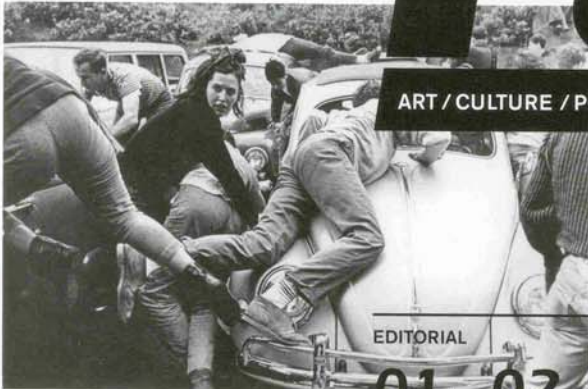


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ART / CULTURE / POLITICS



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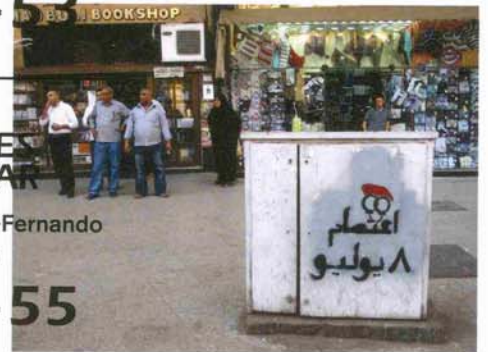
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EDITORIAL

# STATES OF POSTCOLONIALITY/ EGYPT

To describe our state as postcolonial is not to say that colonialism is over, a thing of the past, but instead to insist on a certain historical continuity. It is a gesture against willful forgetting, a taking account of particular lineages of subjugation in order to underscore the importance of resistance, sovereignty and solidarity in the present. It acknowledges an extended age of empire in which neoliberal capitalism has largely taken the place of classical colonialism. It is to say that whether we like it or not, we immigrants, natives, settlers, refugees—we who make up the populace of a geography sometimes referred to as Canada—are bound together by an internationally recognized state that was founded under an imperialist agenda. Canada is a settler state. We are cognizant of our own postcolonial position when we ask: what does inhabiting a state of postcoloniality mean for the politics of the present?

Reaching beyond our locality and taking a regional approach to this question, the *States of Postcoloniality* series begins by turning its attention to three specific locations: Egypt, the (Canadian) Arctic and Lithuania. Working across the tensions generated by a grouping of vastly different regions, we hope to see if there are shared conditions that can work to define postcoloniality. Further, we hope that identifying these conditions we will help to build robust practices of sovereignty and solidarity.

Focusing resolutely on current events and issues, the series grounds these larger questions of postcoloniality in specific examples and lived experiences. Compelled by the infrastructures and economies of contemporary art as much as its varied and specific content, we will feature the work of critical programming institutions and curators in addition to artists and writers based in postcolonial states. We aim to build a robust lexicon of practices and ideas that envision states of postcoloniality characterized by social and environmental justice.

In the issue you hold in your hands, we have assembled a contemporaneous archaeology of this year's ongoing uprising in Egypt. As the first in our series on *States of Postcoloniality*, this issue implicitly draws connections between this year's uprising and a longer picture of Egypt's modern history. Since full British withdrawal from Egypt following World War II, the country has been subject to military rule that, at press time, has not been fully cast off. We will leave it to the political analysts and historians to carefully construct a narrative that convincingly links Egypt's last year to its more distant past. For the time being, we offer our readers a collection of interviews, arguments and images that work to filter and process aspects of this year's uprising. We ask how the nascent and marginal infrastructures of a contemporary art indigenous to Egypt might provide the tools to retake "the means of production of the present" [1]

A plurality of names and terms is symptomatic of history in the making. Uprising, revolt, revolution, pro-democracy, Arab Spring, January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution, and so on, each making its own argument about the context, nature and durability of this year's political upheavals in Egypt and across the Middle East and North Africa. Remarkable resonances exist between events of 2011 and of 1919 (also variously

[1] Claire Fontaine.  
*We Are All Whatever  
Singularities*.  
Self-published, 2006.



described as uprising, insurrection or revolution). Nominally part of the Ottoman Empire at the outbreak of World War I, subject to occupation by Britain since 1882 and one of its protectorates since 1915, Egypt was on the verge of becoming a full colonial state. Following WWI, the populist Egyptian Wafd Party planned to send a delegation to the Paris Peace Conference to demand that Egypt be recognized as an independent nation. Instead, four Wafd leaders were arrested and deported, sparking waves of mass demonstrations and peasant revolts. Although Britain was forced to concede Egyptian independence in 1922 and subsequently dissolved their protectorate, British military occupation continued until 1952. In 1923, a 30-member legislative committee instated a new constitution, ushering in a period of liberalization and paving the way for the revolution of 1952 and Gamal Abdel Nasser's Arab socialism.

With this history in mind, this issue's contributors can be seen as archeologists of the present—sifting, scrutinizing, preserving and juxtaposing an unending accumulation of events, images and thoughts. Unable to make conclusive statements (and perhaps not believing in them anyway), we nonetheless understand that some kind of material practice must accompany this tenor of political turmoil. Bassam el Baroni, in conversation with Nahed Mansour, insists that it is extremely risky to work with the materials of the revolution, that artists need the distance offered by time to exceed smartypants (and half-baked?) political commentary. Despite this, a moment of lived politics cannot be severed from the practices that employ form and rhythm to work through the present. What is then the form, the rhythm?

Reflecting on two separate film programs screened this year—one shot in Alexandria by a French filmmaker, the other a collection of recent Egyptian cinema screened in Toronto—Aliza Ma suggests that perhaps the most useful perspective on revolution is an oblique one, an engagement with peripherally relevant images providing a focus analogous to the disarming optical effect by which certain stars are only visible when we look at them slightly askance.

A more direct engagement with the material conditions of this year's uprising is offered by Themba Lewis' photo essay through which we learn that, prior to January 25, 2011, graffiti did not really exist in Egypt. Over the last nine months, resistance has been made visible on the surfaces of the city: rallies announced, important dates recorded, martyrs honored. Less about art than about communication, these painted signs become part and parcel of an active political process. Similarly attached to material manifestations of struggle, Olive McKeon, activates dance analysis to consider the embodied politics of riots, particularly the Battle of the Camel, waged in Tahrir Square on February 2.

What we hope to have assembled here is an open-ended inquiry that has reigned in both unguarded optimism and excess cynicism to consider the possibilities for politically engaged and relevant material practices in a time of incredible political upheaval. Next up in our States of Postcoloniality series is our Spring 2012 issue devoted to an exploration of indigenous cultural sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic. In the meantime, keep your eyes peeled for our Winter 2011 issue, featuring Peter Morin's Museum, Etienne Turpin's exploits North of Architecture and an interview by Nasrin Himada with the New York-based collective Red Channels.

Gina Dadger  
with the FUSE Editorial Committee

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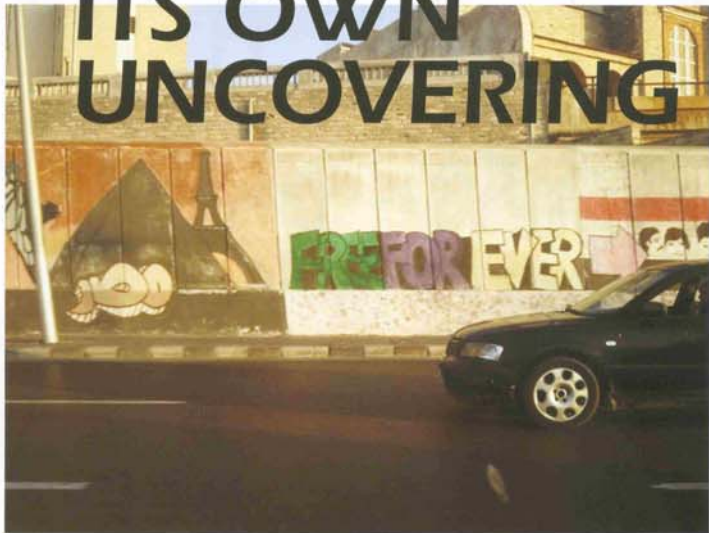
GOVERNMENTS SHOULD BE  
AFRAID OF THEIR

PEOPLE





# ANYTHING BUT ITS OWN UNCOVERING



**Nahed Mansour** is a Toronto-based artist who works in performance, installation and video. Her works have been presented throughout Canada, including: *SINGER* (Whippersnapper Gallery, Toronto); *Varied Tail* (Modern Fuel, Kingston); *Vertigo/Vitiligo* (La Centrale, Montreal); *Kh* (MAM, Montreal); *Measuring* (SAVAC's MONITER 8, Toronto); *Disonantalism* (AKA Gallery, Saskatoon); and *Darkening Cells* (7a'11d Festival, Toronto). Since completing her MFA at Concordia University, Montreal, she has worked as a Program Coordinator at Mayworks Festival-Toronto, while continuing to pursue independent curatorial projects.

Nahed Mansour  
in conversation with Bassam el Baroni of  
the Alexandria Contemporary  
Arts Forum

↑  
Street Art in Alexandria, 2011.  
Photograph by Kole Kilibarda.  
Image courtesy of the photographer.

The Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum (ACAF), the only not-for-profit artist-run centre in the city, was established in May 2006. Housed in a bare but spacious second-floor flat with high ceilings and exposed brick walls, it is a refreshing anomaly in Alexandria, Egypt.

ACAF's committed staff, comprised of Bassam El Baroni, Mona Marzouk and Mahmoud Khaled, have fostered an inviting contemporary art space offering workshops, artist talks and exhibitions as integral components of its programming—all free of charge.

Over the past six years, during my brief but annual returns to Alexandria and ACAF, I have been repeatedly amazed, though not surprised, by ACAF's ability to remain faithful to its mandate, which pledges an "ongoing engagement with projects that bring together

established and emerging artists, university students and diverse practitioners in contexts that recognize the value of an informal, non-hierarchical, open-ended circulation of information and experience."

I most recently visited ACAF on August 8, 2011, to conduct an interview with Bassam El Baroni. His nuanced observations on the predicaments and tensions in current discussions about the relationship between art and politics in Egypt (and beyond) left me questioning my own previous understandings of independent art scenes, street art, contemporary art and revolution.

Can you explain why ACAF was established in December 2005?

I began to understand that there was no internal market developing in Egypt to facilitate the growth of the contemporary art scene. Instead, its growth was completely dependent on the chances that artists got abroad, which caused a lot of friction internally. It seemed to be a *Waiting for Godot*-type of situation. There was also a realization that everything in terms of contemporary art was in Cairo and that there was nothing happening here in Alexandria. We had the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (The New Library of Alexandria), which was promising to be a revolutionary type of institution, but it boiled down to nothing. Additionally, on a personal level, I wanted to focus on a specific project. All these things came together with the help of Mona Marzouk and later with Mahmoud Khaled, and we started to work together on ACAF.

Later on, we began to realize that some problems were beyond us. For example, the local scene or market being linked to and function-

ing within the sphere of an international market is much more than a small institution can resolve.

As the director, who did you initially envision ACAF catering to or attracting?

In a way, I was catering to my memory of myself as a student. I studied at the Alexandria University in the Faculty of Fine Arts. In my final year of studies, I knew that there was something problematic with the institution's vision of art history and of what an artist should be. As I finished my studies, I started to unravel these problematics and continued to develop my ideas around them, informed by a deep interest in theory and philosophy. I think all of us involved with ACAF went through this kind of experience, and we were all able to cross the boundary from being an artist in the fine art tradition towards becoming contemporary artists or contemporary thinkers. Instead of a generation of artists in Alexandria having to go through this transition on their own, we wanted to share our experience with them. I think that was our main objective and the reason why we have existed over the past six years.

When establishing Alexandria's first alternative or independent contemporary art space, do you think you created a dichotomy wherein ACAF directly opposed the existing art scene?

This has some truth to it, but it's not entirely correct. Is the independent scene really independent? What does "independent" mean? How can we be truly independent if we are constantly pushed to pose ourselves as independent? I think institutions perform their independence in order to survive and be able to receive the little financial support that is available. I think that as an institution there is a certain performativity of independence that calls for constant posing as the alternative to the official discourse. But with ACAF, on a working level, we've tried to avoid that as much as we can.

In a recent interview with Hassan Khan in *ArtTerritories 2*, I was looking for the hidden reasons for this problematic dichotomy, as you call it, that people tend to use between the independent scene and the govern-

mental, or official, scene. This has always been problematic because the ideology that we call "the official discourse" might have started out as official discourse, but it is no longer just propagated by institutions. It is actually deeply rooted in Egyptian society and part of many people's identity. Posing yourself as the alternative to this is quite problematic.

The dichotomy between state-sanctioned and so-called independent arts and culture has a direct relationship to ideology and class, but it's nuanced. It's easy enough to focus on the tension between an upper-middle class ideology promoted within so-called independent institutions supported by Western resources and the more populist art that was encouraged and circulated through the state apparatus. For me, this dichotomy is also problematic, although I think that class is a very important thing. The neoliberal era that we are living in mutes, distorts and silences the idea of class. It seems that it's much easier to talk about any social agenda—sexual, racial or religious—than it is to talk about class. Ultimately, when you uncover the problem of class, you are getting at the roots of the injustices done by late capitalism, and late capitalism can accept anything but its own uncovering. The thing is, it's not a necessity that a contemporary artist whose work is highly conceptual has to come from an upper middle class or a rich background. We have living examples of artists working today who don't fit this characterization. So, this kind of totalitarian understanding of things on the basis and boundaries of class isn't correct either.

This led me to think of the real dichotomy as being between fine art, which is what the government promotes, and contemporary art, which is promoted by most institutions that are not under the state umbrella. If there is a clash between the two, it is due to certain things being unexposed or remaining latent in the discourses of both. For instance, in my recent writing, I talk about how contemporary art understands universality in a pragmatic way and how fine art understands it as a more romantic notion. For fine art, universality comes from within the artist and she shines it out to the

**Bassam el Baroni** is a curator and art critic from Alexandria, Egypt. He is the co-founder and director of the Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum, and was co-curator of *Manifesta 8* (Murcia, Spain; 2010). Recent exhibitions and engagements include: the ongoing collaborative archive project *The Arpanet Dialogues*, started in 2010 with Jeremy Beaudry and Nav Haq; *Trapped in Amber: Angas for a Re-enacted Decade*, co-curated with Helga-Marie Nordby at UKS (Oslo, Norway; 2009); and *Cleotronics 08*, an international media art festival (Alexandria, Egypt; 2008). Since 2009, Baroni has developed and performed a series of dramatized context-specific lectures entitled "FOX P2," which combine notions of pre-history, genealogy, economics and art criticism to create episodes of possible universalisms.



world. This universality has its source in the artist's individuality, but the artist's individuality itself is based on rearranging and reconfiguring the art of the international and vernacular canon. In contrast, contemporary art works within a universality that is somehow predefined and that does not rely on the artist as the source of universality. This is a universality based on the idea of knowledge production. The art has to be read on some level as information, knowledge, and / or culture. I see the conflict between these understandings of universality as one of the reasons why we have the distinction between contemporary art and fine art.

Can you describe how projects that have taken place through ACAF have attempted to respond to or engage with local issues?

In 2006, the mayor of Alexandria spearheaded what he called the "beautification plan." He strongly supported the creation of public art sculptures and wall decorations, but I don't think there were any real criteria for them. You could be a razor company, and as a company you could propose any wild sculpture, like a couple of flying dolphins. Many people thought, "This is nice. We have a lot of sculptures." But for us, we would wake up and wonder why there were a couple of dolphins in the street.

During this time (November 2006), ACAF invited an artistic duo from Frankfurt, Wolfgang Winter and Berthold Hoerbelt, to facilitate a workshop, the "Two-Part Art in Public Spaces Project." In the second part of the project, Winter and Hoerbelt designed a minimal sculpture that you could walk into made from pink bottle crates. The sculpture was then constructed by eight Egyptian students—studying at the college of fine art at the time—with eight German students from the Städelschule Art Academy in Frankfurt.

Through different negotiation strategies with the mayor's office, we were finally able to get a location for our public sculpture, the Mahmoudiya Canal Cratehouse. Although it was placed in a remote industrial area, the symbolic value of

it at that particular time was very high. Having gone through the process, participating students were very aware of the strength of placing something in a public space.

What would you consider to be one of the more successful projects ACAF has facilitated?

Between January and May 2008, we held Cleotronica, a one-time festival for "media, art and socio-culture," which consisted of a monthly series of public art projects and concluded with a symposium of participating artists. It effectively addressed a popular misunderstanding of what media art is because, at the time, it was really prevalent for fine artists, who were painters or sculptors, to think that it was enough to be making a video in order to become a contemporary artist.

We invited artists to address what it means to make art using new technologies. From the first wave of net artists, such as Olia Lialina, to artists that took blogging as an artistic practice, they all conducted workshops, lectures or performances that used electricity and other resources of the city to express political and activist ideas. Besides its success in terms of attendance, Cleotronica made it impossible for the people who attended to talk about media art in the same way as before.

In June 2010, demonstrations were organized to protest the murder of Khaled Said who was killed by Alexandria's police. Were artists in Alexandria responding to social-political issues such as police brutality in their practice at the time?

No. I don't think it was happening, but I think it was very normal not to have that happen in the context of the Mubarak era (the three decades characterized by the dictatorial rule of former president Hosni Mubarak). Over the years, I think Egyptian artists had learned that there were boundaries that they couldn't cross, but at the same time they expressed and worked with everything that was out there in terms of the broader socio-political spectrum. They could say anything as long as it was expressed in a specific, sometimes coded way.

I think one of the problems with the current situation is that these boundaries have been broken, and new boundaries haven't been put in place. I think for an artist it's very important to know these kinds of limits. It's not about censorship. It's about knowing the boundaries that the state and the society create at any given moment and at any given place.

The boundaries shifted as a direct result of the uprising, but I think a lot of people are having difficulty placing their practice within a context that they don't exactly know or that hasn't been fully formulated yet, because the identity of the state is changing and the identity of society is in flux.

Would you describe Alexandria's broader art community as visible in the January 25th revolution?

While participating in the uprising, I saw many people there from the art scene, including Alexandria's independent filmmakers and younger artists. It was pretty popular, although most of us weren't there on the first day because it took us by surprise. We thought it might be another demonstration of a small group of intellectuals or political activists, but it didn't turn out that way. We didn't really know the breadth of the uprisings and how many people from all walks of life would be participating. I think it was the second day when everybody realized that it was much more than what we imagined and everybody joined in.

I think the only people linked to the art scene who weren't there were people working in official institutions, for obvious reasons—their careers depend on these institutions, and they understood that joining may not be such a good idea.

What do you think of the more recent explosion of graffiti or street art in Alexandria and across Egypt?

