

Manazir  
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# Nostalgia and Belonging in Art and Architecture from the MENA Region

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**Essay Collection**

Research project conceptualized and edited by Laura Hindelang and Nadia Radwan

# Manazir مناظر

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Swiss Platform for the Study of Visual Arts,  
Architecture and Heritage in the MENA Region

2021

## Nostalgia and Belonging in Art and Architecture from the MENA Region

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The term "Manazir" refers to landscape, perspective and point of view in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Persian. Thus, Manazir is oriented toward a diversity of transcultural and transdisciplinary "landscapes" and "points of views" and open to a multiplicity of themes, epochs and geographical areas.

It is a non-hierarchical platform that will connect scholars, PhD candidates and art professionals working in Swiss universities and institutions, in order to give higher national and international visibility to a rich but yet relatively unknown field.

The Platform disseminates information regarding conferences, workshops, publications and exhibitions taking place in Switzerland. Research results are also promoted through *Manazir Journal*, a peer-reviewed online journal that regularly publishes thematic issues in open access.

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Laura Hindelang & Nadia Radwan

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## Introduction

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Figure 1: Céline Burnand, *Retour à Helwan – La Maison des vivants*, 2021. Courtesy of Céline Burnand.

This collection brings together twelve short essays investigating how nostalgia and belonging come into play in the study of modern and contemporary art and architecture from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Each essay focuses on one selected object—a work of art or architecture—and reflects on its relation to the overall theme.

The essays in this publication result from the research seminar “Nostalgia and Belonging: Art and Architecture in the Middle East and North Africa, 19th–21st Century”, which we taught together at the Institute of Art History at the University of Bern in spring 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

all classes were held via Zoom. Merging our respective fields of research and interests in visual arts, architecture, and heritage, we designed the seminar in a transdisciplinary perspective to investigate the current buzz words "nostalgia" and "belonging", which have increasingly informed the discourse on cultural production in the countries of the MENA region without being comprehensively situated and examined. Our goal was to close this gap by bringing the study of modern and contemporary art and architecture of the MENA region into a fruitful and open dialogue with the conceptualization of nostalgia and belonging in academic writing. This endeavor was informed by recent reflections on global art histories and the decentering of the discipline (for example Keshmirshakan 2011; DaCosta Kaufmann et al. 2016;), which has raised questions about the ways in which the canons, theories, and methods of traditional western art history can be expanded or even reconsidered to adequately incorporate cultural productions from the MENA region.

Nostalgia (from the Greek *nostos*, return, and *algos*, longing) was first coined by the physician Johannes Hofer to describe the extreme homesickness felt by Swiss mercenaries in the late seventeenth century. It has since been theorized as a dialectic relationship between past and future across various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities (Davis 1979; Boym 2001). From the mid-2000s onwards, the meaning of nostalgia has been debated in the fields of modern and contemporary art and architecture (Foster 2004; Huyssen 2006; Bishop 2013). This development is linked to the fact that a growing number of artists and architects have introduced practices for revisiting, archiving, unearthing, reimagining, and deconstructing both past and present in order to create decolonial, vernacular, and transnational approaches of cultures, knowledge production, and politics.

Overall, Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia* has emerged as a key text on the topic, especially for the field of art and architectural history, as she also discusses practices such as heritage making, collecting, archiving, and exhibiting. In her book, Boym defines nostalgia as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" and "a sentiment of loss and displacement", but also as "a romance with one's own fantasy" (Boym XIII). Boym's definition of nostalgia opens up multiple perspectives on a complex phenomenon and seems to resonate in both the real and imagined geography of the MENA region, which has been romanticized from the nineteenth century onwards. Furthermore, Boym situates nostalgia as an individual or collective reaction towards the unsettling experience of modernity. While in Hofer's days nostalgia was considered to be a "treatable sickness", Boym argues that by the twentieth century it had become an "incurable disease", because "nostalgia, like progress, is dependent on the modern conception of unrepeatable and irreversible time" (7, 13). The MENA region as a space that is crucial for the constitution of European (art) histories has generated multiple stories of modernism and its contestations. The "nostalgic turn" has also opened up fruitful ways to examine modernisms, as underlined by Claire Bishop's insightful question: "How did we get so nostalgic for Modernism?" (2013). Curious to investigate the deeper meaning of this "turn", we have taken debates surrounding the terms nostalgia and belonging as an incentive to reflect on their relationship with (post)colonialism, orientalism, and nation-building. From this perspective, it became clear to us that nostalgia and belonging cannot be understood as being fixed in the past, but rather that they are processes that fluctuate and change across real and imagined localities and temporalities. This aspect has also been emphasized by Nira Yuval-Davies, who in her work on the politics of belonging argues that "even in its most stable 'primordial' forms, however, belonging is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity, which is only a naturalized construction of a particular hegemonic form of power relations." (Yuval-Davies 199).

Throughout the semester, the sessions brought forward an impressive diversity of genres and objects of investigation (paintings, installations, photography, architectural drawings, monuments,

social housing projects), practices (art-making, drawing, building, curating, archiving), and geographies (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates). Each of the case studies we discussed shed light on a new aspect of nostalgia and belonging, expanding the reflection to such topics as melancholia and sadness, commemoration and memory, migration and exile, trauma and loss, nation-building and identity, fragmentation and restoration, and mimicry and authenticity. The resulting collection of essays is proof that nostalgia and belonging are fruitful concepts for the study of art and architecture from the MENA region, particularly because they are complex and multirelational.

Among the many relevant questions that emerged from the discussions and brainstorming sessions on objects of art and architecture with our students were the following: Is nostalgia dependent on space and/or time? Who seeks to induce nostalgia, and with which intentions? Is nostalgia something that emanates from the artist's/architect's intention or biography, or is it instead expressed by the theme, form, and atmosphere of the artwork? To what extent is nostalgia triggered by questions of subjectivity and positionality? Which audiences does nostalgia concern? Does the place of exhibition or the lived experiences of the viewers matter? Is nostalgia invoked as part of the afterlife (German: *Eigenleben*) of the art/architecture object or as part of the reception through audiences, collectors, critics, and scholars?

Discussions around nostalgia frequently test the timelines and chronologies that we as art and architectural historians apply, forcing us on the one hand to be very precise and very context-specific with labels such as vernacular, ancient, traditional, futuristic, modern, and contemporary, and on the other to draw (often incommensurable) connections between past, present, and future. For example, one question raised in the seminar was whether nostalgia means having a faith in the past or future that needs to be constructed, maintained, and archived. Moreover, our discussions tested and affirmed the notions of nostalgia and belonging as both concept and sentiment, oscillating between the scientific method and the emotion linked to lived experience. In the geographic context of the MENA region, these notions resonate in both the collective/individual memory of the colonial past and in collective/individual trajectories in the postcolonial present.

The study of modern and contemporary art and architecture in the MENA region cannot avoid examining the complicated relationships with colonial experiences and heritage or questions of center and periphery. Consequently, nostalgia relates to the challenge of the binary discourse typical of orientalism as critiqued by Edward Said. The intractable meandering between local and universal and between east and west is part of the production of the "orient" as a concept rather than as geography. Given that being an artist/architect from the MENA region has become a valuable but also very much contested and often very emotional marker, nostalgia may open the path to new ways of considering the product of transcultural encounters. In this respect, nostalgia and belonging are not only relevant themes but, more importantly, are also useful conceptual tools for analyzing the construction of narratives, emotion, and meaning in art, architecture, and cultural heritage.

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### Biographies

**Laura Hindelang** is Post-Doc researcher at the University of Bern, Institute of Art History. Her forthcoming book *Iridescent Kuwait: Petro-Modernity and Urban Visual Culture since the Mid-Twentieth Century* (De Gruyter 2021) is a transdisciplinary study on Kuwait's urban visual culture and the (in)visibilities of petroleum. She co-edited the bi-lingual anthology *Into the Wild. Art and Architecture in a Global Context* (edition metzel 2018) and has published on urban history and contemporary art of the Gulf States. She is a board member of Manazir – Swiss Platform for the Study of Visual Arts, Architecture and Heritage in the MENA Region and of *Manazir Journal*.

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Émilie Magnin

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## Neo-Pharaonism and National Revival

### The Controversy Surrounding the Saad Zaghloul Mausoleum

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Figure 2: Saad Zaghloul Mausoleum. Mustafa Fahmy, 1927-31. Cairo, Egypt. Photograph by Nadia Radwan.

Constructed in 1931 in Cairo near Tahrir Square, the mausoleum of the nationalist leader Saad Zaghloul (1859–1927) is a building emblematic of the neo-pharaonic style that spread across Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s. During this period, referred to as the “Egyptian Renaissance”, a generation of Egyptian modernist artists incorporated the Western traditions acquired during their studies in

Europe to reinvent and modernize the aesthetic elements of Ancient Egypt and develop a new national style (Radwan 36). This artistic movement coincided with the emergence of nationalist and revolutionary movements, but also with archaeological discoveries, such as the tomb of Tutankhamun by Howard Carter in 1922, which also contributed to a renewed interest in ancient Egyptian civilization, not only in Egypt but also in Europe and the United States (Radwan 37).

The choice of the neo-pharaonic style to commemorate Saad Zaghloul is significant, as he was a significant figure in the quest for Egyptian independence. Zaghloul was the founding leader of the nationalist Wafd Party that led the 1919 revolution against the British occupation, which ultimately resulted in the United Kingdom's recognition of Egyptian independence in 1922. Following the revolution, Zaghloul became prime minister in 1924, after the Wafd Party won the majority at the elections. After his death in 1927, the Wafdist government commissioned a public monument for his mausoleum. Amongst several preliminary designs prepared by the Department of Civil Construction, the neo-pharaonic design by the Egyptian architect Mustafa Fahmy was chosen (Volait, "Architectures" 174). But the neo-pharaonic aesthetic of the building has led to many controversies, and the project was even stopped for several years. The monument was only finished in 1931, after the return of the Wafd party to power, and the remains of Saad Zaghloul were finally transferred into the mausoleum in 1936.

