man Ray, Diane Arbus, and Helmut Newton. He began to think about the role of photography in narrating history and memory, and how photographs could be used to challenge official narratives.

Raad’s work is characterized by its use of photography, film, and text to create narratives that blur the lines between fiction and nonfiction. He often creates complex, multi-layered works that challenge the viewer to question their assumptions about history and memory.

Technology (RIT). He was already deeply aware of photography’s tenuous claim to veracity and its power as informational currency:

You don’t do street photography in a city at war. . . . [Doing street photography] assumes that you can stay in one place for 20 minutes, adjust your tripod and ensure that there’s no sniper or bomb about to go off nearby. It also assumes that the photograph is neutral, the product of a predominantly aesthetic activity. But in a divided city, it’s an intelligence document. Especially when people want information about the other side, taking photographs of buildings, streets or residents is very contentious.6

In addition to his photography courses at RIT, and perhaps just as important, Raad took classes in Middle Eastern studies and, in exile, began to gain perspective on the Arab world. Of his earlier education in Beirut, he has said, “I never got to learn anything about the history of the Arab world or the history of Lebanon in a serious way. That training was in the United States.”7

On leaving RIT, Raad enrolled as a doctoral candidate in the nascent postwar Lebanese art scene during this year, Raad met the artist Akram Zaatari (fig. 2) and the writer Jalal Toufiq, among them Toufic, Zaatari, Tony Chakar, Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige, Lama Joreige, Bernard Khoury, Mohamed Soueid, and Lina Saneh, who collectively established a group presented itself as an organization founded to research and document the contemporary history of Lebanon, specifically the Lebanese Civil War, and as such as maintaining an archive of documents, films, notebooks, photographs, and objects. (Raad himself refers not to the Lebanese Civil War but to the Lebanese civil wars, underscoring the pluralistic nature of the shifting and sometimes conflicting agendas at stake.)

Raad acknowledged the fictive quality of The Atlas Group from the beginning, in a wall text or performance, for example, he might announce, “We produced and found several documents.” (He often uses the plural “we” in discussing The Atlas Group, although he was in fact its sole member.) Yet many failed to perceive or fully grasp the group’s imaginary dimension, so

Beirut as a fertile cultural center in the 1990s.6 They responded to the aftermath of the war with wide-ranging works probing shared questions about memories, traces, and images of conflict. Khalil Joreige has speculated on these Lebanese artists’ fascination with the status of the image: “During the war, every militia had its own media station, television, newspaper or radio. There was a real war of images. Audiences or publics had to learn to deal with these images. We as artists became critical about the use of images. Perhaps interest in art coming from Beirut was due to this sophisticated relationship to images.”8

The work of many of these Lebanese artists, including Raad, points back to the rich legacy of the twentieth-century artists who explored trauma and memory, from Hannah Höch to Gerhard Richter. Raad’s methods are also indebted to Conceptual artists such as Hans Haacke and Michael Asher, to the postmodern appropriations of Sherrie Levine (fig. 3) and Louise Lawler, and to the performative strategies of Joseph Beuys, Sophie Calle, and others. Raad’s formative training in photography, however, is the driving force of his work. He is well versed in the conventions of photographic image-making, and in how those conventions may change or be changed in the aftermath of crisis. His projects continually call into question the still-dominant fiction of photography’s objectivity, and insinuate the suspicion that material evidence is insufficient to capture a full understanding of historical events. They extend the same suspicion to other archival materials besides photographs, to the point of generating alternate documents. Beginning in the late 1990s, these strategies, along with a close reading of theory and a quasi-outsider’s perspective on the war in Lebanon, coalesced into the fragmentary narratives, documents, and images of the groundbreaking work Raad made under the aegis of The Atlas Group.


It was with The Atlas Group that Raad established the brilliantly daring artistic methodology that he employs to this day. The group presented itself as an organization founded to research and document the contemporary history of Lebanon, specifically the Lebanese Civil War, and as such as maintaining an archive of documents, films, notebooks, photographs, and objects. (Raad himself refers not to the Lebanese Civil War but to the Lebanese civil wars, underscoring the pluralistic nature of the shifting and sometimes conflicting agendas at stake.)

Raad, supposedly, was the group’s architect. Each Atlas Group document was attributed to a source, including the colorful historian Dr. Fadi Fakhouri—who, however, was fictional, as was the organization itself.

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strong is our belief in the authority of archives as the repositories of documents that enable and authorize our understanding of history. Raad acknowledges the power of photography’s claim to veracity within his own formative training, even while he debunk[s] the fiction of photography’s impartiality. Although his intention is not to mislead, the imaginary dimension of his project can be destabilizing. In 2002, at a lecture he gave for the Middle Eastern Studies Association at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York, Raad faced heated questioning from students, and replied, “The Atlas Group proceeds with the consideration that the Lebanese wars are an abstraction. One troubling question is: under what notion of facts can we operate in our construction of ‘the history’ of the history of Lebanon? How do we approach the facts of the war?” The Atlas Group is less about the Lebanese Civil War than about the limits and possibilities of writing, documenting, and remembering history. Raad’s personal experience of the last decade of the war was as an émigré, dealing in partial documentation, information, rumor, mediated news reports, and conversations with family members over crackling phone lines. His work is predicated on a reality in which recent events are accessed not only through statistics and facts but equally through experiences, memory, and feelings.