I don't mind street art, and it's interesting to see this kind of political symbolism on the street. At the same time, I feel that at its very core there is a certain naïveté about art as political activism, where the power of the image meets a lifestyle choice. I totally believe that all people should be free to express themselves in



← Wolfgang Winter and Berthold Hoerbelt, *Cratehouse*, 2006. Outdoor installation, Mahmoudiya Canal, Alexandria. Image courtesy of ACAF.



→ Oliver Ressler, part of AKA Education – Art Known as Education, 2009. Image courtesy of ACAF.



→ Jeremy Beaudry, with Mohamed Nabil, *Place in Place of Alexandria*, 2008. Public art project as part of Cleotronica. Image courtesy of ACAF.



public space, but for me, it is one of the weakest art forms because it doesn't really have the power to influence a large sector of society. I think that it's much less than what it claims to be. It just becomes a monotonous element within the monotonous urban landscape of stone and concrete that tries to validate itself through this wing of art / activism.

Here in Egypt, there is a group of artists along the lines of what I just described, but after the uprisings, and after Mubarak left, there was this strange period where anybody and everybody was just painting the Egyptian flag along with other political symbols on the walls of the streets. For me, it was really scary because the majority of the symbols being used were of the state nationalist or military imagery.

If you studied here in Egypt you would understand that this is the same kind of nationalist rhetoric that you find in schoolbooks, the building blocks of your national identity that is constructed by the state. Nobody tested these building blocks at all. Nobody even doubted these building blocks. If the revolution is going to be called a revolution, the first thing that is symptomatic of it being a revolution is that these building blocks are tested and deconstructed. So I don't think it is a revolution, that's why I refer to it as being an uprising.

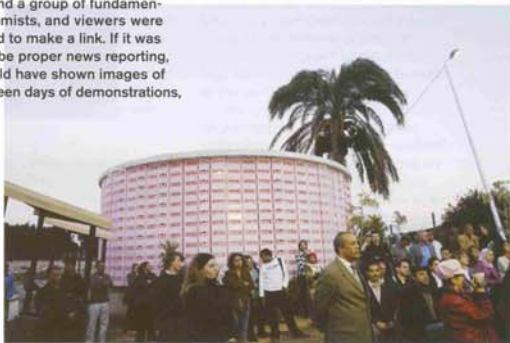
As someone living in the diaspora, I find that discussions abroad regarding the last six months in Egypt are more likely to be centred around points of change, rather than the core construct of the Egyptian state, which, as you articulated, has remained nearly untouched. Do you sense this divide in your travels and conversations with artists outside of Egypt? More specifically, do you think that people with progressive politics (whether artists, activists, journalists, &c) living outside of Egypt seem to be holding onto beliefs that differ from the realities perceived locally?

It is very difficult for me to talk about the situation when it's so raw and developing all the time. I'm also not a political analyst, so these are just my personal observations. But I think, generally speaking, there is a sense that the world is changing. There is something, but it is very

difficult to claim exactly what it is. Some claim it's the end of the neo-liberal capitalist system. But I think these are exaggerations or wishes somehow. For me, it's not about that at all.

I think when people saw this kind of revolution in Tunisia and Egypt, although it may not be a complete revolution, the size and raw strength of it was romanticized as the ultimate longing for a new society in leftist circles. It's very normal when you travel around the world in art circles for there to be this type of projection because traditionally artists and the arts have been geared more towards the left. But I feel it is an abstract longing for things that we can solidly define as justice and not just artificial progress.

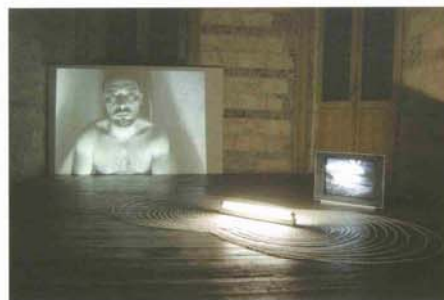
A few days ago, I was watching CNN and they were talking about Mubarak's trial, which is a positive sign. Then they showed a flashback representing what led to this trial, and they kept replaying a video clip of the Islamist Friday, where fundamentalist Islamists took control of Tahrir Square. So, you've got Mubarak on trial and a group of fundamentalist Islamists, and viewers were supposed to make a link. If it was going to be proper news reporting, they would have shown images of the eighteen days of demonstrations,



↑  
Wolfgang Winter and  
Berthold Horbelt, *Cratehouse*, 2006,  
Outdoor installation,  
Mahmoudiya Canal, Alexandria.  
Image courtesy of ACAE

which were held by a kind of multitude or cross-section of society with representation from different classes, as well as religious and cultural affiliations, and the Islamists would be just one voice among many, especially since they were the minority during those days.

I think the real reason behind this kind of reporting is a kind of fear that the media likes to project. I don't think it's a matter of distorting reality as much as it is a process of acting out collective fears. The ultimate fear is that you have the trial of Mubarak, but at the same time you have an Islamist overtaking of the revolution. This is the kind of direct projection of fears and hopes that we are living in, not just in Egypt, but more generally in the international media, which makes it even more difficult to be specific about what you really think about the current political situation.



↑  
Shady El Noshokaty,  
*Summer*, 2008,  
Video installation, ACAE  
Image courtesy of ACAE

Understanding that we are speaking in general terms, do you think that your skepticism regarding the current socio-political situation is shared amongst your colleagues in Alexandria, Egypt, and the Middle East?

I think most people within the art field are not naive about the situation. They understand that it is complicated and that nothing is really as clear-cut as it appears to be. But that doesn't prevent some artists from working with the material of the uprising to produce artworks that are composed of images directly relating to the uprisings. For me, this is problematic for many reasons.

If we look at the way contemporary art deals with the political, we find it can only deal with it when the knowledge and the information related to the event are already something history. For example, Lebanese artists who rely on discursive attempts to analyze the Lebanese Civil War can do so because the civil war is already history.

To deal with this subject matter without the distance of time, you have to be a smarty-pants, meaning you need to be able to make extra clever and cute political commentary that surpasses the shallowness of the material you have. In order to go beyond news, you have to impose a cleverness that can't come from analysis and layered knowledge because there is none. What happens, in most cases, is that it just becomes horrible political commentary that doesn't work for me as art. It works as a sort of consumption with artistic flavour, but it's really a bad consumer product. Of course, there is a lot of that going around. And what exasperates it is the way the market works, especially with art fairs. For example, Art Dubai (a yearly art fair that takes place in Dubai) was a couple of months after Mubarak left, and there were all these horrible works of art about the revolution that I think don't really mean anything. I'm not against dealing with the revolution. But I think it is very rare that an artist can deal with it in an interesting way because one of

the prerequisites for the material and information is for it to be history, and it is not there yet.

What an artist can do is carry the frustration, hope, desires, anxieties of such an event and the ongoing process, and displace it into something else that is not directly using the material. You will still get to a depth where you can make a link. But to actually use the material now, I think it's too early.

↓  
Facade of the building housing ACAE,  
10 Hussein Hassab Street, Alexandria.  
Image courtesy of ACAE





# NOT A COLLECTION OF COOL STUFF— ON THE BIDOUN LIBRARY



Denise Ryner in conversation with Babak Radboy of the Bidoun Library

↑  
Bidoun Library, 2011.  
Installed at the Serpentine Gallery, London.  
Photo by Sebastiano Pelloni.  
Image courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery.

FUSE  
34-4/EGYPT

Denise Ryner is the current Registrar/Archivist at Art Metropole, a Toronto-based artist-run centre that collects, publishes and distributes artists' books, editions, multiples and related ephemera. Her current projects include a curatorial collaboration with Barbara Fischer, director of the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, and the Jackman Humanities Institute at the University of Toronto, on a year-long exhibition titled *Location/Dislocation* that considers the implications of a variety of uprooting, as well as establishing forces ranging from post-colonial diasporas, multiculturalism, cultural re-articulation, economic exploitation to urban gentrification. Ryner has recently joined the editorial committee of *FUSE* magazine. This is her first contribution to *FUSE*.

The Bidoun Library is currently in residence at the Serpentine Gallery. Aside from the opportunity for outreach to various audiences through their local galleries, what is significant or advantageous about presenting the Bidoun Library as a traveling rather than a fixed resource?

The library grows with each city it visits, seeking out specific vectors of publishing from each locality, both in terms of each place's unique position vis-à-vis the Middle East and the specific narratives in print of the Iranian and Arab diaspora there.

Can you briefly describe one or two examples of what you have found in regards to these "specific narratives in print"?

This summer, the Serpentine Gallery in London (UK) played host to the latest installation of the Bidoun Library, an itinerant collection of books, periodicals, audio-visual art and ephemera produced or utilized in the Middle East. The Library's wide range of printed matter is acquired from sources as diverse as the region's artists and activists, to state departments and international corporations long entrenched in the oil industry.

Founded in 2004, Bidoun is an international collective of artists, curators and writers who oversee a range of educational outreach, exhibitions and publishing projects including the much-renowned contemporary art periodical *Bidoun* and the pop-up Bidoun Library. Through these projects and collaborations, Bidoun seeks to create a forum for critical reflection on cultural production within the Middle East and Middle Eastern diasporas, as well as on political, academic and cultural iterations in regards to the region from Western and mainstream sources. The first instance of Bidoun's touring Library was at Abu Dhabi Art in November 2009.

The tensions, opinions, mandates, ideologies and other insights that are reflected in collections and archives of small press publications, zine and ephemera, such as those curated and compiled by Bidoun and other artist-run spaces including Toronto's Art Metropole are crucial for filling out and sometimes countering traditional, mainstream and unquestioned narratives both local and global. Furthermore, archives of printed matter can make visible the multiple connections and movements inherent in transnational culture. As the current archivist at Art Metropole, the role and function of such collections are of great interest to me. The following exchange, between Babak Radboy of Bidoun and myself, took place over email in August 2011.

In London, we found this incredible tradition of printing from the European Left—some of which was exactly what you would expect, but also some surprises: for example, statements of solidarity from British unions with the Iraqi workers during sanctions (imposed after the Anglo-Iraqi War). There was a strain of printing in England which was quite alien to us growing up in the States as well, the left wing, government-funded periodical, a strange cross of humanism and ethnography from the mid- to late-1970s that we had never seen before, which could only come from an Empire turned Welfare State.

In Cairo, we simply bought every single book we could gather printed after the revolution in January 2011—we would just ask book dealers for

everything new, regardless of subject. There were even books which had nothing to do with the revolution which were hurriedly re-printed with revolutionary covers. There is also a selection of fairly trashy magazines clearly caught up in the moment—for example, an issue of *Sports and Fitness* on the theme of "Sports and Revolution," or an issue of *Egypt Air's* in-flight magazine, *Horus*, encouraging tourists to explore Tahrir Square. We are also pursuing a collection there of Mubarak-era printing from the Ministry of Information, as we have a special interest in extinct regimes of production.

Sometimes the connections are surprising—as in Beirut, where we discovered an extensive collection of the rather beautiful, Cuban publication, *Tricontinental*, for about

Babak Radboy is an artist and art director living in New York City. He is the creative director of *Bidoun* magazine and the curator of the Bidoun Library. He is currently nominated for an MTV Video Music Award for Best Art Direction for the music video *POWER* for Kanye West. We are living in strange times.

FUSE  
RYNER/RADBOY



50 cents a copy. It was a beautifully illustrated, third-world-solidarity / guerilla-warfare lifestyle magazine—one copy, which exemplifies the storied life a publication can have, was devoted to the Maoist Puerto Rican street gang the Young Lords, and carried a stamp on the cover from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Research Library.

How do publications and artists' books make their way into the Library? Do you get a lot of submissions, or must you continually seek out publications and unique book works?

To answer this question directly might be a bit misleading. The thing is, the library is not a collection of the coolest or best art books coming out of the Middle East—although we may possess many of them—it is in fact a material critique of cultural production and the discourses that presuppose such books. The basic premise is that since the bound, print object has been displaced by new technologies as the primary vehicle for information, books and periodicals have acquired a new opacity and thus a new vulnerability to material critique. They are no longer just the transparent envelopes for discourse, they are objects—and as objects are subject to the pressures and incentives of material production and a wide range of material objectives; economic, historical and political.

Would you like to elaborate on why books might have been considered "transparent envelopes" previously? It is difficult for me to think of many instances when content/message could be understood independently of its physical form/media?

I think that's true on an aesthetic and tactile level, but I don't think books are readily apprehensible as manifestations of, say, authority, power and influence. They certainly do not represent themselves that way. They occur under the rubrics of creativity, expertise, authorship, academia, entertainment, public discourse and the project of collective knowledge. They are categorized as such in our libraries—according to their immaterial content and not their objective function. Let's imagine

France was at war with Spain—and they commissioned thousands of academic texts, popular format picture books, children's books, academic textbooks, &c—depicting Spain as a barbaric backwoods. These books would make their way into libraries as books about Spain, not as—what a proper reading would reveal they truly are—which is books about France.

This is not only true of books, of course. It's a very basic condition for all forms and formats of public discourse. In general, the impression is that what is said, whether in books or TV is our public discourse—occurring on kind of a platonic field—but the reality is there is no platonic field, only private property and private funds. This has an effect in conditioning what is said even when there is no overt attempt at manipulation.

We wager that the Internet concretely represents a different kind of space, which is beginning to cause interferences in "traditional" media.

The primary way the Bidoun Library uncovers these objectives is by removing, for the most part, any standard of quality or excellence in our process of acquisition. Instead, we buy only the cheapest books on the market within the framework of our four basic conceptual categories.

What are those four categories?

"Home Theatre" represents the mainstream of printing, mostly American—books made for regular people. Books meant to make money, available in malls and drug stores: comic books, pulp fictions, picture books, coffee table books, political pseudo-science, countercultural publications, &c.

"Margin Of Error" represents mostly books belonging to obsolete regimes of production, and left wing publishing, in general. Included in it is a collection from the Ministry of Information of Saddam's Iraq, post-revolutionary-pre-Islamic printing in Iran, publishing of the European left, publishing of Arabs and Iranians in exile, books and pamphlets on Pan-Arabism, Arab Modernism and the Non-Aligned Movement, &c.

"The Natural Order" is a collection of state and corporate printing,

usually overlapping, and usually about the Persian Gulf, and attending in one way or another the production of oil. It includes a large collection of Aramco publications, the products of various Ministries of Information, state-run magazines, guides for traveling businessmen, technical catalogs and almanacs for the oil industry, &c.

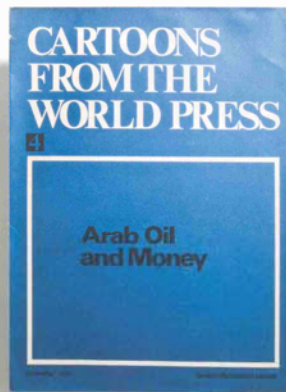
"Post-September 11, 2001" relates to a new market for Middle Eastern cultural production in the west. It includes personal narratives, essays and novels, but has an emphasis on contemporary art from the Middle East.

The artists' books and books on art in the collection all fall into the category "Post-September 11, 2001," because when one ignores the declared objectives, self-legitimizations and specific qualities pertaining to authorship, one can see that in the Middle East, this entire genre of printing emerged almost entirely after the (Work Trade Center) attacks of September 11. Did young artists, essayists, curators and novelists in the region suddenly become prolifically creative after this date, or was it that a new market opened up, both economically and in terms of attendant historical-political narratives?

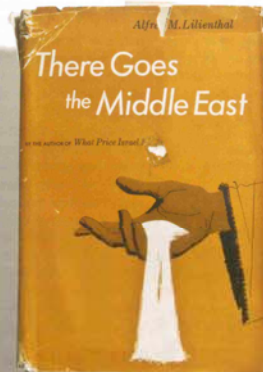
One sees the same antinomy at work in another collection of the Library—in the "Home Theatre" category we have a glut of vintage pulp-fiction, action paperbacks featuring evil Arabs bent on taking over or destroying the world. One could consider them individually on the strength of their writing, or the kitsch genius of their cover illustrations. But our interest lies in the date of publication; this entire genre only appears after the year 1973, following the oil crisis in the United States.

In contrast to other cultural projects or events, how is the Bidoun Library uniquely positioned to respond to or to give context to the recent political upheavals in the Middle East?

If you do all the forensics right, the Bidoun Library's "take" on the Middle East is basically a Marxist-materialist intervention on cultural



Bidoun Library, 2011.  
Cartoons from the World Press 4, 1974.  
Israel Information Centre.  
Image courtesy of the Serpentine Gallery.



Bidoun Library, 2011.  
There Goes the Middle East, 1957.  
Devito-Adair Company.  
Photograph by Babak Radboy.  
Image courtesy of Bidoun Projects.

discourse—critiquing the presuppositions, incentives and prohibitions which precede our free press and the academic production of regional "experts."

For those glued to their screens watching, for example, the revolution in Egypt, I think it was a fairly universal sentiment that the analyzers, forecasters, experts, opinionators and diplomacy mongers were painfully out of step with reality, and more concretely, totally wrong about everything. We are still waiting for our invitation to the *Riz Khan* show (Al Jazeera), *The Situation Room* (CNN) or even *Charlie Rose* (PBS).

Since January, Bidoun has been collecting ephemera related to the Egyptian revolution, which will be on display at the Serpentine Gallery in London.

How does the process of collecting this type of ephemera help to historicize the revolution and post-Mubarak Egypt? What other functions do this particular collection of

publications and what Bidoun calls "printed after-matter" play?

There are a lot of people in Egypt doing really good work archiving and documenting the revolution and the post-revolutionary moment. It's a fleeting moment. I'm not sure that we are totally unique in this, but what Bidoun brings to the table is an ethos barring considerations of quality. What we are interested in is precisely what is most fleeting and even opportunistic—the revolutionary cell-phone ads, righteous discounts on gym memberships, sandwiches dedicated to the Martyrs, the total transformation of teen celebrity magazines in Cairo into hotbeds of revolutionary fervour... This type of material often escapes the grasp of archivists.

New technology, particularly social networking media, is often cited as having played a pivotal role in starting and sustaining recent grassroots

political movements and protests. How do you see the continued relevancy of artists' books and zines to community building, political activity and documentation in the age of the Internet? How can the Bidoun Library provide access to a transnational space for organizing or communication in a role similar to YouTube and Facebook?

This is a difficult question—because artists' books and zines also have a recuperative effect in terms of revolutionary potentiality. In "open" societies (which are pretty much the only societies which would extend invitations to the Library), culture is by and large counterrevolutionary, as it replaces revolutionary ambition with the ambition to produce artists' books and zines about revolutionary ambition. The commodity object satisfies even as it attempts to agitate. This is why the Library is not a collection of cool stuff. It's a collection of dollar books. In this sense one might



take issue with artists' books having a continued relevancy. On the other hand, you have people in post-revolutionary Egypt taking on endless projects—journals, zines, exhibitions, initiatives, talks, talks, talks—which are absolutely crucial.

