

Walid Raad

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Scratching on Things I Could Disavow. A History of Art in the Arab World

Exhibition and Performance

26 May–15 June 2011

Opening:

26 May, 5–7:00 pm

In Absentia: A Conversation Between Walid Raad and Jalal Toufic
on May 27 at 4 p.m.

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

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Wiener Festwochen

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Scratching on Things I Could Disavow. A History of Art in the Arab World is the latest project by the New York-based Lebanese artist Walid Raad. The presentations in English and German language which take place within the exhibition will be presented from May 26 to June 15 at Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary's space in Vienna.

In *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*, Walid Raad takes the visitor from a detailed case study of The Artist Pension Trust and its enmeshment with a network of neoliberal actors, to an account of the accelerated emergence of art spaces and institutions in the Arab world,

and finally to inexplicable physical phenomena like the flattening of art spaces, the shrinking of artworks, and the availability of colors, lines, and forms for contemporary Arab artistic creation.

Walid Raad's overall project engages with the fast-paced development in cities such as Abu-Dhabi, Beirut, Cairo, Doha, Istanbul and Sharjah of a new infrastructure for the visual arts. In a context where cultural tourism has become an instrument of economic growth and power, Raad's project considers the ideological, economic and political dimensions of this phenomenon to ask whether and how culture and tradition in the Arab world may have been affected, materially and immaterially, by the various wars that have been and are still being waged in this volatile region. Raad's works also lean on Jalal Toufic's concept of "the withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster."

Scratching on Things I Could Disavow expands upon the research-based methodology of Raad's *The Atlas Group (1989–2004)*, the visual and performative archival project he has initiated to document the social, political, psychological and aesthetic conditions of the Lebanese wars (1975–1990/91). The new project marks a critical juncture in Raad's practice, at once a departure from *The Atlas Group* while expanding its historical and theoretical reference.

Concept and production: Walid Raad

Concept development collaborators and/or production assistants: Carlos Chahine, Raphael Fleuriet, Ryan Garrett, Kristine Khouri, Mores Mc Wreath, Markus Reymann, Celesta Rottiers, Lucien Samaha, Herman Sorgeloos, Situ Studio, Rémi Vidal

Executive Producer: Klein verzet vzw

Coproduction: Wiener Festwochen, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Festival d'Automne à Paris, Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brüssel, Les Halles, Brüssel, HAU/Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin, Le CENTQUATRE, Paris

Supported by: Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Hamburg/Beirut, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, Centre national des arts plastiques, Paris, Ville de Paris, Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes, Paris

Walid Raad is an artist and an Associate Professor of Art in The Cooper Union (New York, USA). Raad's works include *The Atlas Group*, a fifteen-year project between 1989 and 2004 about the contemporary history of Lebanon, and the ongoing projects *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow: A History of Art in the Arab World*, and *Sweet Talk: Commissions (Beirut)*. His books include *The Truth Will Be Known When The Last Witness Is Dead*, *My Neck Is Thinner Than A Hair*, *Let's Be Honest*, *The Weather Helped*, and *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*. Raad's works have been shown at The Whitechapel Gallery (London, UK), Festival d'Automne (Paris, France), Kunsten Festival des Arts (Brussels, Belgium), Documenta 11 (Kassel, Germany), The Venice Biennale (Venice, Italy), The Hamburger Bahnhof (Berlin, Germany), Homeworks (Beirut, Lebanon) and numerous other museums and venues in Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Raad is also the recipient of the Hasselblad Award (2011), a Guggenheim Fellowship (2009), the Alpert Award in Visual Arts (2007), the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (2007), and the Camera Austria Award (2005). Raad is represented by the Sfeir-Semler Gallery (Hamburg / Beirut); Anthony Reynolds Gallery (London); and Paula Cooper Gallery (New York).

Founded in Vienna in 2002 by Francesca von Habsburg, **Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary** is committed to supporting the production of contemporary art and is actively involved in commissioning and disseminating unconventional projects. After nine years of collecting art, initiating challenging projects and an engaged exhibition practice, the foundation is opening its new exhibition space in autumn 2011, relocating the recently closed Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin to Vienna. The mission of the new space is expressing T-B A21's vision to act as an agent of

transformation, to participate actively in the formulation of our environments and social spaces and to create a venue for dialogue and engagement in Vienna.

The Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary exhibition program is sponsored by the **Vienna Insurance Group**

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Scratching on Things I Could Disavow. A History of Art in the Arab World

Exhibition

Opening: May 26, 5–7:00 pm

Duration: May 26–June 15, 2011

Opening hours:

Mon to Fri (workdays), 12 to 7 p.m.

Sat, Sun, holidays, 12 to 6 p.m.

Free Admission

Exhibition Walk-throughs

Premiere: Thursday, May 26, 2011, 7:30 p.m.

Subsequent presentations: May 27 – June 15, 2011

Mon to Fri (workdays) at 7 p.m.

Sat, Sun, ho at 6 p.m. and at 9 p.m.

Exhibition Walk-throughs in English by Walid Raad

May 26–28, and June 7–10, 11 (at 6 p.m.), 12

Exhibition Walk-throughs in German by Markus Reymann (T-B A21)

May 29–June 6, June 11 (at 9 p.m.), June 13–15

Tickets:

Wiener Festwochen

www.festwochen.at

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*Image above:

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