

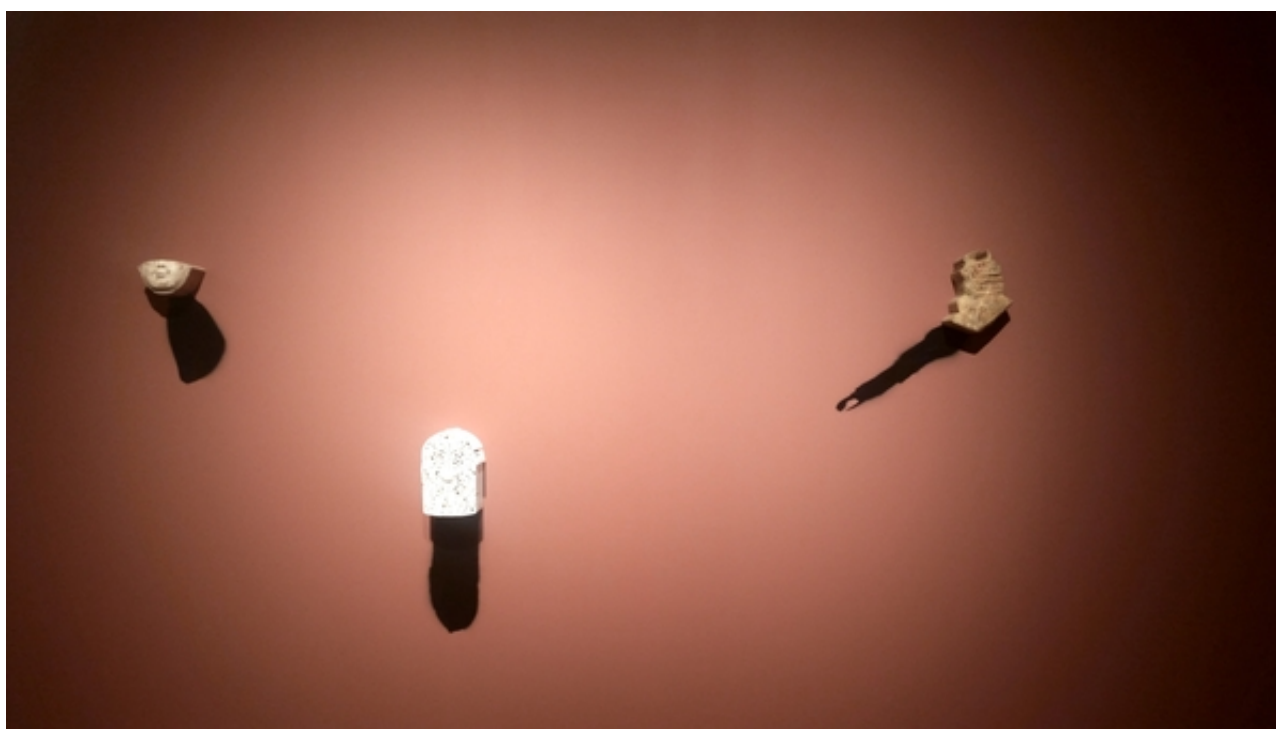
Walid Raad: Institutional critique and art engagé at MADRE

"Preface / Prefazione" is the first solo exhibition of Walid Raad in Italy. It is curated by Alessandro Rabottini and Andrea Vilianni at the MADRE in Naples and it is the outstanding result of the collaboration between a great artist like Walid Raad, who carried out his own research beyond the boundaries between institutional critique and art engagé, and an undisputed institution like the Museo Donna Regina, which, in the course of its complex history, got a sequence of site-specific actions off the ground inside the articulated rooms of its palace, including artists such as Giulio Paolini, Jannis Kounellis and Jeff Koons.



Born in Lebanon, Walid Raad is one of the most interesting voices on the Middle Eastern art scene. A multimedia artist and member of the Atlas Group, a project founded in 1999, that researches, documents and archives Lebanon's contemporary history. Here is where Walid Raad's genius lies, in this inquiring spirit as a cataloguer of finds, tales and impossible developments. *"Scratching on Thing I Could Disavow"* is an

example: a project on modern and contemporary islamic art in the arabic world which he has been working on since 2007. It was conceived to examine the phenomenon which in the last years led several Arabic cities such as Abu Dhabi, Beirut, Cairo, Doha, Manama and Ramallah to quickly spread new cultural foundations, art galleries, academies, magazines and big branches of Western museums. If these changes were seen in the context of the geopolitical, economic, social and military conflicts which have been plaguing the Arabic world in the last decades, they would hit pay dirt but, at the same time, find broken ground for creative work. "The works of the exhibition originate from my interest in Islamic art and Arabic modern art on all accounts: works, shapes, lines and colours: institutions, debates, histories and dissertations: and one more time artists, sponsors and spectators."