Underlying the arguments that arose in the controversy caused by the choice of Mustafa Fahmy's building are different visions of how to pay homage to a national leader and what is considered constitutive of the Egyptian's national identity. For some, the paganism associated with the pharaonic reference was too offensive to serve as a funeral building for a Muslim. Counterproposals were made for the building to be constructed in an Arab or Islamic style to better represent Zaghloul's religious beliefs (Coury 191). For others, the neo-pharaonic style had the advantage of providing a uniting Egyptian symbolism by overcoming religious references, prioritizing the idea of Zaghloul as a political and nationalist leader for all Egyptians, including Muslim, Coptic, and Jewish communities (Volait, "Une lignée d'architectes" 258). In this view, the neo-pharaonic style referred to a common glorious past and was less connoted with other regional or religious influences, making it the only true Egyptian style—a symbol of unity and national awakening. But the idea of an "Egyptian specificity" (Coury 194) expressed through references to ancient history has also been criticized for being representative only of intellectual and middle-class parts of society, far away from the social habits and preoccupations of the lower classes of Egyptian society. Historian Ralph M. Coury thus points out that Pharaonism "often bears the marks of a virulent form of Orientalism that conceived of Arab/Islamic civilization as universally inferior and impoverished" (194) and that its use can be interpreted as a consequence of Egyptian elites' feelings of inferiority towards their European counterparts.

Interestingly, the mausoleum itself is not a mere copy of an antique pharaonic monument. On the contrary, its style is a syncretism of various architectural elements and inspirations that incorporate not only ancient Egyptian references but also classical European influences and modern Art Deco elements. As noted by French architectural historian Mercedes Volait, the mausoleum presents a synthesis of diverse elements: "la massivité des temples égyptiens, une modénature Art déco, le classicisme moderne d'Auguste Perret, des souvenirs d'Andalousie, l'architecture islamique des monuments du Caire, etc." ("Une lignée d'architectes" 258). This process is typical of the artists of the "Egyptian Renaissance", who pursued a modern reinvention of the historical past. This reinvention included traditional patterns, materials, and crafts, but also many external influences. It sought to create a new Egyptian style that could be both national and universal (Radwan 50). In this respect, the academic training of Mustafa Fahmy is exemplary of this Western-educated intellectual class. Fahmy spent seven years of his architectural and artistic studies in Paris before

returning to Cairo to work as an architect. He became the first Egyptian professor to teach architecture at the Cairo Polytechnic School, a position that until then had only been held by Europeans (Volait, "Une lignée d'architectes" 257). While the colossal aspect of the mausoleum, with its large stones and lotus-shaped columns, shows similarities with ancient Egyptian temples, the overall symmetry and proportions as well as the interior ceiling resemble much more European neo-classicist architecture (Gabr). The central plan of the mausoleum, consisting of a square room, is reminiscent of the great tombs of the Mamluk sultans (Volait, "Architectures" 175). Finally, the decorative elements—such as the engraved friezes on the facade or the brass door handles—replicate Egyptian motifs but do so in stylized patterns and materials typical of Art Deco. Treated in a purely decorative manner, the ancient Egyptian motifs (like the lotus, deities, and winged cobras) have lost the particular symbolic and religious meanings they once carried (Gabr). The different inspirations identifiable in the mausoleum illustrate the complexity of the transfer processes and reciprocal influences between Egypt and Europe underlying the development of the neo-pharaonic style.

The controversy surrounding the choice of the neo-pharaonic style for the Saad Zaghloul mausoleum reveals the political tendencies at play at a particular moment in Egypt's history and the different aspects of national identity various actors wished to convey. Even though both pharaonic and Islamic styles can be considered representative of a particular conceptualization of Egyptian identity and culture, they each imply a different narrative and will resonate differently amongst different groups of people. Evoking the remote pharaonic past can indicate a longing for continuity and stability in politically troubled times by referring to a common past and identity that transcends more recent political and cultural divides. Furthermore, as Volait has observed, Pharaonism should not be reduced to its possible political instrumentality, for it also denotes a form of nostalgic romanticism with a strong emotional aura ("Architectures" 171). In this sense, honoring a contemporary political leader like a Pharaoh instead of erecting a building in the Islamic tradition can also be understood as a desire to establish a symbolic link between the dynasties of Ancient Egypt and contemporary Egyptian politics (Radwan 37). This desire for continuity was also demonstrated in the spectacular Pharaohs' Golden Parade, which saw twenty-two royal mummies of Ancient Egypt departing from the Egyptian Museum on April 3, 2021, to join their new home in the recently built National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (Hussein). The pharaonic abundance and the scenery of the procession far surpassed the national funerals of many politicians. Like the tomb of Zaghloul, this parade can be interpreted as a nationalist attempt to reconnect with Egypt's prestigious past and to revive this past in the heart of modern Egypt, creating a continuity between the greatness of past rulers and the present.

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Linda Herzog

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## Between Photography and Architecture

### Gertrude Bell's Sense of Nostalgia

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Figure 3: Gertrude Bell. *M\_004: Mosul - Iraq, Tomb of the Imam Yahya*. 1909. Photograph, negative size: 9.7 x 11.7 cm. © Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom.

Since the invention of photography in 1839, historical monuments in the Middle East have been widely photographed by European scholars and others (Behdad 2, 20). This essay discusses the circumstances and aesthetic characteristics of historical archaeological photographs that offer the potential to evoke nostalgic imaginations and idealizations. To elaborate on this issue, a photograph of the tomb of Yahya Abu al-Qasim in Mosul, Iraq, will be discussed. The picture was taken in 1909 by the British traveler, archaeologist, and diplomat Gertrude Bell on her archaeological journey throughout the Ottoman Empire.

Svetlana Boym defines nostalgia as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed” and speaks of a “sentiment of loss and displacement” in combination “with one’s own fantasy” (Boym xiii). To illustrate the multiple nostalgic notions that Bell’s photograph of the tomb of Yahya Abu al-Qasim may trigger, I used my own imagination and pictured her photograph nicely framed as an exhibit in the Abbasid art section of the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin. The tomb was an important Abbasid building in Iraq that had been well preserved until it was destroyed by soldiers of the so-called Islamic State (IS) in 2014 (Hasan et al. 4; McClary 129). Given the refined decoration, forms and materials of the tomb, its photograph would undoubtedly fit the museum’s collection. The tomb was built in 1239 by Badr al-Din Lulu, who ruled Mosul from 1233 to 1259, shortly before the end of the Abbasid caliphate. He was a slave of Armenian origin who had converted to Islam, but it seems unclear whether he converted to Shia or Sunni Islam (McClary 129–130). In the photograph, the building’s distinguished architecture, with its ornaments and inscriptions, is very noticeable, despite the tomb’s state of evident decay. Its state of decay can be interpreted as the material “traces of a glorious past” that evoke the sentiment of loss (Behdad 58). The feeling of timelessness is additionally intensified by the constant and calm flow of the river Tigris as well as the view of the opposite bank. In this sense, Bell’s photograph conveys the “Orient” as a timeless space” that forms a subject evoking “historical nostalgia” (Behdad 48, 58). This nostalgic notion is not necessarily interrelated with one’s belonging to the “Orient”, but inspires “dreams of another place and another time” (Boym 41).

From a historical perspective, Gertrude Bell’s photograph brings into focus the transnational European archaeological interests in the Ottoman Empire. German archeologists Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld visited the tomb of Imam Yahya on their archaeological journey through Mesopotamia two years before Bell (Sarre and Herzfeld 3: plates IX 1., XCIII 1., IC 1.–CII; 2: 249–263). They photographed the courtyard façade of the tomb from a similar angle, but evidently their photographs differ from one another. The tomb of Imam Yahya was in a much better state in 1907 than in 1909 when photographed by Bell (Sarre and Herzfeld 2: 249). In Sarre and Herzfeld’s publication, the restoration of the building in 1916 was reported, but it was not mentioned who commissioned the repairs (Sarre and Herzfeld 2: 249). Likewise, it remains unclear whether locals visited the tomb at that time or whether it was just of interest to Europeans.

The printed photograph in Bell’s travel book *Amurath to Amurath* (published in 1911) was from the original photograph in the online Gertrude Bell Archive ([http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/photo\\_details.php?photo\\_id=3306](http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/photo_details.php?photo_id=3306)). The spots and marks from the chemical development process were retouched for printing and the left part of the photograph (which depicts the river and the opposite bank) was cropped (Bell fig. 174). As a result, the photograph in *Amurath to Amurath* has an object-bound gaze that focuses solely on the historical building. In this way, the photograph was adapted to archaeological representation practices and resembles the photograph in Sarre and Herzfeld’s publication *Archäologische Reisen im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet* (Sarre and Herzfeld 3: plate CI 1.). In contrast to the picture in Bell’s travel book, the original photograph in the Gertrude Bell Archive evokes a stronger sense of nostalgia due to the visible traces of the chemical

development process, the building's depicted surrounding as well as the tomb's desolate state of decay which is shown in both pictures.

From a contemporary perspective, Bell's photograph of the tomb of Yahya Abu al-Qasim may trigger a sense of loss and displacement. The monument no longer exists, much like larger parts of the old city of Mosul, which were destroyed during the occupation by the so-called Islamic State (IS) between 2014 and 2017. Due to these circumstances, the photograph's meaning has shifted. It now exists detached from the actual tomb and no longer relates to the original building in Mosul. Instead, it serves as a symbol of the time when the photograph was taken. On the one hand, the photograph testifies to the fact that the tomb possessed historical value. On the other hand, the picture's independence from its object is shown by the photograph's existence in European collections as an aesthetic artifact of its own. Furthermore, this shift has created a space for a longing for the past when European scholars on adventurous journeys explored historical monuments in the Middle East. This sense of nostalgia underlines the significance of European knowledge on Middle Eastern heritage sites. However, the nostalgic sentiment that Bell's photograph of the tomb of Imam Yahya can trigger refers to a past shaped by imperial rule and European colonial interests.