None of the “documents” produced by The Atlas Group is truthfully faked: these photographs, texts, and videos are not based on any one person’s actual memories but on ‘fantasies erected from the material of collective memories.’ They also look less like documents than like art: featuring formally considered compositions and carefully calibrated colors and marks, each series falls squarely within the legacy of the politically contentious collage and montage aesthetics of Höch and John Heartfield.

Violence is rarely pictured in The Atlas Group archive, which focuses instead on peripheral details such as the gambling habits of soldiers, the pernicious spread of rumor, and the mechanisms of objectification (if often dubious or unreliable information), the ubiquity of photographic images, the blurring of the distinction between amateur and professional image-makers, and the widespread understanding that any image can be manipulated to support any narrative. Raad has supplied conflicting narratives about the origins of The Atlas Group, variously describing it as founded by himself or by the Lebanese artist Maha Traboulssi, and in 1987 (Raad’s birth year), 1976 (the year after the start of the Civil War), or various years in the 1990s and early 2000s. In fact the group’s first incarnations were in “lecture/performances” in Beirut in the late 1990s. Raad was the first artist in Beirut to engage in the format of lecture/performances, which soon became a fertile format for experimentation for a number of artists. Later, Rabih Mroué, who had a background in theater, created lecture/performances that toed the line between fact and fiction, between theater and visual art, bringing this discourse into the realm of theater (fig. 5). At its inception, The Atlas Group archive was virtual, comprising a set of on-screen images that were activated through the performative act of storytelling. The performative element is inscribed in the group’s very fabric, from the narratives of the wall texts to the accompanying lecture/performances, which simultaneously illuminate the “documents” and unravel the imaginary dimensions of The Atlas Group.

Raad’s performances occur in lecture halls and have been presented in a wide range of contexts, including high-profile art exhibitions such as the Whitney Biennial in New York and documenta 11 and 13 in Kassel, as well as many universities and...
museums (fig. 6). Presenting himself as an archivist and representative of The Atlas Group, Raad sits at a table furnished with a small lamp, a glass of water, and a laptop computer that he uses to project PowerPoint images onto a screen. The images include handsome diagrams of The Atlas Group’s document categorization system as well as the documents themselves. The presentation format and staging are upended by Raad’s admission at the beginning of the lecture that The Atlas Group is an imaginary organization. While he clearly distinguishes between documents that he has produced and those attributed to him, his scholarly authority is such, and the stories of his characters and documents are so compelling, that audiences often fail to hear, or grasp, the imaginary dimensions of the project.

A number of Atlas Group works are attributed to a Dr. Fadl Fakhouri, including Notebook volume 72: Missing Lebanese wars. Notebook volume 38: Already in a lake of fire (1991/2003; pp. 84–89), and Miraculous beginnings/No, illness is neither here nor there (1993/2003; pp. 68–69). Dr. Fakhouri, an esteemed, recently deceased, fictional historian of the Lebanese Civil War whose papers were donated to The Atlas Group, lends the project an authenticity not typically afforded an imaginary organization. But while he clearly distinguishes between the construction of history is unstable, being open to interpretive invention. These lectures can be understood as a performance of memory on levels personal, national, and historiographic. The slippage between authenticity and imagination, the academic decoding of stories and archival documents, is at turns mendacious in “vintage” headshots and stills. Conceived as a way to project an authenticity not typically afforded to artists—yet despite the meticulousness of his documents, an arbitrariness is inscribed within the structure of his authority. Dr. Fakhouri was an avid gambler who filled notebooks with such banal details as the particulars of the bets he placed with fellow historians who gathered on Sundays at the track. They wagered not on which horse would win, but on a particular margin of error—that is, by how many fractions of a second the track’s photographer would miss the exact moment when the animal crossed the finish line. Dr. Fakhouri’s lined notepads feature a neatly pasted photograph of one race’s winning horse, clipped from the daily newspaper An-Nahar; details of the race’s distance and duration; and anecdotal descriptions of the historian who won the bet that day (“He was the thief who at night hugs the walls as he walks home. He was the one who said he will not die with his throat cut”). An-Nahar, a source that Raad continues to use often (in My neck is thinner than a hair: Engines, for example), is itself a site for suspension, since during the Civil War, Lebanon’s various militias often used the country’s newspapers for propaganda purposes. The photographs in Notebook volume 72 were indeed clipped from the paper, but years after the war (fig. 7). Raad’s project questions the authority ascribed to legitimate sources of information (the newspaper), the arbiters of history (the historian), and the tool that often bears witness (the camera).

