

armenity *հայություն*

The National Pavilion
of the Republic of Armenia
Island of San Lazzaro

Contemporary
Artists from
the Armenian Diaspora

armenity *հայրություն*

Edited by Adelina Cüberyan v. Fürstenberg

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Doc Levin, Paris

Design
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Eva Vanzella

Copy Editor
Doriana Comerlati

Translations
Sergio Knipe on behalf of *Scriptum*,
Rome
S. Sarassof (text by Cecile Bourne-
Farrell for Hrair Sarkissian)
Aslı Seven & Alexander Carter
(text by Hera Büyüктаşçıyan)

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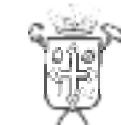
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Curator
Adelina Cüberyan v. Fürstenberg

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Rosana Palazyan
Rebeca Palazyan

Forewords

HE Mrs. Hasmik Poghosyan

Minister of Culture of the Republic of Armenia

In Italy's historic city of Venice, where renowned artists such as Bellini, Tintoretto, and Titian created their masterworks, the 56th edition of that marvelous contemporary art exhibition known to the world as the Venice Biennale is opening. The Biennale provides a global platform where Armenia has been presenting since the beginning of the last century. In different years, famous Armenian artists such as Vazgen Surenyants, Martiros Saryan, Gayane Khachatryan and others have exhibited their work here. In each edition of the Biennale, Armenia and its artists have presented different formats, content and ideas.

In 2015, the Pavilion of Armenia will be showing artists from the Armenian diaspora, presented under the title *Armenity*. In the heart of Europe and on the island of San Lazzaro which itself symbolizes Armenity, Armenians who create around the world have been gathered and united. Today, they live in small towns and big cities in Europe, Asia and America. They have established themselves, inspired by the ideas, theories and principles derived from contemporary art. Their paintings, photographs, video works and installations, and sometimes unusual sculptures and images, remind us of fast-changing cultural values, unbound imagination and the flight of thought. The artists gathered here differ in terms of where they live and how they think, as well as by their tastes and aesthetics, but they remain united by their ethnicity. Today, this respected international platform has brought together the grandchildren of the Genocide survivors: each and every one of them carries within his or her origins, identity, genes, memory and homeland. And

each and every one of them has made the external world – with all its advantages and flaws – his and her own, while also remaining Armenian.

This year the Armenian nation commemorates the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. This event is symbolic not only for Armenians but for humanity as a whole. One hundred years ago, this great crime committed by the Ottoman Turks marked the first genocide of the 20th century. By remaining unpunished, it helped pave the way for other genocides. The survivors of *medz yeghern*, children of the Armenian nation, found shelter in different parts of the world. They did more than merely survive: everywhere they went, they manifested their creative talent and many of them became world-renowned artists.

Every nation values its historical presence and accomplishments. Of course, we always value and exalt our classics, those works which have become eternal. But we also realize that life moves forward and that the contemporary artist working next to us will produce the classic works of the future. Within the context of a long history of victories, defeats, migrations and conquests, it has always been the Armenian artists who have most effectively carried with them the memory of their origins. This is perhaps what gives them a peculiar freedom to think and to create.

For the “Armenity” gathered at the 56th International Art Exhibition, the Venice Biennale art represents the dream of its future, the reflection and shadow of its present and the unremitting and never-ending memory of its past.

Father Elia Kilaghbian

General Abbot

Armenian Mekhitarist Congregation of San Lazzaro

The preparation for this year's Armenian Pavilion on the island of San Lazzaro has been conducted with the Mekhitarist Congregation's centuries-old cultural activities as a backdrop. These activities were accomplished in the service of the Armenian nation, as well as for all who drew their life blood from the culture of this people or were inspired by it; and by the many people who historically and personally came into contact with it. And in any case, which nation had not, at one time or another, some Armenian people presence on its territory?

San Lazzaro may also be considered a piece of Armenia hosted in Venice.

In the 18th century the Serenissima Republic, which was historically known for its ability to integrate many different ethnicities and religions, also offered the Armenian Abbot Mekhitar and his disciples its hospitality. The Mekhitarists have now been based in San Lazzaro for over three centuries. This year in fact will mark the three-hundred-year celebration of Mekhitar's arrival in Venice with his small group of monks.

What really is Mekhitar's charisma, being still alive three centuries later in those who consider themselves as his heirs? Surely it is a certain spirit of openness to Transcendence, something that as humans we are inclined to nourish and make grow. But as this openness hinges on human nature, Mekhitar takes care of all human life dimensions, of its rich and varied experiences and of all its concrete complexity. This includes the maturing of man over time in all his integrity and variety, which makes of each person a unique and irreproducible universe, and in his development as a Christian believer as well. After all, for every true Christian, sanctity simply means the full realization and development of his own humanity.

Mekhitar's project therefore falls within the purview of Christian humanism, one that is animated by an invincible optimism and belief in the fundamental goodness of man, beyond his limits and failures. This optimism is founded upon the goodness of nature, looking to the possibility of rising up to the light of Grace, in relation to an often complex physical, ideal and moral universe.

So, the perspective of Mekhitar is that of a really encyclopedic worldview. The same one that permitted the Mekhitarist Fathers to operate in all aspects of human cultural expression, from the sacred sciences to humanistic and scientific knowledge: philosophy, linguistics, poetry and literature, music; figurative art forms; historiography, archeology; and pure, natural and applied sciences. These activities co-existed with an intensive literary production that began at the end of the 18th century, when the congregation acquired a working printing press on the island of San Lazzaro. With these initiatives and activities, Mekhitar successfully launched a Renaissance of Armenian culture that today is widely recognized as having originated on this small island in the Venetian lagoon.

A Renaissance movement which we hope will continue to be *of* Armenian culture but not only *for* Armenians. A movement which has always derived the most satisfaction from offering something truthful, good and beautiful, and can thus talk to humanity in its entirety. This because, after all, there is perhaps a small fragment of our Armenian mountains in every man's heart.

Jean-Pierre Claveranne

President of the Bullukian Foundation

In this year of remembrance, the Bullukian Foundation felt duty-bound to pay a fitting tribute to the Armenian people, who one hundred years earlier were killed or forced to leave their families and homeland behind them, victims of the violent crimes of the Armenian Genocide, perpetrated in secret under the cover of World War I.

The *Armenity* exhibition presented at the National Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia of the 56th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, is central to our foundation's projects, values and history.

Led by men and women who are the legacy-bearers of their family's history, this new generation of diaspora artists is gathered together for the first time around distinctive artworks. The exhibit aspires to rise above the unspeakable, and to this end, bear witness to the history, geography and memory of its people, and of the failure of those who sought to wipe out its roots and even its very existence.

For all of these reasons and because it strives to provide ongoing support for research and the arts, the Bullukian Foundation is pleased to be a key partner of the exhibition *Armenity*. Wherever possible the foundation attempts to build knowledge, spread culture and assist those initiatives which strive to build a better world.

Napoléon Bullukian, who was born in 1905 in Malatia, Armenia, saw his father and uncles killed during the Armenian Genocide of 1915. He himself was deported, then sold as a slave to a Kurdish tribe, which freed him in 1919. After an epic journey that took him through several Eastern countries and then on to the West, he arrived in France in 1923. Like any other unskilled immigrant, he did a variety of small jobs where there was demand for laborers. Through hard work and determination, he made his way to Paris, where he

met people who would be important for his future. Napoléon Bullukian acquired French citizenship in 1928, did his military service, then settled in Lyon.

An untiring worker with exceptional willpower, Napoléon Bullukian gradually worked his way up, winning social recognition and building a remarkable career. This generous, altruistic man enjoyed being with people and, true to his origins, was in turn a laborer, a builder and an industrialist. He was also an art lover and collector. Throughout his life, he devoted part of his fortune to supporting the arts and helped the artists he met gain a wider audience for their work.

The eponymous foundation he set up later in life carries its founder's values in its DNA and over the last twenty-five years has grown and developed, while remaining true to its missions.

Since its inception, it has pursued three key goals: innovation in health care (especially cancer research), culture (more specifically assistance for young artists), and support for Armenian welfare initiatives.

The Bullukian Foundation is a recognized institution on the national and international cultural scene, maintaining numerous contacts with researchers and artists in a variety of countries, and cooperating with other foundations. It actively supports research and artistic creation by promoting upcoming talents and broadening the scope of its patronage. Innovation, creativity and solidarity are the bedrock of our foundation's philosophy and activity.

We hope this exhibition will be an opportunity for each of us not only to discover strong, distinctive artworks but also to glimpse traces of our own history in this fragmented identity.

Ruben Vardanyan and Veronika Zonabend

*Co-founders of RVVZ Family Foundation and Initiatives
for Development of Armenia (IDeA) Foundation*

The centenary of the Armenian Genocide compels us to once again comprehend the history of last century, especially its first half, which was full of tragic events. Especially salient in this regard are the two world wars, which involved, amidst all else, the attempt to annihilate entire peoples. Millions of people fell victim to two humanitarian catastrophes – the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. Humanism and the capacity to empathize with others, however, opposed this inhumane cruelty. In particular, colossal funds were gathered in the U.S. to help the Armenians – complete strangers from another continent, about whom the Americans knew little. Thanks to the efforts of volunteers from various countries, thousands of people were rescued. Today, this represents millions of human lives and fates.

This pertains to our family – we are both descendants of people who miraculously survived in Ottoman Turkey and avoided perishing during the mass annihilation of the Jews. We have four children, and we, like many other families, will be forever grateful to those who reached out to help our ancestors. We possess the desire and the strength to give back, and together with our friends, partners, and like-minded people, we are implementing projects in the sphere of international education and creating favorable conditions in Russia and Armenia for those who are ready and willing to help.

Like Dostoevsky, we believe that beauty will save the world, and that art is the crea-

tion of magnificence in an international language, understood in any culture on any continent.

One of the key projects of IDeA Foundation, the Dilijan Art Initiative stems from this belief. It provides a framework for the cultural development of the city of Dilijan and Armenia at large. Its mission is to serve as a cultural crossroads and promote global understanding through diverse means of art, research and debate among progressive thinkers and leaders from around the world. While principally focused on contemporary art, the Initiative will pursue a larger aim of changing people’s lives locally and uplifting the image of Armenia internationally.

The fact that the exhibition *Armenity* is taking place precisely in Venice, an eternal source of inspiration for artistic people from every corner of the Earth, is both meaningful and logical. It was precisely here, on the island of San Lazzaro, that an Armenian colony found refuge several centuries ago.

Today, we would like to see Armenia as part of a global world, proud of its roots, but open and unconstrained by its past, as it was at the time of its Venice adventure.

We and everyone at the IDeA Foundation we established, are incredibly happy to become the partners of this outstanding project. We truly hope that it will signal the start of a new era, a Renaissance of beauty, spiritual generosity and humanity.

Contents

Introduction

- 23 Armenity / Hayoutioun
Adelina Cüberyan v. Fürstenberg
- 27 Neither Victory or Defeat... But the
Best Possible Participation
*Q+A between Ginevra Bria and Adelina
Cüberyan v. Fürstenberg*

The Artists

- 32 Haig Aivazian
- 36 Nigol Bezjian
- 40 Anna Boghiguiian
- 44 Hera Büyüktaşçıyan
- 48 Silvina Der-Meguerditchian
- 52 Rene Gabri & Ayreen Anastas
- 56 Mekhitar Garabedian
- 60 Aikaterini Gegsian
- 64 Yervant Gianikian
and Angela Ricci Lucchi
- 68 Aram Jibilian
- 72 Nina Katchadourian
- 76 Melik Ohanian
- 80 Mikayel Ohanjanyan
- 84 Rosana Palazyan
- 88 Sarkis
- 92 Hrair Sarkissian

Essays

- 99 Undoing Denials: Mapping
a Curatorial Terrain
Neery Melkonian
- 109 Armenia, Country of Stones –
Armenia, Country of Books
Valentina Calzolari Bouvier
- 113 Transition Times
Stephanie Bailey

Appendix

- 121 Biographies
- 126 List of Works in the Exhibition
- 129 *Թարգմանություններ*

Adelina Cüberyan v. Fürstenberg

Ադելինա Ճիւպերիան Ֆ. Ֆյուրնշթենբերգ

Introduction

Armenity/Hayoutioun

Adelina Cüberyan v. Fürstenberg

Curator of the Pavilion
of the Republic of Armenia

In honor of the one-hundred-year commemoration of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, the Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia at the 56th Venice Biennale provided an occasion to rethink the notion of “Armenianess” and broaden this reflection to include the concepts of identity type and memory, justice and reconciliation, in the name of which many contemporary struggles are still taking place.

Whether we think of painters, sculptors, architects, photographers, musicians, writers or poets, filmmakers or actors, Armenia’s history is replete with artists. Historically speaking, situated at a transitional point between East and West, Armenian art thrived on Christian soil where the representation of icons was not feared. This resulted in great pictorial talent, passed on over many generations.

I was inspired by the French word “*Arménité*” to call the exhibition *Armenity/Hayoutioun*. It seemed to me an appropriate new word to describe a new generation of artists and intellectuals in constant flux, with a large diversity of self-defining, which however kept a subjective sense of being-in-the-world.

Armenity/Hayoutioun questions the concept of Armenian identity as being the result of the historical connections characterizing Armenian culture through the millennia from the lands of Anatolia, the Caucasus and throughout the diaspora since its inception. The richness of the exhibition finds expression in the diversity of creative ideas and narrations and the vision of each of the artists and intellectuals involved – it is a direct reflection of a continuous process of preservation and enrichment that has allowed the Armenian culture to be integrated but not assimilated in even the most adverse conditions.

In the last one hundred years, despite the *medz yeghern* or Great Calamity, an expression that Armenians use to denote the period of massacres and deportations that peaked in 1915, Armenian culture has survived and artists of Armenian origin have remained genuine citizens of the world-at-large: on the one hand deeply attached to their roots and aware of their own historical individuality, but on the other hand also able to create productive connections with the culture of their country of adoption.

Armenity/Hayoutioun is composed by sixteen artists, all of them grandchildren of the survivors of the first genocide of the 20th century. Whether they were born in Aleppo, Los Angeles or Yerevan, and whether they may now live in Europe, America or the Middle East, their works have kept up with the artistic flow while developing a unique aesthetic approach with a specific ingrained concern for the notions of territories, borders and geography.

In the catalogue, Neery Melkonian’s and Stephanie Bailey’s essays accurately identify this strong feeling of “Armenity.” The artists have also participated in the construction of the catalogue, in writing about their own work, or in choosing appropriate art writers to analyze and dialogue with their work.

The exhibition itself is being held on the island of San Lazzaro which is located on the Venetian lagoon where the Armenian monk Mekhitar, fleeing persecution from the Ottoman Empire, arrived in Venice in 1717. It is here that along with seventeen disciples Mekhitar received permission from the Venetian Republic to found a congregation and monastery – the Mekhitarists of San Lazzaro island – that came to be referred to as “Little Armenia” by both ordinary people and the Armenian intelligentsia for its capturing and rejuvenating the spirit of their nation. Hovannes Shiraz, one of the most popular Armenian poets (Alexandropol 1915–Yerevan 1984), described San Lazzaro as “an Armenian island in foreign waters / with you it renews the light of Armenia.” Over its three-hundred-year history the Monastery of San Lazzaro has helped to preserve Armenia’s unique cultural heritage, much of which might otherwise have been lost. This precious fragment of Armenia in the heart of Venice (with its pier, its garden, its former printing shop, its courtyard, museum and precious library of ancient manuscripts and first editions of printed volumes) provides the framework for some of the most prominent contemporary artists from the Armenian diaspora.

San Lazzaro island itself may be the ultimate example of this unique phenomenon of Armenia.

It is impossible to think of Armenian culture without specifying the importance of its alphabet and the related preservation of its literature and poetry. The essay in the catalogue by Valentina Calzolari emphasizes this strong aspect of Armenian identity. On the other hand, the book on Armenian Poetry that accompanies *Armenity/Hayoutioun* is an example of the flowering of Armenian poets born after 1915 and the Russian Revolution. The poems were selected and edited by the prominent French-speaking poet Vahé Godel.

Curator’s Acknowledgements

Armenity/Hayoutioun has been made possible thanks to the help and priceless commitment of institutions and people I would like here to thank.

My acknowledgements go first to the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Armenia HE Mrs. Hasmik Poghosyan for choosing me as the Curator of the Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia in this symbolic year of 2015.

My special gratitude to the General Abbot of the Mekhitarist Congregation of San Lazzaro Apahair Elia Kilagbalian and all the monks of the Monastery for having given both the artists and myself the opportunity of showing *Armenity/Hayoutioun* in such a precious and unique environment.

My sincere acknowledgments go to HE Sarghis Ghazarian, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Italy and to his collaborator Genni Fortunato, as well as to Vartan Karapetian who has from the beginning believed in this project.

I would like to express my special gratitude to Jean Altounian, Vahé Gabrache and

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This exhibition would not have been possible without the support of the Armenian foundations as well as distinguish individuals such as the Board of Directors of the Bulukian Foundation, Ruben Vardanyan and Veronika Zonabend, Jean Boghossian, Harry and Arda Babikian, Ara Arslanian and Raffi Arslanian, Larry Gagosian, Albert and Françoise Baronian.

The Pavilion of Armenia could not have been built this year without the participation of the artists. I sincerely thank all of them for their invaluable contribution.

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My gratitude goes to the architect Uliva Velo with whom I have been working for many years in different parts of the world. Her collaboration in designing the exhibition has been inestimable.

A special thanks also to the team of ART for The World Europa for their precious help in the realization of *Armenity/Hayoutioun*.

Last but not least, my very special thoughts to my husband Egon and to my friends, who have strongly encouraged me during all the phases of this project.

Neither Victory or Defeat... But the Best Possible Participation

Q+A between Ginevra Bria and Adelina Cüberyan v. Fürstenberg

Venice, February 2015

Ginevra Bria: What meaning does the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide acquire in relation to one of the leading international events devoted to contemporary art?

Adelina Cüberyan v. Fürstenberg: *The Biennale has always been a mirror of its times and the 56th edition falls precisely in 2015, which coincides with the hundredth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Its commemoration acquires a deeper significance when it takes place within the walls of the Monastery of San Lazzaro. The artists of the Armenian diaspora, who are called to represent Armenia in an international context, have different nationalities and backgrounds. Armenian identity for them is a link with a "lost paradise," a land which never coincides with the one they live in. Because of this discrepancy, the artists can represent their own knowledge and awareness, as inner realms, through absolute notions – values which create analogies and feelings shared within the same community. Each artist of the diaspora who interprets his own personal experience and "hearsays," sublimates the contemporary world he lives in, not least through the culture of his host country. This creates a resolved dichotomy between the two lands of reference – a uniting of the two relocations.*

G.B.: *Armenity* presents itself as a place which is superimposed upon physical and geographical regions, and hence automatically coincides with the detailed description of the experience of an "other place" – as one's universal land of origin. The collective encounter between the various narrative and formal fabrics presupposes not just a spatial condition, but also a shared sensitivity enabling the Armenian artists to (re)discover their own land as an intangible heritage, which has always been familiar to them. The aesthetics connected to the Armenian diaspora, moreover, necessarily transcends the binary thought made up of contingent limitations and categories, setting one's own visual culture in given *terres du milieu*, and bringing out interstitial elements through which to re-interpret the present.

A.C.v.F.: *Although the artists of the diaspora may be Lebanese, American, French or Brazilian, and although they belong to different generations, they are still Armenian. Their nationality cannot be detached from the connotations of their origins or from the denotations of the country they live in. Their Armenity becomes an example for contemporaneity, for it reminds us of how, in very difficult conditions, emigrants in the past managed to adapt and find a new place, building a new life for themselves. This is a model for all countries.*

G.B.: Through de-territorialization and re-territorialization, over the following centuries whole social groups will have to start living in a constructive context. So it is crucial to understand, through events such as *Armenity*, how these changes are modifying the cultural map and forms of artistic production, to avoid interpreting each presence in the world in superficial terms. But how do the artists of the Armenian diaspora deal with memory and portray their identity? What hybrid or conflicting forms of identity are reconciled through their work?

A.C.v.F.: *Each artist of the Armenian diaspora is like an inner, personal assemblage of different cultures. He is like a Wunderkammer, which brings together very different objects, without ever accumulating them. Consequently, the Monastery too represents a centuries-old cabinet of wonders. This has been the case since 1717, the year in which the pre-existing leper hospital was renovated by Mekhitar and turned into a place devoted to prayer, as well as to the transmission of knowledge and the conservation of sacred manuscripts. It was typical of the culture of that age for wealthy merchants to donate to the Order not just objects purchased during their travels, but also rare and valuable manuscripts and books. The Monastery museum boasts an extensive collection of ancient volumes, which for almost three hundred years has distinguished and shaped the mission of the monks on San Lazzaro. And the reason for this is that books were the privileged medium for the conservation and transmission of Armenian culture.*

In the exhibition, Nigol Bezjian's works on the poet Daniel Varoujan, or those by Rene Gabri & Ayreen Anastas, engage with the volumes of the monastery – a written testimony to the medz yeghern, or Great Calamity, which perfectly fits within the monastic context of the island, becoming part of it. What emerges is a kind of integration free of contrasts, a presence operating according to different registers and superimpositions devoid of any form of concealment, and reflecting the individual mark of every Armenian.

G.B.: *Armenity brings together artists from different generations, across a forty-year time span. Some of them approach art as an intersubjective experience, while artists such as Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, Anna Boghiguiian and Sarkis – both formally and in terms of their background – belong to the age of protest of the late 1960s, which over time was translated into a form of art. Artists more or less belonging to today's generation, such as Gegisian, mutually engage by looking to their country of origin and assessing its independence. For the artists of previous generations, by contrast, the artists of the 1960s, Armenia did not exist as an independent state, but was rather identified as a Soviet Republic.*

The exhibition further brings together, alongside even younger artists such as Aivazian, among others, the works of Nina Katchadourian, an American artist who draws upon her own family background to follow a trajectory retracing her origins, and those of Hera Büyüктаşçıyan, an artist who lives in Turkey, displaying a full awareness of her family history and personal memories.

A.C.v.F.: *Armenity is also represented by a range of people whose identities are never perfectly connected or overlapping, since each carries its own self-definition. Each of these people is a separate and complex individual who nonetheless shares a common entity, which brings into play their shared past and way of looking at things, but also their being citizens of the world. This is reflected in the varied yet common use of often perishable and transient media and materials of little intrinsic value, which are used to leave marks and can be easily removed or protected – materials that have also been chosen to substantiate Armenty and the culture of change it conveys. Büyüктаşçıyan, for instance, has redeveloped printing blocks with the characters of the Armenian alphabet; Bezjian has carried out in-depth research on the poet Daniel Varoujan, one of the first intellectuals to have been murdered in 1915, focusing on a poem he published in a newspaper of the period. This collected material testifies to a civilization that was wiped out, empowering visitors by offering them a new account.*

G.B.: *Armenty does not present time as an additional framework to Armenian life, but rather as the ethos through which each artist, positively projecting himself into contemporary society, embodies a universal existence (Mekhitar Garabedian). Embarking on a journey across the boundaries of history (Sarkis), these artists – with the benefit of the doubt – mistrust anyone purporting to possess absolute forms of knowledge and are suspicious of all-encompassing explanations and allegedly complete systems of thought. The artists*

of Armenty shun all interpretations of the sense of loss based on nostalgia (Aram Jibilian): with them, the present-past becomes part of the necessity to live, as opposed to the lack of life. Moreover, the liminal development of their culture calls for a process of discovery which is not part of the continuum between past and present, but nonetheless engenders a sense of what is new as an act of revolt against a cultural tradition (Yervant Gianikian). Consequently, the artists of Armenty have learned that each reality gives rise to a range of artifacts (Melik Ohanian), whereby nothing exists until it can be represented; and that, like any other artifact, reality can be made well or badly – or, indeed, can be undone.

How do you perceive your own Armenian identity?

A.C.v.F.: *I was born in Istanbul and spent a sheltered and very happy childhood there, until the age of ten. When I moved to Europe with my parents, in my teenage years, I set the story of my origins aside in order to experience the everyday life of the country in which I was being raised. My contemporary reality, by then, was a European one. Then, over the years, a process of personal development I underwent through art reinforced my Armenianness, also allowing me to open up to different cultures. It was precisely thanks to two Italian artists that I first awakened to the fact of being Armenian-in-the-world. Alighiero Boetti told me about an ancestor of his, an adventurous Dominican friar who, starting in 1769, had served as a missionary first at Mosul and then in Armenia. Gino De Dominicis instead projected his own alter ego in my land of origin – as well as in the Sumerian civilization and in the figure of Gilgamesh, a king who was such by virtue of being not a warrior but an artist, and who had discovered an antidote to death. Both these artists landed on the island of San Lazzaro in 1993, for the Trésors de voyage exhibition I was curating as part of the 45th Venice Biennale. Later, building on this specific experience I had acquired, I traveled to Armenia and discovered a homeland that no longer belonged merely to my private, family sphere, but was directly connected to my real origins – to my “Armenty”.*

I trust that, through this unique opening of Armenia to the diaspora's artistic experience at the 2015 Venice Biennale, the Armenian diaspora will exist through Armenia rather than existing “only” through the world. It means rediscovering a common stability for new generations within a single sphere of identity. May each artist become an opening, a means through which the sense of being Armenian may manifest itself.