The question therefore arises whether it is appropriate to speak of nostalgia when talking about ruins that resulted from war and terror (Huysen 7–8). Envisioning a person who has escaped from occupied Mosul, I imagine that they would be overcome by profound sadness and anger as well as a longing for their hometown when visiting the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin and seeing Bell's photograph among the artworks from the Abbasid period as part of Iraq's cultural heritage. Although Svetlana Boym mentions the "creative rethinking of nostalgia" as "a strategy of survival, a way of making sense of the impossibility of homecoming", I would not call this sense of longing for one's hometown nostalgia (Boym xvii). In my view, the physical and mental aftermath of the destruction caused by the IS occupation of Mosul is not yet overcome. This prevents the utopian dimension that would be needed for nostalgia in this case (Boym xiv).

In the endeavors to rebuild the old city of Mosul, one approach calls for using the area of the tomb of Yahya Abu al-Qasim "for social and mixed religious group development" (Hasan et al. 1). This proposal reports that the tomb was transformed into a modern concrete building during its last renovation between 1997 and 1999 (4). Contemporary photographs on the internet do not clearly indicate whether the tomb was restored or newly built and additionally equipped with the historical elements visible in Bell's photograph. The renovation of the tomb has endowed Bell's photograph with an original quality because the picture shows the tomb's authentic architecture, with its materials and forms, and therefore the building's historical value. What Bell's photograph does not convey, however, is the tomb's symbolic significance that resonates in contemporary photographs. In this sense, Bell's photograph represents a different history than the tomb of Yahya Abu al-Qasim in Mosul itself.

Returning to Boym's definition of nostalgia as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed", we could say that if this longing for a home is not related to one's belonging to a place or time but associated with one's imaginations and "dreams of another place and another time", then Bell's photograph of the tomb has the potential to take the viewer on a nostalgic journey to a distant place in the past (Boym 41). Not every historical archaeological photograph possesses this potential. In the case of Bell's photograph, the distinguished architecture of the building in its state of decay and the photograph's technical imperfection are the vehicles for these sentiments. The fact that the IS destroyed the tomb of Imam Yahya can also evoke nostalgia as the feeling of loss and as a longing for real monuments that no longer exist.

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Ksenia Sadilova

## La fabrication du désir

### Les cartes postales orientalistes de Lehnert & Landrock



Figure 4: Lehnert & Landrock, *Three Women Sitting in the Court of R. Lehnert in Tunis* (Intérieur d'une maison arabe). Postcard with hand-colored photograph. Ref - Tunis# C/ 557 Black and White Collection T-159. © Dr. Edouard Lambelet, Lehnert & Landrock, Egypt.

Dans un patio minutieusement arrangé, trois femmes sont assises sur un tapis à même le sol. La composition de l'image est soigneusement cadrée : à gauche, par une colonne de marbre blanc et à droite, par une porte en bois entre-ouverte et à l'arrière-plan, par un mur décoré de motifs orientalisants ainsi qu'une fenêtre en claustra. Au centre se dresse en évidence un narguilé posé sur un meuble en bois incrusté de nacre. Les trois femmes portent des abaya traditionnelles et on la tête à demi couverte de longs tissus qui s'étendent jusqu'au kilim aux motifs géométriques arrangé sur le sol. Elles sont coiffées de fleurs et portent des bijoux berbères. Leur postures lasses sont contrastées par une certaine malaisance évoquée par les bras croisés d'une des figurantes. Une envie de retrait, d'intimité ? Elles savent qu'elles sont observées, regardées, convoitées. La femme assise au centre regarde fixement devant elle et semble renvoyer aux spectateurs\*trices le

voyeurisme de la scène. Quels sont les noms de ces femmes ? Que peut nous apprendre cette image à leurs propos, concernant leurs conditions ou leurs modes de vie ? Où fût prise cette photographie ? Nulle information ne répondra à ces interrogations.

L'image entend véhiculer une certaine véracité ou authenticité quant à la vie des femmes « arabes » dans un harem quelque part en « Orient ». Les légendes se rapportent à des clichés d'études scientifiques ou ethnographiques avec des titres comme Types arabes, Femmes arabes ou encore No. 557 Femmes de harem. Ce dernier, réalisé par l'entreprise Lehnert & Landrock (L&L) entre 1904 et 1910, n'exprime ni spontanéité, ni instantanéité du moment. Il s'agit, au contraire, d'une mise en scène soigneusement agencée : un tableau vivant destiné à une audience désirant posséder une représentation exotisante de femmes orientales. Ses auteurs, Rudolf Lehnert (1878–1948) et Ernst Landrock (1878–1966)<sup>1</sup>, comblent les attentes de leur audience en délivrant une image stéréotypée et prétendument authentique. Dans le pavillon loué par l'entreprise L&L, la lumière, la pose, la composition et le cadrage sont contrôlés pour composer des tableaux vivants et d'autres scènes érotiques aux poses suggestives. Ce cliché est donc rendu intemporel par le détachement des trois femmes de leur contexte social, culturel et politique, sous prétexte de réaliser « une scène captivante » ainsi que de « faire une œuvre d'artiste » (Mégnin 7).

Dans leur travail photographique, L&L présentent diverses « types » de femmes arabes, prétendument dévoilées, tandis qu'elles sont incarnées par des modèles rémunérés. Il est ainsi possible de retrouver les mêmes modèles arborant d'autres rôles, jouant d'autres « types ». Cette confusion participe à rendre l'entreprise photographique et commerciale profitable et pérenne puisque L&L a pour objectif de « faire du fantasme oriental un projet professionnel commun » et de « satisfaire la demande d'un Occident toujours en mal d'exotisme [...] » (Mégnin 43). Pour la prolifération et le succès de leur commerce, les scènes que les deux associés construisent sont la romantisation d'une réalité inventée dans laquelle même un mendiant devient une porte d'accès à des mondes merveilleux.

La photographie a transformé des corps de jeunes femmes, jeunes hommes et même d'enfants en souvenirs dont le touriste occidental se languira ; figés en objets délocalisés ils peuvent facilement être importés chez-soi, devenant ainsi tangibles, manipulables, interchangeable. Soutenue par le développement du tourisme, la carte postale devient, au début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, un nouveau véhicule médiatique. La reproductibilité du médium (Benjamin) et sa diffusion à large échelle est à même de satisfaire et de rentabiliser l'entreprise capitaliste. Les photographes produisent des tirages sériels, qu'ils réutilisent jusqu'à l'épuisement du négatif. La carte postale représente ainsi un médium qui circule facilement et peut être expédié en Europe ou Outre-Atlantique pour témoigner de la véracité d'événements vécus dans cet ailleurs fantasmé tout en alimentant le succès de l'entreprise coloniale (Seehi 178)<sup>2</sup>.

D'après Malek Alloula, les cartes postales incarnent la violence et le désir de posséder l'autre (Alloula 5). Installé à Tunis en 1904, le projet commercial L&L a pu fleurir, entre autres, grâce à la carte postale. Voyageant à travers l'Algérie, en la Tunisie et l'Égypte, L&L ont fixé des paysages désertiques et des scènes de genre, créant une altérité nouvelle. « C'est surtout chez les Bédouins nomades, sous les tentes des campements, que nous avons trouvé des modèles jeunes et convenant au but visé. Des corps aux formes idéales, brunis par les chauds rayons du soleil,

<sup>1</sup> Originaire de Bohême, Rudolph Lehnert ouvre avec son associé, Ernst Landrock, originaire d'Allemagne, leur premier studio à Tunis, en 1904 qui restera actif jusqu'en 1914. Par la suite, l'entreprise « L&L » s'installera au Caire entre 1924 et 1930.

<sup>2</sup> « *Character types, landscapes, and tableau vivant genre scenes—particularly useful for postcards and exotic tablature—soon made up a large portion of the output of studios run by expatriate Europeans, (...)* ».

photographiés dans des attitudes décentes et des poses d'abandon gracieux ont fourni matière à des images qui eurent beaucoup de succès dans les cercles d'artistes surtout. » (Méglin 7)

Le genre du nu, s'inscrivant dans une démarche dite artistique répond ainsi à une large demande et participant d'une « opération systémique de distorsion » (Alloula 4) qui nourrit la nostalgie. La nostalgie non pas du passé colonial, mais envers un imaginaire capturé par les clichés orientalistes. Svetlana Boym définit la nostalgie comme suit : « *nostalgia (from nostos-return home, and algia-longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy.* » (Boym 13). Dans ce sens, la photographie orientaliste constitue la source du sentiment nostalgique qu'elle véhicule.

Cependant, la photographie n'est pas la chasse gardée des occidentaux et fut aussi bien convoitée au Moyen-Orient, où le médium a servi à la construction d'une nouvelle identité bourgeoise et moderne. Comme l'explique Stephen Seehi :

*the adoption of foreign practices and technologies was not a passive act but a class act to distinguish the new bourgeoisie from the subaltern classes. I argue that the act of 'imitation' was an ideological act by which non-Western subjects claimed ownership of modernity along with its intellectual and capital resources and privileges. (Seehi 178)*

Mais ces clichés ne comblaient peut-être pas les attentes du public occidental. Par exemple, lorsque la journaliste Grace Ellison envoya l'image d'un harem turc à un journal anglais, ils refusèrent de publier sa photographie en argumentant que l'intérieur représenté ne convenait pas aux attentes occidentales d'un harem oriental. Cette photographie prise en localisé en Turquie au début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle montrait, en effet, un intérieur rempli de mobilier européen moderne (Schick 358).

La possession d'une photographie peut aussi générer la nostalgie pour un temps passé ou une contrée lointaine. Dès lors les futures touristes se languissent, bien avant leurs départs réels ou fictifs, de géographies imaginées que les photographes exploitent merveilleusement afin de représenter des mirages distordus d'une réalité inventée par ce que Ali Behdad a nommé des « *camera orientalis* » (Behdad 2016). Et ces mêmes représentations faussées justifient par ce détour l'existence du sentiment nostalgique pour des temps et des espaces imaginaires. « On fait prendre la pose aux mendiants, on maquille les bordels en harems et les studios en sérail. On dénude les jeunes filles au seins menus et un peu aussi les garçons qui ont cette peau qui prend si bien la lumière. On transforme par le cadrage les oasis poussiéreuses en jardins d'Eden. » (Fleig 19). En d'autres termes, ces photographies renvoient le reflet d'un Occident trop narcissique qui se regarde à travers la représentation maîtrisée de l'Autre et acquièrent exactement les images désirées comme dans un jeu pervers de miroir (Fleig 32).