How do the pop-up Libraries connect to the dialogues that are initiated by Bidoun magazine or other Bidoun educational and curatorial projects?

They may not connect. We made an issue dedicated to the library, and the magazine continues to share its ethos both in terms of text-collage and a politics of representation.

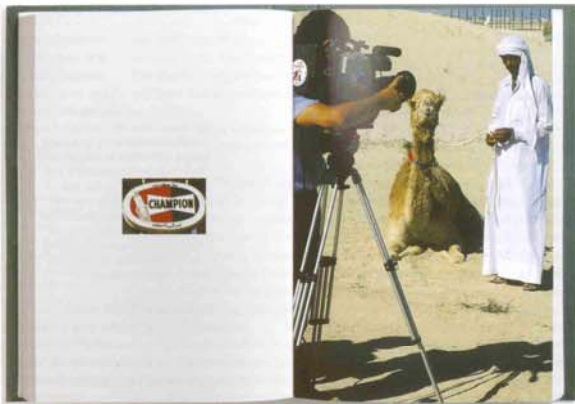
What is unique to Middle Eastern diaspora communities compared to other diasporas? How does Bidoun respond to this? How does the Library and archive engage with the post-colonial cultural and political development of Middle Eastern diasporas?

The library, I think, is going to really focus on diaspora printing in our next iteration in Sweden—which has a very rich history of immigration from the Middle East and elsewhere. The core members of Bidoun are all Iranians who, for various reasons, had to relocate in the 1980s—my own father is a political exile in the U.S. who drives a bus and self-publishes books of short stories in Farsi—so I have been wanting to really touch on this subject for a while now. It is really heartbreaking to publish in your own language outside of your country, and then on the other side of the coin, you have these advocates in exile whose activities are often grotesquely out of touch. It's a completely unwritten history. The word "pathetic" used to have a broader, less offensive connotation—I would use it here.

What do you envision in regards to the future of Bidoun Library? Will there always be a need to advocate for and to

archive contemporary Middle Eastern culture as separate from international contemporary culture?

I think it's clear we are not trying to advocate for anybody or claim Middle Eastern culture is distinct from international contemporary culture—even if we do and it is. In regards to the future, with each iteration of the library, we produce new books made completely out of text and images culled from the collection. So far, we have made six of these and we would like to make more. We would like to do residencies inside of state and corporate archives in the region for the sole purpose of producing new books. Imagine Bidoun's take on the archives of the Kuwait Oil Company or the Ministry of Information in Syria...



↑  
Bidoun Library, 2011.  
*The Natural Order*, 2010.  
Image courtesy of  
the Serpentine Gallery.



↓  
Bidoun Library, 2011.  
*The 99* 10, 2007. Tashbeel Comics.  
Image courtesy of  
the Serpentine Gallery.



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Bidoun Library, 2011.  
*Dudey's*.  
Photograph by Babak Radboy.



↑  
Bidoun Library, 2011.  
*Fantastic Four*, 1987.  
Fasaud Marvel Comics  
Image courtesy of  
the Serpentine Gallery.



PROJECT

# CAIRO III

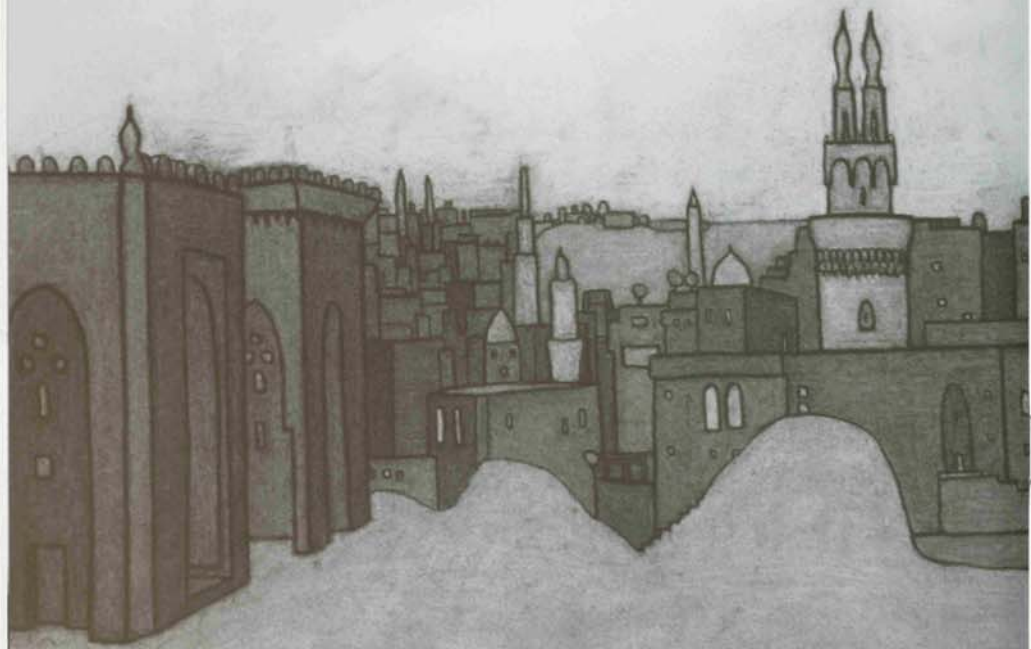
Damon Kowarsky

**Damon Kowarsky** studied printmaking at VCA and Glasgow School of Art and Advanced Figure Drawing with Godwin Bradbeer at RMIT University. Since graduating, he has exhibited regularly in Australia and abroad and worked as a scientific, courtroom, and archaeological illustrator. In 2002 he assisted on a dig for the Dakkhih Oasis Project Egypt. In 2007 he taught drawing at Beaconhouse National University (Lahore, Pakistan) and studied miniature painting under Murad Mumtaz and Mahreen Zuberi. Kowarsky has travelled extensively in North Africa, West Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Architecture and the colours of earth and sky inspire much of his work.

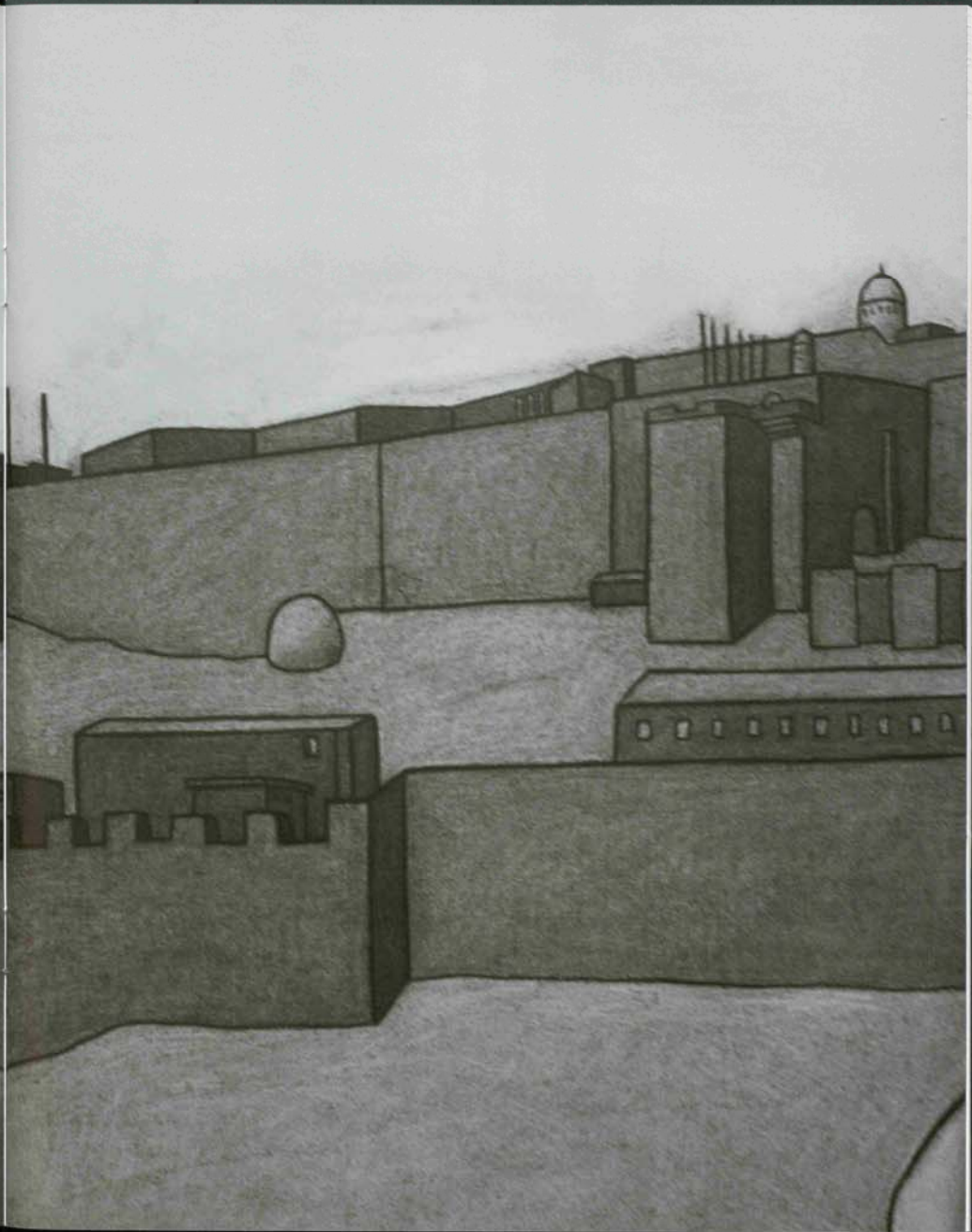
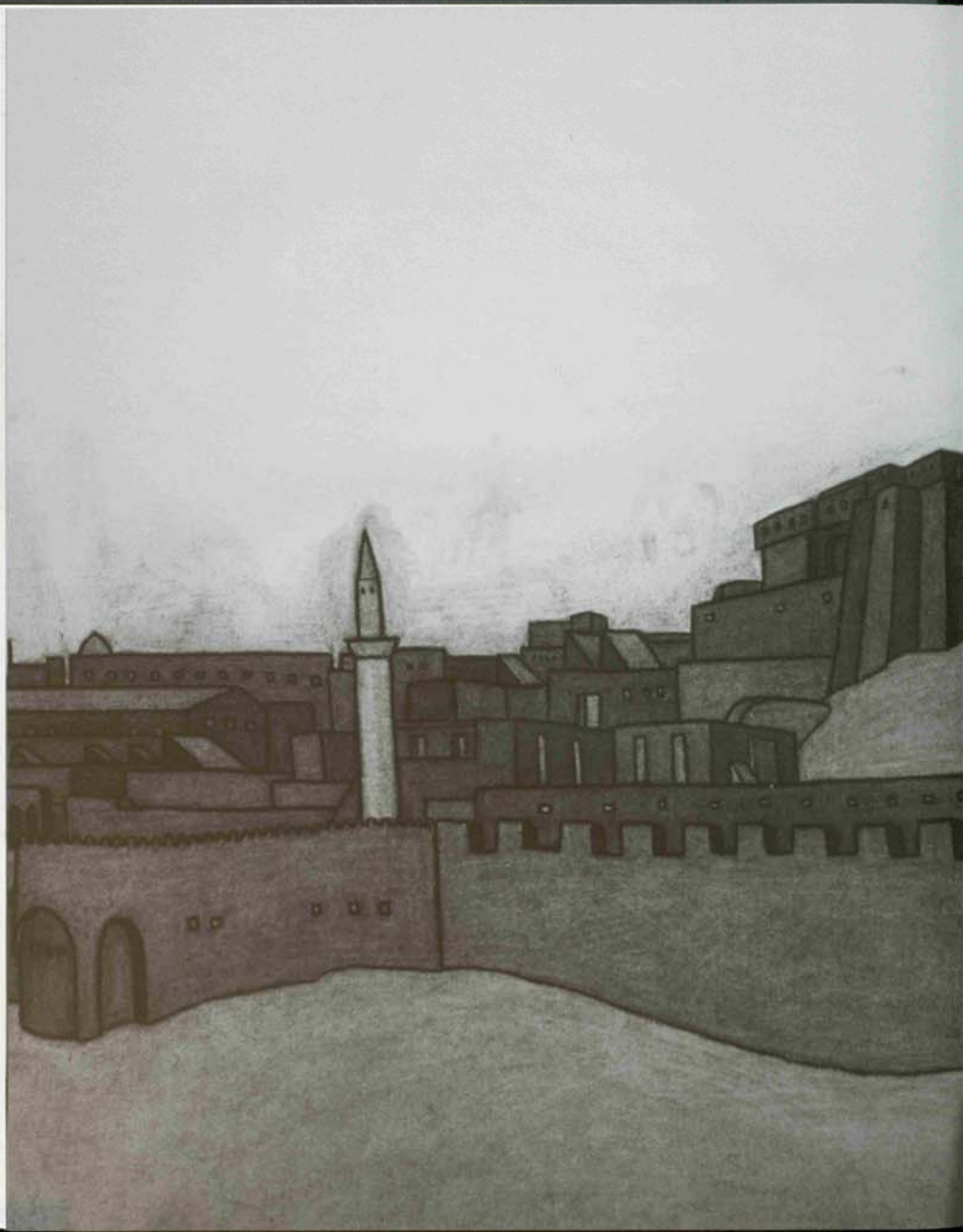
→  
*Cairo III (Cinadeh), 2009.*  
Charcoal on paper,  
32 x 158 in.  
Collection of Chérif Abdel  
Meguid, Cairo.



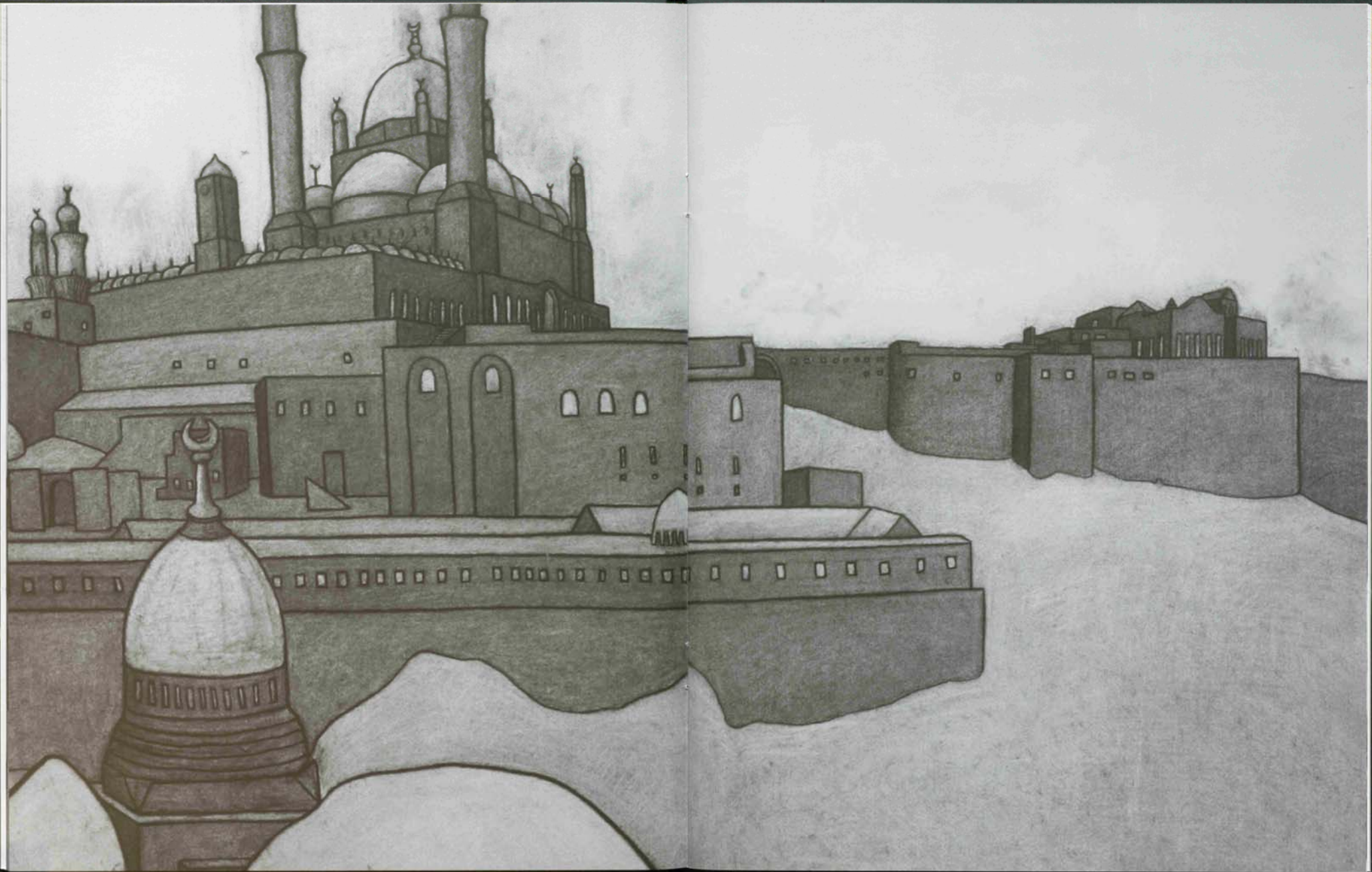




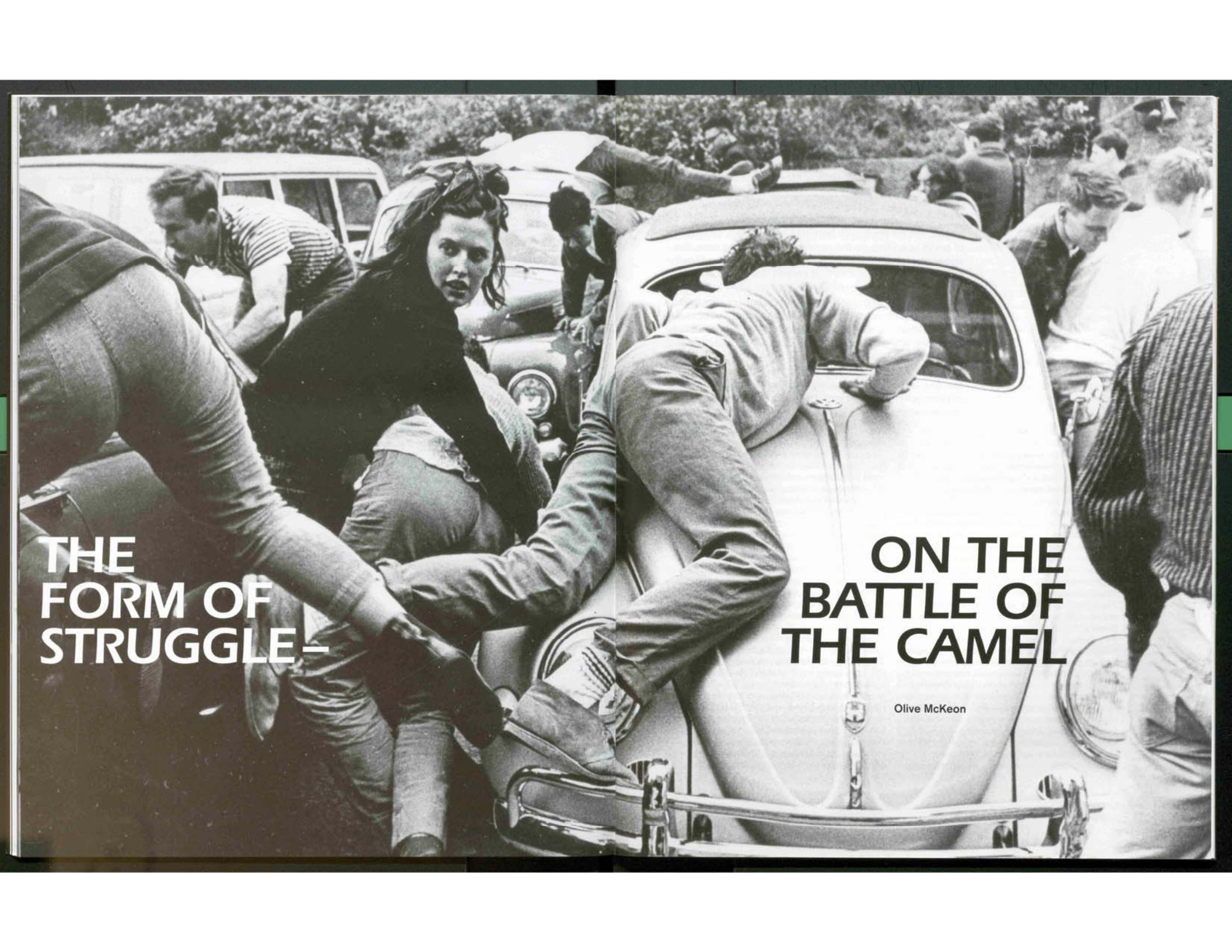












**THE  
FORM OF  
STRUGGLE—**

**ON THE  
BATTLE OF  
THE CAMEL**

Olive McKeon



Politics goes nowhere without movement. It is not simply an idea, decision, or choice taken at a moment but also a transfigurative process that makes and occupies space.

—Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*

**A sledgehammer meets glass, distant shouts, sirens, the air thick with tear-gas and smoke, shards of glass sparkling on the concrete, smoldering cars, the street strewn with objects askew. Bodies running together, bodies forming packs that spread out into lines and condense again into tight swarms. Riots often employ a familiar set of compositional devices: bodies circulating in atypical pathways, the spatial displacement of objects, the breaking of brittle surfaces, the burning of combustible elements. While one can certainly give an account of these moments within a struggle as resulting from a particular calculus of social and material forces, what can one learn from an inquiry into the riot's formal dimension—its shards and ashes, its clamor and mess, its inescapable sensuality?**

This essay examines the "Battle of the Camel," a street confrontation between pro- and anti-Mubarak forces that took place in Cairo's Tahrir Square ("Liberation Square") on February 2, 2011. This mounted camel charge became a spatial contestation of political legitimacy enacted on a corporeal level. By embodying social antagonism within urban space, riots such as the Battle of the Camel often fall prey to the accusation of destructiveness, a claim that overlooks the far more destructive role played by capital within social relations on an ongoing basis. Riots shift the power to disrupt urban space from capital and the state to the riot's collective body. In thinking through the dynamics and significance of the riot as a form of struggle, its embodied dimension plays a crucial role. The actions of the body add an additional layer to the coding of the riot that exceeds textual signs such as chants and posters. As an embodied set of actions, the practice of the riot produces its own logic and permissions not only for the rioter but also for urban space in general. The corporeal struggle over space and time that emerges during a riot resonates with attempts made by choreographers such as Anna Halprin to experiment with which movements are possible in a street context. The present analysis of the Battle of the Camel, and riots more broadly, attends to the formal aspects of struggle, a dimension that is often overlooked or neglected. Turning towards the body and its crucial participation in the elaboration of a political struggle makes evident a corporeal contesta-

tion of legitimacy at play in Tahrir Square, and riots in general.

My description of the Battle of the Camel is pieced together from the video footage and international news sources available from my distant location in California. In writing about such a recent and unprecedented unfolding of events in North Africa and the Middle East, I am aware that a complex politics of representation surrounds any attempt to name or describe these events. I do not wish to generate a narrative that too quickly explains and contains the uncertainty of what has and will occur within the unfolding cycle of struggles.

Beginning on the January 25, a protest encampment against then-president Hosni Mubarak occupied Tahrir Square, a prominent public square in downtown Cairo. Events on one particular day during the popular uprising, Wednesday February 2, 2011, became known as the Battle of the Camel. A pro-Mubarak rally convened on the morning of February 2, following a televised announcement the evening previous, during which Mubarak declared that he would not run for re-election in the fall in order to appease protesters. [1] Mercenaries hired by the regime, paid 50 Egyptian pounds (roughly 9 CAD) for the day, and plainclothes police officers held a rally in Lebanon Square in Western Cairo, during which camel riders and horse-drawn carts paraded in circles around the square. Around noon, the Mubarak supporters moved from the west of the city to central Cairo,

approaching Tahrir Square. Gathering around the Egyptian Museum and pushing through the army tanks that blocked the street leading into the square, pro-government forces mounted on camels and horses besieged the anti-Mubarak protesters. Carrying clubs, rods, sticks and staffs, they burst into Tahrir Square and provoked bloody confrontations as they rode directly into the encampment. Gunfire accompanied the arrival of the camel entourage, possibly the army firing upwards in order to disperse protesters. The anti-Mubarak demonstrators pushed back against the incursions into the square, causing the mercenaries to flee. The violence continued into the evening, as pro-Mubarak forces threw rocks and homemade bombs from the Qasr al-Nil Bridge leading into the square.

In video footage of this daytime Battle of the Camel, it is apparent that the mounted joust generated a complex set of movement dynamics in the square. Groups of galloping camels cut channels through the dense crowd. A constant barrage of varied sized rocks flew like confetti in the air above the heads of those running on the ground. Huge swaths of the square began to dash as if fleeing an encroaching natural disaster, generating gaps that the pro-Mubarak contingent filled. The line between the two sides slid around the traffic circle at the centre of the square, recalling opposing football teams negotiating the position of the line between them during each play. Both pro- and anti-Mubarak demonstrators wore plain clothes, making the sides visually indistinguishable to outside observers. In waves of acceleration and deceleration, space became overturned, claimed and filled. In the attack of the square, the camel riders did not have a specific territorial objective beyond heading into the crowd and busting it up. The space of the square became abstracted from its specific functions and qualities during the attack and defense of positions in space.

The movement dynamics reflected a spatial joust for political legitimacy. The aggregation of bodies in the square had an abstract relation to the ouster of the president. The form of the struggle decoupled from its supposed ends. The square became an arena to enact a power play in which the position of bodies performed the struggle for control. Despite the abstraction of political legitimacy into space, bodies in the square could not escape the materiality of the violence—they suffered beatings, injuries to the head and deaths. Amidst the waves of back-and-forth violence, the struggle for space mediated the struggle for control of the country. The uprising in Egypt succeeded in generating a mass delegitimation of a regime that had previously organized social relations, the process of which continues to unfold with uncertainty.

Riots are characterized by an intensity that does not last. One must consider the moment after the riot when everything is a mess, the city turned into

a ruin of itself. Various opponents characterize these messes as trashing the city, or selfish and self-sabotaging destructiveness. In response to this discourse on destructiveness, one must remember that capital plays an overwhelmingly destructive role in social relations and urban space. Cities remain constantly in a process of making and unmaking, as buildings become torn down, burned, and rebuilt. Construction sites, city block-sized pits of gravel, stalled building projects, and disinvestment in huge sections of a city all reflect the constant state of undoing that characterizes urban space within capitalism. The characterization of riots as social unrest assumes that the city was at rest in a peaceful state of wholeness prior to the interruption by the riot. Riots illuminate the contingency of use-value. The self-valourizing movements of capital supersede any commitment or interest to preserve useful spaces. Wrestling this power from capital—albeit largely temporarily—riots work to shift who makes decisions about the undoing of urban space.

The question of whether the mess created by the riot will remain the next day or workers will efface its traces rests upon the complex dance of legitimacy. In responding to the recent events in Egypt, Slavoj Žižek described the ability of the struggle to delegitimize the Mubarak regime:

*We all know the classic scene from cartoons: the cat reaches a precipice but goes on walking, ignoring the fact that there is no ground under its feet; it starts to fall only when it looks down and notices the abyss. When it loses its authority, the regime is like a cat above the precipice: in order to fall, it only has to be reminded to look down... [2]*

Žižek's cartoon metaphor suggests that prior to a loss of authority, the cat walked on solid ground. A more apt characterization of political power would have the cat continuously walking on an absent precipice. If it were to fall, it would only be to land on another absent ground. As power has a nodal character, it is without centre or head, a thicket of limbs that do not connect back to a central body. From this vantage point, Mubarak stands in for a set of social relations and ordering mechanisms that ultimately have little to do with him. While the specificity of what made the occupation politically decisive remains unclear and ambiguous, one cannot abstract the delegitimation of the regime from the embodied circumstances of occupation and rioting. A sense of what is possible and permissible becomes continuously enacted within a circumstance of struggle. A hopeful reading would point to the ferocity with which Egyptians performed these struggles—their corporeal confidence and courage—that forced the cat to glance down. The decision to face death performed by the self-immolations in Tunisia spread like a wildfire of fearlessness.

Olive Mckeen is a Ph.D. student at the University of California, Los Angeles. She writes on the intersections between dance studies, Marxism and feminism.

Previous page: Anna Halprin, Automobile Event, 1968 (documentation). Site specific performance. Photograph by Rudy Bender. Image courtesy of the artist. Published in Anna Halprin and Rachel Kaplan, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1995).

[1] "Mubarak supporters strike back," *Al Jazeera*, February 3, 2011.

[2] Slavoj Žižek, "For Egypt, this is the miracle of Tahrir Square," *The Guardian*, February 10, 2011.





↑  
Battle of the Camel  
Tahrir Square, Cairo,  
February 2, 2011.  
Photograph by Chris Hondros /  
Getty Images News / Getty Images.

↓  
Tahrir Square, Cairo,  
February 4, 2011.  
Photograph by Mona Seif.  
Creative Commons  
Attribution license.



↑  
Egypt is beautiful without Mubarak.  
Cairo, February 1, 2011.  
Photography by Ramy Raouf.  
Creative Commons  
Attribution license.



A less hopeful analysis would speculate that those in power realized that they could control the situation more efficiently by letting the people have their square while orchestrating a military handover. Whether this moment involves a regrouping of the existing relations or their successful interruption remains uncertain. If one reads Karl Marx as advocating a delegitimation of the social world, an apo-calyse of existing relations, winning may prove to be the hardest and most frightening part.

Widening the scope of inquiry beyond the Battle of the Camel, how can one understand the relation between riots and politics? The riot as a social form can swing many directions. Some riots announce themselves as “political” riots, bursting forth from a protest as the rowdy faction of a political mobilization. Other riots, such as sports riots and shopping mall stampedes, often do not have any explicit political content mobilizing them. Does one need to distinguish between a political riot and a non-political riot, or leftist and rightist modalities of rioting?

In exploring the presence or absence of political ambition in riots, I juxtapose two examples of rowdy behaviour with ambiguous political content: unrest in contemporary Tunisian soccer arenas, and the riot following the Canucks loss in the Stanley Cup final game in Vancouver this year. In a recent lecture on the Tunisian revolution, Sabra Webber argued that soccer played a key role in fomenting the popular movement that ousted the regime. [3] She noted that soccer arenas functioned as one of the only public domains in which crowds openly chanted slogans denouncing the former president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali. Webber noted, “As far back as 2005, dissatisfaction with the Ben Ali regime boiled to the surface at soccer matches. Fans shouted anti-Ben Ali slogans during the Tunisia Cup final that year and insulted the Tunisian leader’s son, forcing him to leave the match prematurely.” [4] In the Tunisian example, football hooliganism was complicit with what became a popular political uprising.

One can contrast the role of sports fans in the anti-Ben Ali struggle with the riot that erupted in Vancouver following the Stanley Cup final game this year. After the Canucks’ 4-0 loss to the Boston Bruins on June 15, the crowds leaving the game erupted into a riot which lasted for approximately four hours. Crowds hurled bottles and trash at large television screens and the police. During the unrest, rioters set seventeen cars—including two police cars—on fire, broke the windows of dozens of stores, and looted merchandise. Sending in riot squads and officers mounted on horses, police arrested over one hundred people during the events, and used tear gas and flash-bang grenades designed to disorient the crowd with smoke and a “bang” sound. In a press conference the following day, Vancouver Police Constable Jim Chu

blamed the riots on a small group of “anarchists and thugs” who came to the game prepared to hijack the crowd’s energy. [5] *National Post* columnist Brian Hutchinson counters this narrative, claiming that thousands of people participated actively in the riot or encouraged the mayhem from the sidelines. [6] A motley group of “garden-variety youths” comprised the 117 people arrested, not simply a small group of anarchist-types with a criminal record. [7] A letter to the *National Post* editor reports that early in the first period of the game, one could hear groups chanting “Let’s Go Riot,” suggesting that the game’s attendees had an interest in raucous behaviour regardless of the game’s outcome. [8]

The political content of the riot remains ambiguous: does identification with the Canucks stand in for a set of solidarities amongst disgruntled Vancouverites in the midst of an economic crisis and an accompanying high unemployment rate, or does it obscure these political interests in favour of a sense of belonging and triumph easier to achieve on the hockey rink than in class struggle? Given the chanting early in the first period, the riots decoupled from the outcome of the game, indicating a desire to riot that moved beyond any response to the Stanley Cup. Unlike the Tunisian soccer crowds that morphed into a revolutionary ouster of the president, the Canucks riot did not extend into a mass social movement. One could interpret the riot as a pseudo-nationalistic identification obscuring classed and racialized social relations, or the coding of these tensions into the Canucks as an empty signifier. In either case, a distinction between political and non-political riots obscures the ambiguity of what occurs in these examples.

A method of interpreting or reading struggles may help to address the ambiguity of riots. Political philosopher George Caffentzis proposes such a method by reading events as struggle even when they may not announce or understand themselves as such. In discussing what he terms “struggle literacy,” he argues that one must approach struggles in light of what they do *not* reveal about themselves: “Struggles cannot be taken at ‘face value’ for two reasons: (a) their self-definition is often (either deliberately or unconsciously) mistaken; (b) an enormous amount of struggle is not identified as struggle at all (e.g., in housework, on the streets, in schools, in factories and offices).” [9] One must read a riot as well as participate in it, as those involved may not recognize the political content of their riot as they move within it. For Caffentzis, class struggle pervades every facet of life: “It is the ‘dark matter’ of social life that accounts for the fact that not all goes well for the ruling classes even when there are neither formal strikes, nor rebellions nor revolts.” [10] If one accepts this conception of class struggle as going on continuously, even when its forms appear too infinitesimal or invisible to recog-

[3] Sabra Webber, “Surprise: Non Sequitur: Revolution” (paper, *Mapping and Renaming the Tunisian Revolution*, University of California, Los Angeles, May 20, 2011).

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Jeff Lee, “Vancouver mayor and police chief blame Stanley Cup riot on anarchists,” *Vancouver Sun*, June 17, 2011.

[6] Brian Hutchinson, “Organized ‘anarchists’ were not behind the Vancouver riot,” *National Post*, June 16, 2011.

[7] Bethany Lindsay, “Anarchists’ not the only rioters,” *CTV British Columbia*, June 20, 2011.

[8] Paul Russell, “Today’s letters: Who’s to blame for the riots?” *National Post*, June 18, 2011.

[9] George Caffentzis, “Reading the Struggles: Notes on the contemporary crisis” (paper, New York Anarchist Book Fair, New York, April 11, 2009).

[10] *Ibid.*



nize, one would dispense with any distinction between a political and a non-political riot, and instead, read what is habitually considered a non-political riot as keeping its politics strategically covert.

As a mode of political struggle whose content one can understand and interpret through reading, riots punctuate a particular struggle—or, in a broader sense, embody the antagonisms that pervade social relations. I turn now to the specific form of the riot and the relations it generates between bodies and spaces. As opposed to the occupation or street barricade that contest modes of circulation and structures of permeability within the built environment, the riot travels through space in a moving assemblage of bodies and objects that interfaces with a terrain, leaving traces of its presence upon the space itself.

The riot entails a set of corporeal maneuvers that act upon the city and also upon the bodies that exert them. By physically engaging with the bodies of others and the contours of the city, the riot reciprocally pushes back and moulds the body of the rioter. One does not know what it feels like to walk in the middle of the street with a large mass of people until one does it. The physicality of the riot reshapes an understanding of what is possible within social relations. The city pushes back, and praxis reverses its direction, doubling back to change those engaged in a struggle. The riot generates a mass or crowd-body, enveloping or drawing individual bodies into an amoebic, collective corporeality. Bodies run, throw, condense and swarm in a multiplicity irreducible to particular or discrete subjects. In a riot, the body converges with a habitus that discovers its logic, capabilities and contours as it moves through space.

The collectively generated body of the riot interfaces with witnesses, spectators and enemies. The presence of these figures raises the question of interpretation during the immediate circumstances of the riot. In an effort to avoid the anxiety of this hermeneutic question, those involved in protests or demonstrations associated with a riot often use signage to contain and explain themselves. Without posters, banners, placards or flyers to explain what the bodies mean, one sees groups of people, perhaps clumped together, perhaps moving in a formation. These corporeal formations do not bear any particular reference in themselves to a political aim or content. The signs must do this work, turning people walking around a building or a circle of people holding hands into a political struggle. Yet, the bodies are in no way incidental or expendable. An action with too few bodies, a situation in which the posters outnumber the people, falls short, lacks force and becomes an embarrassment. A struggle produces two texts simultaneously: the language provided by the signage and the movements of bodies. One does not represent the other; the bodies do not act as signs representing the political content,

and the signs do not represent the aggregation of bodies. Riots often entail a double coding, literal signs and disposition of people in space as a signifying structure.