The Artists

Haig Aivazian

Հայկ Այվազեան

Nigol Bezjian

Նիկոլ Պէզճեան

Anna Boghiguiyan

Աննա Բողիգեան

Hera Büyüктаşçıyan

Հերա Պիւլիւթաշճեան

Silvina Der-Meguerditchian

Սիլվինա Տէր-Մկրտիչեան

Rene Gabri & Ayreen Anastas

Ռենե Գաբրի և Այրին Անաստաս

Mekhitar Garabedian

Մխիթար Կարապետեան

Aikaterini Gegisian

Էկատերինի Կեկիսեան

**Yervant Gianikian
and Angela Ricci Lucchi**

*Երուանդ Ճանիկեան
և Անջելա Ռիչի Լուչի*

Aram Jibilian

Արամ Ճիպիլեան

Nina Katchadourian

Նինա Խաչատուրեան

Melik Ohanian

Մելիք Օհանյան

Mikayel Ohanjanyan

Միքայել Օհանջանյան

Rosana Palazyan

Ռոզանա Փալազեան

Sarkis

Սարգիս

Hrair Sarkissian

Հրայր Սարգիսեան

Haig Aivazian
with Master oud maker Mehmet Caymaz
Hastayım Yaşıyorum (I Am Sick, But I Am Alive), 2014
Tulipwood, mahogany and polyester varnish
99.5 x 235 x 36.5 cm

*I am sick, I am living / With an invisible apparition / Maybe one day,
one day then / I await with hope / My poor soul rotting with longing.*

Hastayım Yaşıyorum is the first part of an ongoing research project on Turkish-Armenian oud master Udi Hrant Kenkulian (1901–1978).

A large majority of Kenkulian's life was spent playing in cafés and selling instruments in Istanbul. He would however, with the support of various patrons, travel repeatedly in a bid to cure his blindness. His eyesight would never be restored, but he would disseminate his music and transmit his knowledge to many students in places like Greece, Lebanon and as far west as the United States.

Thinking through modal structures in classical and modern Turkish music, this project inhabits both the oppositions and entanglements inherent in terms such as *Makam* and *Taksim*, simultaneously embodying an irreconcilable coming together and a partitioning. *Makam* defines both an intervallic and melodic structure in modal music, but it is also used to designate a shrine, its Arabic root implying residence and sedentarization. *Taksim*, which is an improvisation *within* the *Makam* in musical terms, refers to division or distribution in the Arabic language. In the context of Turkish history, it takes on added geopolitical layers.

Few traces remain from Udi Hrant's life in Istanbul, but there are many stories told about him: stories that employ entire lineages of disappeared master oud makers, forgotten composers, inventors of obsolete musical notations, banned Mevlevi, priests and witnesses from the post-Ottoman era. It is through such stories and actors that the project reflects on the migratory motifs of an Armenian, and the manner in which the resonances of these motifs may be historicized or silenced.

Haig Aivazian

Opposite and following pages
Hastayım Yaşıyorum
(I Am Sick, But I Am Alive),
2014
Tulipwood, mahogany
and polyester varnish
99.5 x 235 x 36.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and
Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg-
Beirut, commissioned by
The Moving Museum, Istanbul





Witness.ed

I was introduced to Daniel Varoujan’s poetry, and the work of his peers who were murdered in 1915, in Aleppo, Syria, when I was hardly ten years old, on 24 April 1965. That day countless thousands of Armenians around the world mourned the genocide they had survived. My grandmother’s generation, dressed in black, huddled inside the Forty Martyrs Church in Aleppo, listened obliged to the spectacular solemn mass silently praying as tears rolled from their eyes, lamenting the injustice done to them by the Young Turks government.

Unaware, on that day I had signed a contract to learn and tell about Daniel Varoujan through a film, as I had committed myself to become a filmmaker at a very young age. For decades my mind was occupied with the subject. Finally, in 2010, I had a sudden start with a chain of questions when I watched images of Varoujan and his peers held by those who had gathered in Istanbul to commemorate the Armenian Genocide for the first time. The answers I was pursuing resulted in a 180-minute long film called *Milk, Carnation and a Godly Song* inspired by Varoujan’s poems, mind and art. The completion of the film took four years, many locations and an unprecedented learning journey into the evolution of Armenian culture through art and literature, spanning from the pagan times to 2010.

Daniel Varoujan studied in the Mourad Raphaelian School in Venice and the Monastery of San Lazzaro island. His first poem, “At the Tomb of Alishan,” was published in the *Pazmaveb* literal journal (printed in the monastery) in 1903, when he was nineteen years old. The poem was inspired by his first visit to the grave of Father Alishan on the island of San Lazzaro.

Six years later, Varoujan was purged. He was brutally killed in 1915 by the Young Turks government: he was only thirty-one and left behind a creative and a literary legacy that occupies us still today.

His long poem “To the Cilician Ashes,” one of his masterpieces, was written in 1909 as an epitaph to the massacre of Armenians in Adana and Aleppo. It was first published in the *Aztag* newspaper in Istanbul, whose editorial board included Zabel Yessayan, the author of the monumental *Among the Ruins*, a book depicting her own account of the Adana massacre.

The film *Milk, Carnation and a Godly Song* opened other possibilities when I was invited to present the video installation *Poet/Mourner* which evolved from the film in the Thessaloniki Biennale in 2013. Little I knew that Varoujan was taking a life of its own and growing until I was invited to partake in the 2015 Venice Biennale’s Armenian Pavilion, coinciding with the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, and arrived with this work, *Witness.ed*.

I am unaware where Daniel Varoujan’s artistic genius and my grandmother’s tears will lead me to, but it has taken me this long to define and share what I experienced on 24 April 1965 in Aleppo, Syria. The journey continues.

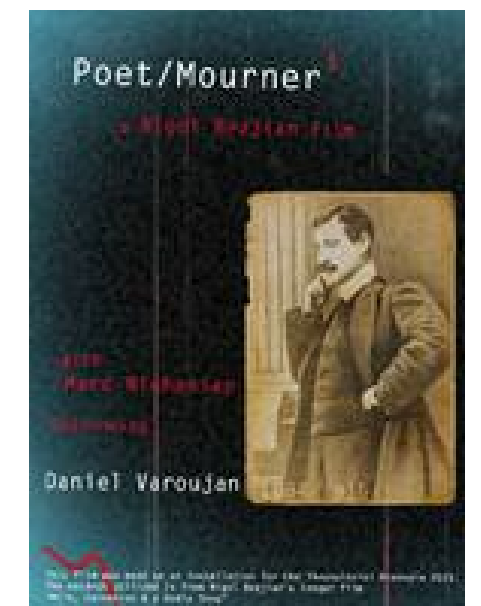
Nigol Bezjian



A Page from “Aztag,” detail from *Witness.ed*, 2015
Site-specific installation
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist

Poet/Mourner, 2013
Poster, video installation
Courtesy the artist

Poet/Mourner, 2013
Title card from video installation
Courtesy the artist



Anna Boghiguan

If a traveler travels through the history of Armenia and the greatness it once had, it will be difficult to disregard the city of Ani which lies by the border of Armenia, in Turkey, attached to the town of Kars. From Ani one can see the other side of Armenia. The legend or the poet Sings the song of Ani. The city of Anias, a woman sitted on the ruins of its churches, there is no consolation but a banal statement My Ani do not cry Please do not cry But we can collect your ashes Your past in a vase that is part of our history, there you can meet the eternal For whom your churches were built your city of 100 churches. Where caravans from Asia came to deposit their wares and to receive more wares and silk to continue their way towards Arabia. If wax is what is used to convey prayers, wax I have used in most of the drawings to convey the image of Ani in visual or literary manner. The line of the word or the line of the image are parallel. It is but the room of the traveler as a monk, either in the monastery or in the world, born with a rose garden in its hand, the roses of Armenia. The birds sing the liberty and the books speak of its history, and one day the history will move upwards.

Anna Boghiguan

Birds, 2013
Installation view at Art Basel 2014
© Moritz Herzog
Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg-Beirut



Ani, 2015
Site-specific installation
Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg-Beirut



Ani, detail, 2015
Site-specific installation
Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-
Semler Gallery, Hamburg-Beirut
Photo Franz Egon v. Fürstenberg



*Mhitar_Byron_Hera
Sivas_Bolis_Venedig
Hayeren_Tırkeren_Ankliyeren
Ayp_Pen_Kim*

On Sunday mornings, one would see numerous groups of men heading from Kurtuluş to Pangaltı for the same reason. Some were meeting at certain points of the street and some were proceeding to the garden of Mekhitarian in company of their children or members of their family.

What was the reason? To have a football match, of course... This was my first step into Mekhitarian's world. Being pushed in a stroller by my father who was rushing and running from our house on Bozkurt Street to Mekhitarian in an effort to get to the football match on time, my feet flew off the pavement until I learned to walk accompanied by the thump thump sound of the strollers' heels. As a child, for me Mekhitarian was a mystery island located in the center of Osmanbey-Pangaltı-Nişantaşı triangle. An unexpected world hidden behind the high walls of a huge endless garden. Contrary to the children who were afraid to go to school, I was looking forward to be part of this gorgeous building which I so admired .

On September 1989, dressed in a red, green, black checkered uniform with the nested PL letters on its collar, I finally became formally a member of Mekhitarian for thirteen years.

The first day I registered at school, my eyes met with a white bearded man looking at me from a picture hanging on the wall of the headmaster's room. Due to the painting's size, his gaze seemed as though he was about to grab me by the arm and pull me in. Although I was a little scared, it was probably the power of attraction of the unknown that pulled my ever-growing curiosity about this man in black and the room full of books he was residing in. When I was gazing from my own time frame into his, it was as though the distance separating us almost disappeared. Looking at the window behind the man in the painting, I could barely make out the opposite shore, an indistinct and foreign vista. My mind was trying to describe what that place could be and how to get there, as my eyes were scanning the room, taking in the table full of books, the young people engrossed in those books and all the other details of the scene.

Suddenly I was startled, feeling a handful of rustling noises of candy wrappers making their way into my pocket.

"Pari yegar (welcome)" said Hayr Hagopos smiling.

"Do you know who he is? Mhitar Appa Hayr... the founder of our school."

While I was leaving the headmaster's office, I turned back once again to look at Mhitar: he was gone. The room stood still as if he could come back any moment, the books left out stood open, their pages flipping in the wind blowing in through the window, waiting to be read again.

Mhitar opened a new blank page... dipped his reed pen in ink and marked the date of September 1701 on the top right corner of the page. This young man had traveled from his hometown of Sivas till Constantinople in the year 1700, leaving ink marks

behind him. He gathered together his cherished Armenian letters, paper and ink together to keep a record of things he did not want to forget. These curly letters floated in his mind and found a final inscription in papers soaked in ink.

With the letters, he had anchored to the shores of the Bosphorus and prepared to establish the foundations of a school he had been envisioning.

The school he imagined would not only provide theological education, but it would also become an important institution for language, culture and science. Mhitar moved into a house in Pera, and there he moved his first steps as a publisher, printing his first book. And yet, being unable to resist the pressure of the Ottoman State, he decided to lay the foundations of these curly letters in other lands, and he once again hit the roads with his students.

In those exciting first days of school, my Yaya (grandmother) drew letters by hand to teach me the Armenian alphabet. My fingers followed the pathways of each letter

Ariel Acemyan
*Mekhitar Sebastatsi
with His Students*, 1929
Oil on canvas
271 x 349 cm
Courtesy Howard and Annig
Agemian Raley Collection



on the page as I traced over the impressions they made in the notebook. Unaware of a future loss to come, I had anchored a boat full of letters to my mind. Some of the letters in the boat were shaped like anchors, so I placed them on the side and started coloring. After I filled the cavity of Պ in pastel red, a hook-shaped Մ appeared before my eyes. I started tracing up the curls of Մ in cobalt blue.

To lay the foundations of his freshly-rooted ideal, Mhitar veered his boat towards Modoni and the Mora peninsula, and thought that this island with a mild climate would be the right place for his dreams. He struggled to lay roots in this land until 1715. When the Ottoman-Venetian war broke out, he had to set sail again.

While coloring the letter U, it became impossible to hold the oil pastel that had shrunk. My fingers stained in blue, I started to look for a new hook-shaped letter. Despite its arrogant posture, I started to draw one of my favorite letters, U, in ochre yellow. Mhitar pointed out Venice to his students who had dropped the U into water upon departure. Dreaming of the books he intended to immortalize and equipped with his undying patience and hope, he set forth towards the unknown. Navigating through the tidal movement of Venetian waters, a faraway island with ruins caught his eye. Once dedicated to healing lepers, this abandoned island was given to the Mekhitarian community in September 1717. Finally, after decades of waiting, Mhitar's boat had finally dropped an anchor of thirty-eight letters to San Lazzaro...

The construction of the monastery was completed by 1740. In a short time it became an important school for clergy and science, and started accepting students from all

Letters from Lost Paradise, installation detail, 2015
Mechanism, bronze, wood
64 x 100 x 85–90 cm (front)
110–115 cm (back)
Courtesy the artist



over the world. Mhitar had partly realized his ideals, but his ultimate dream of immortalizing words came true only after his death. The printing house was launched in 1789, became one of the rare polyglot printing houses of the world and remained active until early 2000s.

The school to which I dragged my heavy backpack full of books and down whose hallways I ran had become like a microcosm to me. Walking out through its doors and opening up to the world outside feels like freedom for a while, but one realizes after a time that the ship has a hole.

My sinking ship was saved from becoming a wreck in November 2013, when I visited Venice. A letter I saw while passing the San Zaccaria dock led me to San Lazzaro and allowed me to recover all the mossy words from the murky depths and bring them to light.

While I was busy recovering these rusty letters, a gondola passed by carrying

a black-haired young man to the dock of San Lazzaro. One foot on the gondola and the other on the dock, the 28-year-old young man was welcomed with great enthusiasm by the monks. This man who was walking side by side with the high priest towards the courtyard was Lord Byron.

He glanced at me as I was weeding out the letters and wandered away smiling. Since his first visit to Venice, he came to San Lazzaro to take Armenian lessons. Although he often mentions his initial difficulties in learning the alphabet in his letters, he was determined to learn the language of the Lost Paradise. Up the stairway from the courtyard and across from the library was Lord Byron's study where he translated this foreign, adopted language and wrote some of his best poetry.

I left Byron working in his study and, overwhelmed by complex emotions, I started walking towards the grand library. In this world where the unknown evokes suspicion,

The Keepers, installation detail, 2015
12 casted hands in wax and bronze
19 x 9 cm
Courtesy the artist

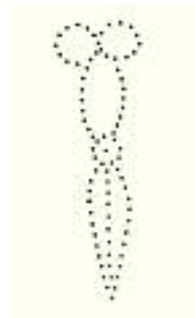


most of things that are lost for many of us still breathe in this island. With the excitement of having discovered a sunken ship or of having found something that was long lost to me, I pushed the curtains aside, gazed out of the window and recalled a landscape I saw back in September 1989.

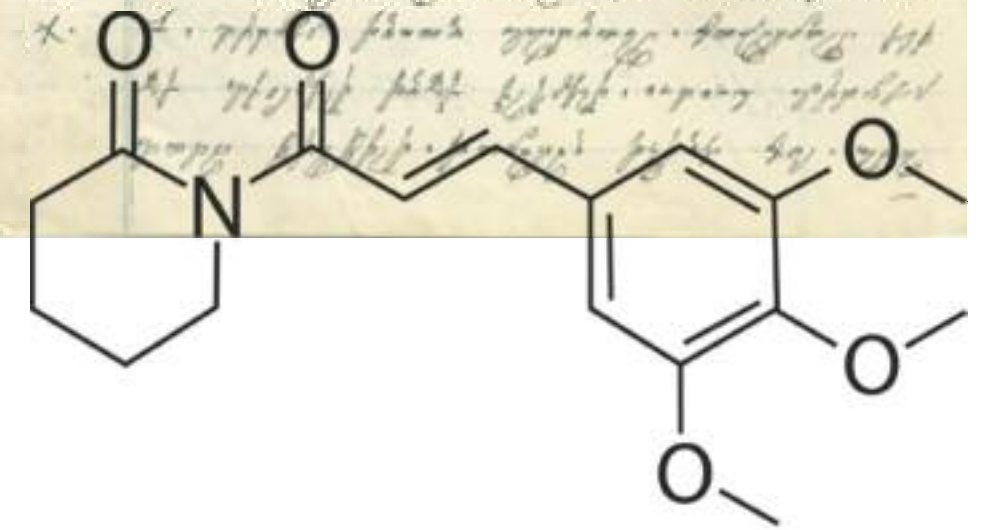
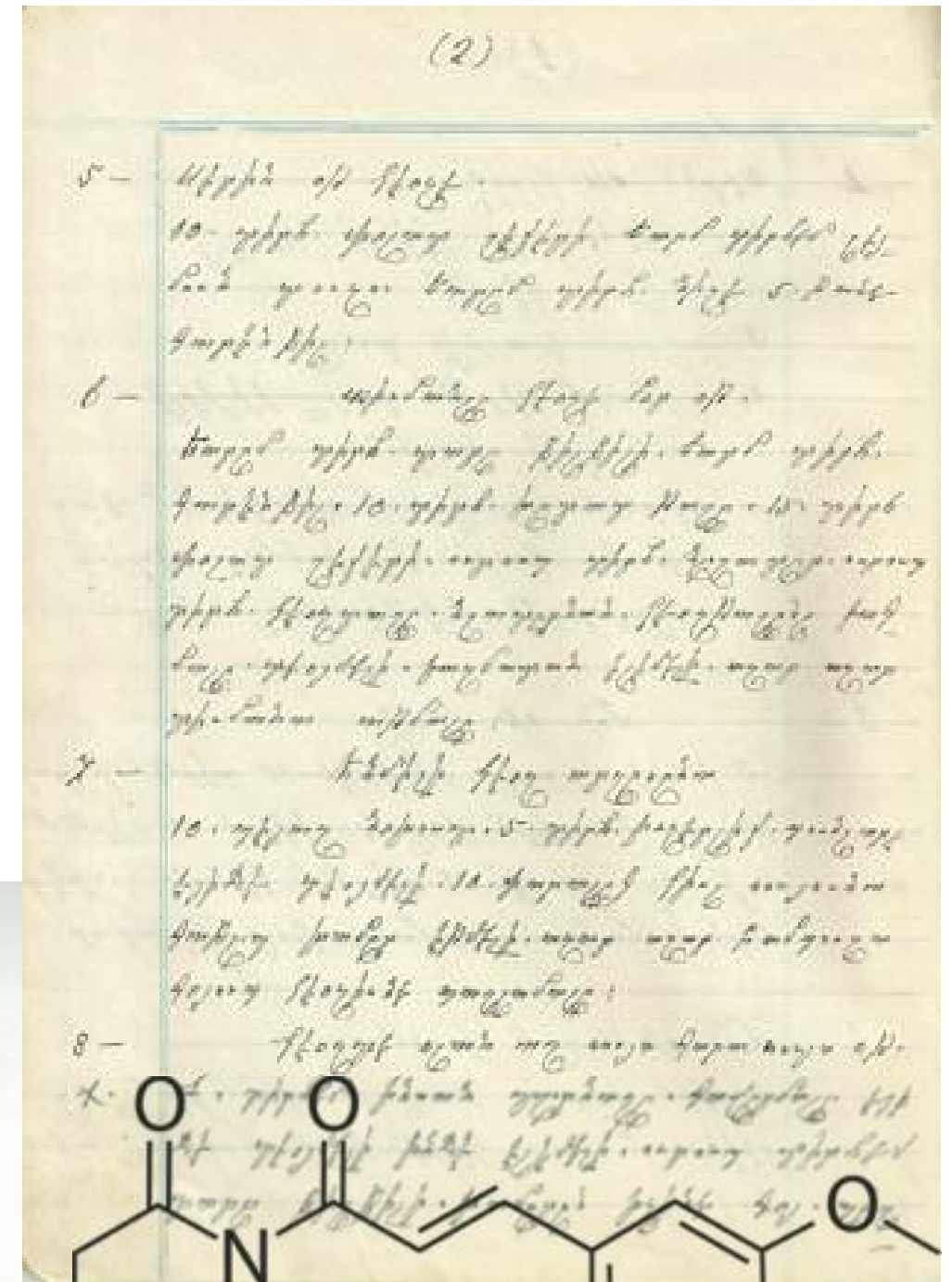
Mhitar is gone again, so is Lord Byron. In their place float an island and thousands of particles of thought that have been immortalized.

Hera Büyüктаşçıyan

TREASURES



Treasures, installation details, 2015
 Manuscript, collages, digital images and small glass bottles
 Variable dimensions
 Courtesy the artist



Berthold Reiss

Austrian-born artist.
He lives and works in Munich

Much of Silvina Der-Meguerditchian's work as an artist has focused on concepts of the collective identity and cultural heritage of the Armenian people. Her installation *Treasures* continues her ongoing exploration of these themes, while at the same time challenging any attempt to approach it in purely historical terms.

Treasures is based on a manuscript written in Turkish using the Armenian alphabet, a compilation of folk remedies that the artist's great grandmother put down on paper in Buenos Aires more than seventy years ago. Drawing on additional texts, collages and objects to supplement and comment on this historical source, Der-Meguerditchian takes it as a point of departure from which to explore the relationship between text and commentary in her artist's book and installation.

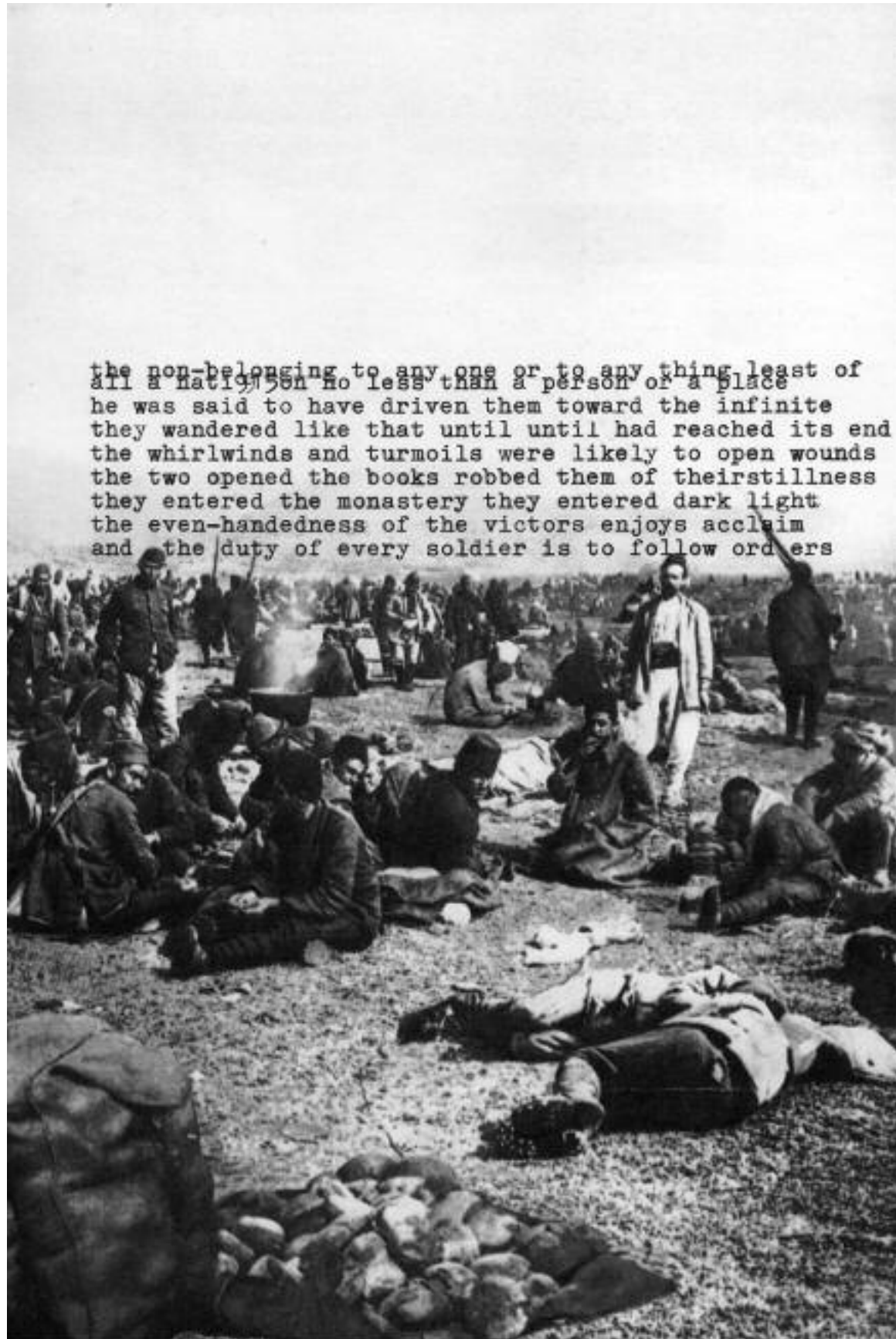
The artist's decision to incorporate the extant display cases and create a site-specific installation attests to the special significance the location holds for her. For Der-Meguerditchian and the others at the school she attended as a girl, the island of San Lazzaro degli Armeni was what Mount Ararat was for most other children in the Armenian community in Argentina: an almost mythical place of longing, particularly close to the heart and yet impossibly faraway.