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Vera Reich

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## Der Palast Baron Empain in Heliopolis Imperiale Nostalgie und koloniales Kulturerbe in Ägypten

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Figure 5: Palast Baron Empain, Heliopolis. Kairo, Ägypten. Fotografie von Nadia Radwan.

Das Aufkommen einer imperialen Nostalgie und damit einhergehende Renovationen und Restaurationen an Ruinen und Gebäuden aus der Kolonialzeit sind seit den 1990er Jahren wiederkehrende und umstrittene Themen in Ägypten (Moore 2017). Nostalgie wird gemeinhin als Gefühl der Sehnsucht nach Zugehörigkeit definiert. Es beschreibt je nach vorliegenden Gegebenheiten auch ein Verlangen nach etwas, das nicht mehr oder nur in der Vorstellung existiert(e). Svetlana Boym definiert Nostalgie als ein Gefühl von Verlust und Verdrängung oder als Romanze mit der eigenen Fantasie (Boym 13–14). Nostalgie kann somit auch als eine Form der Sehnsucht nach einer anderen Zukunft oder einer Utopie verstanden werden. Für den

Literaturwissenschaftler Andreas Huyssen zählen insbesondere Ruinen zu den Orten, die durch ihre räumlichen und historischen Dimensionen bei der betrachtenden Person Nostalgie auslösen. In Ruinen sei die Vergangenheit präsent, aber auch nicht mehr zugänglich, was verfallene Bauten zu einem besonders starken Auslöser für Nostalgie mache (Huyssen 7).

Am Palast Baron Empain in Kairoer Stadtteil Heliopolis ist dies besonders gut zu beobachten. Der koloniale Palast wurde im Laufe seiner Geschichte durch vielschichtige Formen von Nostalgie- und Sehnsuchtsgefühlen geprägt. Diese beeinflussten nicht nur seine Entstehung und ursprüngliche Nutzung im frühen 20. Jahrhundert, sondern treten nun, nach den kürzlich beendeten staatlichen Restaurierungsarbeiten (2017–2020), in Form einer imperialen Nostalgie wieder in Erscheinung. Der Palace Baron Empain, auch bekannt unter dem Namen „Palais Hindou“, gilt als bekanntestes architektonisches Objekt der zentral gelegenen Orouba Avenue. Er besteht aus zwei Etagen, einem Dienstkeller und einer grossen Dachterrasse. Der angrenzende Turm ist auf vier Etagen begehbar und ermöglicht den Blick über den Bezirk Heliopolis. Das Erscheinungsbild des Palastes zeichnet sich im Besonderen durch seine Fassade aus, die mit hinduistischen und buddhistischen Ornamenten und Statuen dekoriert ist. Viele Terrassen, die sich auf unterschiedlichen Höhen befinden, umgeben das Gebäude und verbinden es mit einer grossen Parkanlage (Salam 9).

Der Namensgeber des Palastes, ein belgischer Geschäftsmann und Amateur-Ägyptologe namens Édouard Empain (1852–1929), kam im Jahr 1894 von Indien nach Ägypten, da seine Firma von der Regierung die Konzession für den Bau der Eisenbahnlinie von Mansourah am Nil nach Matariya bei Port Said erhalten hatte. In den darauffolgenden Jahren gründete der Unternehmer die Aktiengesellschaft Ain Shams Oasis Electric Company, die sich nordöstlich von Kairo mitten in der Wüste ein grosses Stück Land aneignete. Auf dem erworbenen Gebiet liess Empain ein Luxus- und Freizeitzentrum für Kairo bauen. Das entstehende Stadtviertel Heliopolis wurde mit breiten Alleen, Parkanlagen, Trink- und Abwasserversorgung, Strom, Mietwohnungen, Freizeiteinrichtungen und dem berühmten Heliopolis Palast Hotel konzipiert. Als Zielgruppe für die Siedlung hatte Empain die ägyptische Bourgeoisie und die zugezogenen Europäer\*innen, die aus geschäftlichen Gründen nach Kairo zogen, im Sinn. Gleichzeitig sollte der Stadtteil aber auch als Tourismus-Magnet fungieren (Adham 150).

Der Palast liegt auf dem höchsten Punkt der Siedlung und diente dem Geschäftsmann als Familienresidenz. Empain gab den Bau um 1905 bei dem französischen Architekten Alexandre Marcel (1860–1928) in Auftrag. Das Gebäude wurde 1911 fertiggestellt und vom berühmten Künstler und Keramiker Georges-Louis Claude (1879–1963) dekoriert (Salam 9). Marcel, der sich bereits mit der Planung des kambodschanischen Pavillons an der Pariser Weltausstellung 1900 einen Namen gemacht hatte, liess sich bei beiden Projekten von Ornamenten und Skulpturen der Angkor Wat Tempel in Kambodscha und der Hindu-Tempel im indischen Orissa inspirieren. Um den hinduistischen Stil möglichst authentisch nachzuahmen, wurden Gipsabdrücke der ursprünglichen Figuren erstellt und nach Kairo geschifft, um sie schliesslich vor Ort in Beton abzugiessen (Flour 68). Diese Technik machte es später möglich, die Figuren nach ihrem Verfall ohne grossen Aufwand zu restaurieren (Salam 8).

Nostalgie und Sehnsucht nach einer exotischen, mystischen Welt und die daraus resultierenden ökonomischen Interessen sind mögliche Erklärungen, warum ein reicher europäischer Geschäftsmann in der Wüste nahe Kairo eine eklektizistische Replikation eines hinduistischen Tempels anfertigen liess. Der im späten 19. Jahrhundert aufkommende Trend, architektonische Denkmäler der Khmer-Ära zu reproduzieren, ging Hand in Hand mit der französischen Besetzung Indochinas, schreibt die Kunsthistorikerin Isabelle Flour. Das architektonische Erbe der Khmer galt in Europa als Verkörperung des mystischen Orients. Diese Vorstellung, später von Edward Said als

Orientalismus benannt, diene dem imperialistischen Narrativ, indem es fremde Kulturen exotisierte und ihre vorrevolutionären und vormodernen Eigenschaften hervorhob. Die Orientfantasien wurden in Europa anhand von Erzählungen, literarischen Berichten, Postkarten und Gemälden verbreitet. Auch die beiden Weltausstellungen in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts galten als treibende Kraft, Ägypten zu „orientalisieren“ und beim europäischen Publikum Sehnsuchtsgefühle nach einer imaginierten exotischen Ferne hervorzurufen (Adham 148–149). Dem Narrativ des mit weiblichen Attributen konnotierten Orients wurde ein rational denkender und somit überlegener Westen gegenübergestellt, um die imperialen Zivilisierungsmissionen in Kolonialgebieten zu legitimieren (Flour 63). In Heliopolis sind neben Gebäuden im neopersischen und neoislamischen Stil auch eklektizistische Bauten in französischen, spanischen oder eben neohinduistischen Stilen zu finden, die dem Viertel seine exotische Atmosphäre verleihen (Moore 99). Dass der Palast Baron Empain im neuen Stadtteil Kairo stand und nicht in Südostasien, spielte dabei eine untergeordnete Rolle. Heliopolis sollte eine „Oase in der Wüste“ darstellen, ein stereotypisiertes Bild, welches dem orientalisierenden Narrativ entsprach und den europäischen Feriengästen vertraut war und damit der Tourismusindustrie diene (Adham 149).

In den Jahrzehnten seit dem Militärputsch von 1952 wurde die Instandhaltung des Palastes stark vernachlässigt, weshalb das Gebäude in allen Bereichen, darunter Stahlträgerkonstruktion, Ornament- und Figureschmuck, Oberflächen sowie Türen und Fenster, grosse Schäden entwickelte (Salam 9). Im Zuge des arabischen Frühlings oder aus städtebaulichen Gründen wurden koloniale Bauten teilweise auch absichtlich zerstört (Moore 427). Das Engagement von Amateur-Historiker\*innen, Zivilbürger\*innen, privaten Vereinen und Medien sowie öffentliche Aktionen gegen den Zerfall von Gebäuden im Stadtraum von Kairo haben schliesslich massgeblich Druck auf die ägyptische Regierung ausgeübt, koloniale Bauten zu restaurieren („Destruction Alert“). Auch die Bezeichnungsveränderung von „Kolonialbauten“ in „Belle-Epoque“-Architektur habe wesentlich dazu beigetragen, dass die Regierung das imperiale Kulturerbe als Teil der modernen Geschichte Ägyptens anerkannte, schreibt die französische Kunsthistorikerin Mercedes Volait. Unter „Belle Epoque“-Architektur verstehe man heutzutage in Ägypten alles, was zwischen 1850 und 1950 errichtet wurde. Negative Konnotationen einer unterdrückerischen Kolonialzeit sind im Begriff „Belle Epoque“ nicht ersichtlich, was die Erscheinung einer imperialen Nostalgie erst denkbar machte.

So kam es, dass im Jahr 2007 der verfallene Palast Baron Empain in den Besitz des ägyptischen Ministeriums für kulturelles Erbe (Supreme Council of Antiquities, SCA) übergang und sich die Regierung für eine Renovierung des Baus im Rahmen eines grossen Restaurierungsplans, in dem acht weitere Kulturerbstätten und Gebäude enthalten sind, aussprach. Für das gesamte Renovierungsprojekt wurden 1,27 Billion Ägyptische Pfund bereitgestellt, davon 114 Millionen für den Palast (Salam 9). Die Restaurierungsarbeiten haben 2017 begonnen und sind kürzlich fertiggestellt worden. Im Jahr 2020 wurde der Palast mit Festlichkeiten und einem Besuch des amtierenden Präsidenten Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi eingeweiht. Zukünftig soll das Gebäude als Bühne fungieren, auf der die Geschichte Heliopolis mittels Licht- und Soundinstallationen vermittelt wird. Der Verfall ist heute nicht mehr ersichtlich, denn der Bau wurde so stark renoviert, dass er beinahe wie eine exakte Nachbildung seiner selbst erscheint. Andreas Huyssens Aussage, dass die Gegenwart ein Zeitalter der originalgetreuen „Remakes“ und die „authentische Ruine“ selbst zu einem historischen Konzept geworden sei, scheint hier sehr zutreffend. Huyssens weist darauf hin, dass „authentische Ruinen“, wie es sie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert noch gab, in unserer heutigen Erinnerungskultur keinen Platz mehr haben (Huyssens 10) – oder schlichtweg nicht mehr existieren.