One must look beyond rallying around a textual signifier to the signification of rallying, to the meaning produced by collective bodies, by social movements as such. In interpreting the riot, one must ask the basic question of dance analysis: what are the bodies doing? Between the texts dropped on banners, and the official statements made in response to a struggle against an employer, a city official, or another representative of the ruling class, a volley of corporeal gestures takes place. Police may enter the scene, moving in formation, hurling gas, firing bullets. Especially in the case of the Battle of the Camel and the Vancouver riot, the bodies became a primary means of communication as very few participants in these instances held placards or signs. This corporeal register not only functions as a signifying structure, but it also becomes a key domain in which the struggle occurs. This volley and exchange of moves becomes a struggle for the spatiotemporal position of bodies: who can circulate where, and for how long?

The dance generated by this struggle for space and time within the immanent conditions of the action itself demonstrates a play of antagonisms one step removed from the specific content of a given demonstration—working conditions, unwaged labour, or tuition hikes, for instance. As a necessary detour away from these political ends, a contestation of legitimacy mediates between the content of a struggle and the corporeality of its articulation. In reading the bodies involved in a struggle, one can observe the action and its repression as a complex joust for legitimacy, played out on a corporeal level, as the Battle of the Camel exemplifies.

A riot operates on different registers simultaneously, the collective aggregation of bodies, a strategic material task, and an intervention into a broader scheme of mediation and power. As the form of a riot exceeds direct intervention and generates a collective performance with an abstract or symbolic connection to its political content, its analysis must move beyond a material calculation of its success or failure. While certain struggles may emphatically profess their goals—in recent memory, the defense of collective bargaining, the roll back of tuition hikes, or the self-abolition of the working class—these remain distanced from the particular site of struggle or praxis. A broad set of processes intervenes between the moment of struggle and the professed goal. One must consider the significance of a struggle in a frame wider than whether or not it achieved the professed ends: did we or did we not roll back the tuition hike? Did we or did we not abolish ourselves as workers or as women? From a broader perspective,

the significance of a particular moment of action emerges from the second-order struggle over legitimacy played out amongst bodies in space.

The riot presents a form of struggle that collapses the distance between the struggle over a particular content and the struggle over legitimacy. The riot generalizes struggle in whatever direction, engaging with whatever it encounters as it moves through space: not this particular window or car, but whatever window, whatever car. One must attend to the participation of the body in the choreography of the riot and the temporality of its storm and stress. Groups congregate in the wrong space, displacing objects, smashing certain things, exploding others. Police functionaries come from inside and out to grab, tug and control the circulation of bodies. Riots in their spatial and temporal maneuvers within urban space perform the struggle for legitimacy. As power operates in the assemblages of nodes that collectively produce social relations, the dance of the riot involves each body witnessing and enacting a sense of what is permissible and possible within the duration of the action. A struggle's aspirations for performativity (as theorized by philosopher J. L. Austin, performativity is the power to act in the world) rest upon the ability of body to perform and contest the regimes of legitimacy that back any particular circumstance of exploitation and domination.

What would it mean to view forms of struggle in these terms, framed not by a specific political content, goal or ends, but as a second-order struggle over legitimacy? One would not look for an external political goal such as the removal of Mubarak from office, but at the movement of bodies within the dynamics of an action. Rather than connecting rising food prices or the tripling of university tuition to smashing a plate of glass, populating and holding a space, or overturning a car at random in the street, the analysis turns to these movements, the tasks performed by the body understood as a danced sequence of movements.

In connecting riots and works of dance, one can turn to choreographers whose compositional impulse resonates with the action of rioting. The rioter resembles a dancer performing a task-based choreography such as Anna Halprin's *Parades and Changes* (1965), in which dancers move objects decisively around the stage and tear up rolls of butcher paper to no specific end. One could view the riot as *Parades and Changes* transposed into life, without the framing or contextualization of the event as art. Halprin often explored the city as a choreographic site of play: "What we were really trying to build up to was a dance throughout the whole city." [11] In her work, *Automobile Event* (1968), her dancers used cars parked on the street as an environment for movement, akin to the rioter's interface with cars. While

Halprin understood her work as *transformational choreography* without an explicit political content or ambition, she and her dancers found themselves interfacing with the police: "This became a political issue because we found ourselves getting arrested over and over again. It became a political issue regarding the right of using the street territory. When were we obstructing the peace? We were behaving in a way people were unfamiliar with and people would get irritated about it." [12] This description could easily describe a riot as much as one of Halprin's dances. The resonance between Halprin's dances and riotous actions indicates that a dance occurs during the riot regardless of the arrival of any activist marching bands, the street theatre troupes, or art as such.

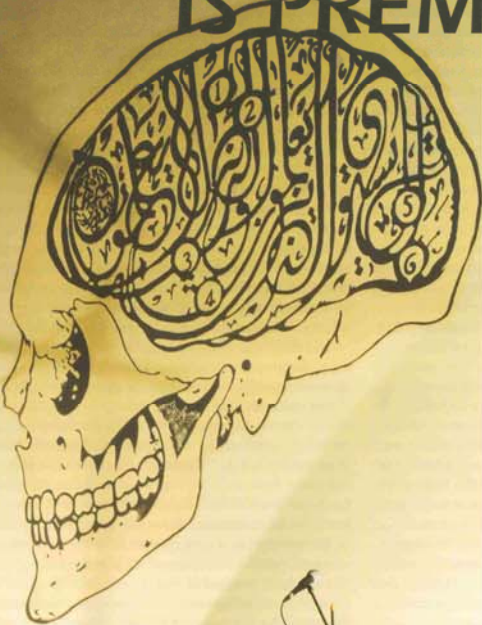
In this investigation of the form of struggle, corporeal movements mediate between a specific political content and the contestation of legitimacy within the immanent conditions of an action. Rather than designating certain riots as political or non-political, one can read the political content into any instance of struggle. Attending to the operations that take place at the level of bodies and groups helps to understand how struggles emerge and what they achieve. The popular uprising in Egypt successfully ousted Mubarak from office, but mass protests and days of action have continued through the spring and summer against the failure of the military government to live up to the political hopes inspired by the year's earlier events. A reoccupation of Tahrir Square began on July 8, although armed forces forcibly ended the sit-in on August 1. "Winning" the revolution in February soon meant a usurpation of state power by the Supreme Council of Armed Forces, a military junta far from utopian. If utopia or communism can be thought not as a concrete set of socio-institutional relations but as a process, one must not ask if a particular struggle finished in victory or defeat but how to swing the unfolding circumstances in an emancipatory direction. As Marx called for the descent from the sphere of exchange to that of production, one must make the descent from the exchange of tactical gestures to their corporeal production, which is to say, to dance.

[11] Anna Halprin and Rachel Kaplan, *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1995), 11.

[12] *Ibid.*



# ANY CELEBRATION IS PREMATURE—



Joseph Banh

FUSE  
34-4/EGYPT

# A SNAPSHOT FROM CAIRO

Joseph Banh is a Canadian cultural consultant, visual artist and writer currently based in Cairo, Egypt. He is interested in the dynamics of global cultural flows as expressed through contemporary cultural production.

As the revolution continues to unfold here in Egypt, it is clear that any celebratory posturing is premature, if not entirely delusional. However, recent events have undoubtedly created a rupture in the social, cultural and political landscape whereby, for the first time in decades, previously suppressed debates and discussions about issues of public concern are happening in local *ahwas* (coffee houses), work places, online, in the streets and in public squares. The revolution has, at least for the moment, destabilized the state's ability to control public discourse and the circulation of ideas.

A striking aspect of the Egyptian revolution is the frenzy of creative response and accelerated cultural production that has gripped Cairo and other parts of the country. The creativity and sense of urgency expressed in the streets continue on as competing groups give voice to their visions for the country's future. However, the question remains what legacy the revolution will have on the country's cultural organizations, artists and art production.

Egypt's cultural scene has been dominated and officially administered by the Ministry of Culture, which acts as both patron and censor, since it was established in 1952 following Gamal Abdel Nasser's military coup and rise to power. Matters of taste, aesthetics, and what constitutes appropriate art and culture for the public (and, therefore, what would be funded or exhibited publicly) have been tightly controlled by the state. Despite this, a number of independent arts organizations have been gradually established outside of the purview of the Ministry of Culture, including Cairo's Darb 1718 Contemporary Art and Culture Center; the Contemporary Image Collective (CIC); and the Townhouse Gallery.

Such spaces play a significant role in the advancement of contemporary art and cultural praxis by making space available for local artists to produce work, and by reframing the interlocking discourses of art, culture and politics beyond the control of the state. Independent art organizations also serve as a much-needed supplement to an (art) education system that has been neglected by the state, and is, therefore, out of sync with current

←  
Claudio Curciotti and  
Eleonora Trani, *Egypt Reborn*, 2011.  
Musical performance.  
Commissioned for the  
opening day of the exhibition  
accompanying Darb 1718's "Art  
of Illustration" workshop.  
Image courtesy of Darb 1718.

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issues and ideas that circulate in academe and the international art community.

However peripheral independent art organizations may be to the state-run cultural system, they have, nonetheless, been on the radar of state security, making them repeated subjects of state censorship and coercion. To varying degrees, this has been the experience of all of the independent art organizations presented below. Notably, since the events that began on January 25, 2011, reports of state censorship have diminished, but it is uncertain how long this will be the case. This state of uncertainty is part and parcel of an unfinished revolution, but it seems that for now, actors in Cairo's cultural field intend to continue their work undeterred.

In July of this year, I interviewed three of Cairo's cultural insiders to get their take on how recent events might impact Egypt's artists, cultural production and the respective organizations that they operate. Their insight into pre- and post-revolutionary Cairo and what lies ahead is a result of their deep engagement with the city's art and cultural scene. In conversation with Moataz Nasreldin, activist and founder of Darb 1718; Mia Jankowicz, artistic director at Contem-

porary Image Collective (CIC); and William Wells, founder and director of the Townhouse Gallery, we get a sense of the operational realities of working as independent arts organizations in Cairo, areas of common concern, and a glimpse of how they will move forward in the days to come.

#### Darb 1718 Contemporary Art and Culture Center

Darb 1718 was founded by Egyptian visual artist and cultural activist Moataz Nasreldin in response to a need for additional art spaces to serve Cairo's artistic community. Situated among the historic communities of Old Cairo, south of the city's downtown core and east of the Nile, Darb 1718 is a multi-use facility consisting of a main exhibition space, rooftop and garden performance and screening spaces, two theatres for dance and musical performances, and workshop spaces.

Darb 1718 operates primarily as a collective. Eschewing the practice of promoting individual artists, Darb 1718 typically mounts group shows, bringing artists together around a core theme or curatorial premise. Exhibitions are either curated in-house via an open call, or by visiting curators. Like many of Egypt's other independent art spaces, it operates in counterpoint to the controlled and closed system of the state-sanctioned cultural institutions and "official" art world. Thus, Darb 1718 strives to continually keep spaces of free expression and exploration open to already established as well as up-and-coming artists.

Nasreldin, however, is quick to point out that Darb 1718's programming is "not just about contemporary art, but about whatever is contemporary—music, performance, storytelling, contemporary dance. It's a chance for young artists and performers to express themselves." [1] This openness and commitment to broader contemporary cultural practice is clearly important

to Darb 1718's mission-based activities because such openness also "brings different audiences to contemporary art."

While one of the core activities at Darb 1718 is to act as a platform for the presentation of contemporary culture, Nasreldin pointed out that a strong conceptual approach is key to their programming, noting that, "The concept is the most important. The concept is the star." For this reason, when questioned about whether the contemporary art scene has noticeably changed since the start of the revolution he replied, "Darb has always been a place to let people say what they want to say, without limitation or censorship. From the beginning, we have targeted and talked about political, social and economic issues in the country." Exhibitions put on by Darb 1718 have explored such issues as the nationwide shortage of bread (a subsidized commodity) in 2008, which resulted in long queues for rations and near riots, to questions of place and identity in relation to the Sahara Desert's division of Northern and Southern Africa.

At the time of writing, the group exhibition on display was entitled *Maspero*, the name of the infamous state television building, and symbol of the state's ideological oppression of the past 50 years. A timely exhibition, it was a compelling multi-media display (multimedia installations, video, photo-based works and paintings) of artists' critiques of state television programming and deconstruction of the cultural icon that is the Maspero building.

Darb 1718 has never shied away from content dealing with issues that are often highly relevant to the specific space and time of the region. In the context of revolutionary Egypt, Nasreldin simply, but no less meaningfully, stated, "We are continuing on, but feel that the 'freedom-space' is expanding. We were pushing before, trying to push things to the edge. Now, you don't feel you have to push as hard, or worry about the reaction, what people will say, whether state security will come to accuse you of anything. There is a sense of freedom, but our work remains the same."

In regard to ascribing a role to contemporary art in these

Founded in 2008, Darb 1718's mission is to be a springboard to advance the burgeoning contemporary art movement in Egypt. They do this while endeavoring to engage with various social and cultural groups in the Fustat neighbourhood of Cairo.

**Moataz Nasreldin**  
Moataz Nasreldin, founder of Darb 1718, was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1961. He lives and works in Cairo. Reflecting the processes of cultural complexity currently under way in the Islamic world, his work goes beyond the particularities and boundaries and gives voice to concerns. The sense of a geopolitical and cultural context and the need to maintain a link with his land of origin are the key elements of the life and work of the artist.

[1] All quotes derived from an interview with Moataz Nasreldin, July 16, 2011.

times of upheaval, Nasreldin's response was particularly apt, "Contemporary art's role is to get away from traditional issues. Getting out of traditional media (oil painting, sculpture, &c) is a way of changing people's mentality, to teach them that they can accept anything else. People are used to seeing painting and sculpture, but now they can see video and installation too—it's about acceptance. Part of accepting contemporary art is also about accepting others generally." As for Darb 1718 Contemporary Art and Culture Center in the days to come, "Our role is simply to give a chance for people to express themselves. This is a place where anyone can come to express him or herself. The most important thing is to keep the energy alive."

#### Contemporary Image Collective

The Contemporary Image Collective (CIC), located on the fourth floor of a 1940s office block in downtown Cairo, was founded by a group of artists, photographers and photojournalists. Frustrated by the difficulties they encountered across the entire range of the photographic production spectrum (lack of space, equipment, problems with digital workflow, printing facilities and the like), the group decided to take matters into their own hands and establish a collective that would support the pursuit of their artistic ambitions. These ambitions included establishing the necessary infrastructure for photographic production at a professional level. Further, they aimed to foster an active and critical engagement with a public largely unfamiliar with photographic representations outside of the context of state-run news media and its claims to photographic objectivity. As Mia Jankowicz, CIC artistic director and curator, explained, the collective's mission has expanded beyond professional training (such as photographic workshops), transitioning into a curated space with public programming split between photography and contemporary art.

Interestingly, from a curatorial vantage point, Jankowicz noted that she was not only interested

↓  
Launch night of the Alternative News Agency at CIC, 2010.  
Photograph by Thomas Hartwell.  
Image courtesy of CIC.





in content, but also how the "shape, form and presumptions" of an institution frame what is possible. [2] This observation is particularly pertinent in the present context as the revolution, and subsequent destabilization of the state, has created a situation where the policies and procedures of the Ministry of Culture can be deconstructed with proposed models of governance based on transparent democratic processes, the participation of the cultural community and with adequate systems of accountability in place. Thus, in regard to the revolution's potential impact on Egyptian art and culture, Jankowicz noted, "I'm more interested in how this time is going to affect the art scene's infrastructure. The positives are that young people are taking things into their own hands, and that artists can better explore their autonomy. I would like a situation in which independent institutions can support and work with this autonomy, and will be trusted by artists in doing so. I feel now, more than ever, that arts institutions should take up messages from artists and apply them to their own operation."

The future trajectory of Cairo's contemporary art scene is, for Jankowicz, inextricably tied to the cultural infrastructure of the

country. She insists that in addition to rethinking the Ministry of Culture's gate-keeping functions, along with funding models for arts organizations, the issues of censorship and oppression by the state security services also need to be laid bare.

Observing that the practice of state censorship has temporarily lessened, Jankowicz acknowledged the importance of free expression, but cautioned that while "there have been many shows of 'revolutionary' artwork from people naturally getting inspired by these ideas for the first time, it is a mistake to believe this is the sole way the art scene can respond to the revolution. I'm not interested in applying pressure on artists to make 'revolutionary' art. That implies the only role of art is to push a political view, or to be purely celebratory or condemning, and I think this is a very limiting idea. It also implies the revolution is over, which it is not."

As for CIC's role in the days to come, Jankowicz explained that their photography workshops continue to be important in distributing the tools of production and representation to those who are living the revolution and who wish to document it. The importance of critically interrogating systems of representation

and the production of meaning in Egypt is perfectly illustrated by CIC's recent project, the Alternative News Agency (ANA). The ANA project brought together artists, citizen journalists and photojournalists in a series of workshops over four months, in response to the 2010 Parliamentary Election. The ANA culminated in an exhibition and publication of photo stories developed over the course of the project.

By integrating educational programming with curatorial direction, the ANA is a great example of, as Jankowicz explained, CIC's original intention "to exist as an alternative to the state education system." CIC's approach is foregrounded by an understanding that "education projects needn't be so didactic. They can be spaces of collaboration that can work across programming and curatorial." The combination of advancing a critical engagement with ideas, and CIC's contribution to the development of the hard skills of cultural production makes it an extremely relevant organization in Cairo's contemporary cultural scene.

Founded in 2004, The Contemporary Image Collective's mission spans contemporary art and educational programming that responds to and develops artistic practice, engagement and discourse.

**Mia Jankowicz** is the Artistic Director of Contemporary Image Collective (CIC). She studied visual cultures and curatorial practice before running the international residency programme at Gasworks, London. She has contributed texts to various magazines, catalogues and readers. With Anna Colin, she has collaborated on the ongoing, independent curatorial project *Disclosures*. In 2012, she will curate *PhotoCairo 5*, CIC's large-scale, contemporary visual arts project.

[2] All quotes derived from an interview with Mia Jankowicz, July 20, 2011.

## Townhouse Gallery

The Townhouse Gallery was founded by wayward Canadian William Wells, in response to the absence of non-governmental and non-commercial art spaces in Cairo. Recognizing the need for creative spaces free from governmental oversight and commercial pressures, the gallery opened in 1998 to a large crowd, most of whom attended out of curiosity. As Wells noted, once people visited Townhouse they started to realize its "potential be a space for discussion." [3] But, almost immediately, Townhouse ran afoul of the Ministry of Culture and state security services that perceived the gallery and its owner as a threat. Art colleges advised students not to attend exhibitions, and newspapers reported that Townhouse Gallery was injecting foreign ideas and influence into Egypt. Despite this rather inauspicious start, Townhouse has become a widely recognized and respected art space in the country and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.