The title Der-Meguerditchian has chosen for her installation points to the fact that the manuscript is based on much more than a document solely of interest to historians and possibly antique book dealers. Much like the fragment of a marble statue from Classical Antiquity, it is a treasure that stands – *pars pro toto* – for the collective identity of a people, a priceless artifact evoking a bygone era.

Of course, old books are bound to elicit associations of transience and impermanence. However, by overlaying, digitally processing and framing her historical sources and thus entering into a dialogue with them, Der-Meguerditchian manages to transcend these associations and build a bridge between past and present.

Suggestive of the delight children take in drawing and scribbling in books, the techniques she uses translate commentary into visual form. Since commentary is generally concerned with examining the authenticity of texts and placing them into a wider context, it often serves to detach us from the text itself. Der-Meguerditchian gives this familiar practice a surprising twist by harnessing it to opposite effect: in using it to amplify their "whisper," she allows her sources to speak to us today and turns them into "treasures" whose significance goes beyond the purely historical.





the non-belonging to any one or to any thing least of
 all a nation, less than a person or a place
 he was said to have driven them toward the infinite
 they wandered like that until until had reached its end
 the whirlwinds and turmoils were likely to open wounds
 the two opened the books robbed them of their stillness
 they entered the monastery they entered dark light
 the even-handedness of the victors enjoys acclaim
 and the duty of every soldier is to follow orders

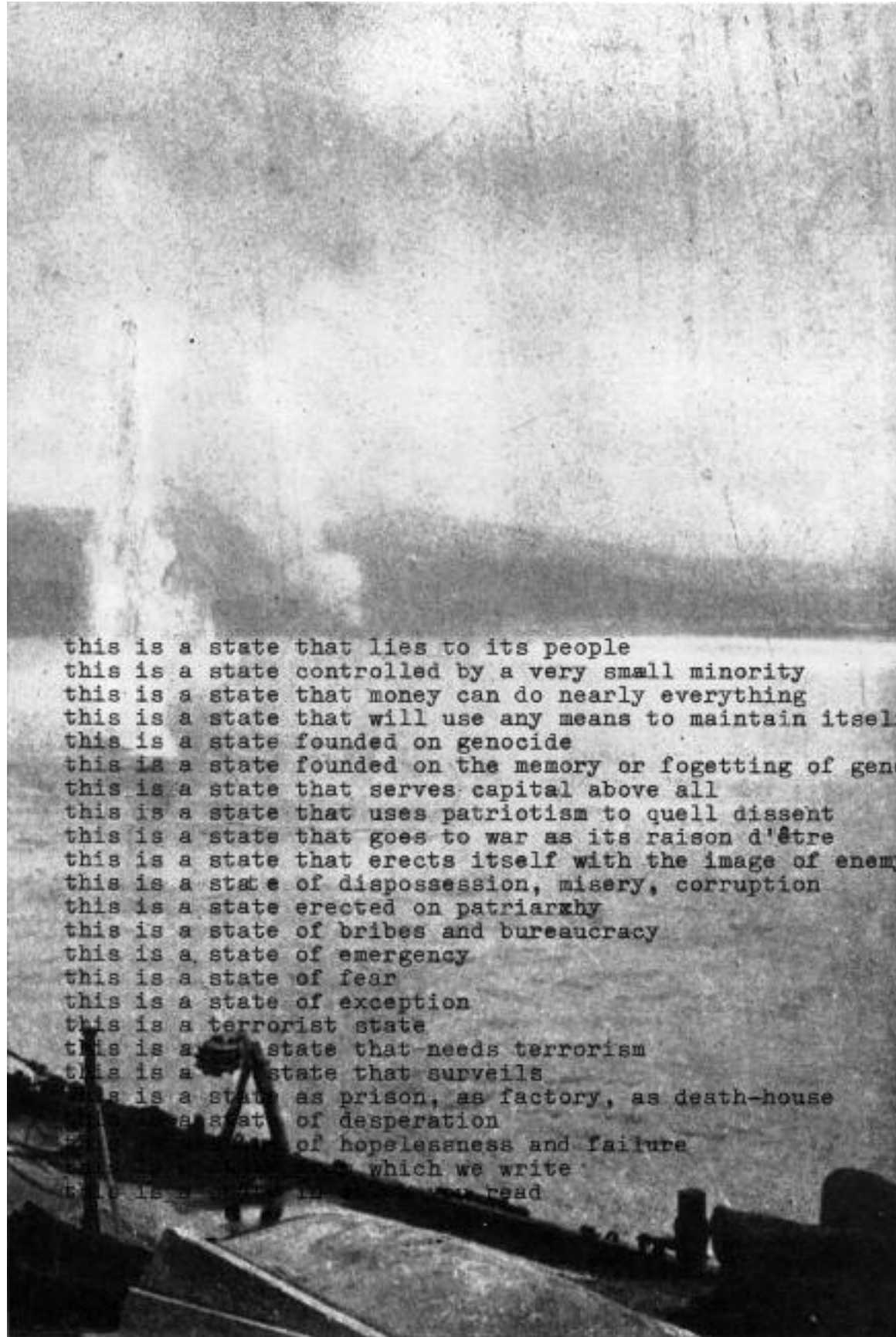
*A Hundred
 Movements toward
 Oblivion. From When
 Counting Loses Its
 Sense, 2015
 Courtesy the artists*



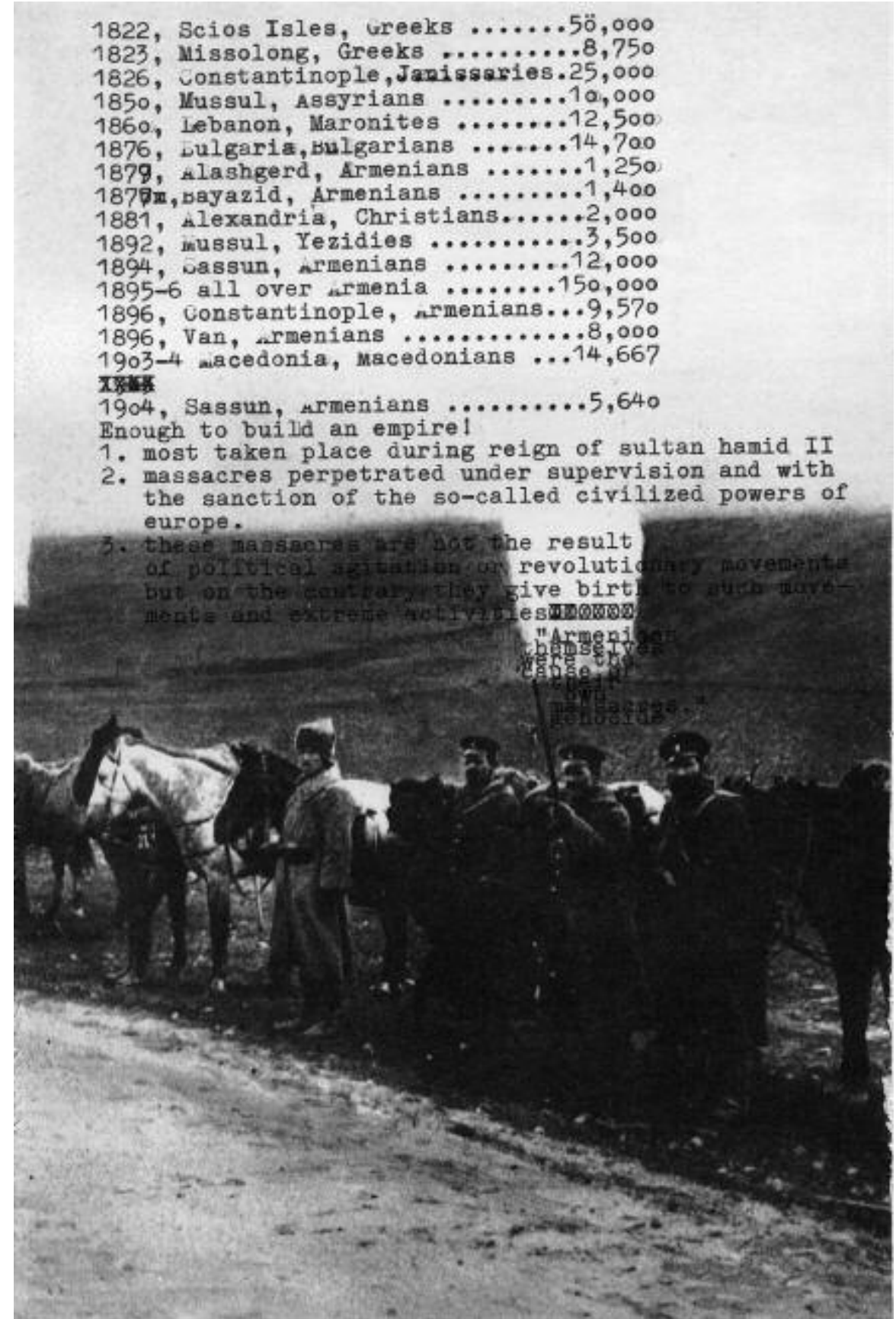
dear you,
 who are you and what do you want from me? you ask, you
 you ask, you ask, you make me stumck, you make me misspe:
 you make me err, mistake, fall caduto, ngnel, ngav, gnay
 you, who are you and who is asking you, no need for que:
 -tion marks anymore, you who interrogates me to admit tl
 -ings i don no not longer no no longer recall, you who
 ask and ask again and never stop asking, you, are a gho:
 -st question mark, you, who are what from where
 you who came to me at night and asked me to lllove, leave
 loving leaving leaving more in loving, you who came to
 me in my darkness, my darjeeling colonozing colonialtea
 you who always haunt me and they say me a gl
 you who start always where you left
 doubling and tripling, tripping
 ver, over and over again and then undergro
 you trip over the board the bodieww bodies u
 -nderground, on the gro
 -se me af i ask you to identify your
 -self you whocarry
 on that same historical
 job those ones who you call enemies
 of the state you who
 persecute, you, is it in the
 name of what, homeland, fatherland, religion
 business, you who name god, you who name every
 one, everything under your inside and outside, you who
 are so dear to me, you who are my neighbor, you who ste
 al again what can only be common, you who steal what you
 already have, possess, or can never possess, dear you
 from start to finish it is you from day to night it is
 you you you, you have come, and you have gone, you, you
 look at me, pity, sadness, grief, hate, disgust, shame
 mutilated, as if, you who have the means in your hands
 to read and to stop and to reason and to madness arms a
 -d you was foot your own land and people because you ha
 none, you who will always wander like like who, who do
 you look like, and you who startle me and your children
 out of bed, with what, what is moving you, you who read
 these words, justice, good or evil when you who are you
 and does it matter who ask, ask, asks stumble stutter
 you who did this, what you did, what we made, youunmade
 you who think yourself a patriot, of what land, the lan
 d of thieves, you who would steal the last stand you ha
 -ve, dear you i try to write you but i can't get through
 to you, you who mean many things, all killy l's, l-words
 lost, left, laughable, lonely, lacking, lesser, iron, out
 of words already you were always being in this state
 of being out of words unable to find them, scattered all
 over the land which have been you who alone die ad live
 and alone have value and alone deserve peace alone rule
 over your dominions of dead you proud pompous even papa
 -rayer could not save you who kill and kill and kill ag
 -in like a sword which cuts through metaphor and silence

*A Hundred Apologies
 Will Not Amount.
 From When Counting
 Loses Its Sense,
 2015
 Courtesy the artists*

This State Is Sinking.
 From *When Counting Loses Its Sense*,
 2015
 Courtesy the artists



*We Had All the
 Amounts in Hand
 and It Amounted to
 Nothing.* From *When
 Counting Loses Its
 Sense*, 2015
 Courtesy the artists



Mekhitar Garabedian

Adam Budak

Chief Curator at the Czech National Gallery in Prague

“I am merely the place,” claims Mekhitar Garabedian and adds along the lines of his neon work which quotes French filmmaker Jean Eustache from his groundbreaking film, *La Maman and la Putain* (1973): “Ne parler qu’avec les mots des autres, c’est ce que je voudrais. Ce doit être ça la liberté” (Speaking with other people’s words, that’s what I desire. That must be a freedom). Autobiographically driven, the work of Mekhitar Garabedian narrates a process of becoming and understanding oneself as an act which is relational towards the other(s). Identity, according to the artist, is always a borrowed identity, borrowed from other people: “Nous ne sommes que les autres” (We are made out of and by others) concludes Garabedian after Alain Resnais while investigating a diasporic subject in his complex, conceptual practice which includes mainly photography and text-based works, executed as drawings, listings or neons, and to a large extent based upon appropriations, found footage or reenactments. The artist becomes an ethnographer of subjectivity, torn by migration and exile and conditioned by the contingencies of displacement and dispossession. His work is an ongoing rehearsal of an identity on a crossway of historical and multicultural turmoil. It is a diary of a troubled sense of belonging and estrangement with the language constituting an essential role in Garabedian’s quest for self-identification, origin and knowledge. “How does language, or the use of a mother tongue, shape and form our understanding and sense of being in the world? How can speaking in another language present a form of estrangement from the self?” asks Garabedian. Born in Aleppo (Syria), where his father lived, and later moving to Beirut where his mother was from, Garabedian spent his childhood between Syria and Lebanon, growing up in a family of Armenian roots thus living in a diaspora, lost inbetween three languages, Armenian, Arabic and Dutch (as the family soon, at Garabedian’s early age, relocated to Belgium). His *fig. a, a comme alphabet* (2009-ongoing) is a series of works based on exercises made while learning the Armenian alphabet. The repeated letters form patterns which, while recognizable as signs, remain incomprehensible to non-Armenian. Garabedian’s work is haunted by the otherness, generated by the unfamiliarity of language and an imprisonment in foreign semantic structures of what paradoxically is called a “mother tongue.” The language is turned into a meaningless ornament, a poetic fabric of incomprehension and lostness. The language pattern decorates the carpets, or, while applied directly on the wall, acts like graffiti or a kind of quasi-spiritual incantation – a labyrinthine alphabet of an alienated subject in despair. The series powerfully illustrates a dramatic act of impossibility to finding himself within familiar yet strange linguistic structures that determine basic communication and sense of identity. Garabedian’s archival 1964–1992, *Alep, Bourdj Hamound, Fresno* (2008) is an ongoing collection of reverse sides of photographs, chosen from the artist’s family albums. Instead of focusing on the photographs’ front side (which is withheld from the viewer), the artist concentrates on the seemingly marginal, personal notes in Armenian, Arabic or English on the backsides, as if searching, like a detective, for hidden, intimate information on invisible subjects and past events. This is yet another example of Garabedian’s troubled memory (or rather a “postmemory” as the artist himself would call it) and his poignant personal past.

fig. a, a comme alphabet, carpet, 2012
Handmade carpet
2 x 3 m
Courtesy the artist and Albert Baronian Gallery, Brussels

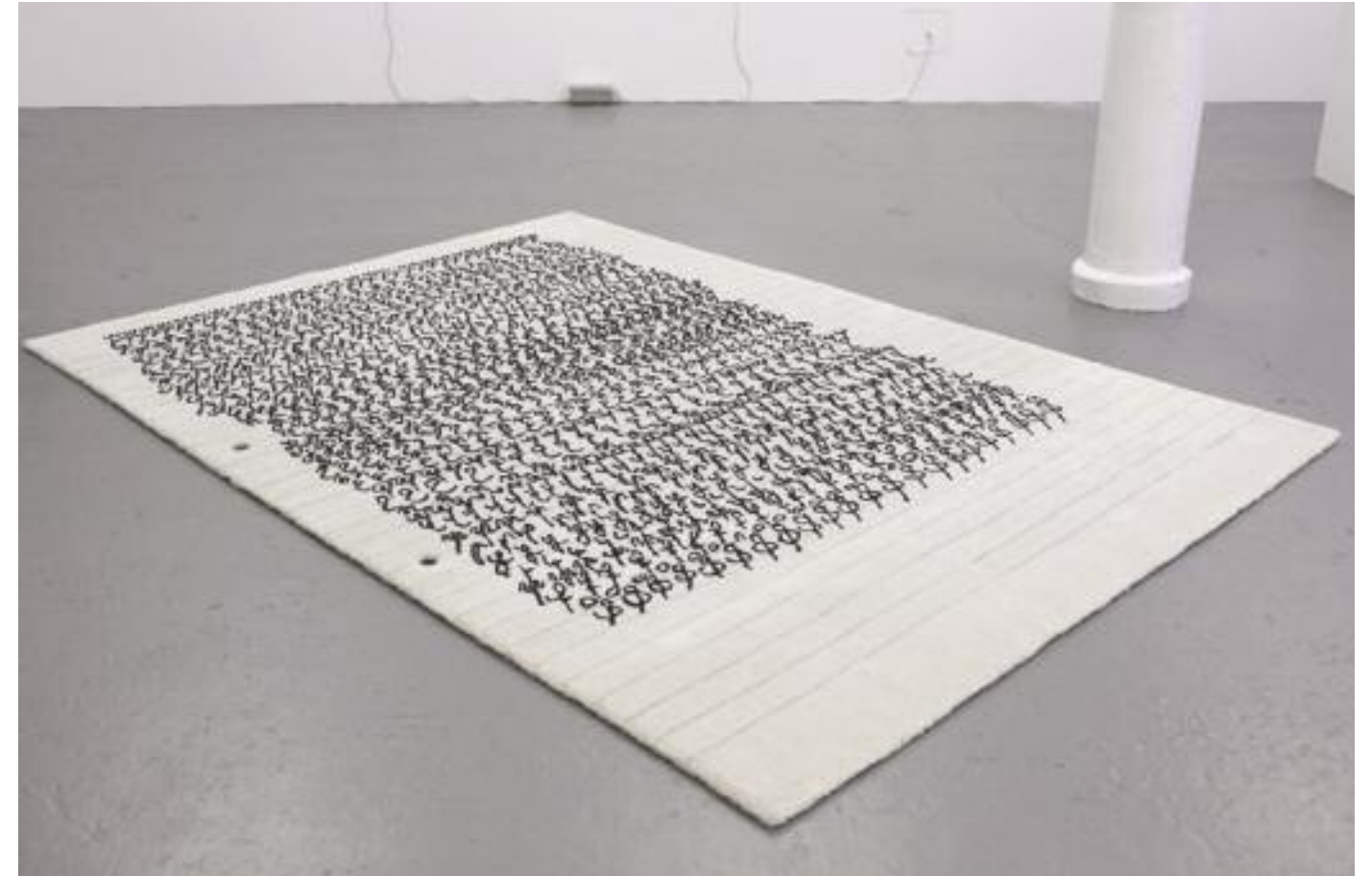


Table (Histoire de mes ancêtres),
 Saint Lazare, Venise, 2013–14
 Part 1 of a diptych
 Ink on paper
 134 x 100 cm
 Courtesy the artist and Albert
 Baronian Gallery, Brussels

TABLE			
Jeune Arménien	3	La bataille d'Avarair	48
Haig e Pel	5	Vahan Mamigonian	49
Aram	6	Vartan II Mamigonian	50
Ara le Beau	7	Kail Vahan	51
Sémiramis	8	Sempad le Vainqueur	52
Anouchavane	9	Sempad I le Martyr	53
Vahakn	10	Aghtamar	54
Anahite	11	Ani	55
Dork le Laid	12	Fin d'Ani	56
Tavit Sessountsi	13	Tatoul Vanantetsi	57
Dikran	14	Léon le Magnifique	58
Vagharchag	15	Libarid	62
Ardachès I	16	Fin du royaume d'Arménie	63
Ardachès I	18	Le Catholico Hagop IV	64
Ardachès I et Saténig	19	Tavit Peg	65
Ardavanz	20	Nersès Achdarakoutsi	66
Dikran II le Grand	22	Les partis arméniens	67
Dikran II et Mithritade V	24	Les héros de Zeltoun	68
Ardavand II	25	Les révoltes du peuple arménien	69
Ardavand II et Cléopâtre	26	Van	70
Dertad I	27	24 Avril 1915	71
Le roi Sanadroug	28	Moussa Dagh	72
Kosrov le Grand	29	Les héros de l'Arara	73
Dertad III	31	Le général Nazarbegian	74
Dertad et Grégoire	32	Sardarabad	75
La maladie de Dertad	33	Antranig	76
Le baptême du roi et du peuple	34	28 Mai 1918	77
Saint Nersès	36	29 Novembre 1920	78
Archagavan	38	La vie continue	79
La bataille de Tzirave	39	Les catholico	80
La belle Parantème	40	Les couvents et les prêtres arméniens	81
Manouel Mamigonian	41	Nous existons	82
Mesrob Machdouts - Vramchabouh - Le Cath. Sahag	42	De mon pays, douce Arménie	83
Saint Mesrob Machdouts	43		
Vartan Mamigonian et Ghéront Yérets	45		

David Kazanjian

Associate Professor
of English at the University
of Pennsylvania

Although I was asked to write about three distinct works presented at two pavilions during the 2015 Venice Biennale, I have been unable to keep them from co-mingling. This opening paragraph will thus be shared among these three works: by Nina Katchadourian and Aikaterini Gegisian in the Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia, and by Sarkis in the Pavilion of Turkey. It will mark the event of this co-mingling. Now, in some strict sense it is impossible for these three works to co-mingle. Catastrophe, diaspora, and exile interdict it. And yet, paradoxically, Katchadourian, Gegisian, and Sarkis show us that such co-mingling is also urgent – but not for the reasons we might rush to think. Not because they perform the tired triumvirate so pithily expressed by the chorus of Los Angeles Armenian alt-metal band System of a Down’s late 1990s hit song “P.L.U.C.K”: “Recognition, Restoration, Reparation.” In fact, in their refusal to sing this chorus, Katchadourian, Gegisian, and Sarkis – in distinct ways and to disparate effects – displace the habits of thought and action that have ossified around a word that links Turks and Armenians, in loss and gains, in struggle and claims. I won’t even write this word properly, since the presumption of its propriety is the very agent of that ossification. I will simply refer to it as “the-word-genocide,” the implications of which have barely begun to be thought (as the philosopher and literary critic Marc Nichanian has taught us) even while it is so often uttered as if by rote, or perhaps precisely because it is so often uttered by rote.¹ For although the events to which that word refers of course happened, catastrophically, it has become evident to some that the significance of those events cannot be captured by the-word-genocide, a too-calculable, too-juridical word that was not even coined until many years after the catastrophe to which it now refers.² Indeed, words like “catastrophe,” as well as older, Armenian words used by those who lived through and died in the massacres and deportations – *yeghern*, *medz yeghern*, *darakrutium*, *aksor*, *chart*, and *aghet* – could be said to tell us much more, or at least to call for thinking rather than rote reiteration. In the spirit of just such a call, Katchadourian, Gegisian, and Sarkis each suggests to us that those events need not be recognized, restored, or repaired in the too-familiar ways. Their works unhinge and displace the rote “re-” – a prefix that melancholically dreams of an impossible return to a presumptively prior unity and fullness – and instead transport us to three potent thresholds: **re cognition** (Katchadourian); **re storation** (Gegisian), and **re paration** (Sarkis).

Note: For Part I, please see the entry on Nina Katchadourian in this catalogue.

II. **re storation**: Aikaterini Gegisian’s *A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas* (2015)

If we can create of the verb “store” – which means to furnish, supply, or stock – the noun “storation,” then we will have arrived with Gegisian at the verge of restoration’s undoing.

“Restoration” offers the most melancholy of hopes, promising a return to a prelapsarian state. In an echo of “recognition’s” etymology, which I discussed in my account of Katchadourian’s *Accent Elimination*, “restoration” often refers to the return of a ruler to a putatively rightful position of power. It is thus a myth machine of sorts, constantly generating tales of prior glory, promising stores of lost wealth and greatness with the seemingly simple action of the re-, which covers its mythical tracks by literalizing the tales it spins. Of course, the tales are never as true as they claim to be, and the return never arrives, even as the restorers manically pursue their melancholy visions.

A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas literally tears the stores from the texts of their promised return. The pages of Gegisian’s layered and collaged work are repurposed from 1960s, 70s, and 80s photographic albums of Soviet Armenia, Turkey, and Greece. Ideological edifices supported by the logic of restoration, those albums claimed simply to present visual truths to their readers, as if those truths were merely stored in the albums. Yet those truths are effects of the albums themselves, a prophetic gambit in which the depiction of an ideal seeks to make that ideal real. Ripped from their proper places in the albums, which were themselves wholly figurative even as they claimed otherwise, the images in Gegisian’s work are catachrestical, figures without adequate literal referents. The *Small Guide* thus composes a surrealist document based on documents of sur-reality. It offers unabashed storation; it supplies us with an imagined land, one we can never quite map or place, one whose temporality slides ir-responsibly across three decades marked by nationalist exuberance and the overheated aesthetics of the Cold War. What will we make of these surreal stores? This question cannot be answered outside the space in which *A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas* will appear during the Biennale, a space that itself has long been an instrument of Armenian nationalist myth making: the cloisters of the San Lazzaro Monastery in Venice, *San Lazzaro degli Armeni*. But I can attend, in advance of that appearance, to some of the *Small Guide*’s individual pages.