Das Aufkommen der kolonialen Nostalgie in Ägypten sei jedoch kein perverser oder masochistischer Wunsch nach der Wiederherstellung des Kolonialismus durch diejenigen, die ihm einst unterworfen waren, meint der Soziologe und Anthropologe William Cunningham Bissell. Vielmehr beinhalte das Gefühl der Nostalgie eine Sehnsucht nach etwas, was nicht wiederhergestellt werden könne, nach etwas Totem und Vergangenen. Nostalgie markiere die Grenze zwischen dem Vergangenen und dem Gegenwärtigen und verankere somit den Kolonialismus an einem entfernten Horizont, während es ihm gleichzeitig eine denkmalhafte Aura verleihe, so Bissell (225–226). Die Anerkennung des kolonialen Erbes als Teil der modernen Geschichte Ägyptens kann als Aufarbeitung der Geschichte und als Wiederaneignung des Raumes verstanden werden und wirft gleichzeitig viele Fragen zur Dynamik von kulturellem Erbe und nationalen Mythen in der Gegenwart auf.

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Jana Scharll

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## Social Housing and Belonging

### Fernand Pouillon's Climat de France in Algiers

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Figure 6: Climat de France. Fernand Pouillon. 1954-57. Algiers, Algeria. © 2017 Carlo Zampieri. Photograph by Carlo Gaetano Zampieri.

"Est-ce une réussite ou un échec ? Je ne saurais le dire [...].  
Pourtant j'ai la certitude que cette architecture  
est sans mépris" (Pouillon 208).

At the center of the modern social housing complex Climat de France in Algiers, built from 1954 to 1957 in the middle of the Algerian War of Independence by French architect Fernand Pouillon (1912–1986), lies the edifice 200 colonnes. The fortress-like building, with its Arab carpet influenced façade, is five stories high and includes a vast agora with similar proportions to the Palais Royal in Paris. Pouillon's inspiration for the building was the Ottoman architecture that the Turks built during

their occupation of Algiers (Pouillon 205). So far, the monumentality of 200 colonnes has no equivalent in Algeria.

The immense stones used in the construction of the two hundred pillars surrounding the courtyard of 200 colonnes, as well as in Pouillon's two other housing projects in Algiers, all came from a quarry in France. This quarry in Fontvielle was owned by the pied-noir Georges Blachette, a parliamentarian and press owner in Algiers through whose influence French-born Jacques Chevallier became mayor of Algiers in 1953 (Pouillon 178; Chevallier 178). Blachette also had an important influence on Chevallier's choice of Pouillon becoming Algiers' first chief architect (Pouillon 176–177). The construction of a huge number of social housing developments was part of the mayor's social welfare program, the aim of which was to pacify the discontented Algerian population in order to ensure France's control over Algeria (O'Leary 20).

The monumental external appearance of 200 colonnes, however, would not suggest that in reality the six thousand apartments on the upper floors are extremely small, have a ceiling height of only two meters, and offer very little comfort (Çelik, *Urban Forms* 156). This contrast can only be understood if one knows for whom the housing was intended. The apartments of the Climat de France represent the *type évolutif* and were built exclusively for Algerians who had recently moved from rural areas to the city of Algiers (Çelik, *Urban Forms* 148). Spatially separated from the Algerian population, most of the Europeans lived downtown near the waterside in modern houses of a higher standard. The inequality of the two communities was expressed in architecture, as the Algerians were accommodated in a type of housing with less comfort.

In fact, it was important to the French to show that the Algerians did not belong to the civilized French community. Architectural historian Regina Göckede mentions that the infrastructure in the Casbah was deliberately not renewed because this part of the city was supposed to serve as an underdeveloped contrast to the modern residential areas of the French, thus justifying the colonial system (89–90).

The differentiation between colonized and colonizers was established by the French from the very beginning of the appropriation of northern African territories by Napoleon's troops in 1830. The colonizers called themselves *citoyens* (citizens) and gave the local Algerians the inferior status of *sujets* (subjects). Whereas the French benefitted from full political rights, the Algerians were excluded from belonging to the political community. Political scientist Dominique Gros argues that the Algerians were actually "*non-citoyens*": in the case of a trial, for example, their legal situation was particularly precarious, as judgments were rendered without judicial investigation and the defense was organized without a lawyer (Gros 45). Only from 1944 onwards did the status of the local population undergo a gradual reformation. However, as the architectural concept of the development of the Climat de France shows, little changed in terms of the perception of the Algerian population. The French still held to the notion that Algerians were less civilized.

The aim of the Climat de France was to "acclimatize" the rural population to the French lifestyle and to French values (O'Leary 20). Architectural theorist Zeynep Çelik argues that the French "social housing" project was actually a re-education program whose goal was to westernize Algerians:

It was hoped that European-style apartments would endow the residents with a new spirit and collectivity and, once recovered from the rupture with traditional ways, the Muslim families would appreciate the advantages of modern comforts, the running water and electricity. New needs would generate 'a new conception of work, a new organization of the family cell, a new mentality. (Çelik, *Urban Forms* 121)

Çelik also points out that the destruction of social and architectural structures was a significant means of maintaining political power (*Urban Forms* 88). The concept of a massive public courtyard, for example, was the total opposite of the private courtyard typical of "traditional" Algerian houses. Two hundred shops and education and medical centers are located around the monumental central public space of 200 colonnes in order to ensure the autonomy of the neighborhood but also to make it easy for the French to control lived Algerian spaces. During the French occupation in particular, traditional courtyards were important refuges from the colonial exterior, as they were exclusively under the control of Algerian families (Çelik, "A Lingered Obsession"135).

As sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis points out, existing hegemonic political powers not only have to maintain the boundaries of the community of belonging, they also have to defend them against contestations by groups who do not feel represented by the authorities (205). As is the case in Algiers, the local population no longer accepted the social inequalities and wanted to escape from their precarious living conditions. Chevallier's attempt to calm the local population by constructing a large amount of social housing failed, and the initial riots finally turned into the Algerian War of Independence. In relation to the Climat de France, cultural scientist Alan O'Leary argues that "The irony is that it was precisely from within a housing project intended to acculturate and pacify the Algerians that the nationalist protests of December 1960 emerged. The Algerians may have lived inside the buildings of the Climat de France, but they rejected the designs that its architecture had upon them" (20).

Not only did modern social housing separate the two communities, it also introduced a new form of mass housing in Algeria and therefore initiated a new way of protesting. Architects Brittany Utting and Daniel Jacobs argue that "The cloistered interiority of the 200 Colonne project, combined with its overtly fortified exterior, its exclusively Muslim population, and its centrality in the massive Climat de France masterplan, generated a condition ideal for both French Protectorate surveillance and also revolution" (14).

Although the Climat de France represented a modern and more comfortable housing project than the informal settlements outside Algiers, the development was not able to make people feel at home nor to give them a sense of emotional belonging. On the contrary, the intended pacifying purpose of the Climat de France was transformed into a space of protest and violence during the Algerian War of Independence. Both sides were willing to sacrifice their lives in order to maintain or improve the conditions of their communities. Yuval-Davis argues that the execution of such a violent duty is the ultimate enactment of citizenship and therefore of belonging to a political community (208).

The development, which was initially built for thirty thousand inhabitants, now accommodates fifty thousand people. Several informal settlements have been established around the development, including one habitation on the rooftop of 200 Colonne. After the colonial era, the French name of the development was no longer used—in the course of the reappropriation of the territory it has been renamed Oued Koriche. Today, the suburb still represents a space of unrest and rebellion. It is the center of drug trafficking in Algiers ("Climat de France").

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Sara Kišević

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## The Exhibition Here and Elsewhere

### On the Contentious Concept of Contemporary Arab Art

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Figure 7: Fouad Elkoury, *Color Snapshot, Place des Canons (Beirut 1982)*. 2014, chromogenic print, 40 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist, the Third Line, Dubai, and Galerie Tanit, Munich/Beirut.

An experience of existence that significantly differs from and surpasses all past forms of human existence, thinking, and action—this is how modernity was thought and imagined in the West. But does the modern go beyond the cartography of the West, the alleged cradle of modernity? If the answer is affirmative, should we talk about multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2) and grasp the contemporary world as a story of continual (re)constitution of various cultural programs? Or can all the different histories be subsumed under or placed in opposition to the same term, that of (Western) modernity? "Staging the modern has always required the nonmodern, the space of colonial difference", argues political scientist Timothy Mitchell in the book *Questions of Modernity* (xxvi). Over the past 20 years, much attention has been paid to Arab contemporary art. This has

been done, among other reasons, to broaden the focus of the study of modern and contemporary art. What has been criticized is that the West often provides recognition to the artists from the region “whose oeuvre falls in step with Western expectations of ‘Arab’ or ‘Islamic’ art” (Scheid 14). The artists recognized and promoted by the West are often “hailed as having overcome an environment that previously ‘lacked art’ or appreciative audiences” (14). Also, non-Western phenomena of modernity are still frequently seen as imported “second-hand modernity” (Mitchell xxvi). How are non-Western modernities presented in the West? Furthermore, why are culturally specific exhibitions that focus on modern and contemporary non-Western art still causing debates?

To explore these issues in more depth, I decided to examine one exhibition of Arab art curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Natalie Bell, Gary Carrion-Murayari, Helga Christoffersen, and Margot Norton at the New Museum in New York in 2014 (Gioni et al.). The exhibition *Here and Elsewhere* was the first museum-wide exhibition in New York City to feature contemporary art from and about the Arab world. The exhibition brought together forty-five artists from twelve countries, many of whom live and work internationally. The participating artists work in disparate mediums (photography, video art, painting, sculpture, installations, collages) and are of different generations. Their work explores history, politics, and social life in the Middle East and beyond. The topics presented included personal portraits and searching for a place to be and a place to stay (Khaled Jarrar, Bouchra Khalili), reportages and testimonies (Abounaddara filmmakers' collective), photography as a territory of conflicting narratives (Yto Barrada), memory and collective image (Shuruq Harb), and drawings of political protests and demonstrations (Rokni Haerizadeh). Practices of archiving, cataloging, and analyzing were also dealt with in the works of many other participating artists.