Notebook volume 72 details an avoidance of the facts of a singular moment. Rather than bet on the win, the historians bet on the inaccuracy of representation and photography’s failure to make crucial events visible. Eadweard Muybridge’s famous photographic sequence of a galloping horse (fig. 8), also the result of a wager, was an exercise in proof: his photographs confirmed what the naked eye could not see—that all four of the horse’s hooves left the ground at full gallop. Muybridge’s photographs showed what happened. The photographs in Dr. Fakhouri’s notebooks, however, don’t show that at all. The images are delayed, and the crucial moment of winning remains unrecorded, unseen, missing. Fakhouri’s notebooks are incapable of describing the “decisive moment,” the phrase made famous by the celebrated photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson. For Raad, this inability is analogous to the limitations of accurately documenting histories of conflict. The viewer’s attention is shifted from the center of events (that is, the photo finish) to the margins, underscored by the copious notes in the work’s margins. By highlighting what was not there, Raad exposes the gap between an event and the report of it, between an incident and the history written about it.

Another work attributed to Dr. Fakhouri is Civilizationally, we do not dig holes to bury ourselves (1958–59/2003; pp. 52–55), a series of small black and white photographs purportedly made famous by the celebrated photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson. For Raad, this inability is analogous to the limitations of accurately documenting histories of conflict. The viewer’s attention is shifted from the center of events (that is, the photo finish) to the margins, underscored by the copious notes in the work’s margins. By highlighting what was not there, Raad exposes the gap between an event and the report of it, between an incident and the history written about it.
to write an unwritten history, the project was created for The Watermelon Woman (1996), by filmmaker Cheryl Dunye, who has said that it “came from the real lack of any information about the lesbian and film history of African-American women. Since it wasn’t happening, I invented it.” Raad similarly uses the conventions of the photographic archive and the family album to create a plausible narrative for Dr. Fakhouri, a historian of the Lebanese Civil War active at a time when such figures were rare or nonexistent.

Not all of The Atlas Group’s documents are attributed to invented characters. Let’s be honest, the weather helped (1986/2006; pp. 78–83) comprises images of notebook pages featuring black-and-white photographs that Raad himself took in Beirut during the Civil War. These images of pockmarked buildings and bombed-out neighborhoods are overlaid with different-sized colored disks that map bullets and shrapnel left after bombings and battles, again collected by Raad himself as a child in Beirut. The colors are linked to the national origins of the ammunitions: in the accompanying text, Raad explains, “It took me ten years to realize that ammunition manufacturers offered for sale to artists, artisans, and architects), these photographs fascinated the Surrealists and are precursors to photo graphs bearing witness to the streets and locales that were disappearing under Baron Haussmann’s modernization of Paris. Although made for commercial purposes (the pictures were offered for sale to artists, artisans, and architects), these photographs fascinated the Surrealists and are precursors to the documentary mode, one that is more expressive, poetic, even illogical. The seemingly arbitrary title Let’s be honest, the weather helped also undermines the claim to veracity inscribed in the work. The weather is a recurring motif for The Atlas Group; the banal staple of small talk, it is neutral and acts as an equalizer, circumscribing the direct address of violence. During Israel’s attack on Lebanon in 2006, when Raad and his family ensconced themselves in their home in the Lebanese mountains, he wrote to a friend, “I just woke up and the weather in the mountains is beautiful. Eastern winds have cleared the air all around. It is just beautiful here. The weather again: the best way to naturalize a disaster, to think of something else to write, to think, and to feel.20"

The weather also plays a role in Hostage: The Bachar tapes (English version). This Atlas Group video focuses on Souheil Bachar, a fictional Lebanese national who, we learn from his testimony, was held hostage in Lebanon in the 1980s and early ’90s alongside five Americans—Terrance Anderson, Thomas Sutherland, Benjamin Weir, Lawrence Martin Jenco, and David Jacobsen, all actual abductees in Lebanon during that period, kidnapped by the Islamic Jihad group. At least one early U.S. reviewer of Hostage . . . speculated about whether Bachar was a real person, but this would not have happened in Lebanon, for he was played by a Lebanese actor well-known and recognized there.21 In the video, Bachar notes that all five Americans wrote memoirs of their time in captivity and each began by mentioning the weather. The sea too plays a role: Bachar asks that the subtitles translating his Arabic be shown against a background blue like the Mediterranean (fig. 13), and the video ends with a montage of the sea’s crashing waves, with Bachar gazing out at them. The legendary beauty of Lebanon’s Mediterranean coast must have made the violence of the Civil War even more incomprehensible as it played out against that backdrop.22

Beginning as research for Raad’s doctoral dissertation, Hostage . . . evolved into an artwork setting imaginary narra tives against real historical events. Bachar’s testimony, which takes place in a nondescript room with a pinned-up sheet of paper as a backdrop, and with a camera that seems to have been set up on a tripod by either Bachar or his captors, is intermixed with footage of U.S. President Ronald Reagan speaking from the Oval Office and of Oliver North at the Iran-Contra trial. To accomplish this found footage an offscreen narrator describes
the kidnappings and their relation to Iran-Contra. Meanwhile there are many ways in which Bachar’s story breaks from the published accounts: he describes homoerotic activities on the part of the captives, for instance, that are not known to have taken place. If the hostages’ own published accounts constitute the part of the captives, for instance, that are not known to have taken place. If the hostages’ own published accounts constitute the “official” narratives of their captivity, Bachar offers an alternative point of view, challenging their authority and the subjective point of view embedded in such documents.