Take, for instance, one of the more heavily populated pages: a photograph of a man and a woman lounging on the edge of a pool next to a man in the pool holding onto the edge, placed on top of another photograph of men drinking in a tavern. On their own, in the original contexts of their respective albums, the photographs communicate by rote. The pool promises leisure time for the traveling bourgeoisie, as the gently undulating waters, bare limbs, and bronzed white skin figure a time-outside-of-time, a time of perpetual pause that still organizes the logic of international tourism. The tavern, in turn, offers timeless folk charm, the men functioning like props every bit as much as the background decor of (plastic?) grapes on vines draped over wine barrels stacked against a wall. If such rote communication delivers what Roland Barthes called the photograph’s *studium* – “What I feel about these photographs derives from an *average* effect, almost from a certain training” – then the photograph of the tavern contains its own *punctum*, which Barthes describes as the “element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me,” troubling the *studium* itself.³ The tavern image’s *punctum* is perched over the head of one of the drinking men, who gesticulates in casual conversation: a wall calendar showing an image of a beach on a tranquil bay with a boat cruising by, hung below a generic watercolor painting of a house on a similarly tranquil bay surrounded by cliffs and mountains. This *punctum* is of the ironic sort: the “*average* effects” of the calendar and the watercolor are replicated by the photograph of the tavern scene itself, such that the tavern scene’s putative authenticity suddenly appears as a mere repetition of prior performances of authenticity. But what of Gegisian’s use of these images in *A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas*? Grouped analogically, as photographs that share a particular *studium*, the layered and reframed technique of their assembly displaces the original *studium* altogether. But not in the name of a piercingly ironic undercutting of authenticity. Rather, the *Small Guide* gathers these stores into an as yet undefined imaginary, one emptied of ideological purpose, one whose purpose is at once potent and unsettled.

Kinship’s Futures,” *Ararat* online magazine (2011), (<http://ararat-magazine.org/2011/06/kinships-past-kinships-futures/>); Anahid Kassabian and David Kazanjian, “From Somewhere Else: Egoyan’s *Calendar*, Freud’s *Rat Man*, and Armenian Diasporic Nationalism,” *Third Text*, vol. 19, no. 2 (March 2005), 125–144; David Kazanjian and Marc Nichanian, “Between Genocide and Catastrophe,” in Eng and Kazanjian, eds., *Loss*, 125–147; Kassabian and Kazanjian, “Melancholic Memories and Manic Politics: Feminism, Documentary, and the Armenian Diaspora,” in Diane Waldman and Janet Walker, eds., *Feminism and Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 202–223.

³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 26.

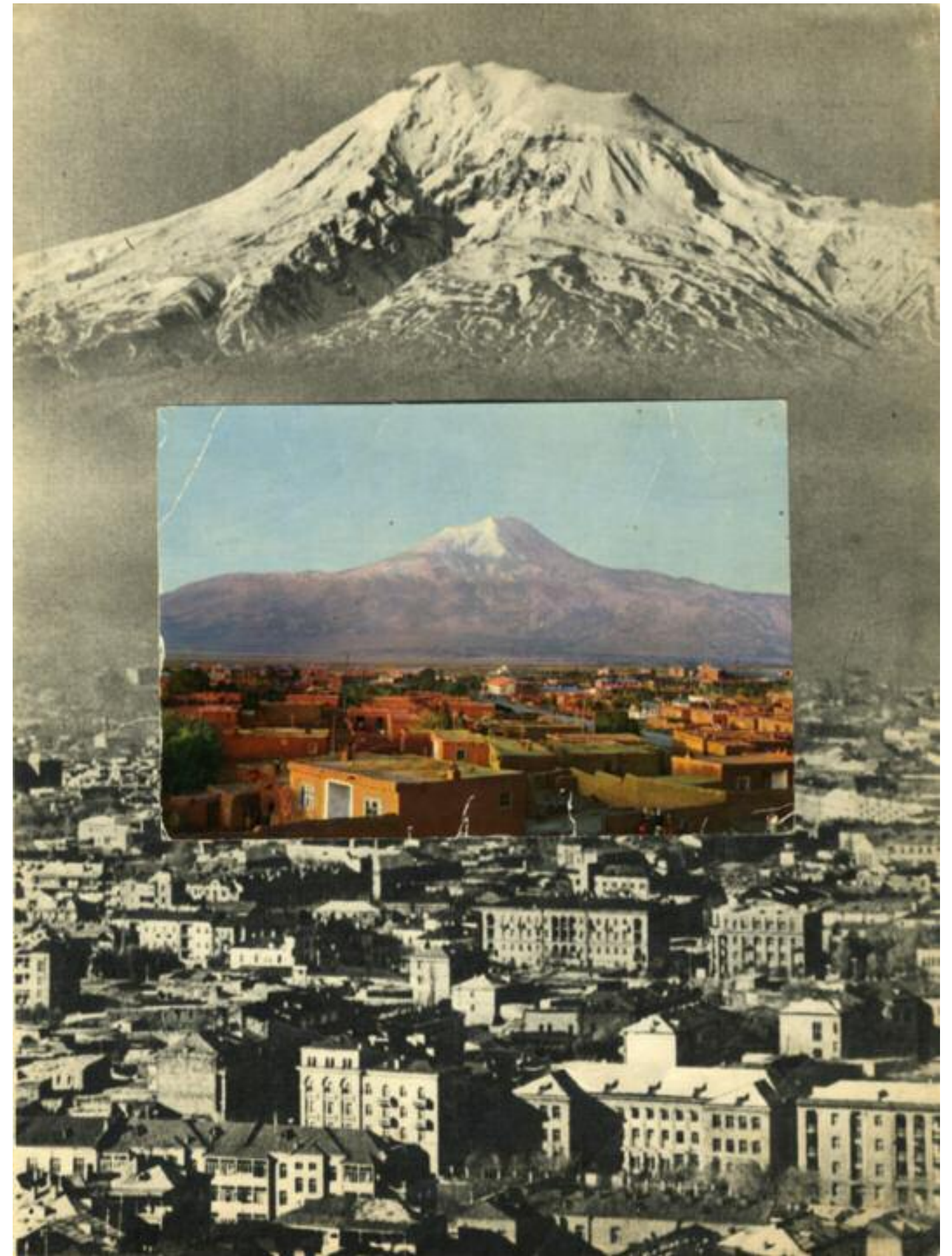
Opposite
From the series *A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas*, 2015
Collage on paper
28.5 x 22 cm
Courtesy the artist and Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki

Below
From the series *A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas*, 2015
Collage on paper
25.5 x 43.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki

Other images in the *Small Guide* function according to a similar logic of analogical taxonomy, layering, and framing. On one page, a black and white photograph of Armenia's nationalist icon *par excellence*, Mount Ararat, foregrounded by the cityscape of Yerevan, overlaid by a small color photograph of Ararat seen from the Turkish side; on another, three black and white photographs of pastoral waterfalls layered on top of one another, each differing slightly in hue from brown to blue to grey; on a third page, a split-screen image made up of two photographs of folkloric dance performances bathed in the vivid colors of 1970s photography. In each case, the albums' promise of reiterable authenticity is displaced by iteration with a difference. That is, the differences between the photographs layered upon each other displace the rote, reiterative *studium* the album seeks to train its readers in.

A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas does not restore anything to or for us. Rather, all is torn from its restorative context and provisionally reassembled without recourse to the kind of training Barthes sees as so essential to the effect of the *studium*. Gegisian stores these images for us in her work, as if guiding us toward a future when we might draw on them, a future that does not long for a presumptively prior glory, a future in a world to which we do not yet belong.

Note: For Part III, please see the entry on Sarkis in the catalogue for the Turkish Pavilion.



Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi

Gabi Scardi

Art critic and curator
based in Milan

For decades, directors Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi have been tirelessly working to demolish the filters that condition our perception of images.

Their project consists in a kind of archeological, anthropological and emotional excavation of history, carried out on the basis of pictures from historical archives or private collections – millions of pictures, whose details are marked out, analyzed and then reassembled, reframed and recolored.

The main themes in their work are totalitarianism, racism, colonialism, major armed conflicts, the effects of power and violence in all their various forms, and the rift between the exploited and the exploiters, between leading actors and outcasts – as well as the way in which ideology shapes our interpretation of history – and entrenched ideas distort it.

The two artists' work unfolds in cycles: *Polo all'Equatore* (1986), *Uomini anni vita* (1990), *Animali criminali* (1994), *Su tutte le vette è pace* (1998), *Inventario balcanico* (2000), *Frammenti elettrici* (2002 and 2009), *Carrousel de jeux* (1997–2006) and *Pays barbare* (2013) – these are but some of the stages in their rigorous research.

The memory of the Armenian Genocide is the founding element in their work.

Both a paradigmatic event and a repository of personal experiences, what this theme entails for Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi is not just an engagement with the past but responsibility towards the future.

It is in this light that one should view *Ritorno a Khodorciur* (*Return to Khodorciur*): a full-length film that plays out in the single sequence shot of an old man telling his story in Italian. This protagonist, author of the text and narrator is Raphael Gianikian, Yervant Gianikian's eighty-year-old father. His voice is faltering, his Italian rather broken, and the sheets of paper he holds in his hands are misarranged. But the narrative is straightforward, the words carefully chosen, and the facts stripped down to the essential. The running time, eighty minutes, coincides with the unfolding of the story. No description is added, no adjective: the man lays his memories bare, testifying even for those who cannot speak. His words do not transfigure reality by offering some alternative, but bring us face to face with first-hand experiences: those of a survivor, of someone who as a child endured a long death march first and then slavery, and was finally released after having witnessed the end of his own people and community.

In his life, Raphael Gianikian has never ceased roaming the earth: a way for him to face existence and engage with the past, to assert that vitality and endurance which enabled him to survive and make it through the 20th-century free from hate.

At the age of eighty he embarked on a journey on foot across eastern Turkey, in order to return to his homeland, retracing the various stages of his forced march.

Back from his journey, he felt the need to describe it. Alone, he wrote and recorded himself.

With *Ritorno a Khodorciur*, Angela Ricci Lucchi and Yervant Gianikian have helped Raphael Gianikian overcome his reserve, by filming him as he reads his story.

Through his controlled yet evident strain, the act of recollection takes shape.

His words combine a yearning for reunion with a feeling of by now incurable estrangement. His figure, sunk in an armchair which might be anywhere, reveals the dismay and sense of loss of an entire misplaced people.

Il pesce d'oro, preparatory sketch for *Rotolo armeno*, 1989–91
Watercolor on paper
15.5 x 10.5 cm
Courtesy the artists

Fratello Agnello, preparatory sketch for *Rotolo armeno*, 1989–91
Watercolor on paper
15.5 x 10.5 cm
Courtesy the artists

Il figlio del Re di Armenia, preparatory sketch for *Rotolo armeno*, 1989–91
Watercolor on paper
15.5 x 10.5 cm
Courtesy the artists

Meglio il serpente che la donna, preparatory sketch for *Rotolo armeno*, 1989–91
Watercolor on paper
15.5 x 10.5 cm
Courtesy the artists



Whereas most of Ricci Lucchi and Gianikian's colossal work foregoes words in favor of the austere power of images, this film is based on the spoken word: only a few faded photographs are added to the portrait of the reading father in the closing frames.

What have not changed are the formal spareness and effort of engaging with the facts by getting to the essential.

The Armenian cultural tradition is also evoked through drawings, for the most part executed by Angela Ricci Lucchi.

In the two artists' research, the untiring analysis of individual film frames has always been counterbalanced by the immediacy of small drawings set against a neutral background.

These mostly monochrome drawings, made up of miniature strokes, fluctuate on sketchbook pages. Watercolor drawings brightened by splashes of vibrant colour stand out on large white sheets.

But let us not be deceived by the light, dreamlike strokes: upon closer inspection, the scenes emerge as harrowing outbursts of pain. This also applies to the long white roll onto which Ricci Lucchi graphically transposes the Armenian fables which Raphael Gianikian used to tell her.

Arranged in a top-down sequence, and separated from one another by punctuation marks also drawn from the oral tradition, these fables – featuring a series of animals as their protagonists – are the product of minds that frame everything within a criminalizing interpretation of reality.

Against the pervasive violence surrounding us, and the emotional numbness that threatens to overcome us, Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi continue to pit their attitude of awareness and repeated affirmation of the dignity of life.



Fiaba 5. Il figlio del Re di Armenia
(la volpe, il lupo, l'orso,
l'avvoltoio), 1989, first preparatory
sketch for *Rotolo armeno*
Watercolor on paper
11 x 15.5 cm
Courtesy the artists

Hrag Vartanian

Writer, critic and curator.
He is the editor-in-chief and
co-founder of the arts blog
Hyperallergic

About sixty-two years after the death of Armenian-American painter Arshile Gorky, artist Aram Jibilian drove through the streets of Sherman, Connecticut, looking for the house where the proto-Abstract Expressionist once lived. Featured in a 1948 edition of *Life Magazine*, Gorky's home was portrayed in the pages of the influential publication as the epitome of mid-century Modernist style, complete with a giant wall of windows in what the artist called his "glass house," and his picture-perfect family. When Jibilian finally found the residence, he talked its current owner into allowing him to spend time in the space. That visit would be part of his unconventional collaboration with the artist, whose spirit, the owner believed, could still be sensed all around.

For Jibilian, Gorky is a connection to a cultural and artistic heritage, a specter looming above his own identity in a country that once demanded that immigrants quickly purge their past. Born Vosdanig Adoyan on the shores of Lake Van, Gorky changed his name – seduced by the promise of the American Dream – and submerged his personal history into abstraction, where he experienced, alchemized, and perhaps reconciled his past behind veils and layers of stories and paint.

Using his iconic *The Artist and His Mother* (c. 1926–1936), which is based on the only extant photograph of Gorky's mother who died in a famine following the Armenian Genocide, Jibilian asked his subjects to don masks fashioned from the image. The masked figures bridge two realities (life/ death), while mimicking Gorky's own life perpetually between two worlds (America/ Armenia, Abstract Expressionism/ Surrealism, modernity/ tradition, fact/ fiction). The series aspires to understand what the painter hid for so long in a Faustian bargain that made his work possible, even if his life slowly became unbearable until it ended in suicide.

"For the mask, I was drawn to the painted face – instead of the photograph – because of the deeper story it told," Jibilian explains. "The face in the photo foreshadows a trauma, but the painted face seems to reconcile a trauma. Having recently been reconciling with my own grief over the death of a loved one by suicide, this was the face with which I connected."

In works like *Self-portrait with Gorky Mask* (2007), Jibilian evokes another famous artist, David Wojnarowicz, who photographed a friend wearing the mask of a 19th-century French poet in his *Arthur Rimbaud in New York* (1978–79) series. Wojnarowicz hints at parallels between himself and his artistic idol, but Jibilian inserts himself directly to transform the ghostlike series into something more definitive. "By wearing the masks, the subjects connect themselves to Gorky vis-a-vis his legendary covering of identity, history and truth," Jibilian says. "The masks operate as a separation device and a defense mechanism, but also as a point of connection as many viewers are familiar with the poignancy of their haunting gazes."

In these images Gorky lives a fantastical existence freed from the burden of reality. *Gorky and the son he never had* (2010) evokes the *Portrait of Myself and My Imaginary Wife* (1934–35) that the artist painted in a wishful moment, while *Gorky, a life in 3 acts* (2008) imagines a more ordinary life for the artist than was ever possible. And in *Untitled (Gorky's Grave, 1; 2015)*, Jibilian captures the ultimate ambiguity of Gorky's life, as we see that his childhood name has crept onto his gravestone, to remind us that some things can never be erased.

The Gorky Mask, 2010
UV pigment on Dibond
58.7 x 55 cm
Courtesy the artist





*Gorky, a life in 3 acts
(i. birth), 2008*
UV pigment on Dibond
61 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy the artist

Untitled (Gorky's Grave, 1), 2015
UV pigment on Dibond
66 x 86.4 cm
Courtesy the artist

*Gorky and the son he never had,
2010*
UV pigment on Dibond
76.2 x 61 cm
Courtesy the artist



David Kazanjian

Associate Professor
of English at the University
of Pennsylvania

Although I was asked to write about three distinct works presented at two pavilions during the 2015 Venice Biennale, I have been unable to keep them from co-mingling. This opening paragraph will thus be shared among these three works: by Nina Katchadourian and Aikaterini Gegisian in the Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia, and by Sarkis in the Pavilion of Turkey. It will mark the event of this co-mingling. Now, in some strict sense it is impossible for these three works to co-mingle. Catastrophe, diaspora, and exile interdict it. And yet, paradoxically, Katchadourian, Gegisian, and Sarkis show us that such co-mingling is also urgent – but not for the reasons we might rush to think. Not because they perform the tired triumvirate so pithily expressed by the chorus of Los Angeles Armenian alt-metal band System of a Down’s late 1990s hit song “P.L.U.C.K”: “Recognition, Restoration, Reparation.” In fact, in their refusal to sing this chorus, Katchadourian, Gegisian, and Sarkis – in distinct ways and to disparate effects – displace the habits of thought and action that have ossified around a word that links Turks and Armenians, in loss and gains, in struggle and claims. I won’t even write this word properly, since the presumption of its propriety is the very agent of that ossification. I will simply refer to it as “the-word-genocide,” the implications of which have barely begun to be thought (as the philosopher and literary critic Marc Nichanian has taught us) even while it is so often uttered as if by rote, or perhaps precisely because it is so often uttered by rote.¹ For although the events to which that word refers of course happened, catastrophically, it has become evident to some that the significance of those events cannot be captured by the-word-genocide, a too-calculable, too-juridical word that was not even coined until many years after the catastrophe to which it now refers.² Indeed, words like “catastrophe,” as well as older, Armenian words used by those who lived through and died in the massacres and deportations – *yeghern*, *medz yeghern*, *darakrutian*, *aksor*, *chart*, and *aghet* – could be said to tell us much more, or at least to call for thinking rather than rote reiteration. In the spirit of just such a call, Katchadourian, Gegisian, and Sarkis each suggests to us that those events need not be recognized, restored, or repaired in the too-familiar ways. Their works unhinge and displace the rote “re-” – a prefix that melancholically dreams of an impossible return to a presumptively prior unity and fullness – and instead transport us to three potent thresholds: **re cognition** (Katchadourian); **re storation** (Gegisian), and **re paration** (Sarkis).

I. **re cognition: Nina Katchadourian’s Accent Elimination (2005)**

If we can see and hear a kind of dispersal of cognition as well as a cognition of dispersal in *Accent Elimination’s* aspirations, frustrations, failures, and laughter, then we will have arrived with Katchadourian at the brink of recognition’s undoing.

“Recognition” is quite an old term, with roots in the classical Latin *recognitio*: a formal examination meant to confirm something previously known to be true. By the medieval and early modern periods, “recognition” referred to a specifically juridical determination of truth, and as a proper noun it marked the acknowledgment of lordship by those subject to its rule. By the 19th century, it referenced the acknowledgment of a political entity’s full and formal statehood. The term’s history thus offers many resources for the orthodox politics of the Armenian diaspora, whose pursuit of recognition for the genocide typically positions diaspora as a tragic problem to be solved by and among states. *Accent Elimination* flirts with that melancholic vision,

setting out to harmonize the disparate accents that bear witness to Katchadourian’s thoroughly diasporic family of origin, whose members sound at once Armenian, Turkish, Lebanese, Finnish, Swedish, and American, with Arabic and French undertones. As the artist puts it, “Inspired by posters advertising courses in ‘accent elimination,’ I worked with my parents and professional speech improvement coach Sam Chwat intensively for several weeks in order to ‘neutralize’ my parents’ accents and then teach each of them to me.” However, rather than properly assuming her parents’ accents, or teaching them her “standard American accent,” the project amplifies sonic differences and the disparate histories they encode.

The work itself is a six-channel video installation in which the artist and her parents repeatedly perform a scripted Q&A about the parents’ accents. According to the artist, her parents wrote their own scripts and she sought “to play the part of a stranger.” At times, this performance seems to crack ever so slightly, on an affective level, with the artist’s interested enthusiasm pushing through the script’s studied lines. One group of three monitors shows the participants performing the first iteration of their scripts in their own accents, and then a second iteration – failingly, with frustration and hilarity – in each others’ accents. Three other monitors feature documentary footage from the lessons with their speech improvement coach.

The artist asks the questions; the parents dutifully answer. The task seems serious and the effort diligent. And yet the installation does not perform precision. Rather, one gets irritated by the script’s repetition, and impatient with the accents’ stubborn refusal to yield. Still, in and through that repetitive refusal the voices do transform into a kind of sonic dissonance, punctuated by the artist’s occasional exasperation and her parents’ earnest smiles. All are undone by their staged encounter, not into a “neutralized” sameness but rather into a paradoxical combination of persistently discrete difference and faltering aural clutter.

Writing of “the thrall in which our relations with others hold us,” Judith Butler suggests that “the very ‘I’ who seeks to tell the story is stopped in the midst of the telling; the very ‘I’ is called into question by its relation to the Other, a relation that does not precisely reduce me to speechlessness, but does nevertheless clutter my speech with signs of its undoing. I tell a story about the relations I choose, only to expose, somewhere along the way, the way I am gripped and undone by these very relations. My narrative falters, as it must. Let’s face it. We’re undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re missing something.”³ The politics of recognition misses this something. *Accent Elimination* directs us toward its cognition.

“Cognition,” unhinged from the lofty legalities of its prefix re-, draws forth an etymology distinct from “recognition.” *Co-(g)noscere* literally means together-knowing. Set at a different scale than “recognition’s” juridical statecraft, *Accent Elimination* reveals how richly lived diaspora is. In place of legal truth determined by elite polities, this work’s quotidian, familial performances offer a collaborative knowing full of agonism, where the incessancy of the re- gives way to an ongoing encounter with the Other, who is closer than we might expect.

Note: For Part II, please see the entry on Aikaterini Gegisian in this catalogue. For Part III, please see the entry on Sarkis in the catalogue for the Turkish Pavilion.

Silence, ‘in a place I’d never been before’, *Agos* (Istanbul, May 2011); Kazanjian, “Kinships Past, Kinship’s Futures,” *Ararat* online magazine (2011), (<http://araratmagazine.org/2011/06/kinships-past-kinships-futures/>); Anahid Kassabian and David Kazanjian, “From Somewhere Else: Egoyan’s *Calendar*, Freud’s *Rat Man*, and Armenian Diasporic Nationalism,” *Third Text*, vol. 19, no. 2 (March 2005), 125–144; David Kazanjian and Marc Nichanian, “Between Genocide and Catastrophe,” in Eng and Kazanjian, eds., *Loss*, 125–147; Kassabian and Kazanjian, “Melancholic Memories and Manic Politics: Feminism, Documentary, and the Armenian Diaspora,” in Diane Waldman and Janet Walker, eds., *Feminism and Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 202–223. ³ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 23.

¹ See Marc Nichanian, *The Historiographic Perversion*, trans. Gil Anidjar (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), originally *La Perversion Historiographique: une réflexion arménienne* (Paris: Editions Lignes et Manifestes, 2006); Nichanian, *Writers of Disaster, Armenian Literature in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 1, *The National Revolution* (Princeton: Gomidas Institute, 2002); Nichanian, “Catastrophic Mourning,” trans. Jeff Fort, in David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds., *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 99–124.

² See the Blind Dates Project, <http://blinddatesproject.org/>; Nanor Kebranian, “Introduction,” in Hagop Oshagan, *Remnants: The Way of the Womb, Book I*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Gomidas Institute, 2014), 5–39; David Kazanjian, “Re-flexion: Genocide in Ruins,” *Discourse*, vol. 33, no. 3 (2011), 368–389; Kazanjian, “On Sound and



Accent Elimination, 2005
 Six monitors, three channels of
 synchronized video, three single-
 channel video loops, six media
 players, three sets of headphones,
 three pedestals, two benches
 Variable dimensions
 Courtesy the artist and Catharine
 Clark Gallery

Opposite
 Installation views

Right
 Video still from footage of lessons

Below
 Documentation from practice
 sessions in the artist's studio



Jean-Christophe Royoux

Art critic and curator, he currently is visual arts and architecture advisor for the Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (France)

Pages 77–79
Presence – Belongingness to Present – Part II: Datcha Project – A Zone of No Production, since 2005
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel
Melik Ohanian @ ADAGP, Paris, 2015

Though separate and autonomous, parts I and II of *Presence – Belongingness to Present*, the work presented by Melik Ohanian at the 56th Venice Biennale, are also complementary and connected in many respects. Invited to take part in the Republic of Armenia Pavilion on the island of San Lazzaro as an artist of the Armenian diaspora, Ohanian decided to produce a particular version of his *Réverbères de la Mémoire*, a work for public space selected unanimously for the international project organized by the City of Geneva and Fondation Armenia in 2010.

After the consideration of various sites in the city of Geneva and a great deal of political and diplomatic pressure, deadlock has now been reached over the permanent installation of the nine memorial streetlights. It is this rejected memory of the drama and trauma of genocide, literally in pieces, that is addressed first of all by the entangled shafts, volutes and arches of the 87 elements of cast aluminum assembled on the platform of *Streetlights of Memory – A Stand by Memorial*, 2010–15.

Melik Ohanian belongs to the second generation of the Armenian diaspora after that of the survivors and exiles of the Genocide of 1915. For him, before the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, Armenia was for a long time synonymous with a culture devoid of territory, necessitating constant self-projection in order not to forget or to exist. This heap of metal, where the curved elements that stand out echo decorative motifs of the Armenian culture, constitutes an initial form of the reverberation of memory.