The title of the exhibition should remind us of a 1974 film essay of the same name by directors Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, and Anne-Marie Miéville: *Ici et ailleurs* (Here and Elsewhere). The film was initially conceived as a pro-Palestinian documentary but afterward became a montage of footage shot in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria in 1970 intertwined with footage shot in Grenoble, France, in 1974. Thus, it evolved from a documentary into “a complex reflection on the ethics of representation and the status of images as instruments of political consciousness” (Bell and Gioni 18). According to the exhibition's curatorial team, the film's directors and the artists featured in the exhibition share a critical attitude towards simplified representations and propaganda, as well as an overall commitment to questioning the role of images in capturing the truth of a situation (24).

Although the title of the exhibition implies questioning on the way images are used for constructing narratives, the exhibition *Here and Elsewhere* has been a matter of debate since its inception precisely because of the politics of representation. Not surprisingly, a core of the criticism is related to Edward Said's notion of Orientalism, that is, Western representations of the non-West. As stated in the directors' foreword to the exhibition catalog, this is not the first exhibition to address “the contentious concept of Arab contemporary art” (Phillips 11). What is new is the transparent approach that the curators decided to take: they incorporated correspondence with artists who refused to exhibit their works, as well as their explanations for their refusals, into the exhibition. One of the reasons for non-participation published in the exhibition catalog is by Moroccan-French artist Latifa Echakhch, who stated that she had decided never to participate in exhibitions related to the Arab world: “I just want to be considered for my choices as an artist and not because of things I cannot choose like my gender or origins” (Bell and Gioni 20). In a similar vein, Palestinian photographer Ahlam Shibli also did not want his work to be framed by an exhibition under a common denominator: “I want my work to have a place of its own, where it can be appreciated or dismissed for the issues it really tries to address” (Bell and Gioni 21). Egyptian

artist Basim Magdy resented the reduction of the oeuvre of an artist to “just being about where the artist comes from” (Bell and Gioni 24). The arguments presented here give us an idea of why exhibitions of this type are still questionable and continue to be the subject of debate.

Furthermore, when discussing culturally and geographically defined exhibitions, it is inevitable to consider the notion of belonging—belonging as not being *in* but *of* the place (Bohrer 28). Belonging is that which becomes visible with distance by affirming one’s *be/ing* through *longing*, which is interestingly considered a touchstone of aesthetic expression throughout Arab culture (Boullata 14). But is it belonging that ensures authentic representation? Does Arab art express Arab experiences, as asked by art historian Nada M. Shabout in *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetic?* To which I would add: Should we as an audience expect artists to represent the general experience of belonging? Should we expect them to be representative of belonging irrespective of whether they feel an emotional attachment to a particular culture or share political and ethical values with it (Yuval 202–204)? Or should we accept their belonging as theirs—somewhat shared, somewhat individual, but definitely personal?

To be spiritually tied to a place, to use your belonging as an inspiration, and yet to wish to extend your work beyond the specificity this implies raises important questions of shared human experiences and universality. Early twenty-first-century Western modernity has tried to affirm narratives about communities of artists who belong to nothing but art itself. Contrasting this position, the curators of the exhibition *Here and Elsewhere* have built their argument on the standpoint that there is no such thing as an international grammar of contemporary art. To refuse the paradigm of universality (or, in other words, internationality without origins or belonging), the curatorial team reached for a cultural framing of the exhibition. As explained by the curators: “the cultural specificity of ‘Here and Elsewhere’ is not so much an essentialist framing of the work of artists who . . . are connected to the Arab world. It is rather a refusal of a pluralist, neoliberal paradigm that reduces difference “in the name of a universality that only recapitulates the homogenizing forces of the global economy.” (Bell and Gioni 22).

In brief, the aim of *Here and Elsewhere* was to present diversity within the specificity of an art exhibition in a New York museum that goes hand in hand with the inexplicit title of the exhibition, that does not highlight the cultural specificity of the exhibition. Ideologically charged notions of authenticity, belonging, and modernism were reflected upon, and the curators acknowledged issues related to the fact that the exhibition rested on national and cultural classifications. But they stopped there, not striving to resolve the issues of representation or to surpass national taxonomies. What they have managed to do is to open up space for further discussions and contributions.

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Anika Rieben

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## Fragmentierte Erinnerungen einer Stadt

Circle of Confusion von Joana Hadjithomas und Khalil Joreige

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Figure 8: Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige, *Circle of Confusion*, 1997, auf einen Spiegel aufgeklebte gedruckte Kartonkarten einer Luftaufnahme Beiruts, 3 x 4m, Cour Carrée du Louvre, Paris 2006. © Emmanuel Nguyen Ngoc, Foto: Emmanuel Nguyen Ngoc.

Was geschieht mit einem Bild, wenn es fragmentiert wird? Verändert sich dadurch die Bedeutung des Bildes? Wird möglicherweise auch die Rolle der betrachtenden Person neu verhandelt?

Im Zentrum dieses Essays steht die im Jahr 1997 entstandene Arbeit *Circle of Confusion* des Künstler- und Filmemacher-Duos Joana Hadjithomas und Khalil Joreige beleuchtet. Beide wurden 1969 in Beirut, Libanon, geboren und begannen dort ihre künstlerische Karriere. Ihre Arbeiten thematisieren auf vielfältige Art und Weise die Zerstörung und die zugehörige Bilderwelt, die der libanesischer Bürgerkrieg (1976–1990) hinterlassen hat (Faitot 1). Hadjithomas & Joreige befragen und hinterfragen die Entstehung von Bildern, Darstellungen und Ideenwelten und deren Zusammenhang mit der Geschichtsschreibung der Region.

Hadjithomas & Joreiges Werke bewegen sich sowohl thematisch als auch formal zwischen Installation, Skulptur, Fotografie, Video, Performance sowie Dokumentar- als auch Spielfilm. Bekannt sind sie unter anderem auch für ihre Langzeitrecherchen zu persönlichen wie auch zu politischen Dokumenten. Somit spielt das Archiv in ihren Werken eine wichtige Rolle (Downey 15). Innerhalb dieser legen sie einen besonderen Fokus auf die Spuren des Nicht-Sichtbaren und der geheim gehaltenen Geschichten. Hierzu gehören beispielsweise das Verschwinden von Personen während des libanesischen Bürgerkrieges oder der architektonische und geologische Untergrund von Städten. Sie untersuchen die Wirksamkeitsmechanismen des Nichtvorhandenseins und fragen: Was passiert bei der Entstehung von Bildmaterial und was passiert, wenn es verloren geht („Biography“)?

Der Name der hier besprochenen Installation, *Circle of Confusion*, ist ein Begriff aus der Fotografie. Der „circle of confusion“ oder der im deutschen Sprachgebrauch sogenannte „Zerstreuungskreis“ verweist auf die Streuung eines einzelnen Bildpunkts, welcher die Schärfentiefe eines Bildes bestimmt. Die Form der Bildpunktstreuung entspricht jeweils der Form der verwendeten Linse (Präkel 56, 85). Die Installation besteht aus 3000 gleich grossen Digitalabzügen, die zusammengesetzt eine Luftaufnahme der Stadt Beirut zeigen. Die Fotos sind auf einem vier auf drei Meter grossen Spiegel angebracht (Naef 150). Jeder Abzug ist auf der Rückseite fortlaufend nummeriert und mit dem Satz „Beirut does not exist“ versehen.

Die im Jahr 1997 entstandene Arbeit *Circle of Confusion* wurde über die Jahre in verschiedenen Ausstellungen gezeigt. Hierzu gehören beispielsweise das Beirut Exhibition Center (2012) und die Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume (2016) und. In der Ausstellung wurden die Besucher\*innen ermutigt, sich ein Fragment, das sie ansprach, auszusuchen und es zu entfernen. Die Ansicht Beiruts wurde dadurch Stück für Stück aufgelöst. Mit jedem zusätzlichen entfernten Element wurde die dahinterliegende Spiegelfläche weiter freigelegt. Somit wurden auch die Betrachter\*innen und die Umgebung, in der das Werk ausgestellt war, im Spiegel und damit im Werk reflektiert. Für welches dieser 3000 puzzleartigen Rechtecke entschieden sich die Besuchenden?

Das Künstlerduo erzählt in der Einleitung zu einem Interview, dass während der Ausstellung ein Besucher den Prozess der sich im Wandel befindenden Installation fotografisch festhielt und die Veränderungen des jeweiligen Tages somit dokumentierte (Hadjithomas et al. 87). Über welchen Zeitraum er diese Dokumentation genau durchführte wird nicht spezifiziert. Auch fotografierte er die einzelnen Abzüge, bevor sie entfernt wurden. Durch seine Dokumentation konnte er eine Statistik erstellen, welche Bildausschnitte am schnellsten verschwanden. Vor allem Grünflächen, Teile des Meeres, alte Häuser und die Strandpromenade waren bei den Ausstellungsbesuchenden sehr beliebt (Hadjithomas et al. 87). Dabei muss angenommen werden, dass die Installation in regelmässigen Abständen wieder vervollständigt wurde und somit nicht dauerhaft als Spiegelfläche verharrte.

Nun stellt sich die Frage, ob die entfernten Bildabzüge durch ihre Entkontextualisierung in der Tat zugleich auch ihre Bedeutung verlieren. Eine Lesart ist, dass die Teile, sobald sie einmal entfernt wurden, durch diese Loslösung aus dem ursprünglichen Bild- und Installationskontext ihre Bedeutung verlieren. Das Künstlerduo sagt hierzu: „Behind the body of the town, the mirror sends us back to our own body. It is impossible to seize Beirut as a whole, we can never hold on to.“ (zit. in Couteau). Aber wenn das ausgewählte Bild für die Person eine persönliche Bedeutung hat, erzählt dann nicht jedes Bild eine neue, ganz individuelle Geschichte, die die Entscheidung zu Entfernung eben genau dieses einen Fragments widerspiegelt? Somit wäre die Bedeutung nicht verloren, sondern multipliziert.