While researching Up to the South, Raad viewed videotapes made by resistance fighters preparing to die—tapes, the artist notes, that often include multiple takes of the same scripted speech. The Hostage, . . . video evokes these tapes in being frequently interrupted by video noise, bands of color, and other technical disruptions that lend authenticity to its DIY quality. At the same time, though, this noise has its own formal beauty, and further destabilizes the narrative by offering visual breaks in an apparently plausible story. The claim to authority is key to Raad’s imaginary documents and characters: just as Dr. Fakhouri lent authority to the archival works of The Atlas Group, Bachar’s firsthand experience as a hostage is necessary to make his account of it convincing.

Secrets in the open sea (1994/2004; pp. 70–73) addresses loss and disappearance through the brilliant blue of the Mediterranean. This is a group of large photographs, supposedly found in a pile of rubble in Beirut in 1993, that appear at first to be monochromes—variations of the color blue—but on close inspection reveal their margins small black-and-white portraits of individuals who, an accompanying text notes, had drowned, died, or been found dead in the Mediterranean between 1975 and 1991. In fact these group portraits come from newspapers that had originally identified their subjects as attendees at innocuous gatherings such as corporate board meetings. The presence of hidden data beneath the surface of a monochrome recalls On Kawara’s monochromatic date paintings, which are linked to world events that are typically invisible to viewers, as the box that houses each painting is lined with the local newspaper for the day the work was made (fig. 14). Similarly, the hidden narratives in Raad’s art destabilize our certainty about what we understand to be facts, and ultimately about what we are seeing.

Secrets in the open sea plays deftly on the associations of the color blue, including, as curator Achim Borchardt-Hume writes, “its symbolism of promise (a bright blue sky on a sunny day), neutrality (the helmets of the xeno peace-keeping forces in the Middle East), and Romantic longing (Novallis’s blue flower).” Blue is also the hue of a lost or dead video signal. Raad has long been fascinated with color; as a student in Rochester, he was the chemical technician in the school’s darkroom and made monochromatic prints there as a personal project, experimenting with the variables affecting the reproduction of colors on photographic papers. At the time, he was also viewing iconic works in the photographic collection of George Eastman House and modernist paintings in Buffalo’s Albright-Knox Art Gallery, encounters, he remembers, that along with the daily phone calls to Beirut must have combined into a potent cocktail that, at the time, failed to blend smoothly with the chemical and optical experiments unfolding in my dark-room. For some time, the experiences sat on top of the other, like oil on water. It took another fifteen years for the blend to mix in such works as Secrets in the open sea. We decided to let them say “we are convinced” twice . . . , and Let’s be honest, the weather helped.”

For Raad, color—and specifically the monochrome—is a way to experience war from a distance. The Atlas Group gives rise to many shifting chronologies, from the various accounts of its founding to its official conclusion, in 2004. Although Raad has begun to exhibit this body of work as if it were completed, he has revisited the project in recent years, producing new works attributed to the organization, in 2004, and several series within this various and all-encompassing body of work stands individually, taken together they constitute an examination of how art history is being forged within the new infrastructures for art in the Arab world—Abu Dhabi’s Saadiyat Island, for example, which will soon house several world-class museums, including branches of the Louvre and Guggenheim, designed by international architects Frank Gehry, Jean Nouvel, Zaha Hadid, and Tadao Ando. New museums, biennials, and galleries are also proliferating in Beirut, Doha, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, and Sharjah. While Scratching . . . may seem a departure from the Atlas Group project, in both Raad uses literary and imaginative means to reimagine a history.
set against the background of the geopolitical, economic, and military conflicts that have shaped the Middle East.

Where The Atlas Group appropriated the logic and look of the archive, Scratching... takes a more digressive and poetic approach. The methodologies of The Atlas Group, systematic, serial, and repetitive, are supplanted by more subjective relationships. None of the works are presented in grids, as they are in The Atlas Group; the works are all different sizes and no two structures are the same. If in The Atlas Group Raad appropriated the authority of the archive to probe how history is written, read, and remembered, his new line of inquiry uses the conventions of the museum display and the authority of the curatorial voice to introduce a performative space for art.

Performance is the central axis around which the art is just one part of a larger performative project; and the stages are installed in MoMA’s Marron Atrium, where they can be viewed from above by visitors to that space’s various catwalks, which come to resemble balconies at a theater (fig. 15). Raad’s careful delivery, dramatic staging, and the performance’s narrative arc are intensely theatrical. He forbids the recording of his performances, for their success, as in theater, relies on the performer’s live presence.