Datcha Project – A Zone of No Production, initiated in 2005, constitutes the second part of *Presence – Belongingness to Present*. The idea was born out of the artist's purchase of a house in an Armenian village in order to invite very different people each year to go and share the temporal dimension of this place in sessions of a few days. Declared as "A Zone of No Production" by Ohanian, the house also constitutes in many respects a reflection on the monumental form. Here the culture with no territory, embodied in a territory whose materialization is prevented, is channeled into a real frame in the form of a dwelling open to outsiders from which in principle nothing particular emerges, neither representation nor testimony.¹

The presence of the *Datcha Project* in Venice will come about exceptionally through the transcription of recordings of conversations and exchanges between the participants at a special session in Armenia organized to coincide with the Biennale.

In two diametrically opposite respects, from the most material to the almost immaterial, both projects question the forms of incarnation of the collective in a paradoxical interplay of presence and absence, the key question for any consistent reflection on the monument. Does the monument have a meaning only with respect to the community it represents or establishes?

It is ultimately in the form of two books – one reconstructing the misadventures of the Geneva monument and the other entitled *Datcha Project – Abandoned Black Book*, available to the public in the Armenian Pavilion and deliberately left by the artist in various places in the city – that these two projects will echo one another at a distance in Venice.

¹ The idea recalls the concept of the "temporary autonomous zone" put forward by the libertarian essayist Hakim Bey in 1991 or the more recent development of "zones to be defended" now spreading as a new form of collective action in various European countries.





Mikayel Ohanjanyan

Ginevra Bria

Art critic and Curator of ISISUF – International Institute of Studies on Futurism in Milan. She is editor at *Artribune* and *Espoarte Magazine*

39°33'2.52"N 46°1'42.96"E

On the left side of the Dar River canyon, on a rocky promontory near Sisian, in the Syunik Province of Armenia, almost two hundred and twenty vertical menhirs make up the Carahunge site. The name Carahunge is thought to derive from two Armenian words: *car*, meaning *stone*, and *hunge* or *hoonch* meaning *sound*, *speaking stones*. These megalithic basalt (andesite) stones, ranging in height from 0.5 to 3 meters above ground, were carved from the Middle Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Eighty-four stones still stand, set in a circular position and featuring near their tops, man-made circular holes, each one less than 10 centimeters across. Archeologists have suggested that these standing stones could have been used for astronomical observation. They may in fact comprise the world's oldest astronomical observatory. They testify geographically and historically to the attempt to measure an unreachable limit. An analogy between the whole and its parts, both represented by a primal plastic relation, placing an end to the sky's limits, as epistemological simulacra and their contingent reflection, voided, obliterated into stony immortality.

As with Carahunge, Mikayel Ohanjanyan's practice involves the spatial research of nothingness, inscribed by a sculptural carrier element, carved into a hollow apperceptive rhythm by an interpretation of distance (or: a distant interpretation). Into a linear cognitive geometry, Ohanjanyan's Armenity pours out from polygonal structures exploited in order to draw the line between two different incidental entities, propositional boundaries ascribable to a tangential point, between vertical and ground planes. Transcendental *specimina* made of a peculiar language, code created into a circumscribed formal scenario and a theoretical emptiness, an axis where the symbolic power of an asymmetrical attribution rests. His works set a line of demarcation between geographic dimensions, moulded onto the topology of earth spaces, and surfaces, depending instead on scattered, reconstructing, cognitive, aesthetic, anthropological, as well as social, practices. Ohanjanyan's "nothingness" easily leads to a symbolic fluency of dearth in (t)his work, turning into its opposite illusion, and then disclosing doubling of composition and matter, rooted in its identical region.

In the strict sense of word, Zorats Karer's monoliths (*strength / multitude stones*, Հորաց Բարեր, as Carahunge is also known in local lore) possess a phenomenon of acknowledgement which turn into a gathering identity, whereby the formulation of formulation becomes potentially timeless. In Ohanjanyan's work visual roots and Armenian belonging are forged by their alignment as defining, underlying principles. Each observation point is equivalent to a primordial geometric point or a sum of geometric postulates, astronomical maps, which are the result of the fission of the objects' constituent parts, duplicated inside epistemologically prominent joints. Therefore, *in lieu of* marginal lands, Ohanjanyan elaborates codes and legendary appearances, in which origins are reinterpreted as spatially-structured statements. One where they could be conveyed by an axiomatic theory on a random land assignment, which would correspond to a spontaneous resistance against changing probabilities.

Karahunj, 2014
Photo Enrico Meloccaro

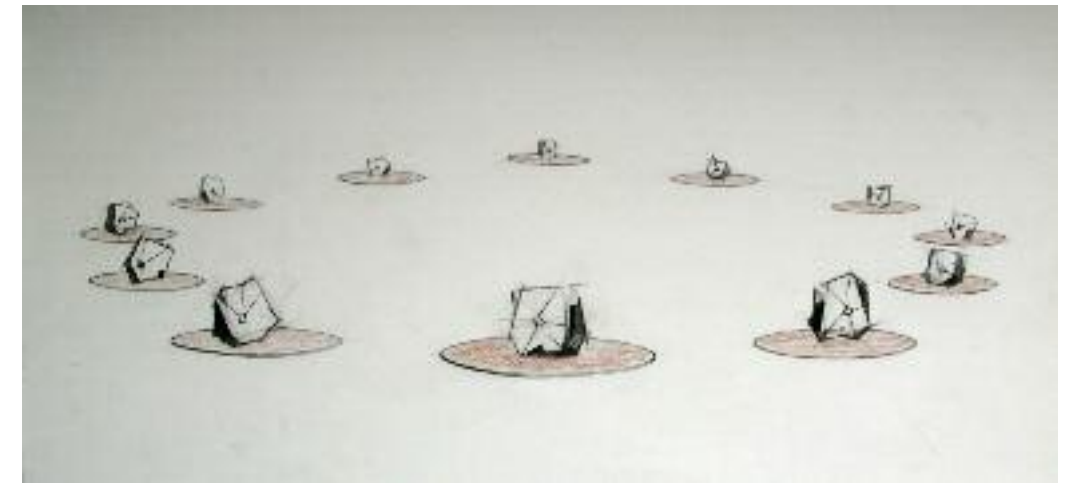


Karahunj, 2014
Photo Enrico Meloccaro



Tasnerku, 2014
Pencil and colored pencil
on paper
29.7 x 42 cm
Courtesy the artist

Tasnerku, detail, 2015
Mixed size basalt blocks
and discs of corten steel
Variable dimensions
Ø 120 cm each disc
Courtesy the artist and
Tornabuoni Arte Gallery,
Florence
Photo Nicola Gnesi



"... Uma história que eu nunca esqueci..." / "... A story I never forgot..." 2013–15
 Video installation – video
 13 minutes; threads on the floor
 Stills from video
 Collection of the artist



... *A story I never forgot...* is a video installation in which the video, produced in an “artisanal” manner, doesn’t pretend to achieve technical excellence, but to reorder and organize the fragmented memory of the Armenian Genocide (c. 1915 to 1920) based on the stories and narrative heard since childhood. To forget it would mean forgetting one’s own being.

Brazilian of Armenian descent from both sides, having started the career in the end of the 1980s, surrounded by episodes of violence; social, economical, and political traumas in Brazil, I did not feel comfortable to deal with the Armenian theme. My urgency was to bring people numbed by the daily occurrence closer to these issues. Since then I’ve been trying to delicately expand the reflection about violence and exclusion in the social fabric, where everyone ends up victimized.

When invited to take part in the 4th Thessaloniki Biennale, a city where my ancestors found refuge for several years, the remote past became so close to me...

Who remembers the Armenian Genocide? I do.

It was necessary to reassemble each fragment of memory as in a puzzle, full of enormous personal cost, to narrate once again the story which was told to me and which I never forgot: to remember and to do remind, to never more happen.

History runs through with a handkerchief embroidered by my grandmother when a refugee in Thessaloniki, with the support of the *Armenian General Benevolent*, where she was an embroidery teacher. Transformed in each episode, the piece covers the story of her origin remembrances (Konya), the life in Greece, the departure to Rio de Janeiro (and new life), until the handkerchief returns as part of the work in the Biennial.

This text is written in the heat of the moment, when multitudes are in the streets of my country, fighting for their rights, living times we haven’t seen for a long time. This made me think of all projects and experiences that art has provided me.

If it doesn’t change the world, I have been living art as a trajectory of understanding and meeting the Other. I have tirelessly dedicated myself to transform the relations of people in the face of such issues, trying to activate a mobilization for a better world.

Rosana Palazyan, June 2013

"... Uma história que eu nunca esqueci..." / "... A story I never forgot..." 2013–15
 Project of the video installation
 at San Lazzaro Monastery





From the series *Por que Daninhas?* / *Why Weeds?*, detail, 2006–2015
Plants and embroidery with thread and human hair on fabric
25 x 20 cm each
Private collection
Courtesy the artist

The series *Why Weeds?* (2006–2015) presents objects as reliquaries, containing a plant considered a weed¹ underneath a transparent fabric. The plant is fixed with an imperceptible embroidery that accompanies its outline. The roots of the plants were substituted by phrases about weeds, embroidered with my hair. Both human and plant DNA is represented.

The roots-phrases are extracted from agronomy books consulted in my research on weeds in the process for the work *In the Other's Place* (2006). Working with the concept of transformation in homeless people life, in parallel to butterflies metamorphosis, my curiosity about weeds appeared by reading that “some species of butterfly are extinct because of the extermination of weeds.” So, what is really a weed? The title *Why Weeds?* raises questions about the terminology used to describe things that are considered undesirable.

Phrases such as “Something of a more exuberant beauty could grow in its place” or “They are *seen as enemies to be controlled*” are very similar to words I listened from some people, when I was involved in researching with the homeless in streets.

“Any specie can be a weed when it is born where it is undesirable and compete for space and nutrients with economically productive cultures”: this sentence makes me amplify the reflection between humans and plants considered weeds. Anyone can be a weed, at some time or in some context.

In 2010 the work acquired a new body when mounted on stands similar to plant labels at the botanical gardens, and took place at the installation *The Garden of Weeds*, a garden where plants considered weeds were cultivated along with ornamental and medicinal plants – proposing a reflection about how to live together and who would be the weeds in this garden?

¹ Weed in Portuguese – *Daninha* – is a word that is not used only for a kind of plant. It is an adjective used to designate something or someone harmful.

Now, photographic pieces representing *Why Weeds?* will be installed in the Cloister Garden of the San Lazzaro Monastery, and the weeds that will grow naturally in that garden will not be removed, living together with the existent plants.

In this specific exhibition, at the Armenian Pavilion of the 56th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, *Why Weeds?* is a challenger and proposes the reflexion of events such as genocides, undesirable immigration, social exclusion, and racism inflated by words and labels: “They are born where they are not wanted”; “They are invaders and must be exterminated”.

Rosana Palazyan, January 2015



Ruben Arevshatyan

Artist, art critic and independent curator based in Yerevan

My memory is my homeland

The relationship between memory and homeland, and the equation between the two, is perhaps one of the most basic concepts behind Sarkis Zabunyan's oeuvre. This concept includes within it the creative methodology and ideas that Sarkis has developed and used as an artist while also reflecting the complex and multilayered essence of his life story and world outlook. Just as memory space itself has no spatial borders, the artist's conception of homeland does not contain any fixed topographical borders. These borders expand through the silvery air of one of the September mornings in 1955 in Beyoğlu, one that is saturated with the scent of olive oil and vinegar, as well as the crunching sound of broken glass underfoot after the windows of street shops have been smashed. They reach up to, stretch and tear in the blood red silence of the northern Oslo sky in Munch's scream. They loom in African ritual sculptures reviving their symbolic essence and intertwining with new meanings that were acquired as a result of historic civilizational, cultural rifts and colonial appropriation. They disperse like an azure watercolor drop inside a small tin ship sunk somewhere in the ocean basin in Yerevan, but never reach the coveted door behind which desires become reality. The homeland present in Sarkis' memory is comprised of altogether diverse, geographically distant and contradictory images, aromas and melodies. Some are personal, while others are comprised of other people's sensations and traumas, which the artist appropriates and passes through the layers of his own memory where he juxtaposes, subjectivizes and crystallizes them into a newly visible and tangible memory trove.

And yet the subjective memory that Sarkis materializes in his work as his own personal experience does not presuppose the restrictive space set by the limits of individual memory. By focusing on his own personal reminiscences and experienced sensations of insignificant, at first sight, past moments Sarkis simultaneously withdraws from the "memory space" that he has created, leaving its borders open to anyone and letting the space survive on its own.

The distance established between the artist and his "space of remembrance" is an important precondition for an understanding of this space from multiple perspectives, while also being an important structural element of this very same space. It is the distance in which an event, a moment trauma, or human suffering are being translated into a memory; where the rifts between the "self" and the collective "we," an event and a narrative acquire through the artistic forms new structures and correlations, and thus also achieve new meaning(s).

The notion of autonomous survival is interwoven with the metaphors of rupture, migration, suffering, and the distant sensation of death and transition. These are all present as permanent elements in the form and concept of Sarkis' work. They offer a complex and multilayered system of references which relate to the artist's personal history and memory, while also referring to related world culture, arts, cinema, literature and music.

The concept of *Leidschatz* (a treasury of suffering) used by the artist considers the work of art as a store of energies derived from the experience of suffering. Different kinds of objects, sculptures, video and audio tapes, textual fragments, etc. store the

67 – *Croix de brique*, from *Ailleurs ici*, Chaumont-sur-Loire, 2012
Stained glass, metal, LED
50.8 x 77.7 cm
Courtesy Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris-Brussels



Atlas de Mammuthus Intermedius, 2014
Bones from the site of Romain-la-Roche (160,000 years B.C.)
Resin, natural glue, gold leaf
38 x 25 x 15 cm
Restored by Olivier Bracq according to the Japanese technique of restoration Kintsugi, dating back to the 15th century
Collection Musées de Montbéliard



41 – *Danseuse dorée en haut du toit*, from *Ailleurs ici*, Chaumont-sur-Loire, 2012
Stained glass, metal, LED
52 x 77.7 cm
Courtesy Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris-Brussels



accumulated experiences of suffering (both individual and collective) from the past. The artist's main task, then, becomes to free these "tragic" energies stored up over time in these objects.

Wandering as a nomad in between individual and collective remembrance spaces, Sarkis projects his memory experience onto the history of human suffering, thus opening up the borders between cultures and civilizations, and time and space, as if he were trying to find shelter in these very same memory territories. The artist's fathomless desire to share that shelter with others transforms Sarkis' "memory space" into a common homeland for all of humanity; a homeland where history, love, and all the suffering that anyone has ever experienced gain form and become visible, transforming themselves into a common human "treasure chest of memory."

Ada Ewe vierge, 2013–14
Metal furniture, 30 sheets on
Arches paper 300 g, 56 x 76 cm,
with wooden objects
132 x 68 x 92 cm
Courtesy Galerie Nathalie
Obadia, Paris-Brussels



Cecile Bourne-Farrell

Based in London, independent curator for public and private institutions

¹ Turkey, the successor state of the Ottoman Empire, denies the word “genocide” is an accurate term for the mass killings of Armenians that began under Ottoman rule in 1915. It has in recent years been faced with repeated calls to recognize them as such. To date, twenty-three countries have officially recognized the mass killings as genocide. To know more: Ara Sarafian, ed., *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, Uncensored Edition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Gomidas Institute, 2000).

² After the end of World War I, Genocide survivors tried to return and reclaim their former homes and assets, but were driven out by the Ankara government. On 13 September 1915, the Ottoman parliament passed the “Temporary Law of Expropriation and Confiscation,” stating that all property, including land, livestock, and homes belonging to Armenians, was to be confiscated by the authorities.

The images titled *Unexposed* by Hrair Sarkissian bring to light not only a contrasting interiority felt within the living spaces of Armenians who have relocated to Turkey, but also the role that these spaces play in the development of their inhabitants’ identity. The images, with their strong narrative complexity, might very well have been taken at the beginning of the 20th century during the Armenian Genocide from 1915 to 1917,¹ or perhaps during World War II. The Armenians have existed as a dispossessed group² ever since the existence of the Ottoman Empire, their gestures and beliefs reduced to nothing by oppressive regimes. Hrair Sarkissian’s work intends to reveal some of the intimacy found within the members of the Armenian minority in Turkey, some of whom dare not even mention their family names, fearful of the fatal consequences of revealing themselves to existing repression.

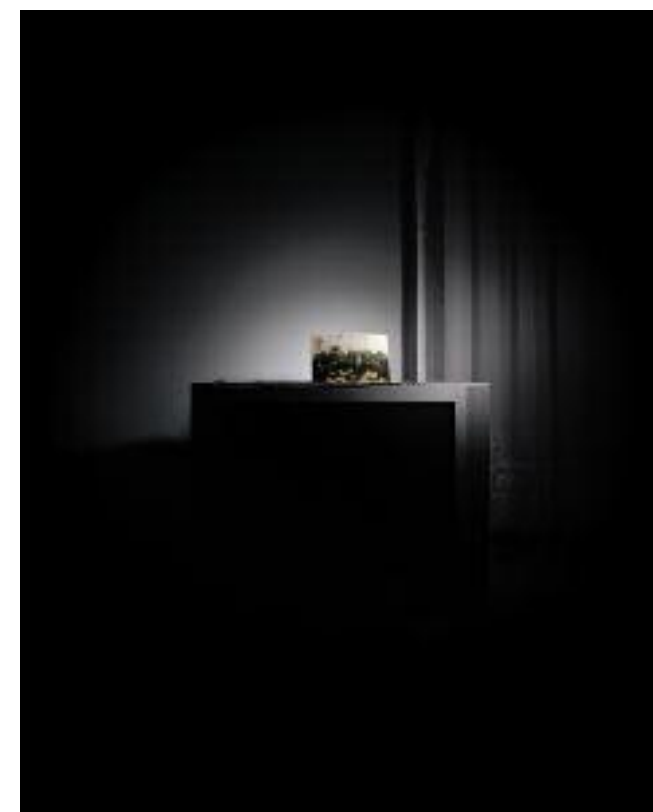
In general, the people who seek refuge in these apartments come from the countryside, mostly from Eastern Anatolia and small villages, where their Armenian identities are most stigmatized. Their existence in small communities makes them far more recognizable, since everyone knows everyone in village life, while moving to larger cities assures anonymity, and allows them to recover and reclaim a sense of community and belonging. Since the period of the Armenian Genocide, surviving Armenian families – called *gavioir* or infidels – have had to convert to Islam, in the hopes of escaping some of the repression imposed by the Turkish government and society. As a consequence, those who have chosen to reclaim their Armenian identities are accepted by neither their Armenian nor their Turkish compatriots: “They are never looked at the same way after that,” says the artist. Within this context, it is important to understand that those who embark on a quest for a different identity also risk leaving behind Islam, only to enter another, even more constrained community, thus putting themselves at an even larger risk.

Sarkissian’s images demonstrate this process. Hands holding fragile lace tablecloths, as though clutching to the earth that bears their roots. A floral armchair becomes evocative of bodies ever in search of a wounded past, just as a plinth overflows over time with layers of accumulated paint. The bodies are suffering, their souls searching for something lost. These are places that cannot reveal the identities of the people that come to them; silently, entire existences are played out in these muted interiors. This theatricality is provoked by the anonymity of the figures depicted, their presence only suggested through silhouettes and shadows, an open door, a hand reaching into the darkness to keep it open. We understand the severity of the scenario, sense something dark and deeply-rooted reinforced by the specific lighting used in the artist’s work.

The royal blue hue of the two chairs suggests not only that we find ourselves in a domestic interior, but one that is also symbolic of the refuge and protection provided by the setting. Nothing is taken for granted, and everything remains in the realm of the unspoken. Only a single group photograph is presented: it stands atop a television frame, delicately placed on a lace doily.

These hieratic photographs, although they never name or identify their subjects, use the modesty of the apartments in order to reveal the psychological mutations which occur in the liminal spaces between eternally changing lives – lost between situations, cultures and generations.

Here and following pages
Unexposed, 2012
 Archival inkjet prints
 137.5 x 110 cm each
 Courtesy the artist and Kalfayan
 Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki





Essays

Undoing Denials: Mapping a Curatorial Terrain

Neery Melkonian

*But they will also be different – different from how they used to be, these songs.
For I have turned and found longing at my side, and I have looked into her eyes,
and now she leads me with a steady hand.*

Rilke - In a lengthy love letter dated July 6, 1898

Art historian by education, Melkonian is an independent researcher, writer and curator based in New York City

Introduction

Since its inception a couple of decades ago following Armenia's independence, the curatorial direction of the national pavilion at the Venice Biennale leaned predominantly towards showcasing artists who work/live in Yerevan. Except when sponsors were needed, the participation of the global diaspora was largely bypassed and limited to one or two expats and an occasional celebrity artist.

Logistical and material difficulties in organizing such international undertaking noted, the making of the events reflected the insular cultural policies/politics of the local powers that be, with a diaspora elite willing to support them mainly out of patriotism. Such approaches have to date proven to be insufficient to cultivating a sound culture of giving that recognizes artistic production as a necessary investment in a society's growth.

Regardless, the pavilion has served as an important platform to introduce to international audiences the contributions of some remarkable local artists, as well as art professionals whose combined efforts imparted valuable insights about the post-soviet predicament, as well as the complexities and challenges of undoing official narratives, that facilitate the writing of new (art) histories.

The broader potential of such platforms, however, remained untapped particularly as it applies to bridging the existing socio-political gaps between inside/outside or homeland/diaspora. This preferential treatment of the "native as more authentic" at times intensified the "othering of the diaspora" that could be found amply elsewhere, especially across the severed borders of Armenia.

Armenity in many ways attempts to make up for the deficit created in the processes outlined above. As its title suggests, the undertaking proposes a transnational definition of a collective identity. With diasporan roots that span across time and geography, the exhibit highlights artists who are mostly the grandchildren of Armenian Genocide survivors, marking one of the worldwide centennial commemorations of the 1915 Catastrophe, even though it does not seek to re-present genocide.

The word "Armenity" is seldom used and rings as foreign or even invented, particularly to the ears of those not well-versed in the nuances of the Western Armenian language, which has been officially recognized as endangered. By choosing it the curator, Adelina Cüberyan v. Fürstenberg, opens a window to imagine a polity beyond the confines of geography, and the identity politics implied by the more commonly used label "Armenianness." *Armenity's* curatorial selection also transcends the political correctness of groups within the boundaries of diasporan communities that tend to instrumentalize artists for the sake of a given charitable cause, rather than caring about and supporting a broader understanding of cultural production as a driver of substantive change.

Closer to the more philosophical and literary currency of the term *aghet* (catastrophe), *Armenity* reminds us that a polity may have parallel and not necessarily contradic-

tory or oppositional self-namings that project a wealth of stances. As revealed by the overall concerns addressed in the exhibited works, the term *Armenity* delineates the less familiar, more complex and quieted perceptions of identification. *Armenity* then, like many of the participating artists, exists in the margins of collective consciousness, patiently and rigorously engaging the viewer with the contemporary realities of its constant making, un-making, and remaking. It offers a cluster of universal visual languages that mediate, bridge and translate particular issues.

Marginalization is also evident in the selection of San Lazzaro island as a venue. Also born from exilic conditions of silencing and persecution, the monastery became a dynamic transnational site for the collection, maintenance, translation and dissemination of “great texts” to and from Armenia. A utopia built out of necessity to serve cultural exploration and renewal is at risk today. As discussed below, several of the artworks made specifically for *Armenity* respond to the diasporic predicament of this important site.

With the exception of senior or more established artists like Sarkis, Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, and Anna Boghiguian, the majority of the sixteen artists exhibiting in *Armenity* have gained prominence or entered the contemporary art scene in the last decade or so. Like the curator of the exhibition, they are better recognized in Europe and the Middle East, where many are based. While two are from Brazil and Argentina, three are from the United States, and a couple more collaborate with their partners, also artists, who are of Italian and Palestinian origin. Possessing historical links to the Ottoman Empire, all are multilingual and polycentric. Many come from immigrant families who experienced the Lebanese civil war, the Iranian revolution, or Soviet rupture. Some are also back and forth-ers to Armenia, while others have just begun to discover their ancestral homeland in Turkey. The exhibit’s emphasis on artists from Europe and the Middle East reflects several factors including the emergence of new art-destinations and art-economies in places like Dubai, Sharjah and Istanbul; the support for more modest initiatives in cultural hubs like Beirut, Cairo and Jerusalem, and the push towards multiculturalism and integration, all of which mark a shift from New York’s dominance of the international (art) scene since World War II.

As global citizens, these artists grew up navigating through the precarious times of the last several decades caused by momentous developments including the fall of the Eastern Block, the formation of the European Union, man-made and natural disasters like Chernobyl, the end of Apartheid, accelerated globalization and migration, the technological revolution which provided greater access to Internet and social media, the murder of Hrant Dink, the resurgence of Cold War politics, and recent political upheavals in the Middle East and beyond.

Conscious of other kinds of ruptures, violence and displacement, and not simply historical or Armenian ones, the ensuing existential push-and-pull led these and other diaspora artists and intellectuals to question their prescribed / inherited collective identities, and to gain agency through translating their newly-found subjectivities into artistic practices which tend to reinscribe, revalue, renew, even disrupt fixed cultural identifications.