Hierzu schreiben Hadjithomas & Joreige, dass die Ausstellungsbesuchenden auf sich selbst zurückgeworfen werden. Vielleicht finden sie ein Fragment des eigenen einstmaligen Hauses, der ehemaligen Schule oder ein Teil des Meeres, das nur für sie Bedeutung besitzt. Das Fragment an sich bleibt eine Abstraktion und ist somit als blosses Abbild wenig bedeutungsträchtig (Hadjithomas et al. 87). Dies würde auch bedeuten, dass es für die Zugehörigkeit zu einer Stadt und einer Community keine singuläre Definition oder Anschauung gibt, sondern dass alle ihre eigenen Erfahrungen und Gefühle mit einfließen lassen. In diesem Sinne ist sowohl das Bild als auch die Stadt Beirut in einem Zustand stetiger Veränderungen und kann nie wirklich festgehalten oder definiert werden. „Beirut does not exist“ kann also auch als „no single Beirut exists“ verstanden werden (Naeff 150–151).

Die Installation zeigt eine Stadt, die sich ihrer ganzheitlichen Erfassung, beziehungsweise einer Definition entzieht. Das Werk befindet sich in einem ständigen Wandel, bleibt in Bewegung, genau wie die Stadt selbst. In einem Artikel wird erwähnt, dass das Künstlerduo die Geschichte und die Archive des Libanons ohne jegliche Nostalgie erforscht und sich dabei nicht nur mit der Vergangenheit, sondern auch mit der Gegenwart und Zukunft auseinandersetzt (Faitot 2). Mit Fokus auf der Interaktion des Publikums mit dem Werk, erscheint diese Aussage allerdings eher zweifelhaft. Besonders bei *Circle of Confusion* tritt durch das In-Erinnerungen-Schwelgen, durch das Suchen nach Bekanntem, nach Elementen, die vielleicht nicht mehr so sind, wie sie es einst waren, oder wie man sich an sie erinnert, ein Moment der Nostalgie zutage.

Das Publikum der Ausstellung in Beirut identifizierte sich mit gewissen architektonischen oder landschaftlichen Bruchstücken und stellten so auch eine Verbindung zu anderen Besucher\*innen her. Bezogen auf die Annahme, dass die Fragmente der Luftbilddaufnahme regelmässig ersetzt, beziehungsweise vervollständigt werden, bildeten sich im Lauf der Zeit Gruppen von Menschen, die dasselbe Fragment entfernt hatten.

Wenn wir das Werk von Hadjithomas und Joreige nun noch einmal explizit vor dem Hintergrund der sichtbaren Zerstörung nach dem libanesischen Bürgerkrieg betrachten, wird die Verwüstung der Stadt nicht nur durch das Bild selbst repräsentiert, sondern auch durch das Entfernen der einzelnen Teile. Die Besucher\*innen nehmen einen Teil des Bildes mit nach Hause und geben ihm eine neue Bedeutung, jedoch löschen sie auch einen Teil des Ganzen aus. So sind wir bei der Betrachtung des Spiegels nicht nur auf unser eigenes Spiegelbild zurückgeworfen, sondern tragen auch Verantwortung an der Zerstörung des Bildes (Naeff 151–152).

Dieser Installation *Circle of Confusion* folgte im Jahr 2009 die Videoarbeit *History of the Circle of Confusion*. Diese wurde unter anderem im Juli 2009 im Rahmen des Festival d'Avignon in Frankreich in der Église des Célestins ausgestellt. Es handelt sich dabei um eine Dokumentation des performativen Bildentfernungsprozesses, welcher in Echtzeit wiedergegeben wird. Das zweiminütige Video wird in Originalgrösse auf eine Wand projiziert. Während das Bild bei *Circle of Confusion* verschwindet, werden in Form des Films neue Bilder kreiert. Das Handeln der Besuchenden hinterlässt nun auf zwei Bildebenen Spuren. Auch hier wäre der Aspekt der Nostalgie als zentraler Punkt für die Arbeit durchaus denkbar. Durch die Videodokumentation der Bilderentfernung entsteht gewissermassen eine zweite Ebene des Festhaltens. Drückt dies nicht auch ein Bedürfnis aus, etwas Veränderliches, oder Vergängliches zu erhalten?

Auf beide Arbeiten bezogen stellt sich die Frage, was mit dem Werk und seiner Wirkung geschieht, wenn es nicht mehr in Beirut, seinem Ursprungsort, ausgestellt wird. 2017 wurde *Circle of Confusion* beispielsweise im Institut Valencià d'Art Modern in Spanien gezeigt. Der Aspekt von Nostalgie und Zugehörigkeit scheint weniger gegeben zu sein, wenn die Arbeit ausserhalb von Beirut zu sehen ist. Wahrscheinlich auch, weil sich die Motivation zur Auswahl eines Kärtchens

verändert. Fragmente werden möglicherweise eher nach ästhetischen Kriterien ausgewählt als nach Orten, zu denen die Besucher\*innen eine emotionale Verbindung besitzen. Letztendlich schwingt jedoch in beiden Arbeiten eine nostalgische Note mit. *Circle of Confusion* gibt dem Betrachter die Gelegenheit, sich auf die Suche nach Altbekanntem zu begeben, während *History of the Circle of Confusion* stärker den performativen Akt des Sich-Erinnerns festhält.

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Abigail Stoner

## This is a Souk

### Ruins and Reconstructions in Post-War Beirut



Figure 9: Beirut Souks site with L'Orient-Le Jour Building and Ibn Araaq monument. 1995. Beirut, Lebanon. © Solidere. Photograph by Mosbah Assi.

When futures are constructed upon nostalgic foundations, do they stand, or float, or topple? Can we occupy these immaterial structures or do they even exist?

In the traditional sense, nostalgia is defined by longing—longing for a time or a place that no longer exists or has never existed (Boym viii). Due to its ambiguity, nostalgia is often used as a tool for constructing collective identities where local histories have become inaccessible or remain a source of conflict (xvi). In this way, nostalgia, operating like a blanket of oblivion, offers space for re-beginning and imagining new futures (Khayyat 44). In this dreamlike space, everyone can feel they belong. However, Svetlana Boym warns against the pairing of nostalgia and belonging: “longing can make us more empathetic toward fellow humans, yet the moment we try to repair longing

with belonging... we often part ways and put an end to mutual understanding. In extreme cases it can create a phantom homeland" (359).

The reconstruction of the Beirut Central District (BCD), and more specifically the reconstruction of the Beirut Souks, is an example of a post-war reconstruction project built upon nostalgia. The BCD was heavily damaged during the Lebanese civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 1990 and violently divided the city of Beirut along sectarian lines. During an early ceasefire in 1976, the State Council for Development and Reconstruction began drawing plans for reconstructing the BCD as "a site in which a new sense of national identity could be given spatial expression" (Makdisi 666). The center of the nation's capital was to be commonly and collectively reinvented to embody a non-sectarian and unified people (666). However, planning was interrupted by fighting in 1977 and did not resume until the 1980s under the oversight of the private engineering firm OGER Liban. Based on a revised and unapproved master plan for the total reconstruction of the downtown area, OGER Liban began the systematic clearing of all structures in the BCD (667). Although more than half of the cleared structures—beautiful examples of Ottoman, French mandate, and modern-era architecture—were structurally sound, they were not preserved (Tabet 83–105). Despite public outcry, demolition continued until the end of 1992, at which point the entire area had been cleared and all that was left of the city center was an expansive field of dirt (Makdisi 674).<sup>1</sup>

This tabula rasa was then handed to the private real-estate company *Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction de Beyrouth*, better known as Solidere, who assumed total control of the reconstruction of the BCD. Moving away from earlier futuristic proposals that had been criticized for negating the surrounding urban fabric, Solidere took the opportunity presented by contemporary archaeological excavations of the downtown area to rebrand their master plan. "An Ancient City for the Future" became Solidere's slogan for the new BCD: a modern city formed around architectural fragments of Beirut's pre-modern history (Makdisi 666–675). Clouded in ambiguity, the slogan aimed to promote the reconstruction of a generalized past as the foundation for a totalized future. Beirut in its present state was to be forgotten.

The former souks, which had been a popular place for commerce and intersectional encounter since their construction under Ottoman rule in the late nineteenth century, were targeted as one of the first areas to be reconstructed by Solidere. By recalling the economic and social successes of the historic souks, the new souks were to symbolize the rebirth of a united Lebanese nation (Solidere). However, rather than employing Lebanese nationals for the design, Solidere selected the internationally renowned Spanish architect Rafael Moneo, a western-oriented architect who had no former building experience in Lebanon or the Middle East but who was supported by the Beirut architecture firm Samir Khairallah and Partners (Solidere). According to Moneo, "the charge for the project... entailed finding an architectural solution that revitalizes the familiar character of a souk while accommodating contemporary needs of shopping and retail" (263). The former souks, which had been obliterated only three years before, were not to be reconstructed but rather reinvented based on the generalized idea of an "oriental" marketplace reinterpreted for retail shopping (Makdisi 667).

