

Walid Raad "Better be watching the clouds"

Paula Cooper Gallery presents a new series of work by Walid Raad entitled *Better be watching the clouds* (2000/2017). The presentation will include a selection of fifteen plates from the series.

The plates in *Better be watching the clouds* show pages from a book of flora native to the Middle East where the heads of political leaders involved in, or contemporary with, the Lebanese Civil War appear as efflorescences. Its brightly colored blossoms budding with black and white photos of politicians recall the history of political critique and photomontage by artists such as Hannah Höch and John Heartfield. Raad's index catalogs an extensive collection of players including: Muammar Gaddafi (Libya), Margaret Thatcher (UK), Anwar Sadat (Egypt), Hosni Mubarak (Egypt), Saddam Hussein (Iraq), Jimmy Carter (USA), Ronald Reagan (USA), François Mitterrand (France), Mikhail Gorbachev (Soviet Union), Yasser Arafat (Palestine), King Hussein of Jordan, Ayatollah Khomeini (Iran), Ali Khamenei (Iran), Menachem Begin (Israel), Yitzhak Shamir (Israel), Shafik Wazzan (Lebanon), Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (UAE), Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (Kuwait). The series is accompanied by wall text that reads: "The following plates were donated to The Atlas Group in 2000. The anonymous donation came in a box labeled with the following words: Comrade leader, Comrade leader, you'd better be watching the clouds."

For over 25 years, Walid Raad (b. 1967, Lebanon) has created work that explores the ways in which events of physical and psychological violence affect bodies, minds, and culture. His work has been shown in numerous international exhibitions, including Documenta 11 and 13 (2002 and 2012), the Istanbul Biennial (2015), the first Vienna Biennale (2015), the

Whitney Biennial (2000 and 2002), and the 2003 and 2015 Venice Biennale, among others. Raad has had one-person exhibitions at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2006), the Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid (2009), the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2010), Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2011), Carré d'Art, Nîmes and MADRE Napoli (both 2014). In 2015, Raad was the subject of a mid-career retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, that traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, and Museo Jumex, Mexico City. He is the recipient of numerous awards and prizes including the 2007 Alpert Award from CalArts, the 2011 Hasselblad Award, and the 2016 Infinity Award in Art from the International Center of Photography. Raad currently lives in New York City where he teaches in The Cooper Union's School of Art. He is also a member of Ashkal Alwan's Home Workspace in Beirut, and the Gulf Labor Coalition.