Inherent in this repositioning of former cultural signifiers is a shift from representing (i.e. the genocide) to investigating modes of (its) representations. By forging aesthetic strategies that intervene with the lingering effects of the continued denial of the Armenian catastrophe or *aghet*, these experimentations give new relevance to iconic historical artifacts, figures, places, and events. In doing so they resist the perpetuation of sentimental images of victims, ruins, etc. that unconsciously repeat the initial intent of the denier, rather than enabling new possibilities of being or becoming.

As tools of subtle criticism and persuasion, the exhibited works collectively offer us alternative histories and cultural mappings that bypass official narratives entrenched in preservation ideologies and exhausted nationalist rhetoric, that date back to the 19th-

century ethos of national awakenings which coincided with the advent of the technological revolution that gave us the printing press.

Artistic practice for these artists also transcend the commodification of art. Incorporating diverse media, particularly archival materials, performance, sound, and light, many of the works assembled here trigger a transformative experience. They help shed residues of displacement and loss by instigating new memories.

Encountering these works is like holding a mirror to internal states of conformity, inertia, and stagnation that repeat denial, negation and transference of trauma, as perpetuated by denialist regimes.

The worldliness of this post-1990s generation derives in part from an awareness of the contributions of their artistic precursors (such as the Conceptual, Minimalist, Situationist, Happenings, and protest artists of the 1960s), whose works marked formal and contextual departures from the aesthetic sensibilities of what came before (i.e. Abstract Expressionism exemplified by Arshile Gorky and the subsequent generation of modernist practices) and addressed the socio-political concerns of the time (i.e. the Vietnam war, civil rights, feminist and peace movements).

In this context, the inclusion of works by Sarkis and Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi – pioneers in their respective practices of early Conceptual and Installation Art, as well as in the innovative use of archival film footage – dot artistic lineages found with the younger generation. By exhibiting these works side by side for the first time, *Armenity* attests to continuities, despite discontinuities, that span across time and space.

Some of the works reference the rich threads and textures of ancient Armenian traditions (i.e. folklore, mythology, manuscript illumination, engraving, embroidery), not to replicate but to free their contextual stasis by infusing them with contemporary meaning and relevance. The commitment of these artists recalls medieval monks whose experimentations contributed to cultural rebirths (i.e. the invention of an alphabet in 405 AD and distinct architectural styles of the 5th–7th and 10th–12th centuries) which in turn were influenced by the flow of capital, ideas and trends (in art, literature, design, fashion) made possible through older global networks of trade and patronage systems.

The hybridity of their inspirational sources motivate these artists to investigate a multiplex of particularities and to translate them into singular aesthetic languages. But these are not narratives of proof and externality; rather they are intimate expressions of the silences that give us pause from the weight of the unspeakable. They are like a collection of love poems that no longer long to belong – they belong.

Artworks

Now I come to you full of future. And from habit we begin to live our past.

Rilke

My Ani do not cry

Please do not cry

But we can collect your ashes

Your past in a vase that is part of our history, there you can meet the eternal

In a recent email this is how Anna Boghiguian describes the photo and drawing installation that she is preparing for *Armenity*, which deals with her visit to the ancient city of Ani that lies on the border of Armenia, in Turkey. Her statement refers to a popular early modern image produced by the Mekhitarist monks, which has been reproduced for over a century in Armenian language and history textbooks, as well as in calendars, key chains and other such souvenirs. Rendered in a neoclassical style, Ani has been personified as a

larger than life female figure, stoically sitting on the ruins of the many churches that the city is known for, mourning her (self?) destruction. The poet in Boghiguiian finds no comfort in what's become a banal portrayal, and is in the process of inscribing a more fitting identity to the city's past greatness where "... caravans from Asia came to deposit their wares and to receive more wares and silk to continue their way towards Arabia." For her project, Boghiguiian has chosen a small room in the monastic complex where sparse furnishings like a desk, a chair and some books invite the visitor to sit and contemplate "the traveler as a monk," which also alludes to Boghiguiian's own nomadic life. She considers the entire world her country. This is reflected in the small-scale drawings done in different media, which she carried by hand in a *boghcha* from place to place, visually chronicling an intuitively perceived universe, be it Ethiopia, India, Turkey, Egypt or Canada. The drawings and photos presented here, as a rare book if you will, are inspired by her sojourn to Ani, and incorporate her lyrical writings, particles of wisdom. Like the beeswax that channels prayers through candles, the artist applies the medium to erase separation and pay equal importance to the written word and the visual image. Touched by the roses she encountered during her travels in Armenia, Boghiguiian envisions her room filled with roses (can you smell the perfume?), just as several free birds, like the ones that hover over Ani's spectacular natural landscape (do you feel their freedom?), transcend the geopolitical entanglement of Ani, while a rainbow lights *this* wandering monk's room, where new narratives are conjured.

Artists Silvina Der-Meguerditchian and Rosana Palazyan pay homage to the memory of their grandmothers by piecing together their respective life-journeys as genocide survivors, immigrants and mothers. Their memories are resurrected by revisiting the nearly muted legacies that each woman left behind – a lace handkerchief made in a Greek orphanage that traveled to Brazil, and a booklet on the folk medicine of Aintab printed in Argentina. Der-Meguerditchian does her *re-member-ing* through a mixed-media installation that uses the old bookcases and cabinets of the monastery's library to display samples of the rich and colorful herbs, flora and fauna associated with the book's content.

Palazyan, on the other hand, combines animation and embroidery techniques to weave a video tapestry that follows her subject's journey which starts from a turbulent Anatolia, passes through the calm of the Aegean, before settling on another distant shore to build a family. The strength and resilience of these women sip through both works without resorting to the violence and nostalgia commonly found in the objectified representations of female genocide survivors. Such modernist traditions of illustrating misery (of death marches and starving women and children) has been the preoccupation of several Armenian male artists since the 1940s and 1950s (i.e. Jansaim) who were influenced by the French Miserabilist aesthetics (with roots in medieval Europe) and aimed for mass appeal and consumption. By breaking away from such habitual and unchecked transferences of trauma, pity and guilt, Der-Meguerditchian and Palazyan free the imagining of female bodies of genocide survivors from the patriarchal gaze.

One of the early examples in history during which Armenians experienced a diaspora (= dispersion of sperm) came with their forced conversion to Christianity – which resulted in the destruction of pagan temples, goddesses and songs that had existed for centuries. Mikayel Ohanjanyan's *Tasnerku* sculptural installation revisits the megaliths at Carahunge – one of the few remaining pagan sites in Armenia – to invoke an ancient belief system based on cosmology and the twelve tenets of observational astronomy. The artist, who is Yerevan-born and Florence-based, resorts to architectural floor plans, mixed size basalt blocks and steel discs to recreate the site on one of the island's terraces. His re-charting also correspond to the twelve provinces of classical or Greater Armenia to resonate the belonging / not belonging of a myriad of civilizations that have crossed it. Similarly, the theatricality of Ohanjanyan's geometric abstractions indicate affinities filtered

through post-World War I artistic movements such as Constructivism – i.e. Tatlin's "counter reliefs" and Malevich's Suprematism – as well as Arte Povera's use of common objects, which were then displaced by Soviet Social Realism.

How does one portray silence, its deep roots and deafening ring, without violating its identity? That is the challenge that the Damascus-born and London-based photographer Hrair Sarkissian tackles. His emotionally charged "portraits" deal with Muslim Turkish citizens who have in recent years been coming out or attempting to reclaim their Christian Armenian lineages. These bare photographs contain no people, just the interiors of their subject's private environments, enhanced by dramatic lighting and sharp contrasts that highlight the mundane. Yet Sarkissian craft-fully captures the psychological intensity involved in coming out, as they convey (not document) the fears, the shame, the burden and the alienation experienced in this process.

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan's appreciation of her heritage gets rekindled when she reads Lord Byron's letters related to his sojourns at San Lazzaro to learn Armenian. The British poet's fascination with the culture and the "language of the other" causes the artist to question her own ambivalence about most things Armenian while a young student at the Mekhitarist school in Istanbul. Her use of oversized Armenian letter-stamps that excerpt a selection of the poet's writings (i.e. *Lost Paradise*) augment the customary setting, and use, of Lord Byron's room at the monastery by giving voice to and making visible the forgotten memories of the island that once stood as a beacon of spirituality and knowledge.

Aram Jibilian's photographs activate memories of a very different place in another corner of the world. They deal with his sojourn to Arshile Gorky's studio-home in Connecticut and the town's cemetery where the renowned painter – a survivor of the Genocide who hung himself at the age of forty-four – is buried. Taking clues from ghost stories recounted by Gorky's neighbors, Jibilian channels the un-dead-ness of the late painter in ways that make us question what is remembered or forgotten about Gorky. The unassuming photographs of a tree, a white sheet, and a sparse tombstone pose as mere clues to the unknowable. Even with the haunting gaze of one of Gorky's masks based on the iconic self-portrait of the late artist and his mother, Jibilian seems to remind us that to comprehend the truth about Gorky's predicament, and the experience of the Catastrophe, requires more than facts as evidence.

Rene Gabri & Ayreen Anastas's participation involves taking photographs from books housed at the Mekhitarist library which trace Near Eastern histories and physically intervening on them – by cutting, cropping, writing, coloring, manipulating and typing over them to create poetic collages, as a form of research that enables one to overcome the inertness of the historical artifacts. As the artists are interested in the notion of parody, another aspect of their project manifests as a walk through the grounds of the monastery where traces of their work were left for surprise encounters. Known for applying similar approaches at other art destinations, the couple's alternative "survey" of the Near East extends a palimpsest of historical lines to reconsider: the relation of early Christianity to certain philosophies and practices of late Antiquity, the Mekhitarist community and history of the island, the European imagination of the Orient, the crusades, the massacres of the 1800's, the Armenian Genocide, the Russian Revolution, the World War I and dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, the question of language in the context of these histories, narration, storytelling, testimony, truth-telling, the contemporary struggles in the region, forgiveness, mourning, and ethics.

Aikaterini Gegisian's collages and artist's book project recycled reproductions found in various publications from Greece, Armenia and Turkey. Produced in the 1960s and 1980s, they functioned as instruments of nation building to lure tourists, and commerce. The artist's canny and visually layered regroupings of these easily consumable ideological "ready-mades" bring forth, despite their particular differences, the commonalities bet-

ween the failures of these nation-states. As each nation's construction/branding of an aura of uniqueness dissolves into Gegisian's inventive reconstructions we are left belonging to a utopia, a non-existent country.

For several decades, Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi have been making use of early 20th-century archival film to produce new work that alters the meaning or intent of the originary footage. Without spoken words or voice-over narration, and with minimal interjections of color and original sound compositions, their experimental documentaries stand as poignant commentaries against world wars, fascism, and colonialism.

One of the two works included in *Armenity* is an exception to their mostly silent film approach. Made in 1986, *Ritorno a Khodorciur* is about Gianikian's father Raphael – a genocide survivor – who in 1976, after months of preparation, returned to Turkey. The film shows Raphael reading from his unpublished diaries which he kept throughout his life but refused to talk about its content. He travels alone on foot in hiking boots and a super 8 camera and records with great detail what remains of his lost childhood town, including abandoned villages, houses in ruins, mountains, rocks and vegetation. With photos of the old country at hand his "pilgrimage" – a promise made to his brother in Georgia – also makes him a guest in places where he once belonged. As people begin to remember his family, Raphael's knowledge of the Turkish and Kurdish languages is regained, and conversations about what happened to the Armenians unfold with him appearing like a ghost to his hosts. The film interweaves past and present as the father organizes the traces that document his childhood, while his son, the filmmaker, learns about his family's tragedy for the first time.

To remedy irrecoverable loss, rectify wrongs, and give absences a presence sometimes requires the gifts of an alchemist. These are the types of philosophical speculations involved in conceptual artist Sarkis's practice. Take his *Atlas de Mammuthus Intermedius*, for instance. This sculpture made of what looks like the remains of an ancient colossal structure, perhaps even a perished creature, also carries traces of a recent intervention made visible through a belt-like ribbon of gold that holds the fragile fragments of the piece together. To restore the dignity of this mammoth bone, the artist turns to the Japanese art of Kintsugi used to repair broken pottery, with seams of gold, in a way that makes the broken vessel even more beautiful and valuable than it was before. One website describes the technique as an appropriate metaphor for ways of dealing with the broken places that life gives all of us, or finding treasures in life's scars.

What if what's broken is a country, as the juxtaposition of one of the other works included in *Armenity* suggests? Photographed in Armenia, *Croix de brique* depicts two bricks marked by burn marks, otherwise resting intact in a pile of stones and mud, side by side and forming a cross. Despite the image's ambiguity, the comparison of the crosses' discarded state with the dire socio-political and economic state of Armenia is unavoidable. And while it conjures many reasons for its condition – including the country's fragile geopolitical position and the closed borders with its wealthy and mighty neighbor(s) – the juxtaposition implies that a Kintsugi-like performance for Armenia in the foreseeable future seems improbable.

This modest proposition gains further gravity given the fact that this year Sarkis has also been selected to represent the national pavilion of his country of birth Turkey, at the Venice Biennale. It might be worth noting that Sarkis exiled himself to Paris in the 1960s, which has been his adopted country since. Recent developments surrounding "dialogue and reconciliation" – aside from his acceptance of the invitation to this significant moment of "return" – is a prime example of how the artist lives, acts upon, what his works have stood for many years.

As part of his large-scale, multimedia installation for this momentous occasion, the artist has chosen to hang from the cathedral-like ceilings of the lush Turkish Pavilion at

the Giardini, the monumental portraits of Paradjanov, Hrant Dink and Gezi Park. A grouping that clearly draws parallels between several disparate yet similar oppressive pasts and presents, pasts that do not pass, but rather reincarnate.

Another segment of his project involves a young Venetian girl carrying an antique silver belt from Van back and forth between the Armenian and Turkish Pavilions – two neighboring nations that used to be part of the Ottoman Empire but have existed with severed diplomatic relations for a century. While the context of the portraits in the main pavilion compels us to contemplate the transnational nature of internal and external exile, this smaller, quieter, gesture points to the fragility and uncertainty of reconciliatory measures. Like the rainbow that radiates on and off of the installation site – a transnational home away from home – the wandering belt also promises a glimmer of hope in undoing wrongs, mending a century of disconnects, letting go of exhausted means, experimenting, starting afresh. Just as the sheer weight of the silver belt makes an improbable fit on a tiny waist, the artist's proposal may at first seem merely ceremonial. But his staging involves a repositioning as well, not via a return to old "customs and costumes" but by instigating a process of transformation, whereby the reversal of the effects of denial and the redefinition of kinships and neighborliness begin with the recognition of the "other" as equal.

The demanding process of undoing "otherness" travels through a different path in Nigol Bezjian's five-channel video projection *Witness.ed*. Here the task is internal and relies on the incremental yet steady efforts of an assembly of colorful "actors" in a vast and disjointed transnational space of Armenia. The piece deals with a series of readings, or takes on the life and work of Daniel Varoujan, one of the poets of the late Ottoman Armenian literary Renaissance (*Zartok*) who in 1915, at the age of thirty-one, was among several other prominent Armenian intellectuals arrested and killed not far from Istanbul. This work is excerpted from Bezjian's longer documentary on the same subject that excavates the *past-present* importance of the poet whose dissident voice was marginalized within both Turkish and Armenian intellectual circles, ultimately leading to his tragic death. Through the film we travel to places like Venice and Ghent (Varoujan was educated at the Mekhitarist school and the university of Ghent before returning to Turkey to teach), as well as Aleppo, Beirut, Yerevan, Paris, Milan and New Jersey: the poet's imprints are gradually retraced in the filmic clustering of cross-disciplinary and multilingual interpretations. As their passionate performances filter, each with distinct intonation, the poet's stances on love, lust, paganism, metaphysics and spirituality that critiqued oppression, slavery, corruption and gender inequality in the Ottoman Empire, we better understand not only the mystery surrounding his historic death but its perpetuation. As viewers we become witnesses to the poet's betrayal particularly in the segment of the video projection where contemporary French-Armenian philosopher and literary critic Marc Nichanian, sitting in an Istanbul high-rise (with the Bosphorous dotted by minarets and the Turkish flags as background), eloquently reframes Varoujan. As Nichanian states, Varoujan was aware of the pending catastrophe and used his poetry to part with a testimony which, among other things, cautioned that total annihilation occurs when a society is not allowed to mourn, or if a society forgets how to mourn, and that artistic practice is the only way to reverse that (self) denial. Varoujan, who had once observed that thought becomes color in Venice, was also at odds with the transcendental teachings of the Mekhitarist. It is fitting indeed that *Witness.ed* is being shown in the 300-year-old printing facility of the monastic complex that has been turned into a museum.

Mekhitar Garabedian who has lived in Ghent most of his life, also has a piece on Varoujan that consists of a stack of posters which visitors can take away as souvenirs. Embossed on this white-on-white minimalist composition are phrases in Armenian lifted from a memorial plaque dedicated to Varoujan that hangs at the university of Ghent's

library. Unnoticeable at first, the poster through its infinite numbers intentionally reproduces the unintelligibility of the plaque as encountered by most library visitors. In addition to posing as a commentary on the consequences of the displacement of the Western Armenian language, this piece also makes us think about how a foreign script in a host country risks becoming an artifact, a decoration stripped of meaning and of the possibility of becoming a functioning language. Another piece by Garabedian duplicates the table of contents of a textbook in French called *Histoire de mes ancêtres* (History of my Ancestors) which was produced by the Mekhitarists in 1977, the same year that the artist was born in Aleppo, once a dynamic cultural hub. The worn out dark ink against the white page echoes the fading currency of its content. As outlined in the taxonomy of the table of contents, history here limits the imagining of a collective identity to a long sequence of oppositional paradigms (good/evil, hero/villain) and the collapsing of mythical and actual figures or events, framed mostly as tragedies turned into miraculous victories, whereby any contextual or critical reflection is obstructed. *And the World Is Alive. And Van Is Alive* is a neon light piece that quotes from *Burning Orchards* – a novel by Kurken Mahari who as a child lived through the uprising and subsequent seizure of his native town of Van near Ani, before arriving in the newly-formed Republic of Armenia which, like the establishment of modern Turkey, was created artificially. Written after being exiled ten years in Siberia for his earlier writings, Mahari's novel was banned in Soviet Armenia upon its first publication in 1966, a period of national reawakening marked by massive demonstrations and the building of the first genocide memorial complex. Censors banned the book, even forced him to rewrite it, because Mahari had depicted Van not as a glorified historical place frozen in time but a world that's very much alive, breathing through his subjective recollections of ordinary people and life, and often speaking in conflicting tenses: present, past and future. In an unexpected yet intimate setting on the island, Garabedian's piece waits to be discovered, creating a sense of awkwardness that comes from not belonging to a place, and from being outside history.

Nina Katchadourian's *Accent Elimination* offers an ironic account of what happens when one attempts to eradicate strangeness. For her multiple-screen video installation the artist employed a renowned speech specialist to standardize her parents' distinct yet difficult to trace accents and then teach her theirs. Scripted by the parents, the video's simple narrative is based on questions asked from strangers dealing with where they each come from. As the intensive coaching and rehearsals unfold, we learn that the accent of the father, Herant, is a mixture of Armenian, Turkish, Arabic, and French, with a touch of Swedish, which is his wife's mother tongue. When attempting to place his accent, Herant discloses that most people mistake him for a Hungarian. Then we learn that the mother's accent is actually Finnish-Swedish, because Stina comes from a Swedish-speaking minority living in Finland. Stina also learned Armenian after marrying Herant in order to communicate with his family. The couple met in Beirut and have been living for decades in the United States, where the artist was born. At a frustrating yet comical moment the video captures Nina practicing how to say the word "Armenian" with a typical forced "R," and the sounds "AR – ARM – ARMY" are repeated with varying pauses and emphasis till she gets the right pronunciation. Since AR means "take" in Armenian, this unscripted sequence of utterances transform the scene, as well as the work, into a symbol of defiance and survival.

Resistance takes on another form in Melik Ohanian's *Streetlights of Memory – A Stand by Memorial* which is part of two related projects called *Presence*. This large-scale public sculpture that sits in the garden of the monastic complex consists of close to two hundred pieces that are individually cast in aluminum and then reassembled to expose, if you like, the "guts" of its former existence. Collapsed ruins that cannot be ruins because they have been resurrected, not to replicate its previous identity but to forge a new one that embodies

entangled fragments of its past. The story of this piece begins in 2010 when Ohanian's design for a memorial in Geneva unanimously won the competition for the city's public art project. Submitted by representatives of the Armenian community in partnership with the city as a gift to Geneva, Ohanian's proposal was/is based on a streetlight from 1920s New York – an ordinary but forgotten object of an urban landscape, now remembered by assigning it a new function. To be multiplied in numbers and dispersed throughout a public park in Geneva, each eight-meter-tall streetlight's source of light is replaced by a chrome tear, while its pole becomes the support for engraved texts.

Contextually particular and universal at the same time, the implementation of this sensitive and poetic memorial, after going through lengthy processes of approvals by engineers as well as a number of authorities (including location changes and topographical revisions) is currently stalled due to pressure from the Turkish community, involving politicians and the UN. The San Lazzaro version, then, gives us a glimpse of the memorial's ongoing life while also addressing a broader condition. As Ohanian states, what would existence be like if seen from a distance... as archetypes appear and converge, between origin and destination, in perpetual constructions? Belonging to the present for the artist means to belong to several places, several times, at the same time. The second installment of *Presence* involves a detailed publication that chronicles the life of *Streetlights of Memory* and a series of related workshops held at off-site venues by Ohanian in Venice.

Hastayım Yaşıyorum (I Am Sick, But I Am Alive) is Haig Aivazian's inaugural piece, related to his ongoing and extensively researched project on Turkish-Armenian oud master Udi Hrant Kenkulian (1901–1978). In order to "cure" his blindness, Udi Hrant, as he was known, traveled the world to perform and teach. Here, this exquisitely-crafted sculpture in the shape of a larger-than-life, stringless, oud which is turned upside down rests disquietly on two stools. Aivazian's larger project involves the untangling of a complex modernist construct that resulted in the standardization of art, music, literatures, and folklore at the end of the Ottoman Empire. Based on European models, this drive towards ethnography arrived to the Armenian milieu in the 1890s through polyphonization and Western musical notation and spread by the 1920s with the establishment of the Turkish Republic.

Taking cues from how the instrument is actually played through *Makams* and *Taksims* as well as the etymological nuances of both terms, Aivazian helps us understand how this process of Turkification or "purification" implies a coming together and parting of altered or silenced Ottoman and post-Ottoman music. (*Taksims* are improvisations of the *Makams*, initial and resident modes, which migrate throughout a performance then slowly return to the original to conclude.) Classical Turkish art and music were very much a part of the Turkification process that pitted one set of claims of "purity" against the other.

The title of the piece comes from a song, which aside from the easy association with the "Sick Man of Europe" used to describe the late Ottoman Empire, alludes to Hrant who was also lovesick, longing or melancholically waiting, not only for his ghostly love but for his sight to return.

In addition, as Aivazian has pointed out, the title refers to an overall malaise present in Turkish culture and cosmopolitan discourses related to survival and to the persistent memories of "minority others." These are in reality deeply bruised and diminished historical absences/presences that resonate in the physicality of the stringless oud, as if it were a conversation that turned inward, yet still wishes to be heard.

The stools that are part of the composition denote the master-pupil lineage in transmitting via repetition and practice, while the knowledge is never entirely passed on or at least remains partly a secret for the student to explore over time. This is similar to the manner in which the making of the instrument itself is taught, a trade in which Armenians and Greeks were among the most prominent and respected practitioners. Aivazian's oud,

which poses as a mystery since it also looks like a boat or a tomb, serves as a key motif to inspire further reflections on the migratory patterns of Udi Hrant, and the manner in which those intertwined patterns that are often perceived as “Armenian” culture are transmitted, spread and preserved.

Author’s note: As one colleague observed, I have tried to highlight the connections within the diversity of works presented in *Armenity* through a *décalage* of fits and stops, articulations and disarticulations, claims and challenges. Mostly, all the pieces appear as “dropouts” from the hegemony against which we are in common struggle. Even though some of the pieces were still in their planning stages, this writing was facilitated by my familiarity with many of the artists’ past works as well as by our recent correspondences. Any misreadings of their intent or work is mine alone.

Armenia, Country of Stones – Armenia, Country of Books

Valentina Calzolari Bouvier

Professor of Armenian Studies at the University of Geneva, and President of the International Association of Armenian Studies

According to what has become a current expression, Armenia is a “country of stones” – in Armenian, *Hayastan K’arastan*. This expression, which recalls Osip Mandelstam’s verses on the “land of the screaming stones,” suits Armenia perfectly. It is a reference to the country’s rocky landscapes, but may also be regarded as an allusion to its difficult history, or even to the stones of the *khatchkars* and medieval churches that stand as vestiges of an ancient past. To this well-known expression another one may be added. By taking advantage of the flexibility of the Armenian language, which lends itself to the creation of endless neologisms, and legitimized by a volume which – on the occasion of this outstanding event – has coined a new English word, *Armenity*, we have launched the formula *Hayastan Matenastan*, “Armenia, country of books.” Writing and books have been among the main sources of Armenian identity over the centuries: they are an integral part of *Armenity*, to which the present exhibition is a tribute.

