

HOME BEIRUT SOUNDING THE NEIGHBORS

A new chapter of the series of *Interactions across the Mediterranean* dedicated to the relationship between Europe and the Middle East. The story of a city, a laboratory of resistance, artistic innovation and hope seen through over 100 works by 36 artists.

15 November 2017 – 20 May 2018

Ziad Abillama / Shirin Abu Shaqra / Etel Adnan / Tamara Al-Samerraei / Mounira Al Solh / Haig Aivazian / Ziad Antar / Caline Aoun / Marwa Arsanios / Tarek Atoui / Vartan Avakian / Eric Baudelaire / Tony Chakar / Ali Cherri / Roy Dib / Maroun El-Daccache / Fouad Elkoury / Sirine Fattouh / Laure Ghorayeb / Ahmad Ghossein / Mona Hatoum / Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige / Hatem Imam / Lamia Joreige / Mazen Kerbaj / Bernard Khoury / Walid Raad / Marwan Rechmaoui / Graziella Rizkallah Toufic / Stéphanie Saadé / Rania Stephan / Jalal Toufic / Paola Yacoub / Akram Zaatari / Cynthia Zaven

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*Dear Beirut,
You are cigarette/You are pulse and tunnel/Freckles and siren
How do you contain so many things?
(Hala Alyan)*

Rome, 14 November 2017. Cultural diversity, the memory of war, the effervescence of the present, the profound urban transformation, the prospects for the future: all these are **Home Beirut. Sounding the Neighbors**, at MAXXI from **15 November 2017 to 20 May 2018**.

The exhibition, curated by **Hou Hanru** and **Giulia Ferracci** is a new chapter of the project *Interactions across the Mediterranean* which, after focussing on the contemporary art scene in Iran (2014-2015) and Istanbul (2015-2016) this time turns to **Beirut**, a dynamic city processing the past and acting as a laboratory for the future; it does so through **over 100 works by 36 artists**, expressions of an **inter-Mediterranean culture** enjoying vigorous growth.

THE EXHIBITION

Over the last two decades, Beirut has become an example of resilience, dynamism, cultural vivacity and hope of which contemporary art is both a testimony and a dynamo, even at this time of renewed tension.

The very history and reality of the city always echoes and interacts with lively but conflictive events happening in the neighborhoods, near and afar. The city, rich in cultural, economic and political diversity, is constantly transformed through a negotiation with the globalising world. However, it is profoundly anchored in a collective obsession: how to deal with the idea of belonging, or, how to make this place a “home” for all, while everyone has a different sense of identity?

Hence the title of the exhibition, **Home Beirut Sounding the Neighbors**.

With an exhibition design that has visitors navigate the complexity of the city, the show is organized in **four sections**, each conceived as a “home” devoted to one aspect of the city’s kaleidoscopic artistic scene: memory (*Home for Memory*), hospitality (*Home for Everyone?*), local mapping (*Home for Remapping*) and joy (*Home for Joy*).

HOME FOR MEMORY tackles the existential theme, shared by many artists, of the contradiction between memories of the conflict and the desire to rebuild a new civil society.

This section deploys works, above all photographs and videos, reflecting on archiving, collections and documentation with pieces midway between testimony and imagination, in which the reconstruction of events remains a permanent challenge, if not an impossibility.

Memory becomes a bridge connecting past, present and future, as in the work *Collapsing Clouds of Gas and Dust* by **Vartan Avakian**, a series of crystals created artificially from dust recovered from a building used by snipers during the war, a metaphor for the cyclical nature of history and a reflection on the concept of the commemorative monument, or in the video *Beirut Exploded Views* by **Akram Zaatari**, set in a post-apocalyptic city.

Among the works in this section are the series of drawings *33 Jours* and *Beirut, July – August 2006*, by **Laure Ghorayeb** and **Mazen Kerbaj**, mother and son: she is a poet, journalist and illustrator, he is a musician and illustrator. Together they tell the story of the 33 day-war of 2006, drawing on paper facts and emotions and then publishing the drawings on his blog. The now historical video *Measures of Distance* (1988) by **Mona Hatoum**, forced to stay in London at the outbreak of the war in 1975, recounts her relationship with her distant mother through fragments of letters, intimate conversations and images. Here the private dimension of the mother-daughter relationship intertwines with the public experience of the tragic war.

HOME FOR EVERYONE? The migrant crisis is an issue that has always been contemporary in Beirut. Yesterday as today, due to the conflicts and the migratory flows, Armenians, Greeks, Syrian and Palestinians, peoples with diverse origins and religions, have chosen this city as their new home for a few months or a lifetime.

All this has contributed to the creation of a rich, complex and cosmopolitan culture.

In this section we find the dual video installation *Remembering the Light* (2016) by **Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige**, winners of the *Marcel Duchamp Prize 2017*: sharing the element of water, they evoke the current migratory phenomenon entrusting a reflection on human destiny to the poetry of the images.