The performance begins in front of Raad’s video installation Translator’s introduction: Pension arts in Dubai (2012; pp. 114–21), where the artist launches into an overview of the complex structure of the Artist Pension Trust (APT), a real organization that signals a significant shift in the collection of art and in the speculative practices of the art market. The installation includes a digitally animated chart recalling the famous chart of the development of modern art that Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the founding director of MoMA, published in 1936, as well as later precedents such as Hans Haacke’s Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971 (1971; fig. 16). Like Haacke’s work, Raad’s APT chart attempts to track and expose the control of assets, but his diagram is slightly more simplified. The idea of withdrawal is inspired by Tóffle’s concept of “the withdrawing of tradition past a surpassing disaster,” as elaborated in his book of the same title.

Scratching... is marked by narratives of absence and withdrawal—the shrinking of works of art (Section 139: The Atlas Group (1989–2004); 2008 pp. 128–31), for instance, or their changing over time (Preface to the third edition, 2013; pp. 150–51), or empty museum spaces with unenterable doorways (Section 88: Views from outer to inner compartments, 2010; pp. 126–27). Raad’s is one part of a complex network of elements (wall color, wall texts, lights, floors). Like his Atlas Group lectures, the Scratching... performance unlocks the meaning of all of the works that constitute the series.

Raad, who in Scratching... seems more like a spiritual medium, or the narrator of a play, than like the scholarly historian of The Atlas Group, for his part creates scenarios wherein works of art are no longer fully available to be seen, read, or experienced. The recent history of the Middle East has marked the cultural realm with startling violence. In Baghdad in 2003, the National Museum was ransacked and priceless cultural artifacts were lost after the collapse of the regime of Saddam Hussein. In Cairo in 2011, the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Tahrir Square was looted during the Arab Spring. In 2013, the minaret of the Great Mosque at Aleppo was destroyed during the Syrian Civil War, and more recently, US forces in northern Iraq have destroyed Shia shrines, Sufi sites, and Mesopotamian relics. This kind of violence affects not only historical sites and institutions but the study of recent art history, particularly of Arab modernism, which flourished in centers like Damascus and Baghdad, where the first Arab biennial was presented in 1974. In the current environment, art historians must struggle to gain access to artworks, documents, and archival materials essential to write the history of the Arab art of the twentieth century.

Recognizing that these realities demand new modes of display and content formation, Raad proposes scenarios that make even extant artworks appear in some ways unavailable to those standing in front of them. Section 139: The Atlas Group (1989–2004), for example, is a retrospective of the works of The Atlas Group, but they are scaled down and installed in a gallery.
model small enough to be unenterable. The accompanying text explains that in 2008, after agreeing to exhibit in a chic new white-cube gallery in Beirut (in the neighborhood of Karantina), Raad found that his works had shrunk to 1/100th of their original size. He insists, though, that the works on view are not miniatures:

“These artworks shrunk once they entered the space. Why, I don’t know. Sometimes artists encounter their own works, concepts or forms, and they’re no longer available to them. They appear distorted. Something about Beirut’s time and space makes an artwork shrink and inaccessible to the artist. This is not a psychological encounter, nor is it a meta-space makes an artwork shrink and inaccessible to the museum. Raad's system for displaying art is grounded in the present conditions of the Middle East, its roots lie in the Conceptual and post-Conceptual art that investigated the legitimacy and relevance of the art museum by appropriating and altering conventional museum practices and modes of display. Perhaps the most famous example is Marcel Broodthaers’s Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures (1966–72; fig. 19), an art museum with neither a collection nor a permanent site that appeared in pop-up locations between 1968 and 1971, when it was offered for sale (no buyers were found). Like Broodthaers, Raad adapts the apparatus of the museum display—silkscreen wall texts, the white-cube gallery space, the gallery talk, carefully considered frames and lighting—in order to lean on and play with the authority of the museum.

Scratching . . . should also be considered alongside architects’ imaginings of what civic institutions might look like in the future—visionary projects such as the Japanese Metabolism movement’s models for living after the devastation of World War II, and Lina Bo Bardi’s projects during the period of the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985. For the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (1957–68), Bo Bardi designed not only the building but the display scheme: the museum’s paintings were mounted within glass panes (making them viewable from both front and back) that in turn were set on concrete blocks distributed throughout an enormous open gallery without walls (fig. 20). Not only could these individual pods be moved around, but visitors had to create their own paths through them—their own paths through history. By stripping away the institutional apparatus of sequential rooms of works that the visitor came to in a certain order, Bo Bardi undercut the typical Western form of art history as a chronological series of movements and developments. Working during the turbulent sociopolitical events of mid-century Brazil, she was interested in a populist “pedagogy of the oppressed,” a democratization of knowledge.

The political gesture inscribed in her system resonates with the multifarious network that is Scratching . . . , which suggests, as Bo Bardi’s does, that in certain political and social climates the undoing of museums as we know them is a reality. Raad speculates on new, subjective relationships among works of art, systems of display, and cultural entities reflecting the sociopolitical contexts that they occupy.