In ancient Armenian, the word *matian* means book, scroll, or manuscript. A *matenadaran* is a repository of medieval manuscripts. Alongside the *Matenadaran* par excellence, which is to say the manuscript library in Yerevan, we find other *matenadaran*, or libraries, including the Armenian library in the Mekhitarist Monastery of San Lazzaro, which plays a prominent role on account of its wealth of documents and art objects, not to mention its scholarly tradition.

The importance of books in Armenian history cannot fully be appreciated without considering the origins of the Armenian alphabet, dating back to the 5th century. Sources of the period describe the creation of letters with strokes that find no parallels in other traditions and which perfectly illustrate the great symbolic value the Armenians assign to their way of writing.

Creating an Alphabet to Build an Ethnic Identity

In the early 5th century, Armenia witnessed one of the most critical moments in its history. Towards the end of the previous century, the country had been partitioned in two and divided between the Roman and the Persian empires. Within a few decades, Armenia lost not just its independence and territorial integrity, but also the royal dynasty that had ruled it for over four centuries. Soon, it found itself facing the risk of religious assimilation, especially on the Persian side. It was in this troubled period that the Armenian alphabet was created, as a weapon of resistance against the catastrophe. “Seeing that the Kingdom of Armenia had come to an end,” the historian Moses of Khoren writes in his *History of Armenia* (III, 47), the monk and former royal court secretary Mesrop Mashtots devoted all his energy to creating an instrument that might help consolidate the Christianization of Armenia (which had become a Christian kingdom in the early 4th century) and constitute a powerful marker of ethnic identity, in opposition to the Zoroastrian Iranian invaders. Mashtots thus set out on the quest for an Armenian alphabet, with the aim of translating

the Bible. Thus Mashtots searched for new national letters by embarking on a journey to Edessa and Samosata in Syria, which already had an alphabet for their own language. Fifth-century Armenian historians, however, are keen to stress that it was not through the help of expert foreign calligraphers that Mashtots found his letters (although to define the final layout of the alphabet he resorted to the help of an expert in Greek writing). Historians rather describe the creation of the Armenian alphabet as a divine revelation.

Just after creating the alphabet – an alphabet quite unlike any other form of writing and marking a unique, unmistakable link with the Armenian language – the Armenians started producing their first translations of religious works (most notably the Bible), followed shortly afterwards by the first original works in Armenian. These are for the most part historiographical works which reflect upon the meaning of events and the Armenians' place in sacred history. Based upon the Hebrew model, ancient historians suggest that the Armenians are a chosen people. They present the "gift of letters" as one of the unambiguous signs of the alliance between God and the Armenian people (Koriwn, *Life of Mashtots*, Preface, 5th century). Regarded as a key to the divine realm, Armenian writing continued to retain its symbolic value.

The letters of the Armenian alphabet, which according to Moses of Khoren appeared to Mesrop in a vision, as though they had been traced "upon a rock by the palm of a hand," were used for stone inscriptions and a large number of manuscripts.

Manuscripts: as Valuable as the World

"For the fool a manuscript is of no value, for the wise man it is as valuable as the world": this annotation made by the copyist of ms. 2178 of the Matenadaran in Yerevan (in the year 1391) reflects the deep respect which the Armenians have always shown towards manuscripts. In the medieval age, a large number of Gospel Books – and smaller number of complete Bibles – were copied down in the *scriptoria* of Armenian monasteries. In the Gospel Books, the relation between images and text is crucial. The cycle of scenes encapsulating the history of the redemption of mankind are reproduced in full-page plates. In older manuscripts, the plates are brought together at the beginning of the volume, whereas in later manuscripts they tend to be interspersed between the pages of the text. At an even later date, images are often inserted directly within the text, as illustrations.

The relation between images and text in Armenian manuscripts reflects the sense of the sacred which distinguishes medieval Armenia. This history of the redemption of mankind through Christ's incarnation was regarded as something that is constantly renewed in the present. Among other things, this explains the practice among persons commissioning the Gospel Books of having themselves portrayed in the miniatures. Entering directly within the scenes of the biblical cycle meant taking part in sacred history and bearing witness to the fact that the boundary between past and present had been abolished. For this and many other reasons, manuscripts were sacred in medieval Armenia. This is also reflected in liturgical practice, where the Bible is scented with incense and never touched with bare hands.

The relation between text and image reflects the various aspects of religious devotion in medieval Armenia. In this respect, it is fascinating to consider that through the use of illumination canonical texts were enriched by elements drawn from non-canonical literature. This is the case with Nativity scenes, which often feature details inspired by the apocryphal Gospels of the Infancy of Jesus. The "boundaries" between canonical and non-canonical are abolished through the use of images.

The religious significance of manuscripts aside, the deep respect shown towards them as objects is reflected by the many personal notes (colophons) which copyists added in their works. These notes often draw a contrast between the transient nature of human life and the endurance of manuscripts, generation after generation. Regarded as an offering and

act of devotion, manuscripts are at the same time viewed as privileged intercessors with God. Many colophons even appear to personify their manuscript. Some copyists express shock at the idea that a manuscript was stolen by foreign invaders: a manuscript snatched from a monastery and lying in the hands of infidels is perceived as a captive to be ransomed. One well-known episode is that of the famous homiliary from the Mush region (ms. 7729 of the Matenadaran in Yerevan, dating from 1202–04), an area which had always been inhabited by Armenians. The bulkiest of all Armenian manuscript (27 kg), it was ransomed from the Seljuk Turks in the 12th century. In 1915, however, during the deportations, the codex was split. One half was buried in the courtyard of the church in Erzurum, while the other half was further partitioned and stored by some women. In this way, the manuscript survived: in later years it was reassembled and deposited in the Matenadaran in Yerevan, where it remains to this day.

The Armenians have entrusted manuscripts with the preservation of the written heritage of their national language, which consists not just in religious works but also in scientific, historical and poetic ones, among others. These are the many genres covered by the collection of 30,000 codices stored in Armenian libraries, including that of San Lazzaro in the Venice lagoon.

From Manuscript to Print

The roots of Armenian printing are in Venice. In 1512, six decades after Gutenberg's invention of printing, one Hagop Meghapart ("James the Sinner") published the first printed book in Armenian. This was soon followed (1512–13) by another four books that reflect the interests of the Armenians at the threshold of the modern age. These early volumes include a collection of propitiatory formulas combining prayers, magic charms, curses, empirical medical advice, and exorcisms. One also finds a book on horoscopes and astronomy; a calendar; a missal; and an anthology of poems in vernacular Armenian.

Whereas the very first book to have been written in Armenian, in the early 5th century, had been a translation of the Bible, the first printed Bibles in Armenian were only published one century after the invention of printing. It is worth noting here that the history of books closely reflects the religious history of Armenia and its often difficult relations with dominant churches. Unable to obtain permission to print an Armenian Bible in Venice, on account of Catholic censorship, the Armenian Oskan Erevantsi moved to Protestant Holland, where in the years 1666–68 he published the first printed version of the Bible in Armenian. By one of those strange twists of fate, the same control organ of the Catholic Church, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, was later to promote the publication of many printed books in Armenian.

Manuscripts did not disappear after 1512: for many years, codices and printed volumes continued to coexist. Besides, the earliest books often imitate the illuminations of medieval Armenian manuscripts. Most of the iconographic repertoire soon changed through the influence of European incunabula, and printed books started exploring new subjects. The earliest volumes include religious texts and historical works, as well as medical and mathematical texts, trade manuals, spelling books, grammars, and dictionaries. These printed volumes were intended – among other things – to meet the requirements of a people largely made up of merchants and travelers, and contained everything one might look for when embarking on a long sea journey. Mention should also be made of the first oreries (crafted by the Vanandetsi brothers in Amsterdam), a fitting symbol for a people that had set out to explore the world and, through print, was now approaching modernity.

In that age, the many maritime routes connecting East and West were bustling with Armenian traders. It is important to bear in mind that the many seaports for Armenian commerce in the West often coincided with the main printing centres.

At the time of the invention of printing, the Armenian people were already scattered

far and wide, well before the Great Diaspora which followed the genocide of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire in 1915. The Armenians, then, were dispersed across East and West. Alongside the Venetian colony, one might mention those in Livorno, Marseilles, Amsterdam, Lvov and – in the Levant – Smyrna and Constantinople. Further to the east lay the colonies of Kolkata and Madras – where the first works of Armenian political philosophy were published – as well as New Julfa. This Iranian city was home to the *khodja*, the Armenian merchants who, along with the Armenian Church, were the foremost promoters of printed books. Printing reached the Armenians of Russia and the Caucasus in the late 18th century. On its part, the Mekhitarist congregation had been among the principal institutions for Armenian typography ever since the time of its founder.

Traveling Books

One of the many chapters in the history of Armenian printing is a tale of fruitful cultural patronage. Armenian merchants ensured capital and channels of distribution. Along with spices and precious textiles, their ships also carried books. In many places, the collaboration between booksellers and traveling merchants contributed to the spread of books.

The history of Armenian traders sailing the seas between East and West overlaps with that of the circulation of the Armenian cultural heritage. This in turn contributed to shaping a shared feeling of national identity, despite the fragmentation of the Armenian people into colonies and the lack of an independent homeland. Within this context, books played a crucial role. Given that for centuries the history of the Armenian people has been one of dispersion and lack of independence, Armenia has partly been built on the spread of a shared cultural heritage. Manuscripts and books – along with the centers preserving them, such as the island of San Lazzaro – are among the cornerstones of a history that is still in progress, and in which contemporary art is now revealing and creating new forms of Armenia.

Essential Bibliography

Many exhibition catalogues have been published over the last few years. These include various articles on the creation of the Armenian alphabet, medieval Armenian manuscripts, and the origins of Armenian printing. Among the most recent catalogues, see: V. CALZOLARI, ed., *Illuminations d'Arménie. Arts du livre et de la pierre dans l'Arménie ancienne et médiévale* (Geneva-Yerevan, 2007); C. MUTAFIAN, ed., *Arménie. La magie de l'écrit* (Marseilles-Paris, 2007); G. ULUHOGIAN, B. L. ZEKIYAN and V.

KARAPETIAN, eds., *Armenia. Impronte di una civiltà* (Milan, 2012).

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Transition Times

Stephanie Bailey

Managing Editor, *Ibraaz*,
and Contributing Editor,
ART PAPERS and *LEAP*

I am not ashamed of my identity, it is still under construction.

Mahmoud Darwish

There are so many crosses for us to bear these days: so much that weighs down on us as individuals, communities, and nations. The 21st century has only begun, and the clash between the past and the future is already underway. From nationalism to post-nationalism to a kind of neo-nationalism, the very foundations with which we identify as citizens are being re-negotiated. Take the battle between Israel and Palestine – an instance of a nation maintaining its statehood, and a nation asserting its right to statehood, respectively; or the conditions in Europe, where a kind of post-nationalist unification has produced a rise in neo-nationalism. Then we have ISIS: what *The New Scientist* has described as hypermodern, “more of a network than a nation,”¹ which has declared war on, amongst other things, the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement that carved up the Middle East into British and French “spheres of influence.”² And on the flip side, there is democratic confederalism – a political approach that aims to escape, as Abdullah Ocalan explains, “the trap of nationalism” by offering a “non-state social paradigm.”³

More and more, we are witnessing the world as a historical, geopolitical mesh: a space of rampant and often volatile negotiation in which there is as much to untangle as there is to assert. We have so much to deal with, and yet so little time to take it all in. Lessons are not learned, wounds of the past are festering, and healing feels as remote as the stories that define who we are because so much has been forgotten, and even denied. Take the Armenian Genocide: an event that Raphael Lemkin used as an example for a term he coined to describe what Churchill called, during the Nazi purges, “a crime without a name.”⁴

It is no coincidence that the Armenians call their genocide *aghet*, which means catastrophe: the same word the Palestinians use to remember the loss of their homeland, which they call *al-Nakba*. Nor is it chance that the Nazis returned the remains of Talaat Pasha – one of the key architects of the Armenian Genocide – to Turkey in 1943 (Turkey was allied with Germany in World War I). It is fitting also that these catastrophes took place during the two world wars that defined a violent century in which, as Mark Levene observed in 2000, a global system of nation states came into full fruition.⁵

On the study of genocide, Levene insists on understanding the phenomenon through an investigation not only of the historical context of each individual genocide, but also “the macro-historical record” – “the broad and moving canvas in which we might chart and hopefully analyze the emergence and development of the current international system.”⁶ But as individuals, how do we navigate this contested space of world history in the new 21st century? How do we make sense of it all? How do we position ourselves in the network? There is no map – no beginning or end: not one single starting point. There is just relation, for better or for worse; and histories – an infinite number of them. We can see these histories unfolding in such spaces as the World Wide Web – a place where the distances between people and places are collapsed with the click of a button, and where the world

is – quite literally – at our fingertips. As our contemporary Library of Alexandria, the Internet is a networked space where individuals, communities, nations, regions, and indeed, worlds co-mingle, existing autonomously, or atomically, in such a way that recalls Muriel Rukeyser’s observation that the universe is made of stories, not atoms.

The vastness and complexity of our historical world is palpable, too, in such events as the Venice Biennale; an event with its roots in the National and World’s Fairs of the 18th and 19th centuries, and which evolved in 1895 – at the turn of the 20th century – into an international exhibition of art and culture organized according to national pavilions so as to offer a worldview once every two years. Indeed, as Lawrence Alloway wrote, the Venice Biennale is a “a big exhibition” that represents “a compressed journey ... taken by the exhibition visitor in a single day.”⁷ And the journey just keeps getting longer and more complicated. Even in 1968, Alloway observed how unprecedented quantity and multiplicity was rendering art an uncontrollable subject: “Its boundaries are no longer clear; its scale is no longer compact. This holds true, also, for the past, which obviously is steadily increasing as a result of the passage of time, and ever-more-sophisticated techniques of inquiry into the periods.”⁸

Ultimately, when faced with the ever-lengthening scroll of human history as represented in such world spaces as the Internet or the Venice Biennale, it is down to the individual to take what they can from what they see and understand. After all, as Paul Crowther noted in *Art and Embodiment*, “the structure of embodied subjectivity and of the world are directly correlated.”⁹ Thus, when entering spaces like these, you might say we all become global wanderers, as we move from webpage to webpage, or from national pavilion to collateral event. We become bodies that exist between frames, like those of the displaced: bodies that relate to the world – and to each other – through personal experience first and foremost.

This is where *Armenity* comes in: a pavilion that is dedicated to artists of the Armenian diaspora. Or more specifically, the grandchildren of survivors of the Armenian Genocide, who were born all over the world, be it Beirut, Lyon, Los Angeles, or Cairo, and whose “concerns transcend notions of territory, borders and geography, precisely because this is their legacy, heritage and birthright.” They are, like so many other paradigmatic diasporas, the embodiment of what Arjun Appadurai has called one of the crucibles of an emergent post-national order: a diasporic public sphere that is established and maintained through international migration and the transnational mediation of national ethnicities who – for one reason or another – operate beyond the confines of a single nation-state.¹⁰ They are true global citizens of the 21st century, a “transnational assembly” intimately connected with the history that brought them into being. Their birthright is to mediate systems that do not reflect their own particular state of existence. Think about the Kurds, for instance: a nation that exists “mostly within the present-day borders of Turkey, Iraq and Iran, with smaller parts in Syria, Armenia and Azerbaijan.”¹¹

It is this precise condition: a nation that is at once confined by its borders as much as its borders are dissolved by its diaspora, that gives this exhibition a vision of what Greek-Armenian artist Aikaterini Gegisian describes as “utopic potential.” For the artists showing in *Armenity*, it is the individual who draws the map; the artists who become what Deleuze called Foucault: new cartographers leading the way to a future that has not quite taken shape. Take Rosana Palazyan’s video installation, ... *A story I never forgot...*, which traces Palazyan’s grandmother’s journey from Thessaloniki to Rio de Janeiro: a legacy the artist decided to confront when she was invited to show at the 4th Thessaloniki Biennale in 2013–14, as a kind of homecoming. Here, remembrance becomes a tracing of a self that is rooted in a violent displacement: a history that has been passed down as a personal, albeit collective, recall. In Palazyan’s tracing is the assertion of a continuation: a demonstration that a journey, which started in 1915 and has led to all points of the globe,

has not ended. After all, as she the artist writes: “to forget [the Armenian Genocide] would mean forgetting one’s own being.”¹²

Indeed, Palazyan’s project positions the artist as a cartographic “chronicler.” What Walter Benjamin described as one “who recounts events without distinguishing between the great and small,” and in doing so “accounts for the truth, that nothing which has ever happened is to be given as lost to history.” The chronicler uncovers a past worthy of a “resurrected humanity.”¹³ It is here that we might consider the role of the artist through Nigol Bezjian’s effective study into the life and work of the poet Daniel Varoujan in *Poet/Mourner* (2013). In this twenty-minute video, Bezjian presents an edited version of a lecture by associate professor of the department of Armenian studies at Columbia University, Marc Nichanian, on Varoujan, one of the first Armenian intellectuals to be arrested by the Young Turks in 1915. In his lecture, Nichanian presents three poems by Varoujan – “Vahakn,” “Among the Ruins of Ani,” and “To the Cilician Ashes” – so as to explain the position of the poet as a mourner: one left to pick up the pieces after a massacre. Yet, in a kind of reversal of Benjamin’s famous Angel of History, the poet in this proposition is not pushed forward by progress. Rather, the poet “sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage” and in fact stays to “awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed.”¹⁴ This is the recuperative effort of recalling, reviving, and illuminating a history that was so savagely forged, and which is woven into the fabric of the world through the bodies that represent it. Our histories walk among us.

Consider Haig Aivazian’s research into the life of Turkish-Armenian oud master Udi Hrant Kenkulian: a project that reflects on the life of a musician who traveled the world, sharing his craft, by producing a sculpture that considers the modal structures in Ottoman and post-Ottoman music. The sculpture Aivazian presents here, *Hastayım Yaşıyorum (I Am Sick, But I Am Alive)* is constructed to formally express what Aivazian calls the “oppositions and entanglements inherent in terms such as *Makam* and *Taksim*, simultaneously embodying an irreconcilable coming together and a partitioning.” For him, it is a work that ultimately considers the “migratory motifs of an Armenian, and the manner in which the resonances of these motifs may be historicized or silenced.” Here, the act of tracing produces an ever more complex constellation of meaning. With the dispersal of the Armenian diaspora comes an even richer intermingling of culture with culture, which brings us back to the transnational order this exhibition proposes through its artists.

As James Tatum observed of Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain*, “the wounds and deaths in wars denationalize us, reducing us to a fundamental, stateless human identity.”¹⁵ For Scarry, “the ‘unmaking’ of the human being, the emptying of the nation from his body, is equally characteristic of dying or being wounded, for the in part naturally ‘given’ and in part ‘made’ body is deconstructed.”¹⁶ In this process of “unmaking,” Scarry notes, an “unmaking of the civilization as it resides in each of those bodies” occurs, too.¹⁷ You might call it an unraveling. Take Hera Büyükaşçıyan’s sculpture *Letters from Lost Paradise*, for example, which maps out a journey of language through Lord Byron’s time studying Armenian on the island where this exhibition takes place: San Lazzaro degli Armeni, established in the 18th century when the Mekhitarian community was expelled from the Peloponnese. The island was also home to the longest running Armenian printing house, established as part of the Mekhitarist Monastery complex, which ran from 1789 to the early 2000s. It was this house that printed Lord Byron’s *Armenian Exercises and Poetry* in 1870, and it is from this house that Büyükaşçıyan unwinds a history that expands into the world.

Büyükaşçıyan’s sculpture – which presents moving letter stamps spelling out English text written with Armenian script – reflects on what the artist describes as a tension that “exists between the process of reaching out to understand the other, and the process of becoming totally assimilated and thus alienated from one’s own identity, culture and language.” On the work’s composition, Büyükaşçıyan considered the use of the Armen-

ian alphabet in Anatolia in both the past and present day, with some Armenian communities producing texts in Turkish written in Armenian letters. In so doing, she touches on the way Armenian culture has been at once disseminated, assimilated, modified, and contained within such cultural strongholds as San Lazzaro: widely-known to be a focal point for Armenian culture. Indeed, in 1913, Daniel Varoujan wrote in a letter to Garegin Levonian: “Tread softly on the island consecrated by the Mekhitarist Fathers, each step could be on the ashes of a genius.”¹⁸

Yet, Büyüktaşçıyan’s project is more expansive, still. By relating to the history of the printing press on San Lazzaro, she produces a connection to the history of the Armenian press in general, which goes back to the end of the 18th century, with roots not “in the historic territory of Armenia,” as Mark Grigorian writes, but “within the diasporan Armenian communities.”¹⁹ The first newspaper, *Azdarar* (The Herald) was printed in Madras, India, between 1794 and 1796, while another, *Taregrutian* (The Chronicle), was launched in 1799 right here on the island of San Lazzaro, printed by the Mekhitarian monks in the modern Western Armenian language, Ashkhararabar. Indeed, by the beginning of the 19th century, Grigorian notes, “Armenian communities as far apart as Bombay and Calcutta in India, Astrakhan in Russia, Vienna in Austria, and Constantinople and Smyrna in the Ottoman Empire, were all enjoying the opportunity to read locally produced newspapers in their native Armenian language.”²⁰

The dissemination of Armenian culture in this history reflects on the dissemination of Armenian bodies, too, and the vast global network that makes up the Armenian diaspora. This recalls a trope in Büyüktaşçıyan’s practice in which water is treated as a material metaphor for the traces of memory and history that exist all around us. Take a project the artist recently presented as part of the Jerusalem Show VII, *The Recovery of an Early Water*, in which the artist used fabric to re-imagine one of Jerusalem’s lost water supplies, Hezekiah’s Pool: a reservoir that was built during the reign of King Hezekiah, and which has been dry since 2010. Both projects are about fluidity; a visualization of a state of flux, in which movement and change become the constant. In so many ways, they express the simple fact that we are all connected, one way or another, whether we know it or not.

In this state of flow, the body becomes a mediator of the unexpected, the unforeseen, and the uncontrollable: it is always in the process of a certain unraveling and rewinding. As Paul Crowther wrote, the human subject “is just one amongst other such sensible beings and things, with whom and which it is engaged in a constant process of reciprocal interaction and modification. The reason why this process is constant is because embodied beings are *finite*. This means that no matter how thoroughly they engage with the sensible world – with Otherness (in the broad sense of both other beings and things) – they cannot fix it into absolute, unchanging place.”²¹ It is a state of being that Rene Gabri & Ayreen Anastas explore in their long-term collaborative project *The Meaning of Everything*, which constitutes a series of books that act as archives for methods with which the artists consider questions that concern them. As the artists state, one series is an attempt at giving form to the intellectual and affective movements or “becomings” that constitute a life, while allowing room for a “speculative and prospective dimension” that factors in the potential for “unforeseeable incidents.”²² After all, such a constant state of becoming is a state of unknowing, too, which brings us back to the contemporary moment and the challenges we face.

As globalization continues to combine, what Eric Hobsbawm observed as “regional, national and other cultures” in “a peculiar way,”²³ things are changing, as are we. Even in the 1990s, Arjun Appadurai picked up as much when he wrote that the “materials for a post-national imaginary must be around us already.”²⁴ Those materials, however, include the living bodies that transcend the frameworks laid down by history, including those of-

ferred by the nation state and its borders. These bodies that have been displaced are destined to a life of perpetual otherness – a state that is, as Crowther noted, “radically transcendent” because “there is always more to be perceived, always more to be done; always more than can be contained in any present moment of perception or sequence of actions.”²⁵

But these days, everyone is an “other” in some way. We are all, as Homi K. Bhabha wrote, “free to negotiate and translate [our] cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference.”²⁶ This is something to remember as we wander through the Venice Biennale in 2015, when new political imaginaries reacting to the historical machinations of modernity and imperialism are emerging. When we move from pavilion to pavilion, we are engaging in a kind of border thinking as mediators, one and all: a perspective Walter D. Mignolo describes as “thinking in exteriority in the spaces and time that the self-narrative of modernity invented as its outside to legitimize its own logic of coloniality.”²⁷ Today, it is the perspectives of the displaced, the wanderers, and the outsiders that offer guidance on how we might live in a world on edge. Borrowing Bhabha’s words again, they are “the bearers of a hybrid identity [who] are caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation” – what Fanon called “the liberatory ‘people’ who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change.”²⁸ In these transition times, to see the world from hybrid perspectives might allow us to recognize how change is as much a constant as the shackles of stagnation, and it is always possible.

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⁴ Raphael Lemkin, “Genocide,” *American Scholar*, vol. 15, no. 2 (April 1946), 227–30, accessed at <http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/americanscholar1946.htm>.

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⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale 1895–1968. From Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1968), 38.

⁸ Ibid, 126.

⁹ Paul Crowther, *Art and Embodiment*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 2.

¹⁰ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 22.

¹¹ Amir Hassanpour, “The Kurdish Experience,” *The Middle East Research Project*, published in MER189 and accessed at <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer189/kurdish-experience>.

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¹³ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, III, accessed at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>.

¹⁴ Ibid., IX.