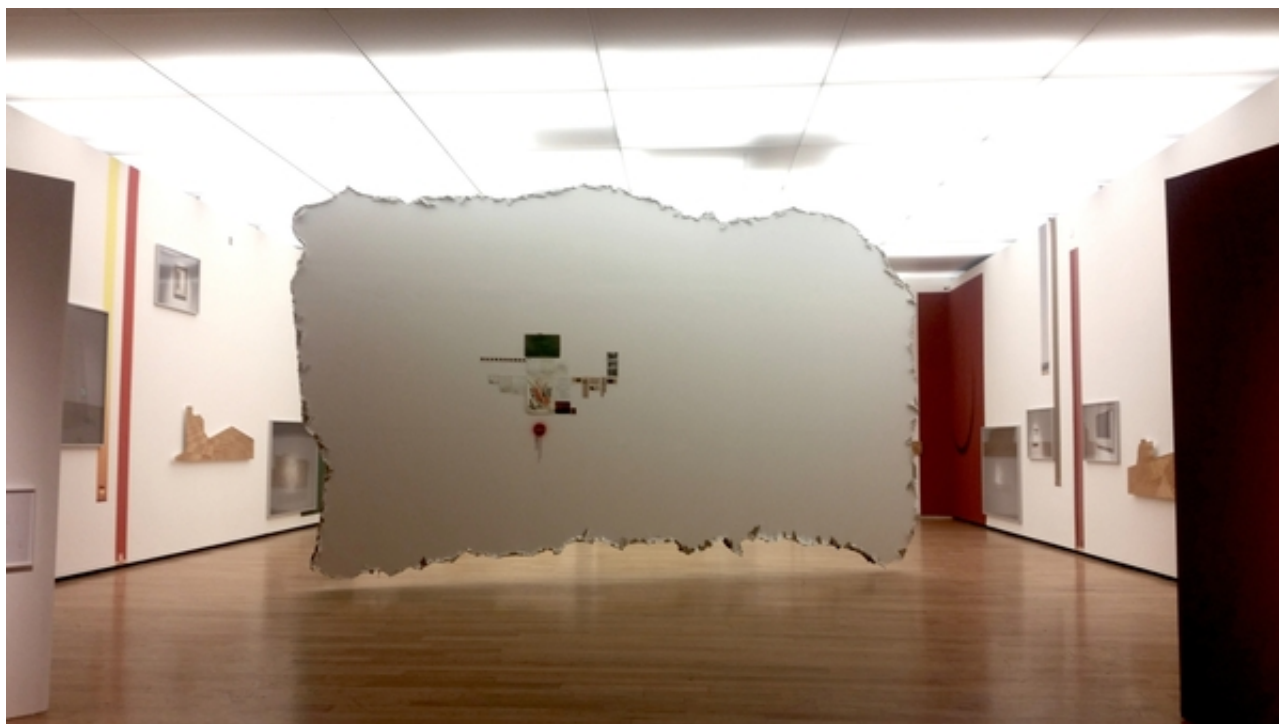
Exhibitions are the stage where the crossroad among artwork, artist, curator, audience, exhibition context and market has its most meaningful effects, concerning artist promotion, cultural policy and – naturally – the value of art itself. And here Walid Raad subtly hints at his biased institutional criticism, the starting point for an exhibition-collection, where nothing is left to chance: several supplementary panels, as if the artist

directly led his audience through his history, revealing in advance and explaining those pauses between the works. He tells us, for example, about the moving of 294 works of Louvre's Département des Arts de L'Islam, which will be lent to the Louvre of Abu Dhabi between 2016 and 2046. Walid Raad compares this fact with the works and the exhibited manufactured objects and the way they are shown: "Here objects are caught red-handed. Moreover, and to complete their transformation, I wanted to provide suitable showcases and descriptions."



Among the first exhibited works, a preeminent site specific action: "Index XXVI: red," a drywall, apparently ripped out from his "birthplace," stands out diagonally hanged along the first room. On one side there are the names of the lebanese artists whom the author states to telepathically foresee by a time lag of nine years. "I prepared an exhibition space in Beirut and on a continue white wall – it was not broken, we broke it to be able to transport it – I hanged those names, written in white vinyl letters, saying to myself that someday and somehow, a proof would have come and confirm everything. Then I must confess you that when I look for a proof of telepathic signals, I usually expect it from artists, writers, dancers and cooks." His country's culture is critically sifted up and his

work is nothing else than a coherent and refined investigation of our current time.



WALID RAAD "*PREFACE / PREFAZIONE*" at [MADRE – Museo d'arte contemporanea Donnaregina](#), Naples. 11 October 2014 – 19 January 2015