Scratching . . . encompasses an entire constellation of the ephemera that accompany the production and display of art in today’s accelerated art economy. Appendix XVIII: Plates 22–257 (2008–10) is a series of photographs drawn from documents of real exhibitions and art activities in the Arab world: books, catalogues, posters, invasions, invitations. After scanning these documents, though, Raad erased or rearranged their graphic elements, signs, and letters, producing works that although colorful are largely monochromatic. According to his text (pp. 140–41), this realignment is a direct effect of the Lebanese Civil War: “It is clear to me today that these wars also affected colors, lines, shapes, and forms. Some of these were affected in a material way, and, like burned books or razed monuments, were physically destroyed and lost forever; others, like looted treasure or politically compromised artworks, remain physically intact but are removed from view, possibly never to be seen again.”

The titles of bodies of work such as Appendix XVIII, of course, are appropriated from the language of academic books, which may contain an appendix at the end to supplement or explicate the information that has preceded it. Appendix XVIII: Plates, however, is an appendix without an antecedent. Scratching . . . also includes several prefaces, an index (Index XXXV: Red, blue, black, orange, yellow), and a prologue (Prologue, Plates I, II, III (2015; pp. 150–51, 158–59), but the manuscript to which these addenda refer is absent. In breaking the linear sequences of written art history, Raad speculates on a new reality for art that is subject to delays and absences and presented as a decentralized combination of subjective images.

Like much of Raad’s work, Appendix XVIII: Plates is grounded in traditional photographic practices, and he likens his method to that of a documentary photographer: “I produce an image by ‘borrowing’ historical facts.” The photographs in Appendix XVIII constitute a kind of map or catalogue for the new infrastructures of Arab art. Plates 22–24: A History of Venice I–III,
for example, is drawn from promotional materials for the Lebanese Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of 2007, the first time Lebanon was represented with its own national pavilion there. Beyond the title, however, this reference is unclear, since it text and graphics have been removed or rearranged, leaving a predominant field of red. Like Secrets in the open sea, the monochromes in Appendix XVIII: Plates are a site for hidden or encrypted information. As such, they are highly politicized documents.

Where Appendix XVIII: Plates appropriates documents from the contemporary-art infrastructures of the Arab world, the several bodies of work in Scratching . . . that bear the title Preface (there are currently seven of these, numbered from one to seven) largely focus on Islamic art. Raad acknowledges his novice status as a student of Islamic objects: “I don’t know that much about Islamic art. All this is very new to me, but some of these objects I see in the display at the Louvre and at the Met—they’re lines, their forms, and their colors—have been very productive for me.” Raad’s treatment of these artworks in Scratching . . . addresses the slippery nature of their forms and the inability to “see” them within their new contexts. Preface to the third edition and Preface to the fifth edition (2012–15; pp. 150–51, 154) focus on the Louvre’s collection of Islamic art, one of the premier holdings in the West, eventually to be displayed in the new Abu Dhabi museum designed by Nouvel. In 2012, at the invitation of the Louvre, Raad accessed the Paris museum’s archives, including pictures from its conservation and curatorial files and object photographs made by in-house photographers. He also photographed the highly publicized new Islamic-art wing, which opened in the fall of 2012. This research produced an exhibition of a video and sculptural installation at the Louvre in 2013 (fig. 21), followed by an ongoing series of interwoven multimedia installations built around imaginary narratives of the Louvre’s collection. These works, which continue to be rearranged in various configurations, include Footnote II (2015; pp. 150–51), a sculptural installation conceived for the MoMA exhibition.

In Preface to the third edition Raad tells the story of the inextricable transformation of 294 objects from the Louvre during their journey to Abu Dhabi, to take place in the future, sometime between 2016 and 2046. While no one will doubt the subsequent changes, the nature and reason of their onset will be contested. Many will attribute them to the weather, asserting that the “corrosion” began soon after the exquisitely crafted, climate-controlled crates were opened in the Arabian Desert. Others will insist they are immaterial and psychological, expressed only in the dreams and psychological disorders of noncitizens working in the Emirate. And a few, the rare few, will speculate that they are aesthetic and came into view only once, in the photographs produced by an artist during her Emirati-sponsored visit to the museum in 2026.

The photographs picture this transformation: a fifteenth-century jade wine cup from Iran inscribed with a poem and a design of carved flowers (fig. 22), for example, combines with a late-twelth- to early-thirteenth-century sculpture from Iran (fig. 23) to produce a new hybrid (p. 154). The objects seem to have changed skins, as if one object’s form had been superimposed on another.

The photographs in Preface to the third edition are just one part of an iterative process that is growing increasingly layered as Raad’s work develops. In Preface to the third edition, Acknowledgement (2014–15; p. 150), for example, Raad’s photographs become sculptural objects, their forms being printed with a 3-D printer and recast in plaster, resin, and other materials. The most complex iteration in Scratching . . . is surely Footnote II, a section of wall wall papered with a digital collage of archival photographs of the vitrines that the Louvre used to display Islamic art in the 1920s—vitrines, though, that these particular photographs show empty. On the surface of the wallpaper, meanwhile, hang both the photographs from Preface to the third edition and the three-dimensional objects derived from them. The wall, then, contains not only all the elements of the objects’ transformation but clues to their past histories. Having disappeared from the archival photographs, appeared transformed in Raad’s new images, and been remade in other materials in the sculptures, these objects are evidently not fixed; they are elusive, in flux. Their support is also elusive: wallpaper, photographs, and objects are all affixed to a separate wall segment that hangs off the museum wall structure, as if ready to be transported in its entirety to Abu Dhabi.