¹⁵ James Tatum, *The Mourner’s Song. War and Remembrance from the Iliad to Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 117.

¹⁶ As quoted by James Tatum, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Daniel Varoujan, Letter to Garegin Levonian, 27th March 1913 ([Letters], Yerevan, 1965, 202), courtesy of The Armenian Mechitarist Congregation, <http://mechitar.com/island/index.php?iM=6>.

¹⁹ Mark Grigorian, “Media and Democracy in Armenia,” in Edmund Herzig and Marina Kurkchyan, eds., *The Armenians. Past and Present in the Making of National Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 180.

²⁰ Ibid., 180.

²¹ Crowther, 1.

²² Artist statement courtesy of Tanya Leighton Gallery, <http://www.tanyaleighton.com/index.php?pageId=266&l=en>.

²³ Eric Hobsbawm, *Fractured Times. Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The New Press, 2014), 26.

²⁴ Appadurai, 21.

²⁵ Crowther, 1.

²⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences,” on Atlas of Transformation: <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/c/cultural-diversity/cultural-diversity-and-cultural-differences-homi-k-bhabha.html>.

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²⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences,” on Atlas of Transformation: <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/c/cultural-diversity/cultural-diversity-and-cultural-differences-homi-k-bhabha.html>

Appendix

Biographies

Haig Aivazian

Born in 1980 in Beirut, Lebanon, where he currently lives and works. He is an artist, a curator and a writer. Using performance, video, drawing, installation and sculpture, his work weaves together personal and geopolitical, micro and macro narratives in its search for ideological loopholes and short circuits. Aivazian holds an MFA from Northwestern University and is a Skowhegan alumni (2011). His work has been exhibited internationally. *Refugee Olympics*, part of the *FUGERE* project, was commissioned for Sharjah Biennial 9 (2009), while other parts were shown in the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (2015). Aivazian's video works have been included in several exhibitions and festivals including: Mercer Union, Toronto (2011), Art Dubai (2012), FIDMarseille (2012), Videobrasil's Southern Panoramas (2013) and the Los Angeles Municipal Museum, LAMAG (2014).

Among his curated exhibitions are: *Roads Were Open / Roads Were Closed* at The Third Line, Dubai (2008); and *Plot for a Biennial*, Sharjah Biennial 10 (2011), of which he was Associate Curator. Aivazian has written for a number of publications including *Afterall Journal*, *Manifesta Journal*, *FUSE*, *Adbusters*, *Ibraaz*, *Bidoun*, *AMCA* (Association for Modern and Contemporary Art of the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey), and *The Arab Studies Journal* as well as several exhibition catalogues. He is represented by Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg-Beirut.

Nigol Bezjian

Born in 1955 in Aleppo to Armenian parents, he immigrated to Lebanon first, where he lived and worked before immigrating to Boston, USA, in 1974. He studied filmmaking at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television where he graduated with a MFA in Film Producing, Writing and Directing. After having worked for Future TV in Lebanon, Bezjian has been involved in producing broadcast television programs throughout the Middle East. For several years he has owned a production company, Think Positive, providing production services in Lebanon, producing documentaries TV shows, and consulting for TV stations.

His first full-length feature film, *Chickpeas*, released in 1992, earned wide acclaim that continues to this day. His filmography includes, among others: *Cycle Carmen* (1981), *Roads Full of Apricots* (2001), *Verve* (2003), *Home/Land* (2008), *Milk*, *Carnation and a Godly*

Song (2013), *I Left My Shoes in Istanbul* (2013), *Rumi: The Same Gate* (2014) and, most recently, *Thank You Ladies and Gentlemen* (2014). His films have been shown in countless film festivals where many of which have been awarded.

Anna Boghiguan

Born in 1946 in Cairo, Egypt. She lives and works in the Universe. Boghiguan left Cairo in the 1970s and moved to Canada where she received her artistic training. She studied Art and Music at the Concordia University in Montreal and Political Science and Economics at the American University in Cairo. She has had several exhibitions in Montreal, Toronto, Sanaa (Yemen), Athens, Istanbul, Cairo, Berlin... She has also completed an artist book and illustrations that were published by the French editor Fata Morgana (Montpellier) as well as for the American University in Cairo. She was responsible for drawing the covers for Naguib Mahfouz's novels, and she wrote the book *Anna's Egypt*. Boghiguan has participated in several biennials, including Thessaloniki (2007), Istanbul (2009), Sharjah (2011), and São Paulo and Cartagena (2014). She participated in Documenta 13, Kassel (2012) and in the show *Here and Elsewhere* at the New Museum, New York (2014). She is represented by Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg-Beirut.

Hera Büyükaşçıyan

Born in 1984 in Istanbul, Turkey, where she lives and works. She graduated in 2006 in Fine Arts from the Marmara University.

The artist uses notions of the "other" and combines it with the concepts of absence and invisibility to compose such notion within an imaginary connection through identity, memory, space and time, opening new narratives thanks to the use of metaphors from local myths, historic and iconographic elements. She has participated in Artists Residency programs that include the ACSL Yerevan (2011); PiST / / Interdisciplinary Project Space, Istanbul (2012); Villa Waldberta, Munich (2012–13); Delfina Foundation, London (2014). Recent exhibitions include, among others: *Changeables & Transformables*, Istanbul (2009); *Lives and Works in Istanbul*, Istanbul (2010); *art. homes*, Munich-Istanbul (2010–11); *The Afternoon Odyssey*, SALT Istanbul (2012); *Looking for Somewhere to Land*, Stockholm (2012); *The Land Across the Blind*, Galeri Mana, Istanbul (2014); *Oxymoron Normality*, Bialystok-Istanbul (2014); *Jerusalem Show VII*,

Jerusalem (2014); *The Century of Centuries*, SALT, Istanbul (2014).

Silvina Der-Meguerditchian

Born in 1967 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, she lives and works in Berlin. The artist is the granddaughter of Armenian immigrants to Argentina. Her artistic work deals with issues related to national identity, memory, the role of minorities in the society and the potential of a space “in-between.” She is interested in the impact of migration in the urban space and its consequences. Her work uses different medias such as installation, video, sound, rugs, and performance. She is the initiator of the platform for Armenian artists and curators *Underconstruction*, the first Armenian diaspora representation at the 52nd Venice Biennale (*Underconstruction: Visual dialogue – Talking about Identities in the Armenian Transnation*). Since 2010 she is the Artistic Director of Houshamadyan (www.houshamadyan.org), a project to reconstruct Ottoman Armenian town and village life. Her projects were awarded with scholarships from the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), Soros Foundation, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Tufenkian Foundation, and the Gulbenkian Foundation. Her work has been shown in many exhibitions around the world, including, among others, Germany, Argentina and Turkey. In 2014 she spent a six-months scholarship at the Kulturakademie Tarabya in Istanbul, a residency program of the German Foreign Ministry and the Goethe Institut.

Rene Gabri & Ayreen Anastas

Rene Gabri. It is 10:55, January 28, 2015. Four years ago today, corrupted empires and regimes seemed all on the brink of collapse. The named artist is on his way to Istanbul, which for centuries was called by another name. It was a common occurrence for Armenian artists of previous centuries to take on or be called by another name. What is involved in this act of naming, he wonders. How is a people, a place, a person named? And what historical conditions would bring his parents to name him, Rene, a name having neither a literal relation to Armenia nor Iran? Were they Francophiles, as was common among certain milieus in Teheran? Were they trying to hide his identity to save him from the embarrassment or danger of belonging to a persecuted and displaced people? Or was Hermik, his mother, so keen to have a daughter that she gave a name that could always recall the her in him?

Maybe his name was a parody of that grotesque practice in the post-Ottoman period of changing the place names of towns and villages to erase any trace of an Armenian presence. And what compels a bureaucrat, arriving in an Armenian village near Peria, to name one half of the village Gabri, euphemism for “unbeliever,” and the other Karapetian? At 12:29, a thought comes, maybe we are undeserving of Armenian names, because we have not understood one of the most elemental lessons of our ancestors: the violence of fixing an identity, the violence of naming.

Ayreen Anastas is her name and yet she is not the same. She is an image dissolving itself in a landscape of thyme, of earth, of dirt, of olive trees, of stones and cement walls crawling, enclosing, menacing, dispossessing and smashing life everywhere they go. She refuses the language of mere descriptions, the idea of one’s own distinctions and all discourses of biographies and definitions. She desires, thus postulates and hallucinates:

A) the suspension of laws, orders, state police, all elites, elitism including egalitarianism; B) the inclusion and appreciation in her life/their lives of: the invisible, inaudible, unsayable, imperceptible, immaterial, intangible and the general; C) the putting into question the will in all its forms and especially the confusion arising from the translations of the will to power as power over and not power to; and finally D) the weariness of work as life, of work over life and all regimes of property over lives, times and spaces.

Mekhitar Garabedian

Born in 1977 in Aleppo, Syria, he currently lives and works in Ghent, Belgium. He draws inspiration for many of his works from his experience as an immigrant. Raised in Belgium, his upbringing established a consciousness of his family’s continued struggle to preserve their Armenian heritage. Memory is central to many of his works, articulated not only through recollection or looking to the past, but also through repetition as a mnemonic exercise. Often his works build on aspects of Armenian culture, but others take their inspiration from works in music, literature or film.

Garabedian’s solo exhibition *Without even leaving, we are already no longer there* was presented at SMAK, Ghent (2012), and his work has appeared in group exhibitions such as *curated_by*, Vienna (2011), *Graphology*, The Drawing Room, London (2012), *Long ago, and not true anyway*, waterside

contemporary, London (2013), *Here and Elsewhere*, New Museum, New York (2014), and *The Sky is Blue in Some Other Way*, Elba Benítez Gallery, Madrid (2014). In 2015 his work will be presented at the Thessaloniki Biennale. Garabedian was awarded the Ariane de Rothschild Art Prize in 2008. He is currently affiliated with KASK / School of Arts Ghent as a researcher and guest professor of Installation and Media Art. Garabedian is represented by Albert Baronian Gallery, Brussels.

Aikaterini Gegisian

Born in 1976 in Thessaloniki, Greece, to a mixed Greek and Armenian family. Both her mother’s and father’s families went to Greece as refugees during the population exchange of 1922 between Greece and Turkey. Her multi-faceted work explores how images (from still to moving) operating within a global media environment that shapes the conscious and unconscious contain new possibilities for thought. In 2014 she completed a PhD at the University of Westminster (London) and was a Visiting Scholar-Artist at the University of Pennsylvania (USA). Her work has been presented internationally in film festivals and biennials as well as in solo and group shows, including NARS Foundation, New York; Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck College, London; Vladikafkaz Fine Arts Museum, North Ossetia, Russia; Thessaloniki Centre for Contemporary Art, Greece; Spike Island Gallery, Bristol; Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, Greece; Gyumri International Biennial of Contemporary Art, Armenia. Gegisian’s work is included in private and institutional collections, such as the National Center of Contemporary Art, North Ossetia, Russia; State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki; and the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki. Aikaterini Gegisian is represented by Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki.

Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi

Yervant Gianikian was born in Merano to Armenian parents. He studied architecture in Venice and began working in film upon meeting Angela Ricci Lucchi, born in Lugo di Romagna. She studied painting with Oskar Kokoschka. Their work focuses on the image and the constant search for visual expression.

The two artists have presented their works at numerous international film festivals in Cannes, Rotterdam, Venice, and Toronto, and have been

awarded for their work worldwide. Their works have been shown in major solo and group exhibitions in leading museums including: Jeu de Paume, Paris (1995, 2006); MoMA, New York (2000, 2009); Tate Modern, London (2011); Hangar Bicocca, Milan (2012); and recently in the show *La guerra che verrà...* at MART, Rovereto (2014). Their work has been shown as well in major events such as the 49th Venice Biennale (2001), curated by Harald Szeemann, and, more recently, in 2013 in the show *The Encyclopedic Palace*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni and Cindy Sherman.

Their works can be found in many Italian and international collections, including: British Film Institute, London; MoMA, New York; La Cinémathèque Française, Paris; Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain, Paris; Fabric Workshop & Museum, Philadelphia; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; and the MART, Rovereto.

Aram Jibilian

Aram Jibilian moved to New York from his native California in 1998 to pursue a Master of Arts at New York University. In 2008, he began an “inter-and intra-psychic” exploration of the work of the Armenian-American artist Arshile Gorky. Based on the artists’ shared ancestry and the recent death of a loved one by suicide, Jibilian began to consider the psychic traces of loss and how they function within the individual and the Armenian diaspora as a whole. This investigation ultimately led him to Gorky’s home in Sherman, Connecticut, where the “ghost” of Gorky had reportedly been residing. Beginning in 2012, Jibilian joined a performance collective with choreographer Daria Fain, which ultimately led to a series of performances with The Commons Choir. In 2013, Jibilian enrolled at Hunter College where he recently completed a Master in Social Work. He was awarded the Getzel Family Award for his work and commitment to the health and well-being of communities which have been marginalized. Alongside his continued art practice, Jibilian currently works as a psychotherapist for youth experiencing homelessness in New York City.

Nina Katchadourian

Born in 1968 in Stanford, California, she lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She grew up spending every summer on a small island in the Finnish archipelago, where she still spends part of each year. Her Armenian father and Finland-Swedish mother met in Beirut in 1964.

Katchadourian's broad practice engages a wide variety of media, including photography, sculpture, video, and sound. Her work is in many private and public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Saatchi Collection, the Margulies Collection, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Recent solo and group exhibitions include the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, PS1/MoMA, the Serpentine Gallery, Saatchi Gallery, Turner Contemporary, the Istanbul Modern, SculptureCenter, the Palais de Tokyo, and De Appel. In 2016, her work will be the subject of a traveling solo museum show originating at the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas. Katchadourian is an Associate Professor at New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. She is represented by Catharine Clark Gallery.

Melik Ohanian

Melik Ohanian is a French artist born in 1969 who lives between New York and Paris, and whose whole work is centered on the image. His research questions the means, the mediums and the allegorical power of the image, constantly returning to a number of recurring themes: desert zones, the labor world, the end of revolutionary utopias, scientific or historical facts, Armenian identity... By privileging the paradoxes and the reversals, he gradually developed a vocabulary of original plastic and filmic gestures, as an artist whose characteristics are commonly associated with what we define the "exhibition cinema." The recurrent use of traveling against the editing, the projection of films without images, film design for a single screen... are some of his singular (artistic) gestures. Beyond these ambitious projects that challenge the cinema constituent evidences, the work of Melik Ohanian exists in multiple forms. Among them, the design of sculptural objects plays an increasingly important role in questioning both the exhibition space as a representation site, a specific issue in terms of memory, history and politics, and anything relying to a memorial form. Represented on an international level, the artist has first been noticed in 2002 with the installation *Island of an Island* (1998–2001), exhibited for the opening of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. He has participated in numerous biennials, such as São Paulo, Berlin, Sydney (2004), Moscow, Lyon (2005),

Seville, Gwangju (2006), Venice (2007) and Sharjah (2011).

Mikayel Ohanjanyan

Born in 1976 in Yerevan, Armenia, of Armenian parents originally from Syunik, a mountainous region of Southern Armenia. His ancestors come from the ancient region of Salmast, formerly Saghamas or Saghamaast (now Iran). Forced to leave their land after the Russian-Persian war at the beginning of the 19th century, they settled in the Syunik region and later in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh). Ohanjanyan attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Yerevan. In 2000 he moved to Florence, Italy, where he currently lives and works, after having studied Sculpture at the Florence Academy of Fine Arts. During his artistic career he has participated in numerous national and international exhibitions, including the Venice International Architecture Biennale in 2010 and the 2011 Venice Art Biennale. He was recently awarded the Prize Henraux 2014. His works can be found in Italian and international collections including the Vatican, the Henraux Foundation, Targetti's Light Art Collection, and in the Collection of the City of Neustadt an der Weinstrasse, Germany.

Rosana Palazyan

Born in 1963 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where she lives and works. Her parents are both of Armenian origin. Her grandparents from mother's side moved to Brazil around 1926 and her father in 1950. She attended the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage and studied Architecture and Urbanism at the Universidade Gama Filho, both in Rio de Janeiro. In twenty-six years of production, Palazyan's work in a variety of mediums (embroidery, drawing, installation, video, performance and public art projects) has promoted experiences about art, life and society along with the incorporation of the "Other," and proposed reflections on the social field of art. Solo exhibitions include: Museu de Arte Contemporâneo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico (2000); Centro Cultural Banco Brasil, São Paulo (2004); Casa França Brasil, Rio de Janeiro (2010). Group exhibitions include: 26th São Paulo International Biennial (2004); *Pretty Tough: Contemporary Storytelling*, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2009); *The Street*, MHKA, Antwerp (2011); 4th Thessaloniki Biennale

(2013–14); *O abrigo e o terreno*, Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro (2013–14).

Sarkis

Born in 1938 in Istanbul, Turkey, he lives and works in Paris, France. During sixty years of artistic career, Sarkis has worked in various media, including interdisciplinary installations (audio, visual). His works have been shown in important art institutions, museums and galleries such as the Louvre Museum, Paris; MAMCO, Genève; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Documenta VI and Documenta VII (Kassel, 1977 and 1982) count among the artist's major shows. The artist is the recipient of the 1967 Prix de la Peinture at the Biennale de Paris and the 1991 Grand Prix National de Sculpture. He has recently exhibited at the Centre Georges Pompidou (2010), the MAMCO (2011), the Submarine Wharf in collaboration with Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2012), and the Musée du Château des Ducs de Wurtemberg in Montbéliard, France (2014), where a solo exhibition was devoted to his work. He will also be representing the Turkish Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015. He is represented by Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris-Brussels.

Hrair Sarkissian

Born in 1973 in Damascus, Syria. He earned his foundational training at his father's photographic studio in Damascus. Sarkissian attended the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie in Arles, France (2003–04) and in 2010 completed a BFA in Photography at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam. His works revolve around individual and collective memory and identity. His photographs of urban environments and landscape employ traditional documentary techniques to re-evaluate larger historical, religious or social narratives. Through his work he explores personal memories and his family's Armenian heritage, while inviting the viewer to consider the paradox between what is made visible and the stories of the past. In 2013 the artist received the Abraaj Group Art Prize. He has exhibited internationally in numerous biennials and solo and group shows, including: Istanbul Biennale; Sharjah Biennale, UAE; Thessaloniki Biennale; Asia Pacific Triennial, Brisbane; Tate Modern, London; New Museum, New York; Darat Al Funun – The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman; Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City; FotoMuseum, Antwerp; SALT, Istanbul. Sarkissian is currently based in London and is represented by Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki.

Haig Aivazian

Hastayım Yaşıyorum (I Am Sick, But I Am Alive), 2014
Tulipwood, mahogany and polyester varnish
99.5 x 235 x 36.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg-Beirut, commissioned by The Moving Museum, Istanbul

Nigol Bezjian

Witness.ed, 2015
Site-specific installation
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist

Camera: Nigol Bezjian, Barbaros Goekdemir, Ahmad Jardali
Editors: Maroon Asmar, Noor Al Amin, Chantal Kanaan Partamian
Digital photography: Arno Jihanian
Digital graphics: Nairi Alexandrian
Appearances: Marc Nichanian, Antonia Arslan, Serge Avedikian, Hrayr Kalemkerian
Voice: Hermine Nourpetian
Librarian: Vera Gosdanian
Text translators: Marc Nichanina, Nigol Bezjian, Tatul Sonentz Papazian, Dr. B. Missakian, Hermine Nurpetian, Nare Kelemkerian, Oshin Elagoz
Subtitling: Carole Haddad
Recording studio: Voice of Van Studio
Supporters: Think Positive Productions, Hamazkayin Central Executive Committee, Haigazian University

Anna Boghiguan

Ani, 2015
Site-specific installation
Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg-Beirut
Birds, 2013
Papier mâché
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg-Beirut

Do Not Cry Ani, 2015
Artist's book
Mixed media
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg-Beirut

Hera Büyüктаşçıyan

Letters from Lost Paradise, 2015
Mechanism, bronze, wood
64 x 100 x 85–90 cm (front)
110–115 cm (back)
Courtesy the artist

The Keepers, 2015
Wax and bronze
19 x 9 cm
Courtesy the artist

Silvina Der-Meguerditchian

Treasures, 2015
Manuscript, collages, digital images and small glass bottles
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist

Rene Gabri & Ayreen Anastas

When Counting Loses Its Sense, 2015
Mixed media, paper, ink, pencil, collage, interventions, scratches, appropriations, cuts, traces, etc.
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artists

Expecting nothing, going nowhere and soon never arriving, 2015
Guided walk on the grounds of the Monastery of San Lazzaro, duration approximately 1 hour
Courtesy the artists

Mekhitar Garabedian

Agheg, 2003–15
Sound installation, 9 minutes, voice by Agheg Garabedian
Courtesy the artist and Albert Baronian Gallery, Brussels

Table (Histoire de mes ancêtres), Saint Lazare, Venise, 2013–14
Dptych
Ink on paper
134 x 100 cm, 69 x 100 cm
Courtesy the artist and Albert Baronian Gallery, Brussels

Untitled (Gurgen Mahari, The World Is Alive, Venice), 2015
Neon
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist and Albert Baronian Gallery, Brussels

Untitled (Daniel Varoujan Ghent), 2011
Paper, intaglio print
73.5 x 58.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Albert Baronian Gallery, Brussels

Aikaterini Gegisian

A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas, 2015
Limited edition of 100 individual signed copies plus 20 artist's proofs
Hardcover, 17 x 24 cm
Courtesy the artist and Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki

A Small Guide to the Invisible Seas, 2015
Collages on paper
Site-specific installation
Courtesy the artist and Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki

Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi

Ritorno a Khodorciur: Diario armeno, 1986
Video, 80 minutes
Courtesy the artists

Rotolo armeno, 2012
Watercolor on paper
17 x 0.80 m
Courtesy the artists

Aram Jibilian

Gorky, a life in 3 acts (i. birth), 2008
UV pigment on Dibond
61 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy the artist

Gorky and the Glass House (panel 18), 2010
UV pigment on Dibond
87.6 x 61 cm
Courtesy the artist

Gorky and the Glass House (panel 22), 2010
UV pigment on Dibond
87.6 x 61 cm
Courtesy the artist

Gorky and the son he never had, 2010
UV pigment on Dibond
76.2 x 61 cm
Courtesy the artist

The Gorky Mask, 2010
UV pigment on Dibond
58.7 x 55 cm
Courtesy the artist

Untitled (Gorky's Grave, 1), 2015
UV pigment on Dibond
66 x 86.4 cm
Courtesy the artist

Nina Katachadourian

Accent Elimination, 2005
Six monitors, three channels of synchronized video, three single-channel video loops, six media players, three sets of headphones, three pedestals, two benches
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery

Melik Ohanian

Presence – Belongingness to Present – Part I
Streetlights of Memory – A Stand by Memorial, 2010–15
Site-specific installation
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

Presence – Belongingness to Present – Part II
Datcha Project – A Zone of No Production, since 2005
Site-specific installation
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

Mikayel Ohanjanyan

Tasnerku, 2015
Mixed size basalt blocks and discs of corten steel
Variable dimensions
Ø 120 cm each disc
Variable dimensions
Courtesy the artist and Tornabuoni Arte Gallery, Florence

Rosana Palazyan

“... Uma história que eu nunca esqueci...” / “... A story I never forgot...”, 2013–15
Video installation – video
13 minutes; threads on the floor
Collection of the artist

Script, direction, camera and photography: Rosana Palazyan
Drawings, paintings, embroideries and objects: Rosana Palazyan
Video and sound edition: Rosana Palazyan and Fábio Carvalho
Sound and song research: Rosana Palazyan
Computer graphics: Fábio Carvalho
Artist assistant: Carlos Eduardo da Silva
Conservation of works: Marcus Vinicius de Moraes Lacerda
Supporter: Rebeca Palazyan

Por que Daninhas? / Why Weeds?, 2006–2015
Photographs printed on vinyl mounted on metal stands
10 pieces
30 x 40 x 115 cm each piece
Site-specific installation
Courtesy the artist

Photography: Vicente de Mello and Rosana Palazyan
Image editing: Fábio Carvalho and Rosana Palazyan
Supporter: Rebeca Palazyan

Sarkis

41 – Danseuse dorée en haut du toit, from Ailleurs ici, Chaumont-sur-Loire, 2012
Stained glass, metal, LED
52 x 77.7 cm
Courtesy Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris-Brussels

67 – Croix de brique, from Ailleurs ici, Chaumont-sur-Loire, 2012
Stained glass, metal, LED
50.8 x 77.7 cm
Courtesy Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris-Brussels

Atlas de Mammuthus Intermedius, 2014
Bones from the site of Romain-la-Roche (160,000 years B.C.)
Resin, natural glue, gold leaf
38 x 25 x 15 cm
Restored by Olivier Bracq according to the Japanese technique of restoration Kintsugi, dating back to the 15th century
Collection Musées de Montbéliard

Ada Ewe vierge, 2013–14
Metal furniture, 30 sheets on Arches paper 300 g, 56 x 76 cm, with wooden objects
132 x 68 x 92 cm
Courtesy Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris-Brussels

Hrair Sarkissian

Unexposed, 2012
Archival inkjet prints
137.5 x 110 cm each
Courtesy the artist and Kalfayan Galleries, Athens-Thessaloniki