The video *A Spectacle Of Privacy* (2014) by **Roy Dib**, through the dialogue between a couple with relationship issues, recounts the Israeli-Palestinian question, drawing an analogy with a sexual encounter; the ones by **Jalal Toufic** are devoted to Ashura, the Islamic religious commemoration that takes on diverse meanings depending on the context.

HOME FOR REMAPPING investigates the profound changes that the Beirut area has lived through: from the wounds of war to natural disasters and through to the construction boom, the city has transformed radically. All the social conflicts and reconciliations of the past 40 years are inscribed in its re-planning process. Among the works in this area: *Beirut Caoutchouc*, the great map of the city of Beirut by **Marwan Rechmaoui**, made with rubber and unfolding on the floor where the public are invited to walk on it; the video installation *After the River* by **Lamia Joreige** dedicated to the river traversing Beirut, a space capable of recounting the history of the city through its progressive deterioration. This section also features in *Shipping Container Floor* by **Caline Aoun**, *Deutsche Bank's Artist of the year 2018*, a carbon copy of the bottom of a container presenting a critical witness and reflection on the invasion of global capitalism in the city's life today.

HOME FOR JOY Beirut has always produced beauty, even in the hardest of times: visual arts, music, dance, film and poetry never ceased to exist, with the destruction of war actually nurturing them as forms of resistance and resilience. The city is teeming with examples of cultural infrastructure – foundations, galleries, archives, arts centres – and offers a rich output of visual arts, music, dance, theatre, film and poetry, all recounted in this section. Here we find, among other works, the drawings from the *One Year* project (2016) by **Mazen Kerbaj**, who designed the cover of the exhibition catalogue: one drawing a day, a visual diary that playfully records the passing of time. Music as an expression of joy is at the centre of the video installation by **Ziad Antar**. The most emblematic image belongs to the dancer **Alexandre Paulikevitch** who, facing the camera of **Sirine Fattouh**, danced into the ruins of a destructed village in a real ecstasy, suggesting a joyful Phoenix Nirvana of the war-torn home!

PERFORMANCE

On the occasion of the opening on **Tuesday 14 November**, there will be **performances** by **Mazen Kerbaj** and **Tarek Atoui** and by **Roy Dib**. The first features the two artist-musicians in a highly experimental **electronic music concert** realised with unconventional instruments.

The second, of great power and poetry, is inspired by the citizens of Aleppo who, in order to protect themselves from snipers, hid behind the curtains in buildings. At the foot of the installation *Here and There - Rome Edition*, taking the form of a curtain, an actress, **Sara El Debuç**, cuts rectangles of fabric with messages of peace and distributes them as amulets among the spectators.

EVENTS

Throughout the period of the exhibition, a rich programme of events will develop the themes: video and artist film screenings will alternate with performances, workshops and educational projects.

The first event is scheduled for **Wednesday 15 November at 6.00 PM, with the talk featuring Khalil Joreige** whose works *Remembering the Light* and *Distracted Bullets* made with **Joana Hadjithomas** are on show. The two artists also inaugurate the latest chapter of *Artapes*, the artist film review in the museum's video gallery, devoted to Beirut. The talks with the artists in the exhibition continue on **19 January 2018 (Eric Baudelaire)** and on **11 April (Bernard Khoury)**. In January, within the ambit of *CINEMA al MAXXI*, in collaboration with the Fondazione Cinema per Roma, the film program will feature retrospectives devoted to the directors **Ziad Doueiri**, **Nadine Labaki** and **Randa Chahal**. There will also be **workshops** on graphic design (February 2018) and experimental electronic music (May 2018); **didactic workshops** for schools and families, for adults and children, and an **international symposium** on the themes of the exhibition (spring).

Home Beirut Sounding the Neighbors sheds light on an extraordinary process of urban redevelopment and social rehabilitation, giving voice to the community of artists, musicians, publishers, designers and performers working to create a more promising future for the city. In opposition to the rise of neo-nationalist and populist ideologies, with its cultural vivacity Beirut is a beacon of hope in a stormy Mediterranean.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by **CURA**. With texts by **Maroun El-Dacacche**, **Roy Dib**, **Rosita Di Peri**, **Giulia Ferracci**, **Hou Hanru**, **Haten Imam**, **Bernard Koury**, **Hussein Nassereddine**, **Sharif Sehnaoui**, **Stefan Tarnowski**, **Jalal Toufic** and **Paola Yacoub**.

The press kit and images of the exhibition can be downloaded from the Reserved Area of the Fondazione MAXXI's website at www.maxxi.art/en/area-stampa/ by typing in the password **areariservatamaxxi**

MAXXI – National Museum of XXI Century Arts

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Admittance free for students of art and architecture from Tuesday to Friday

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