For Raad, a key idea about these intangible Louvre artworks is that they are “extant but not available. I’ve always liked the sentence. Toufic has written it. It resonates with me. It’s like something is there but not, present but not available.” In this context consider the 1990 art theft at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (Raad’s first American landing point). Gardner, the museum’s founder, stipulated in her will that the works in the collection had to stay where she had put them; her installation cannot be changed. Today, then, empty frames hang in place of the stolen treasures (fig. 24). These frames signal a hope for the art’s eventual retrieval, but also in a way make the stolen works visible to visitors through memory, like sites for their afterimage. Raad’s Preface to the third edition draws on the idea of placeholders for artworks that are never fully available.

Many of the works in Scratching . . . picture not art objects but their effects, such as reflections (Preface to the second edition, 2012; pp. 144–47) and shadows (Preface to the seventh edition, 2012). Blank walls, polished floors, and empty doorways become active players in works such as Section 8II: Views from outer to inner compartments, the title of both a video and a sculptural installation. The sculptural work was made for the opening of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, in Doha, for which Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali Thani of Qatar invited a group of internationally recognized artists affiliated with the museum.
with the Middle East to conceive artworks. Walid Raad devised a set of doorways that mimics the architectural style of Western museums of the nineteenth century. Photography remains the artist’s primary language even in this sculptural work, for the proportions of the doors are derived from photographs. The doorways, which are fashioned from wood, are like stage sets in that they are only convincing from a frontal vantage point. This slyly subjective quality is enhanced in the MoMA display with theatrical lighting that casts strong shadows, integral parts of the work that function to activate the sculpture as an agent in a story. A related work, Letters to the Reader (1864, 1877, 1916, 1923) (fig. 25), Raad’s installation at the 2014 São Paulo Bienale, pictures shadows of empty frames on free-standing walls. In both of these projects, familiar elements of museum display—doors, walls, frames (everything but art-works themselves)—play a role in the new spaces of an imaginary museum.

The video titled Section 88: Views from outer to inner compartments features museum doorways that slowly fade into each other in silent animation. Created from digitally manipulated photographs of actual museum doorways, including some at both MoMA and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the video is a virtual hall of mirrors, the rooms and hallways endlessly looping and superimposing. The galleries are empty of both visitors and art. Their walls refer to the preferred display modes of standing walls. In both of these projects, familiar elements of museum display—doors, walls, frames (everything but art-works themselves)—play a role in the new spaces of an imaginary museum.

Letters to the Reader (1864, 1877, 1916, 1923) was written in multiple languages, including Arabic. In the essay, the artist discusses the concept of the letter as a means of communication and the role of the artist as a mediator in the context of the Middle Eastern art scene. The letter serves as a starting point for Raad’s exploration of institutional critique, his term was ideology and hegemony,” and he extends this notion to a parafictional mode of art-making.

In the essay, Raad explains, “Ideology in the sense of, How do ideas become ruling ideas? What is the relationship between ideas, the economy—the superstructure/infrastructure debate—but also ideas, economy, discourse, and the psyche?” Perhaps fantasy and literary digression are the only way to grapple with those complex superstructures. The term proposed by art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty is parafictional, which she uses in relation to recent projects such as Khalil Rabah’s natural-history-museum-style display Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind (2003–) and Raad’s Atlas Group. Lambert-Beatty writes, “Fiction or fictiveness has emerged as an important category in recent art. But, like a paramedic as opposed to a medical doctor, a parafiction is related to but not quite a member of the category of fiction as established in literary and dramatic art. It remains a bit outside.” The notion of the parafictional could be extended to precedents such as Ilya Kabakov’s seminal series 10 Characters (1972–75) and The Man Who Flew into His Picture (1981–88; fig. 26), which uses fictional characters to explore the ubiquitous language of bureaucracy and the absurdity of daily experience within the old Soviet Union. Raad’s imaginary narratives too must be understood within and as a response to the economic, political, and military structures of the contemporary Middle East. Just as the Lebanese Civil War functioned as an ever present abstraction that impacted the reading and understanding of the documents of The Atlas Group, the geopolitical realities, both historical and new, within which Arab art is constructed and read provide the lens through which to view the Scratchings... works.

Raad’s art, though, is liberated from fixed historical chronologies, whether the telling of war or the chronology of art. Not just an escape, this disruption offers an alternate vision of how we might understand and remember history. For Raad, the relationship between past and present, personal and public, truth and fiction, are blurred: “The story one tells oneself and that captures one’s attention and belief may have nothing to do with what happened in the past, but that’s the story that seems to matter in the present and for the future.” The optical mysteries, literary digressions, and imaginary dimensions of Raad’s art resound well after we encounter them. Through his photographs, videos, and sculptures, he creates compelling scenarios in which we are invited to inhabit the universe that they occupy.
was in Beirut in 1989. See ibid., p. 45.