Community engagement and collaboration is an integral part of Townhouse's activities. Its commitment to establishing standards of curatorial and artistic practice that encourage critical thinking and engagement with contemporary issues has resulted in a multitude of programs and workshops that supplement the performances and exhibitions staged. In an attempt to address the intense social stratification in Egyptian society, the programs include workshops with working children, refugees, the disabled and with other marginalized groups. An international residency program was soon added that encouraged professional and cultural cross-pollination amongst local and foreign artists. Because Townhouse's activities respond to the different but interrelated needs of various communities, their projects tend to be interdisciplinary in nature, integrating aspects of art and education.

Recent collaborative projects such as *Tasmeem: Design for Life* testify to Townhouse's expansion of its reach and relevance. The 16-month *Tasmeem* project is a collaboration between Townhouse, Azza Fahmy Jewellery, and AMID-

EAST, with curriculum developed with the Rhode Island School of Design. The program offers underprivileged Egyptian youth the chance to learn about design, and develop critical thinking and practical crafts-manship skills. An intensive English language-training component is also part of the program.

Actively engaged in Cairo's activist and development communities, it appears that recent events have not significantly impacted Townhouse's mission-based activities. Acknowledging the outburst of creative responses to the revolution, Wells astutely pointed out that one must go beyond the immediate context of the revolution to be able to comprehend the import of what is happening in Egypt. He noted, "Everyone involved with Townhouse is an activist and is especially aware that there has not been a revolution. Any celebration is premature."

Independent artists and arts organizations have been operating in opposition to the state-sanctioned cultural system for years. They have been struggling for this very moment. Thus, in response to the question of how the content and mandate of contemporary art may have shifted in response to the revolution, Wells mused, "In terms of pre- and post-revolution, any artwork able to reflect serious critical thinking on what's taking place right now won't be produced for at least a year. The work created now belongs in the metro, the square, the streets."

Indeed, Wells questioned the very notion that there is a special role for contemporary art and artists. "I don't see a 'role' at all," he said, "this idea that contemporary artists have a role, like a doctor, it's not like that. We have imposed on artists the role of cultural translator and it's not fair. I don't think artists have any other role aside from producing. We just need to give them the resources to allow the work to be produced and presented without any agenda, without assigning a role to it."

Spaces like Darb 1718, CIC, and Townhouse take on increased relevance when understood in relation to the revolution, and the possibilities of creating a more critical and inclusive public realm. Despite this, times may have changed, but their missions have

not. The forms of Egyptian contemporary art presented by the three organizations are on par with exhibitions in many cities of the world. The content, however, necessarily reflects the idiosyncrasies, realities and contradictions of the region—revolutionary or not. Continuous engagement with local and regional issues (that are often also consonant with broader international issues), a commitment to education through workshops and residencies, and deep connections built with their respective communities ensure that independent art organizations will have a role to play in rebuilding the country in the days to come. The approaches taken by each organization may be different, but in many ways their aims are the same. The revolutionary moment is happening now, but one could also say that for these organizations, it has always already been on the horizon. Understood as the expansion of democratic cultural potentialities, revolution continues to be something that they, and their artists, are reaching for.

Since its inception in 1998, the Townhouse Gallery of contemporary art has established itself as one of the region's leading independent spaces for the arts, providing an extensive program of visual arts, film, theatre and music. In addition, community development initiatives, as well as educational programmes figure significantly in their multiple mandates.

**William Wells** William Wells started his career in the arts in 1980, as one of the co-founders of London-based Unit Seven Studios, a multi-disciplinary artist-run collective. He also served as an educational advisor to Britain's Arts Council and Crafts Council. In 1985, Wells moved to Cairo, where he worked for development agencies before returning to the curatorial and arts management fields, setting up art programs and agencies throughout the Middle East. In 1998, Wells established the Townhouse Gallery of Contemporary Art.

[3] All quotes derived from an interview with William Wells, July 23, 2011.



Utopia Choir, February 2011. Performance. Performed at Townhouse's Rawabet Theatre. Image courtesy of Townhouse.



# FOR THE TIME BEING—

## A PARTIAL ICONO- GRAPHY OF REVOLUTION IN CAIRO



Themba Lewis

Themba Lewis is a photographer and writer living on a houseboat in Cairo, Egypt. His news photography has featured in numerous print and online media (including Al Jazeera, The Guardian, CNN, the Wall Street Journal and others), and his photographs have been exhibited in North America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Lewis holds graduate degrees from the American University in Cairo and the University of Oxford, where he lectured on analogue photography for the Oxford University Photographic Society and managed the Pembroke College darkroom.

All images are digital stills shot by Themba Lewis in Cairo between January and August, 2011. All images courtesy of the artist.

An unprecedented, feverish flourishing of public art has been an immediate effect of this year's Egyptian revolution. Within hours of the February 11 departure of former president Hosni Mubarak, young Cairenes turned their city into a massive canvas, marking its surfaces with legions of murals, art pieces, stencils, and spray-painted graffiti. Walls and windows, tanks and tar-mac—all became fair game for the expression of jubilation, hope and remembrance for those killed during the uprising. Street art appears and is augmented, altered, removed and repainted as the prominence of issues, struggles, and debates rise and fall in the aftermath of the initial uprising. Massive stencil monuments to young martyrs of the revolution were spray painted across the city, as ideological debates and celebrations of the revolution itself lined the streets leading to Tahrir Square.

This means of expression, although, although flourishing in the lawless days of revolution, is, like all unauthorized public art, impermanent and slowly disappearing, as clean-up efforts and anti-vandalism campaigns work to rebrand Egypt as "post-revolutionary"—clean, stable and back to normal. The revolution is not over, however, and public art provides a telling, if temporary, view into the relaxation of a city by its inhabitants, a visual explosion of expression that had been suppressed for 30 years.

This photo essay is a window into the ongoing revolution in Cairo, providing imagery from the streets around Tahrir Square over the six months since since Mubarak's departure. These six months have seen unity and revolutionary euphoria fade into frustration, political posturing, the reoccupation of Tahrir Square, internal debate, military crackdown, continued killing and renewed revolutionary determination. The images presented here document the iconography associated with the political, artistic, and ideological development of the revolution, most recently through calls to continue the occupation of Tahrir Square, to remove Field Marshall Tantawi and his Supreme Council of the Armed Forces from power, and to see institutional change that would guarantee a departure from ideologies of the past.

← *Hashtag History* A revolutionary rests against a wall of the massive, government administration building bordering Tahrir Square. The building was temporarily shut down by the demonstrators, and artists have taken to its walls. Here significant protest dates, listed as Twitter hashtags in testament to Twitter's central role in coordinating and reporting on the events, coat the wall.





←  
25 January In the days immediately following the removal of Mubarak, a memorial appeared on the eastern side of Tahrir Square commemorating those who had been killed during the uprising. The street that circles Tahrir was painted with a large "25 January," and flowers and photographs were left at the site. This art disappeared within days, and no permanent memorial exists.

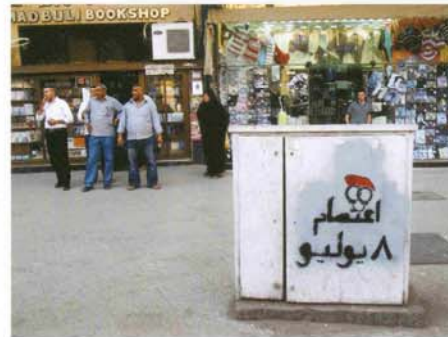
→  
*"I'll Be Back Soon!"*  
Since the fall of Mubarak, the wall of a public toilet in Falaki Square has been a battleground between graffiti artists and clean-up crews. This wall, twice painted with massive murals of a martyr killed in the revolution, and twice painted over, now announces the July 8 Tahrir Square occupation along with a handwritten note from the artist, "I will be back soon!"



←  
*Shehab Maier* means "Egypt youth," and is painted on the wall of a side-street leading to an area of Tahrir that saw very heavy battling between revolutionaries and thugs on camel and horseback. The youth of Egypt are widely credited with driving the revolution and see themselves as the generation of the new Egypt. Many Egyptians compliment their creativity, Internet savvy and optimism, but the removal of Mubarak could not have happened if it had not been for country-wide demonstrations by all segments of society and the massive economic pressure of national strikes by middle-aged labourers across the country.



←  
*Ganzeer Defaced Street art* has provoked a wide range of reaction, being met with celebration, curiosity, skepticism, and anger. This piece on the island of Zamalek by up-and-coming artist Ganzeer used to show former president Hosni Mubarak arm in arm with members of his administration that have remained in power after the revolution. It was defaced and blacked out almost immediately. Ganzeer was later apprehended by state security and taken for questioning about for criticizing the military in a subsequent incident before being released.



↑  
*Talaat Harb* An electrical box in Talaat Harb Square, just up from Tahrir Square, has gone through a number of variations. Initially painted with the face of Field Marshall Tantawi as a Salafi (the Salafis are an anti-democratic, fundamentalist Islamic group that Tantawi has been accused of collaborating with), it was painted over and repainted with a set of handcuffs wearing an Egyptian Military beret. Now this beret has been augmented by an announcement for the July 8 Tahrir reoccupation. Out of frame in the foreground is a protest in solidarity with uprisings in Suez and Alexandria.

↓  
*The Ghost of Khaled Said*, Khaled Said, a young man in his twenties, was dragged from a cyber-café and beaten to death by police in June 2010. The police autopsy report stated that he had suffocated while trying to swallow a bag of hashish, but photos of his gruesomely disfigured body, as well as testimony from witnesses, quickly went viral, eventually making Khaled Said the face of the Egyptian revolution. Subsequently, a Google executive name Wael Ghonem started the "We are all Khaled Said" Facebook page, which became wildly followed and is credited as a fundamental contributor to the beginning of the revolution. On the first anniversary of Khaled Said's killing, after the revolution Said didn't live to see, protesters stormed the military line defending the Interior Ministry and spray-painted Said's face across the walls. By morning, all signs of this event had been painted over.





# CONTEMPO- RANEOUS ARCHAEOLOGIES



Aliza Ma in conversation  
with Gabe Klinger and Rasha Salti

↑  
Tahani Rached,  
*Neighbours (Ginan)*, 2009.  
35mm, 105 min. Egypt.  
Image courtesy of TIFF  
Egypt Rising Film Programme  
and Tahani Rached.

↑  
Youssef Nasrallah,  
*The Aquarium (Genet Al Atmak)*,  
2008 (film still). 35mm, 111 min.  
Egypt/France/Germany.  
Image courtesy of TIFF  
Egypt Rising Film Program and  
Youssef Nasrallah.

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Aliza Ma is a fervent cinephile living in Toronto. She has worked in various programming capacities for the American Film Institute and Sundance Film Festival, and is now a year-round employee of TIFF Cinematheque (Toronto), in the film programs department. She has mediated and translated for Chinese filmmakers Jia Zhangke and Emily Tang. Independently, she contributes to various film-related publications and works as a programmer for the Gendai Gallery (Toronto), exploring facets of micro-cinema programming, with a focus on avant-garde and contemporary Asian cinema. Her last program was on Ernie Gehr, in collaboration with *Scapegoat* journal.

For most people outside of Egypt, the revolutionary events of February – as part of what is now referred to as the Arab Spring – were received via a rapid torrent of images that formed an endless evolving montage on broadcast news channels. Though inevitably truncated, fractured and fragmented by the media filter, the potency and evocative immediacy of these images – images transmitted from an artillery of ubiquitous mini-recording devices operated by the participants themselves – demanded a response. Seen through a cinephilic lens, the images emerging from Egypt called to mind another assortment of images from the previous spring: the heteroglot assemblage that was Jean-Luc Godard's *Film Socialisme*, composed of footage culled from cellphones, anamorphic video and HD, whose evocations of contemporary global cataclysms economic, environmental and political rhyme uncannily well with the collectively authored tapestry of images that represented the Arab Spring to the world. As is so often the case (for the vast majority of the Western world, at least), the reality of revolution was made inextricable from its representation – a *mise-en-abyme* requiring a Godardian critical intervention to sift through its proliferating visual traces and restore to them the autonomy they had lost in the rush of narrative.

In this situation, film curation and exhibition necessarily become essayistic practices, critical programs in poetic dialogue with social reality. While history offers innumerable instances in which the imperialist impulse of commercial film distribution and exhibition has used the developing world as grist for its mill – for instance, the nascent Technicolor process proved both its technological and commercial viability through such “exotic” documentary films as *Cairo, City Of Contrast* (1938) – one could also cite a number of instances in which film programs have been effective tools in understanding and responding to revolution. In instances such as Maurice Lemaitre's abstruse screening events under the banner of Lettrism, to Robert Flaherty's pioneering documentary film forum, one can see how film programming forms a contemporaneous archaeology of the reality of global events. Navigating recent examples, one finds an incipient catalogue of programs that examine Egypt's current landscape. In shifting scales, each film explores different planes and perspectives of an intangible political reality. Our pursuit here will be the juxtaposition of two recently screened film programs focused on Egypt: French filmmaker Emmanuelle Demoris' *Mafrouza* cycle, and *Egypt Rising: Portents of Revolution in Recent Egyptian Cinema*, curated by Rasha Salti.

Three weeks after the initial events of the Arab Spring, film professor, writer and programmer Gabe Klinger traveled to Egypt with Emmanuelle Demoris to present Demoris' twelve-hour, five-part documentary film series collectively named the *Mafrouza* cycle (2007-10), after the eponymous Alexandrian neighbourhood in which the films are set. Demoris first encountered Mafrouza and its residents ten years ago, after accepting an invitation from a group of French archaeologists to explore the ruins of the necropolis of Alexandria. After Demoris met the people who had built their homes in the ruins, the archaeological impulse became secondary as she spent four years living with them and

Gabe Klinger, a Chicago-based teacher, writer and film programmer, was born in São Paulo, Brazil. He is currently an assistant professor in fine arts at National-Louis University. Klinger co-founded and is head programmer of Chicago Cinema Forum, a non-profit devoted to talking about and disseminating important and challenging works in film history. He has served on juries at the Buenos Aires Festival of Independent Cinema (Argentina), the Vienna (Austria), and the Rio de Janeiro International Film Festival (Brazil), among others. As a journalist and critic, Klinger has written for over twenty journals, regularly attends film festivals all over the world, and is a member of the International Federation of Film Critics.

Rasha Salti is currently the Toronto International Film Festival's programmer for African and Middle Eastern Cinema. Salti is an independent film and visual arts curator and writer. In 2011, she was co-curator of the 10th Sharjah Biennial for the Arts, with Suzanne Cotter and Haig Avazian. Salti writes about artistic practice in the Arab world, film, and general social and political commentary, in Arabic and English. Her articles and essays have been published in *The Jerusalem Quarterly Report* (Palestine), *Naqd* (Algeria), *MERIP* (USA), *The London Review of Books* (UK), *Alterall* (US) and *Third Text* (UK).

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chronicling their daily lives with a low-grade digital camera—a cinematic tool intimately connected to the democratization of image-making.

While there is no direct connection, French distribution was secured for *Mafrouza* immediately after the events of the Arab Spring, which also facilitated Demoris and Klinger's trip to Egypt to present the films at the American University in Cairo and the French Institute in Alexandria. The latter is only a stone's throw from the improvised neighbourhood itself, or rather what is left of it; since Demoris finished filming, all of Mafrouza's residents have been displaced by the city to make way for a real-estate development. The presence of a number of Mafrouza residents at screenings of the films no doubt helped contribute to the exciting, sometimes impassioned discussions that Klinger and Demoris moderated afterwards. While it would be both glib and slighting of the films' aesthetic contour to view them solely in hindsight of the Arab Spring, the durational intensity of *Mafrouza* over its ruminative, yet gripping twelve hours helps reveal not only the textures but the density of daily life, that which can give weight to such ecstatic, all-too-infrequent bursts of liber-

ation as Egypt witnessed in February.

For international film programmer Rasha Salti—who presented the six-film program called *Egypt Rising: Portents of Revolution in Recent Egyptian Cinema* at Toronto's TIFF Bell Lightbox in June 2011 as part of the Luminato Festival—a contrasting conflation of fiction and non-fiction is embodied in a surreptitious shift in Egypt's independent filmmaking. In these films, simple, archetypal stories told by Egypt's first generation of independent filmmakers provide an alternative historiographical context in which to understand the successive revolutionary events.

This August, I was able to speak with both Gabe Klinger and Rasha Salti about their respective programming ventures; the following text is composed of edited transcripts from these interviews.

#### The *Mafrouza* Cycle

When did you first encounter the *Mafrouza* films?

When it was screened at Locarno, where it won the Cinema of the Present award. The second experience seeing the films was in Egypt, three weeks after the events of the Arab Spring, which was amazing.

How did you come to present the films in Egypt, and how did your presence there figure into your curatorial aims around these films?

The idea came from Emmanuelle Demoris' belief that she needed an interlocutor to present the film with her. I think many filmmakers—and especially someone who has been immersed in their subject for ten years—are not going to have enough distance from their work to lead a discussion about it, and this is essentially the critical function: to be able to contextualize the work for an audience. Last year, Demoris started talking to the American University in Cairo and the French Institute in Alexandria about showing the films privately. When the events of the Arab Spring began, we thought there was no way we would be able to show the films anymore, as a lot of the staff from those institutions had been asked by consular personnel to leave the country. But, after the dust settled a little bit, we suddenly received messages from those same people—now back in Egypt—saying it would be a great time to do something like this. They seemed to have passed from trepidation to a cautious but genuine enthusiasm. By that time, they had realized that Mubarak's regime no longer held any water, and essentially, the floodgates had opened. So the idea that we could show these films, advertise them publicly, and get as many people as we could to come became a reality very quickly.

Were there any obstacles you encountered in screening the films?

One of the major issues was that the military in both Alexandria and Cairo had set a curfew. Our screenings were in the evening, and because the *Mafrouza* films are on average about two to two-and-a-half hours in length, the ending of the film would often come up right against the curfew. So, it frequently became a question of whether it was safe to stay and continue the discussion, because we were completely overwhelmed by the response we got from these screenings. We opted to start playing by our own rules in a way, staying late and then negotiating different ways to get transportation back to the hotel.

You met some of the subjects from the film in Alexandria. What was it like to watch and discuss the films with them?

We employed some of the translators who worked with Demoris during the filming process, and three of the subjects of the film came to all of our screenings in Alexandria. However, many others weren't able to come, for one reason or another. Many of them had been displaced when the city took over the neighbourhood for redevelopment, or they didn't want to put themselves front and centre within an unfamiliar context during this very uncertain time. For instance, one of them was evading the military draft during the filming and is now in a myriad of legal troubles. To be at a public screening of a film in which he appears, and which tackles some of these issues head-on, would have been too much exposure for him.