The artist has said that the first performance. The artist has said that the first


The Atlas Group was a project undertaken by Wald I Raad between 1989 and 2004 to research and document the contemporary history of Lebanon, with particular emphasis on the Lebanese wars of 1975 to 1990. Raad found and produced audio, visual, and literary documents that shed light on this history. The documents were preserved in The Atlas Group Archive, which is located in Beirut and New York and is organized in three types of categories: [cat. A] refers to documents attributed to individuals; [cat. F] stands for documents attributed to anonymous individuals or institutions; [cat. AGP] is the abbreviation for documents attributed to The Atlas Group itself. The schema reproduced in this book offers a snapshot of the archive and its contents.
he las oup
Until his death, in 1993, Dr. Fadl Fakhouri was the most renowned historian of Lebanon. The only available photographs of Dr. Fakhouri consist of twenty-four black-and-white self-portraits that were found in a small brown envelope titled *Civilizationally, we do not dig holes to bury ourselves*. The historian produced the photographs in 1958 and 1959 during his one and only trip outside of Lebanon, to Paris and Rome.
In 2007 I initiated a project, *Scratching on things I could disavow*, on the history of art in the "Arab world." I began the project at the same time that the establishment of new cultural foundations, art galleries, art schools, art magazines, art prizes, art fairs, and large Western-brand museums was accelerating in cities such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Beirut, Cairo, Doha, Manama, Ramallah, and others. These material developments were matched by equally fraught efforts to define, sort, and stitch "Arab art" along three loosely silhouetted nodes: "Islamic," "modern," and "contemporary." When viewed alongside the political, economic, social, and military conflicts that have consumed the "Arab world" in the past few decades, such developments shape a rich yet thorny ground for creative work.

The artworks and stories I present in this project concentrate on some of the stories, forms, lines, and colors made available by these developments, especially when they are screened alongside Jalal Toufic’s concept of "the withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster." I have so far produced two main chapters, each composed of several works.

*Scratching on things I could disavow: Walkthrough* chronicles some of the encounters that drove me to engage with the history of art in the "Arab world" in the first place: an invitation to join the Dubai branch of the Artist Pension Trust; the development of Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi; the opening of the Sfeir-Semler Gallery in Beirut, and the subsequent shrinking of my works; my "communication" with artists from the future; artworks that have lost their reflections and shadows; and the effects of the wars in Lebanon on colors, lines, and forms.

*Scratching on things I could disavow: Les Louvres* relates to my ongoing study of "Islamic art." More specifically, I present works that emerged out of my two-year exploration of the Louvre’s newly established Département des Arts de l’Islam, its archives and new exhibition spaces. This encounter with "Islamic art" in the Louvre in Paris was also animated by the emergence of a new Louvre in Abu Dhabi.

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1 The writings of Jalal Toufic, and in particular his concept of the “withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster,” remain central to me and to this project. With this concept Toufic considers how certain disasters affect tradition. He pays special attention to the rare instances when artworks are affected immaterially, in more subtle and insidious ways than has hitherto been thought. He characterizes such immaterial effects as “withdrawals,” meaning not that an artwork or other cultural artifact itself was destroyed, but rather that its immaterial character and its own atmosphere were destroyed, as crystallized by the Louvre. In a subsequent book, Toufic also proposes that artists have at times attempted to resurrect such withdrawn artworks, albeit with great doubt as to the success of their efforts.
Walkthrough
In 2007, I was asked to join the Dubai branch of the Artist Pension Trust (APT). A private company established in 2004 by a savvy entrepreneur and a risk-management guru, APT aims to select and pool artists and artworks into regional investment and pension funds, of which it has thus far established eight. APT is owned by MutualArt, a British Virgin Islands-registered company whose assets include the Web site by the same name.

2003 The Atlas Group into the events and experiences of the past year, Tony Chakar, Bilal Khbeiz, and Walid Raad have been working on the first volume of this multimedia project. The research will result in a 70-minute mixed media presentation/performance about and around the events, experiences, forms, and objects of a car bomb that was detonated on January 28, 1998 in the Fardi Enab neighborhood of Beirut. The volume is expected to be released in spring 2004.

2003 The performance included a screening of Hostage: The Bachar tapes (English version) (pp. 90–93) followed by a scripted question-and-answer session with both Mohaiemen and Raad. This was followed by a question-and-answer session with Carlos Chahine. November 6 and 7, Festival d’Automne, Le Centquatre, Paris.


70 minutes World Wide

Raad has presented this performance both solo and in collaboration with other artists, including the installation of related sculptural and video works, and in the form of a booklet with a PowerPoint slide show. See pp. 53–47.


2003 Scratching on things I could disavow.

1_Volume 1_Chapter 1 (Beirut: 1992–2005)


70 minutes World Wide

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1_Volume 1_Chapter 1 (Beirut: 1992–2005)
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