What was some of the feedback you received after your presentations?

I asked one of the subjects what it was like to see himself onscreen, but he turned his answer

into one that addressed the larger events of the Arab Spring, in which he was an active participant. He saw me as someone who could present these problems—the country's problems, not his personal troubles—to the rest of the world. There was a palpable sense of excitement in the responses of the Egyptian audiences: it was a new thrill for them to go to a movie theatre and discuss issues like this publicly, after being prevented from doing so for over 40 years under the Mubarak regime. There was a notable distinction between the responses from Egyptian and non-Egyptian viewers. For the latter, the questions often revolved around Demoris' process; when one American student asked her how much she had paid the participants, she got very frustrated. For the Egyptians, the process and questions about representation were secondary because they were so engaged in the act of looking, and of questioning how the film could be fit into the evolving narrative of the February revolution.

Did watching *Mafrouza* again in light of the Arab Spring, and the

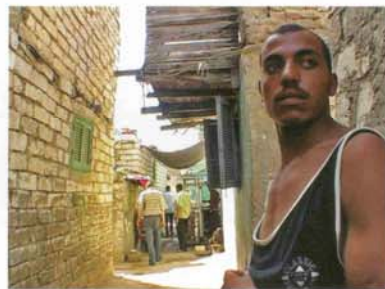
fact that you were there right in its aftermath, add an extra dimension to the films for you?

Absolutely. I felt like I really discovered the films when I watched them there. When the screenings finished and the lights came up, I went out in the streets and felt the films were all around me. The most visceral experience of that was being woken up by the prayer calls in the morning, which is such an integral part of the soundtrack of the films. Sound can be the most powerful and immersive device in cinema, and I felt like I was really in the films' world. The divide between what I saw and what was onscreen diminished.

Do you think that we will soon be seeing the beginnings of a new Egyptian film culture?

I think we'll certainly be seeing filmmakers and artists taking advantage of the new freedoms. Demoris, for instance, could probably go back to Egypt now and make a film in a very different way. While she was making *Mafrouza*, she was being followed by the police and watched

↓  
Emmanuelle Demoris,  
*Mafrouza-Coeur*, 2010 (digital still).  
Digital presentation, 159 min. France.  
Image courtesy of Emmanuelle Demoris.





very closely. Now, I don't think there would be any issues. One of the important aspects of the Arab Spring was that people began to film everything.

Prior to the Arab Spring, filming was not allowed?

Before Mubarak fell, it was illegal for Egyptians to film in the streets. All of a sudden, there are no rules and it's impossible to put people in jail for filming because everyone's doing it. I think we're going to see some very prominent examples of that in the coming years. But, I think there is still a long way to go. There needs to be a screening culture where young people can see things, and a critical culture and aesthetic rigour that are currently lacking. That's why it's so crucial to show *Mafrouza* in this context.

The *Mafrouza* series, by a French director, was presented under the auspices of Egypt's foreign cultural institutions. With the ongoing transformations in the media landscape, what do you think programming new Egyptian cinema will be like in the future?

I think there is good work being made in Egypt now, but perhaps there isn't yet the history and focus needed for the kind of cinema represented by *Mafrouza*. In speaking with Egyptian academics and filmmakers, we understood that things were still very much in flux, and that any potentially revolutionary filmmaking practice is still in its very early stages. Egyptian filmmakers and artists have not really been exposed to the works of Harun Farocki or other more materialist documentary filmmakers, and so they haven't had the benefits of the tools and lessons that those films can provide. There were a number of documentaries we encountered while we were in the YouTube mode, without any real aesthetic punch. Maybe in the next five years we will really start to see some interesting films emerging from Egypt, and within that context, the *Mafrouza* films could be nestled more comfortably from a curatorial standpoint. But right now, I think they're more effectively placed within a broader, global and cinephilic context.

Do you think screenings such as the *Mafrouza* events will provide the tools to develop a new film vocabulary in Egypt?

Yes, but it has to be organic. It has to grow out of a context that is from Egyptian people and for Egyptian people. There shouldn't be another trendy, international academic or film event, that wouldn't help anything. Probably the best way to make things change in this place is that there has to be a very careful, non-invasive and non-prescriptive curatorial practice. My main purpose in going to Egypt was to be guided by the forces that were already present, and not impose my own practices and views onto their film culture.

#### Egypt Rising

What initially led to the idea of doing this program?

I had been exchanging messages with [TIFF Co-Director] Cameron Bailey about how the events of the Arab Spring would affect filmmaking, and doing a program to respond to this change. Media broadcasters are so reliant on amateur photography, like footage from mobile phones or small handheld cameras. Small, portable recording devices are being used as key tools for participating in the revolution. For a long time, independent filmmaking and screening could not be public. Now, it seems the reality of lived experience is being told through people filming themselves in situations. I wanted to show this change.

What do you consider the beginning of Egypt's new independent cinema culture, and how did this affect your curatorial scope?

I would say beginning in the late 1990s, a revolution was brought on by digital technology, which dared people to produce films and show them with little money. It was an entirely new, alternative culture in Egypt. By 2006 and 2007, people were making independent films with established actors that were distributed in major cinemas. Among the first examples of these productions were

*Eye of the Sun* (2008) and *Heliopolis* (2009). Their emergence signaled the beginnings of a revolution.

What are the distribution and exhibition channels for independent films in and out of Cairo?

There are no alternative distribution channels. Egyptian cinema has very little interaction with the US and European markets and no concern for international distribution. Independent filmmakers make deals with the local distributors that minimize commercial investment and losses. Alternatively, these films can be shown in spaces outside of the economy of distribution, but at least the films are seen.

Was the decision to show these films in Toronto developed, in part, due to this closed system?

When we realized there would be a possibility to show the films at the Lightbox, we understood that it was impossible to expect that from February to June, there would already be films that directly respond to the Arab Spring. Instead, we wanted to explore origins, or portents, of the events. What are the historical and allegorical ways in which filmmakers have been trying to address the social and political malaise that eventually led to a revolution? With these films there is an opportunity to show this history as a reflection of a larger context.

So for you, is programming cinema a political tool?

Certainly it is an artistic and cultural tool. Cinema is such a powerful art, but I always make sure to harness the industry, and to make sure that through the film screenings, the filmmakers find help with their future productions. Screenings are a platform to talk about larger issues. While it is important for cineastes to program retrospectives of a master auteur or give exposure to unknown filmmakers, it is also key to show that film is just as important as reportage. The Arab Spring is a tremendous historic event, and we have the opportunity to show elements and traces that have been trying to convey a need for change.

This way, we have the space to maybe give the films a new lease on life.

A number of the films in your program, such as *Neighbors*, *The Aquarium*, *Eye of the Sun* and *Heliopolis*, explore the subject and theme of locality; the last two are even named after specific Cairene neighbourhoods. Why is this theme of local specificity so prominent in your program?

As a program dealing with pre-revolutionary cinema that addresses the issues of the revolution in oblique ways, the films capture something that anticipates the recent events within the realm of storytelling. The locations become an interesting pretext to address a multitude of issues. Some of the street footage that is woven into fictional narratives is barely altered by the filmmakers. These films and their locations are a microcosm of the country.

The *Mafrouza* screenings indicate that images of quotidian life, people and communities are often more profound than direct images of political upheaval. The peripatetic proclivities of *Film Socialisme* and the old Technicolor travel films find echoes in the new Egyptian cinema, the *Egypt Rising* program illustrating, perhaps, that cinematic imagining is always enmeshed in a discourse between the archaic and the revolutionary. This cinema, at once framed by dramatic representations of personal love and loss and inscribed with abjuring political histories, marks a trajectory through a milieu encumbered by disparate demands of commercial distribution and reforming bureaucratic procedures. While *Mafrouza* belongs to a lineage of political materialist filmmaking explicitly linked to the Poetic Realism of Godard's own forerunners, the new wave of local-specific independent Egyptian cinema exhibited by programs such as *Egypt Rising* are without historical precedent, tracing reflections and transformations into a new dialogue with critical international cinema.

But for *Mafrouza*'s displaced subjects—many of whom were actively involved in the revolution, and many of whom had not even seen, much less appeared in a film before—film is neither a diversion nor even a reflection of the light of Tahrir Square, but an entity to be weighed against all other necessities of life. As one asked in a lively, post-screening discussion, "Tea helps me live... Does your film do that?"

↓  
Hesham Issawi,  
Cairo East, 2010 (digital still).  
Digital presentation, 100 min.  
Egypt/United Arab Emirates.  
Image courtesy of TIFF Egypt Rising  
Film Program and Hesham Issawi.





# CONTAINER TECHNOLOGIES— MEDIA AND SOCIAL CHANGE



FUSE in conversation with  
Anna Feigenbaum

Young Iranian artists participating in the revolution would spend the day running around the streets of Tehran, recording images of mass demonstrations, strategic property destruction, strikes and government brutality. At night, they would gather and watch the footage together—commenting, cheering, arguing and mourning in turn. It was 1979, the images were shot on Super 8 film cameras, and they were participating

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in the broad coalition organizing anti-Shah demonstrations that eventually toppled Iran's monarchy, replacing it with the Islamist republic that remains in place today. They would rush home at sunset, develop the film, and huddle around it urgently, itching to know what else had happened that day. Through a mediated sharing of events, they were able to get a robust sense of what was happening, and they used this information to help them strategize. In the summer of 2009, demonstrators in Iran were using media in a similar way to communicate, only this time the cameras were cell phones, and the videos were transmitted across the globe and shared not only with each other in Iran, but also with a global diaspora who edited, translated and retransmitted them in order to be involved and connected. [1]

Two years later, during what has been termed (mostly in Western media outlets) the Arab Spring, the use of media in these two Iranian examples took on renewed interest amidst further proclamations of Twitter and Facebook Revolutions. How can such historical examples of the role of media in social change help us to develop a more nuanced and critical understanding of how digital media is being used today, not only in the service of democratic movements but equally for the purposes of security and surveillance? To get our collective head around this question, FUSE approached Anna Feigenbaum, a scholar who studies histories of media and social movements. The following is an edited transcript of the interview, which took place in July 2011.

Much of your recent work deals with social media. Can you define this term?

There's your standard industry definition, which associates social media with the development of web 2.0 technologies. Social media are platforms for the circulation and sharing of information using a "many-to-many" form of communication. This is in contrast to a broadcast or "one-to-many" form, which is more of a traditional model of media dispersion, and how something like television news works.

But people who are interested in new media history will be quick to point out that we've actually *always* had media that was social, and used media socially. What I study is how social movements and protesters have historically used media in these kinds of sharing, peer-to-peer ways in order to develop movements. So I look at things like when people were first able to take portable VHS cameras into protests, and the kind of protest documentaries they would make and the methods they'd use to circulate them.

Is there an important distinction between new media and social media?

Well, there are debates about this! *New media* generally refers to post-1990s digital media technologies, Internet platforms, web-based technologies, mobile media, &c. Yet, a number of people in the field of media communications who have a critical perspective on this terminology think that *digital media* is a better term than *new media* because, by definition, all media is new at some point in its history. However, there are also objections to the term *digital media* as not all new technologies are digital, and we see a number of productions and platforms that combine digital and non-digital technologies.

*Social media* is a different kind of term, which we could think of as a sub-category of *new media*, referring specifically to new media that make use of web 2.0 technologies and employ peer-to-peer networking capabilities that enable users to share files and information.

While these terms can be useful, I would actually argue against all of them, or at least suggest that we approach them more critically.

When we slot practices and creative productions into these kinds of vague—often marketing / PR driven—categories, we tend to fail to stop and think about their social and economic complexities and the outcomes of deploying them. While favouring the digital over the "traditional" often obscures or ignores important (and political) histories of practice, resisting technological change limits our abilities to carry those histories into the future. For example, how can we hold onto positive arguments for digitizing art collections to make them more publicly available on the web, while still embracing and financially sustaining spaces for preserving and exhibiting art in ways that engage and create physical communities?

I think we need a better understanding of the ways "new" and "old" media interact, as well as of the ways that media can be social without (only) being on the internet.

Anna Feigenbaum is an activist-academic working with new media, the politics of representation, gender and communications, alternative media and protest cultures. Her research takes a transdisciplinary approach, combining sociological and cultural studies methods. Her work engages technology studies to investigate new media development and expand upon traditional notions of communication technologies—to include things like shoe boxes and snipped bits of wire. She teaches at Richmond, the American International University in London, and is also an arts events organizer, an active participant in campaigns around climate justice and migrant rights, a published creative writer and retired slam poet. She has spent the past ten years living between New York, Montreal and London.

[1] FUSE thanks Nika Khanjani and Keyvan Mahjoor for sharing this story.

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How can we complicate the relationship between social media and social change, beyond a simple—and misguided—assumption of social media's democratic character?

First of all, it's important to understand where that assumption comes from. There's both a genuine (if naïve) reason that people believe that, and then a marketing reason. The genuine reason is that mobile and digital technologies, with their ability for cheap reproduction and platforms that allow for sharing mean that we create virtual public spaces in which people can freely exchange and communicate. This works on a very classic, liberal Habermasian model of a public space.

Then, there's the marketing reason. I was just reading again about the guy—Wael Ghonim—who coined the phrase the "Facebook Revolution," and he's a Google executive. He's a social media entrepreneur, so of course he's going to tell you that it's a "Facebook Revolution." This happens all the time. If you watch advertisements for any kind of new mobile phone, you'll see depicted the perfect image of connectedness, of sharing in a benevolent, happy world. There's a big push from marketers to emotionalize the sharing, to represent democracy as joy and happiness among the masses because it's easier to sell things to people who are happy and have lots of friends. They have adopted a language of social change pretty quickly too, claiming that for themselves.

To complicate this, I would look critically at each one of these two arguments. With the marketing one, that's a bit easier. We can use a classic media analysis to attack that model. It's quite obvious when companies like (tax dodging) Vodafone take images of the Egyptian revolution and put them into their ads, talking about how phones empower people. We don't need to have too strong a critique of consumerism to say, "Hey, we know what's going on here. Let's be critical about this."

But the other argument is a bit more complicated and deserves more time. A lot of people get hung up here, and what we've ended up with is a somewhat stagnant debate

around technology. If you critique the idea that these social media tools are democratic and implicated meaningfully in social change, then you're seen as a Luddite or a technophobe. If you support the idea, then you are seen as a techno-zealot and equally stupid... Because we're operating in this binary, it becomes difficult to identify what is useful about these technologies while also thinking about them critically.

The first thing that we need to do is separate content from technology. I would say that this language of "tools," which we see used by both sides, is something that we need to be more careful and critical about. What do we even mean when we say that? Are we talking about the platform as a tool? For example, is Facebook, removed of all its content, some kind of empty, democratic space? If we want to claim that it is, then the next question to ask is, "What are we putting in it?" If I announce an Aryan Nation rally, is that an example of democracy in action? If what someone means is that Facebook provides a free marketplace of ideas, then they are using a definition of democracy that has no understanding of social justice, oppression, histories of colonialism... So, what we actually need to have is not a discussion about social media but a debate about the meaning of democracy.

One thing that I think is really interesting about public space for Egypt specifically comes from what was happening in the actual space of Tahrir Square. There were barricades all around the square, and people would spend hours waiting in long queues being checked by ad-hoc security groups. And you know what? That's not a free, openly accessible public space. In fact, what makes the physical square capable of being a space for democracy is that people are actually being checked to see if they at least adhere to a general common ground (mainly that they are not cops or working for the government).

You mentioned that one of the things you are working on is the role of media in social change pre-social media. Can you talk briefly about how that broad, historical perspective can help us to understand what social

media is or is not doing compared to how media has functioned historically?

Two things immediately come to mind. One is that it allows us to be critical of this zeal, from marketing or elsewhere, that leads us to believe that the newest thing is what's going to revolutionize the world... During the collapse of the USSR, you had tech-zealots declaring a "fax machine revolution," and when the telegraph was first invented, people thought all sorts of apocalyptic things were going to happen because of how fast messages could travel. This happens every time a technology emerges. It helps to historicize this, and put into context the ways that people have always got excited about or scared of the emergence of new technologies—particularly communications technologies—because they affect so many people's lives.

The other thing that a historical perspective helps us with is thinking about how these practices that we're calling "new" also have a history. An example from my research is the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp. Women would get arrested for an action and end up in prison, and realize that other women in prison had been collecting news clippings about their protests and creating little archives of them, shoved into cereal boxes, or shoe boxes, or whatever they had. When the newer protesters would arrive in prison, the women would pull out all of these clippings. To me, that's a precursor to what we see on Facebook. Folks have always saved news sources about what they're doing, as long as there have been news sources.

That's one of the amazing things about Facebook—it allows us, with speed and efficiency, to create our own patchwork or piece-meal newsletters. It gives us the communicative power to re-circulate, both enabling us to contest mainstream/corporate media images and to showcase alternative or "minor media" reports and representations. Of course, there are all kinds of baby animals and other clutter mixed in there. This is why I like to call Facebook a *container technology*, following Zoe Sophia, which is a term that can also

be used to describe media such as the shoebox scrapbooks. There are a lot of similar stories that you can tell if you don't limit your thinking about social media to digital media or web 2.0. I think it's beneficial to identify and trace the social processes at work in all kinds of media.

Are claims of the central role of Facebook or Twitter in recent uprisings necessarily overblown?

Looking at the statistics of how many people actually have Twitter accounts, it seems clear that while there may be a few key people using Twitter to announce the meeting time of a protest, the way that most people are actually learning about that is just through word of mouth, the way that we always have.

The kinds of statistics that people have been coming up with are that only seven percent of Egyptians have Facebook accounts. There are also a lot of interesting accounts of the use of flyers in Egypt. The photocopy created a surge in activists' uses of print media, but flyers go all the way back to the printing press and even before that. It's interesting to me that print always remains part of a media ecology of social change, and a very important one. An example that I really like, is how the Black Panther Party would always use an image or two in their newsletters, partly in response to the fact that some of the people they wanted to reach were illiterate. Or, if we look at certain indigenous movements in Ecuador, Bolivia and elsewhere, where multiple languages are spoken and people live in rural areas, we'll see different kinds of communication technologies being used, such as community radio stations that can reach particular cultural and linguistic communities. We can't account for all of those things if we think that everything is happening through web-based social media.

If a big difference between digital media and, say, print media is the speed of transmission, one thing we need to keep in mind is that it works both ways. It takes organizers a bit longer to get the word around if they need to see each other to exchange a flyer or have a conversation, but from

a surveillance perspective, those exchanges are harder to monitor. With online forums, we are dealing with a different beast. Anecdotally, we all acknowledge that the state surveys and suppresses activists and organizers through social media, but it doesn't seem like we understand the mechanisms that are actually used to do so. For those of us in Toronto, an obvious local example would be the recent use of Montreal-based organizer Jaggi Singh's Twitter feed as evidence against him in the charges he faced after the G20. What do you think organizers should know about how security and the state are using digital media?

This goes back to the exchange we were having earlier about the "tool" model. So, if I'm Jaggi Singh, and I'm using my Twitter feed as a tool to let people know what's going on and where they should be, but that tool is open to view by the police, then is it also a tool for the police? Do we share that tool? If the things that are tools for us are also tools for the police, then it seems to me that we have a problem. For this reason, I find the idea of a container technology to be much more useful than the idea of media as a tool. So, if we think of Twitter as a container technology in which we are putting (or posting) things, but everyone can see what we're putting in there, then we can ask the question of how we want to use it.

On a more practical level, we need to understand that it's not a freak incident when the police use these technologies for surveillance. There are two major ways that they do this. The first is creating fake accounts, so just as infiltration happens in person, it will happen on friend lists. That's not about your security settings, you can set those as tight as you want, but some of those people on your list are going to be infiltrators.

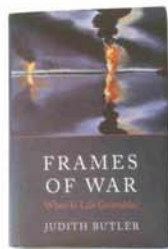
The other thing that we should be increasingly concerned about and monitoring is the ways in which police and the state are engaging new media and social media technologies for their own use. Some of the research that I've been doing looks at how digital and "social" technologies are being marketed to the police and to the government. They're

being sold in the exactly the same way that you are: "Streamline your info from the street cops to the cops in the office and the cops in the van! Take a picture of a protester and instantly send it through your BlackBerry for instant identification..." One of the biggest things on the market right now, in the counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency policing industry, are portable biometric scanners. They were first used in Iraq and now are being marketed for domestic use. Not only do these things have the capacity to take your fingerprints, but they also do facial recognition, so the idea is that I can instantly take this photo of you and run it through multiple databases—including sites like Facebook—and match it up.

I think it's important to raise questions of organizing, infrastructure and strategies for communication. For example, before we rush out to make a Facebook event or start yet another listserve, let's go back to some basic questions about how best to communicate the information and ideas we want to get out. Who are we trying to reach? What media do they engage with? Are these communication platforms or media secure? For instance, is this model of consensus that we've inherited actually serving us, particularly in the "digital age"? It is getting shit done in a way that we're satisfied with? Are there other organizational models that make use of all different kinds of technologies, that we could be using, that would push us further? These kinds of larger, logistical questions are what we need to be asking to account for the currency of new media. Tactics before Tweeting. Or something like that.



## Radical Humanism — Judith Butler's Frames of War



Reviewed by  
Francisco-Fernando  
Granados

Judith Butler's latest book was written in response to the official and unofficial military interventions carried out in the name of fighting terrorism in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Butler turns her painstaking and engaged attention towards the aesthetic management of the global politics of torture, delving into the framing and re-framing mechanisms that mediate the perception of bodies that have been construed as "the enemy" from the Euro-American perspective. Butler manages this task while simultaneously returning to the analysis of gender and sexuality that characterized her earlier work. In a public landscape

influenced by eight years of the rhetoric put forward by the government of George W. Bush, the nuance and specificity of critical analysis suffered in favour of fear-mongering and arbitrary aggression. Within this increasingly conservative political and rhetorical context, *Frames of War* (2010) emerges as an urgent, if not always easy, critical response that aims to radically re-think states of humanity in anti-racist, queer terms.

The book deals with the question of when and how a body is recognized as having a life. In other words, which sets of social and political circumstances grant and maintain the possibility of becoming a subject. In the first chapter, Butler responds to a series of poems written by Guantanamo Bay prisoners, engaging in a fundamental reconsideration of humanism by theorizing it using a deconstructive logic. She suggests that it is not autonomous individuality that humanizes, but rather the connections that exist between individuals that grant a breathing body a life. In this line of reasoning, violence towards the other imperils the survival of the self. Butler foregrounds the body's fragility and proposes interdependence between bodies as the grounds for an ethics that allows for the survival of human life. This state of humanity is marked by what she terms "grievability," the capacity to conceive of a life as worthy of mourning when it is lost. A grievable life, Butler posits, is a life that is institutionally recognized and protected through community so that it may survive. Yet grievability is not granted evenly. In her introduction, Butler understands the racist and

patriarchal underpinnings of the US-led military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan in terms of a "differential distribution" [1] that construes some bodies as more human than others.

In the Canadian context, a palpitating example of a body who has not been seen as worthy of the right to otherwise standard juridical protections can be found in Omar Khadr, the Canadian man of Egyptian heritage who was arrested in Afghanistan as a minor in 2002, held without charges for three years, and then convicted of war crimes in Guantanamo's extra-judicial military tribunals in 2010. [2] Khadr's situation stands in stark contrast to a case involving an as-yet unnamed American citizen who claims he was detained in Iraq by the US military for nine months without explanation; a recent judgment by a federal judge has granted this person, a former military contractor, the right to sue former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld personally for authorizing "torturous interrogation techniques." [3]

Butler's argument allows for the emergence of basic but urgent questions concerning the conditions that have structured, maintained and legitimized Khadr's irregular imprisonment: What has made it possible for Khadr to be rendered as something other than a citizen and a human being deserving of basic legal protections in the eyes of American and Canadian public institutions? Why was there a three-year gap between the time of his arrest and his indictment on charges of murder for the death of a U.S. soldier? Why did the Supreme Court

of Canada overturn the decision of a lower Court of Appeals that ordered Stephen Harper's government to repatriate Khadr, even when the Supreme Court unanimously agreed that not doing so constituted a violation of his rights as a Canadian citizen? When will Khadr and other Guantanamo prisoners who have reported physical and mental torture have a chance to file a claim against senior members of the Bush administration for implementing torture as an interrogation technique? What would it take for Khadr's humanity to be recognized in the midst of such a brutalizing context?

Butler's focus on poetry and photography throughout the book highlights the role that sensory perception plays in making and justifying decisions affecting the lives of others. Her engagement with processes of framing suggests that the uneven distribution of human recognition has significant aesthetic dimensions. In the book's centerpiece essay on the production and circulation of the Abu Ghraib torture photographs, she writes alongside and against Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2002). She reflects on how the cruelty motivating the production of the photographs was critically re-framed through public showings of the images, such as the exhibition at the International Center for Photography in New York, [4] prompting public opinion around the globe to reconsider their unconditional support for the Iraq War. A critical contextualization of these images of pain denies the triumphant tone of their making and exposes the brutality of their intention.

Francisco-Fernando Granados is a Guatemalan-born artist and writer working in performance, video, drawing, cultural criticism and curatorial practice. His work as an artist has been exhibited in galleries and artist-run spaces including the Vancouver Art Gallery, the LIVE Biennial of Performance Art, the ArtLAB at the University of Western Ontario, and the Images Festival. His writing has been published through VIVO Media Arts Centre, and *FUSE*, where he contributes as part of the magazine's Editorial Committee. He is currently working on a Masters of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto.

Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London; New York: Verso, 2009).

[1] *Ibid.*, 8.

[6] Trinh T. Minh Ha, *Frayer Framed* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[7] "France begins ban on niqab and burqa," *The Guardian*, April 12, 2011.

[8] Ian Traynor, "Belgium moves towards public ban on burqa and niqab," *The Guardian*, April 1, 2010.

[9] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988).

[10] Butler 2009, 122.

[11] *Ibid.*, 171-2.

A change in perception, an *aesthetic shift*, emerges with the possibility of seeing the images outside and against the intentions of the eyes which first framed them. This shift constitutes what Butler references as the "framing of the frame," or the "framing of the framer" [5] — phrases she borrows from artist, filmmaker and writer Trinh T. Minh-ha. [6] According to Butler, the act of revealing the underpinnings of a given frame performs an ethics of photography by producing a context that continuously breaks with itself as a means to remain critical. Such a contextual ethics of framing resists the production of the kind of nationalist mythmaking that has comfortably allowed for the dissolution of juridical guarantees for Khadr and other individuals in his position.

The chapter titled "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time" explores the political deployment of European ideas of progress and modernity in the service of xenophobia. This section responds to border restrictions aimed at keeping out primarily Muslim migrants, and laws such as the recent banning of the burqa and the niqab in France [7] and Belgium. [8] Relevant still in the wake of the large number of refugees created by the conflict in Libya and other nations in the region, Butler develops a nuanced critique of racist assumptions that imagine Muslims as fundamentalist homophobes who must be kept out of "modern" European society. Such conservative arguments use gay rights as an alibi to justify discrimination against populations of non-European descent. People who practice Islam, in particular, are framed as

a threat to supposedly socially progressive, secular values that imagine queer populations as exclusively white. Sections like this may return the reader to more familiar Butler territory. She is most well known for her work from the late 1980s and early 1990s, which contributed to shifting the focus of critical feminist practice by emphasizing the category of gender over more simplified divisions between "man" and "woman." [9] Butler uses her gender analysis to criticize the exploitation of juridical LGBTQ guarantees for socially conservative purposes. She does this by tracing the patriarchal inflexion of ideas around mainstream European secularism that find their roots in Christian fundamentalism.

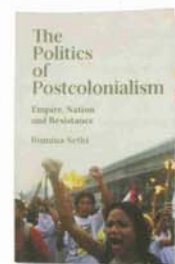
While keeping an eye on the political workings of gender, Butler's work has shifted its focus in recent years. She has continued to challenge conservative assumptions applied unevenly to Muslims by suggesting "we ought not understand secularism as the sole source of critique, or religion as the sole source of dogmatism." [10] The aim of her intellectual project since *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) has become the crafting of a critique of state violence drawn from the study of the work of twentieth century Jewish scholars. Her lectures and essays over the last years have turned to thinkers like Hannah Arendt, Susan Sontag, Walter Benjamin, Emmanuel Levinas, and Primo Levi. The development of this work, combined with her activism in support for campaigns that advocate an end to the violence against Palestinian populations in

Gaza, the West Bank and abroad has allowed Butler to use her training in Jewish philosophy to confront and dispute the notion that any criticism of the State of Israel with regards to the occupation of Palestinian territories constitutes an act of anti-Semitism.

As part of this larger project, I understand *Frames of War* as describing an ethics beyond self-congratulation and self-righteousness that may itself become an approach for what she imagines as an emergent Left politics. Her notion of re-framing highlights a set of intellectual and social possibilities that connect the aesthetic implications of perception with the critical task of consistent political action. *Frames of War* reads as a work grappling with the ethics of seeing images and structuring ways of

looking, an ethics that calls for critique to be turned on oneself first and foremost:

The struggle against violence accepts that violence is one's own possibility... if one postured as a beautiful soul, as someone by definition without violent aggression, there could be no ethical quandary, no struggle and no problem. [11]



## Rumina Sethi's *The Politics of Postcolonialism: Empire, Nation and Resistance*

Reviewed by  
Leila Timmins

Locating postcolonial studies within the twenty-first century requires situating it within the contemporary globalized world, a moment defined by the unrestricted flow of capital, the spread of transnational corporations and the erosion of traditional distinctions between nations and nationhood, which necessitates a shift in the way we engage with the so-called "post-." It is, perhaps, this unassuming prefix, "post-," that has led to so much contention in the study of postcolonialism. On the one hand, in this age of "post-" politics, postcolonialism has come to mean an infinite number of things—a historical transition, an achieved epoch, a cultural location, a theoretical stance—but,



on the other, it is clear that there is nothing "post-" about the effects of colonization in the decolonized world. As such, certain branches of postcolonial studies have recently come under attack for failing to make an intervention in the lived politics of postcolonial experience, instead focusing their academic methodologies on modes of textual interpretation and deconstructionist analysis. Against this tendency, *The Politics of Postcolonialism* (2011) is a clear move away from the ossifying strategies of the academy, offering a refreshing and provocative examination of the current state of postcolonial studies and calls for a re-infusion of the discipline with a grounded politics of resistance.

By way of introduction, Rumina Sethi disparagingly repeats Edward W. Said's famous call for "responsible intellectuals" from his seminal work, *Orientalism* (1979). Looking back to the origins of postcolonial studies as a discipline, Sethi defines postcolonialism as philosophy that "seeks to encourage radical politics and engagement with popular struggles," a charge that provocatively implicates an academy which, largely, has still not addressed many of the actual economic and political issues relating to postcolonialism. As Sethi notes, it was Said who first traced the correspondence of American neocolonialism to both its orientalist tendencies in the past and to the imperial policies of nineteenth-century colonizers. This material lineage is repeatedly overlooked in contemporary postcolonial studies, which has often been structured in opposition to American

studies, and instead tends to focus on areas supposedly outside of North American concerns such as South Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa. It should be noted that Sethi does not focus much attention on Canada, and with a rich and varied academic tradition often deeply implicated in local indigenous politics, the climate is somewhat different here. The project of this book is thus threefold: to investigate modes of resistance in the new world order; to examine the current state of postcolonial studies; and to prioritize and reframe the political mandate of the discipline.

Sethi traces out how liberal capitalism, following decolonization struggles across the world, has, for its part, contributed a great deal to undoing the borders of nation-states through the global spread of multinational corporations. Capitalist hegemony on such a large scale has radically weakened the power of labour, and as such, labour-based resistance movements, with the desperation of a globalized working class and its underclasses matching the inchoate and nameless nature of the people who make up transnational corporations. For this reason, Sethi asks whether we are witnessing the end of the nation-state, and if so, how this might affect modes of resistance. Importantly, Sethi attempts to forge a link between historical Marxism and post-colonialism as a means of both understanding structures of power and restoring a certain form of "cultural nationalism," or a cultural revitalization of nationhood as a means of forging intellectualism

with popular consciousness in a united resistance movement. Although the material focus of Marxism has historically been seen to be at odds with postcolonial studies' cultural leanings, Sethi convincingly argues that the two disciplines are not as disparate as they purport to be, and that a critique of Eurocentrism, globalization and exploitation has always been central to both disciplines. For if postcolonialism is to mount a successful opposition to neocolonialism, it must include a careful structural analysis of global capitalism as well as a cultural understanding of nationhood.

Beyond a structural redefinition of postcolonialism, Sethi models a methodological practice that highlights and honours resistance movements around the world. The 2002 protests in Bolivia against decreased spending on health and education, demonstrations in El Salvador which marked the privatization of the Social Security Institute, the regional strike in Peru organized by the Frente Amplo Civico against the privatization of electricity, and the Zapatista rebels in Mexico fighting the government's strategies of *neoliberalismo* are among many examples of resistance in this book. Accordingly, all such acts of dissent and activism initiated under the aegis of resistance to corporate globalization should be included in the term *postcolonial*.

By far the most important charge of the book, as Sethi herself states, is the allegation that the relationship between postcolonialism and global capitalism has been left unexamined by almost all postcolonial critics, and

that "postcolonial studies, as a consequence, propelled by the metropolitan methodology of postcolonial theory, has developed side by side with the growth of neocolonialism." Not only has postcolonial theory become deaf to the cries of active resistance movements, but also its lack of reflexivity or structural analysis has made it complicit with the spread of neocolonialism. It is with this desire to unite theory and practice that Sethi challenges scholars, claiming that: "If postcolonial studies is to be relevant today, it must become the voice of the people and theorize about movements against globalization, rather than becoming part of its grand design." Following this, if postcolonial scholars are to engage in the "politics" of postcolonialism, they must step away from current theories of hybridity and multiculturalism, and focus on the extra-literary concerns that can help link postcolonialism with activism in the world outside the academy, working to carve out a space within the academy for rigorous self-examination and for the inclusion of the voices from international resistance movements. Then, and only then, will we be able to shape what it means to be a "responsible intellectual."

Lela Timmins is a Toronto-based writer and arts administrator who holds an MA in Art History from the University of Toronto. She has worked with Barbara Fischer at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, helping to coordinate conferences and exhibitions, and was also the founding director of Franks artist-run centre in Vancouver. Currently, she is the editorial intern at *C Magazine* and sits on the editorial committee of *FUSE*.

Rumina Sethi, *The Politics of Postcolonialism: Empire, Nation and Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).

→  
April 6 Movement tent, Tahrir Square, Cairo, June 29, 2011.  
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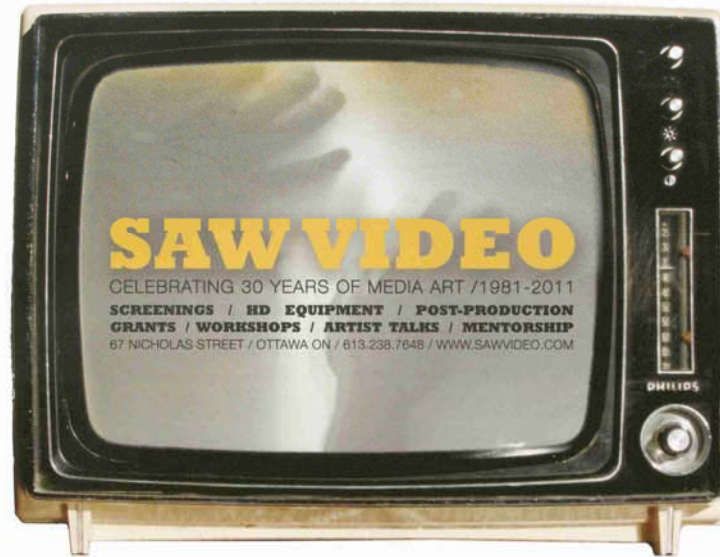
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Rafael Murguía sings this song,  
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in Chocó, Colombia

Juan Manuel Echavarría, *Bones de Carina*, 2005, video. Courtesy of the artist  
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Maha Mustafa, *Black Fountain* 2005, installation

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"Black Water Art" is a metaphor for the conceptual transition from one space to another. This annual event transforms the White Water Gallery's space into a commercial venue for a period of two weeks each January. During this time artwork is sold on site and through the White Water Gallery's website. 100% of all sales go directly to the artists, making this a unique commercial opportunity for participants. Due to high demand and limited available space, a size restriction of 24x24 inches (61x61 cm) has been imposed on submissions. Members of the White Water Gallery submit their piece for **FREE**. Non-members pay a \$30 submission fee.

**NOTE:** A membership to the White Water Gallery only costs \$25 yearly. Anyone can join, and there are additional benefits and opportunities available for members.

**Postmarked Deadline: December 30th, 2011** (Artwork must be received by January 10th, 2012).  
Visit the White Water Gallery's website for more information.



[www.whitewatergallery.com](http://www.whitewatergallery.com)





**VARLEY ART GALLERY'S  
EXPANSION  
OPENING SOON!**

CARLTON STREET

MAIN STREET

The \$2.5 million addition to the Varley Art Gallery of Markham is scheduled to open in the late fall 2011 – check our website regularly at [www.visitthevarley.com](http://www.visitthevarley.com) for updates on the progress.

Varley  
-McKay  
art foundation

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

MARKHAM