Based on this premise, Moneo designed an indoor-outdoor shopping complex embedded with vague references to the former souks. With a surface area of over 45,000 square meters, the complex takes up an entire city block. Pedestrian streets aligned according to the rediscovered Phoenician city grid cut through the block and define the principal shopping areas. The shopping

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<sup>1</sup> At the time, OGER Liban was run by Rafiq Hariri. Saree Makdisi identifies the CDR's abdication of the city center reconstruction to OGER Liban as marking the beginning of "Harirism", a political-economic discourse culminating in 1992 with Rafiq Hariri's appointment as Prime Minister of Lebanon.

streets, named after the former souks al-Jamil, al-Arwam, al-Tawileh, and Ayyass, are covered by glass roof structures and remain open to air and light (Moneo 266–270). The glass coverings are a reference to the makeshift awnings and sunshades that dominated the streetscape of the former Beirut souks. However, unlike the former souks, the complex exudes a homogeneous character emphasized by the unvaried facade cladding as well as the serial roof landscape, a signature of Moneo's architectural style.<sup>2</sup> Moneo argued that the "generic" architecture would allow individual shop owners to define the identity of their own stores. Although reminiscent of the makeshift formation of the former souks, this idea is undermined by the standardized storefronts of the global retail chains that could afford space in the new Beirut Souks.<sup>3</sup>

As a final effort in proving the historical authenticity of the new souks, Moneo isolated and exhibited selected archaeological finds that were uncovered during the excavations required for the new building foundations and underground parking. Elements of the city settlement from the sixth century B.C., the city walls from the ninth century A.D., as well as monuments such as the Zawiyat Ibn Arraq from 1517 A.D. were restored and re-integrated into the architecture and consumer experience of the new souks. For example, the Zawiyat Ibn Arraq, originally a monastic complex, later a shop in the former souk al-Tawileh, and most recently visited as a shrine, today stands on display between a three-meter high "I (Heart) Beirut" sign and a high-end jewelry store (Al-Harithy 215–218). Stripped of its complex history, the ruin appears as a frozen theater set dislocated from space and time.

The Beirut Souks were constructed on nostalgic foundations: ancient ruins, vague signals, and, to a large extent, language. The insistence on the terms "reconstruction" and "souk", though inaccurate, form the very basis of Solidere's and Moneo's project. The souks, which no longer exist, are preserved in the idea that the Beirut Souks are one and the same. But the high-end commercial center, which has been criticized since its initial conception, continues to be rejected by Beirutis as a valid public space (Shayya 30). To many, it cannot function as a symbol for national rebirth and belonging because it has obliterated all material memory and meaning of the former souks and their role in the city center. Instead, the commercial center is seen as a void in the local environment, merely an attraction for wealthy tourists.

Yet, despite public rejection, the new souks do exist as a material part of contemporary Beirut. Their space influences the way the public experiences and interacts with the city, whether they are read as a void or an attraction.<sup>4</sup> Today, the souks may be rejected and unoccupied, but they do have the potential to be re-imagined, re-claimed, and re-futured. Nostalgia is, after all, ambiguous.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example the San Pablo Airport in Sevilla, Spain, or the Moderna Museet and Arkitekturmuseet in Stockholm, Sweden (Website of Rafael Moneo Architects).

<sup>3</sup> "Beirut Souks" was the marketing label given to the new souk area.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, opposition to Solidere has provoked countless counter-projects, such as Lebanese architect Bernard Khoury's Evolving Scars from 1991, or the cultural center Beit Beirut, also known as "The Yellow House". In a way, these can be read as indirect products of the reconstruction project.

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Lara Morgan

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## Reimagining Black Gold Nostalgia in the Arabian Gulf Monira Al Qadiri's *Alien Technology II*

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Figure 10: Monira Al Qadiri, *Alien Technology II*, curated and produced by Mizna for Northern Spark 2017, a project of Northern Lights.mn. Photo: Dusty Hoskovec.

*Alien Technology*—a fitting title when one does not know the context of these strange sculptures by Kuwaiti artist Monira Al Qadiri. The large abstract figures, which were created in 2014 and displayed amongst other places at the fifty-eighth Venice Biennale in 2019 and at the Northern Spark Art Festival in Minneapolis in 2017, are artistic depictions of industrial oil drill heads. Some viewers may be intimidated by the display of these oil drill heads, while others might even consider the painted, polished, and refined heads as cute. The oil drill head sculpture *Alien Technology II* in particular has a strange appearance, with a rounded grinding surface covered in an exterior of seemingly small-looking bubbles. The intimidating aspect of this almost kitschy-looking oil drill head is its large and overpowering size (three by three by three meters). Knowing the context of the usage of the drill head, which is industrially utilized to penetrate the rock surface to

obtain oil and gas, gives the sculpture an additional violent and almost aggressive aura. Although this large depiction of the oil drill provides the recipient with the named impressions, it is held in a stunning shimmering color scheme that gives the monument a very uncanny and mysterious approach. A different version of *Alien Technology* that was displayed at the fifty-eighth Venice Biennale has a dark metallic color reminiscent of the color of oil on the surface of the water. But *Alien Technology II*, with its already mentioned rounded grinder, has a surface of a shimmering mother of pearl. These purposely chosen colors reference specific materials and substances that define or defined the Middle East and have contributed to the economic growth of the Arab states: the pearl industry from the 1860s to the 1930s and the oil industry (Aqil 464). All in all, Al Qadiri's monuments refer to a specific historical as well as a contemporary context for these Arabian Gulf states.

Al Qadiri, who grew up in Kuwait and then studied in Japan at the University of Tokyo, completed her Ph.D. in inter-media art on *The Aesthetics of Sadness in the Middle East*. Her work *Alien Technology* is a reference to the petroleum culture that has been one of the key factors contributing to the enormous wealth in the Middle East since the mid-twentieth century. Her sculptures show the very instrument of extraction of the so-called "black gold". They question the practice of drilling for oil by shining an artistic spotlight on it. Oil is a very limited resource, one that through its violent extraction contributes to climate crises and the destruction of the planet (LeMenager 5–6). This leads to certain questions. When will this valuable and simultaneously destructive resource run out? What does a post-petroleum culture look like? With these reflections, one can say that a melancholy feeling echoes in Al Qadiri's work. The melancholy feeling also comes from the intimidating look of the oil drill head, which is suggestive of the violent act required to retrieve the precious resource.

*Alien Technology II*, which has a shimmering pearl surface, generates a different feeling in the viewer. The reference to the almost-forgotten history of the Middle Eastern pearl industry gives us a sense of nostalgia. The pearl industry that thrived in the Arabian Gulf region from the 1860s to the 1930s was a staple export that significantly contributed to the economic wealth of the region (Aqil 464). After the 1930s, the industry experienced a decline in pearl exports due mainly to Japan's globally expanding pearling industry and the world economic crisis that began in 1929. The social construct of pearling in the Arabian Gulf and the industry itself was complex and contributed to fostering the cultural identity of the Gulf region (Khalaf).

Al Qadiri's pearl-coated drill head can therefore be seen as adding a nostalgic element to her work. But what exactly do we understand as nostalgia? Svetlana Boym defines the term nostalgia in her book *The Future of Nostalgia* as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" (xiii). Belonging is therefore a core aspect of a nostalgic feeling. Boym goes on to say that "Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy" (xiii). Nostalgia can therefore only be lived through a fantasized connection to something or someone. By applying this understanding of Boym's definition of nostalgia to Al Qadiri's sculptures, we realize that her work indeed produces nostalgia. The Kuwaiti artist has moved across the world and is currently stationed in Berlin, but her work always references her Middle Eastern origins. Al Qadiri's creations are contributions to the art world that arouse a nostalgic feeling in the viewer. Thus, *Alien Technology* is not only a comment on the petroleum culture of the Arabian Gulf states but can be seen as a product of the artist's feeling of nostalgic belonging. Settling on this interpretation of the artist's nostalgia, another question arises regarding the naming of the artwork itself. How can we perceive nostalgia if the work is titled *Alien Technology*? Can the feeling of nostalgia still exist if we label something as unfamiliar, or in this case, "alien"? Primarily, the title refers to the strange look of the object itself, which without further context can be seen as

foreign or "alien". In an interview with the online magazine Living Content, Al Qadiri states her clear intention that her work *Alien Technology* is not a portrayal of nostalgia at all. She argues that her sculptures depict the history (and the lack of history) of the Arabian Gulf region (Paul). She states the importance of knowing one's history in a realistic matter, especially the history of the early twentieth century, which has been rewritten due to government censorship and the influence of regional conflicts and wars.

In her definition of nostalgia, Boym emphasizes a romanticized feeling of belonging to a place or a time that was either experienced in the past or has never been experienced at all. The part of life that has not been experienced but that one identifies with can be seen as an unfamiliar or an "alien" experience. In Al Qadiri's *Alien Technology II*, one may presume that she is referring to the pearl industry of the 1860s to 1930s, and that she is asking the viewer to then feel nostalgic about a piece of the Arabian Gulf's history that they did not experience. For the viewer, rethinking history through *Alien Technology* has the potential to form a cultural identity with the region, which can be seen as a feeling of nostalgia.

This brief essay on Monira Al Qadiri's work *Alien Technology* in the context of nostalgia has hopefully shown the complexity and layers that Al Qadiri's work has to offer. *Alien Technology* is an art piece that not only places a question mark on the industrial, economic, social, and cultural concept of the Arabian Gulf states but also combines this with various layers of personal perceptions of nostalgia that also question the future of petroleum culture.

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Hanna Hänggi

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## Kolorierte Nostalgie in den Selbstporträts von Youssef Nabil

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Figure 11: Youssef Nabil. *Self-portrait with Roots*, Los Angeles. 2008, handkolorierter Silbergelatineabzug, 40 x 27 cm. Image courtesy of Collection Nadour, Paris/Düsseldorf.

Die Selbstportraits von Youssef Nabil sind, optisch wie auch inhaltlich, sinnliche und nostalgische Arbeiten. In der Fotografie *Self-portrait with Roots, Los Angeles* (2008) liegt Nabil am Fuss eines Baumes. Er hat sich zusammengerollt und schmiegt sich an den grossen Wurzelstock. Den kurz geschorenen Kopf hat er in seine Armbeugen gebettet. Die Augen sind geschlossen. Das Wurzelgewirr verteilt sich vom Ende des Stammes scheinbar endlos über den ganzen Bildraum und streckt sich der betrachtenden Person förmlich entgegen. Zwischen den blau-grauen Wurzeln sind leuchtende Grasflächen zu erkennen. Die Haut des Künstlers weist an einigen Stellen einen bläulichen Schimmer auf. Seine angewinkelten und überkreuzten Arme sind in den sich überlagernden Wurzeln wiederzuerkennen. Der abgebildete Mann wird durch seine Körpersprache und Haltung mit seiner organischen Umgebung und dem Kreislauf der Natur verbunden. Die Szene wirkt friedlich, aber auch kalt. Schläft er? Träumt er? Wo ist er?

Der ägyptische Künstler inszeniert sich in seinen Selbstportraits in verschiedenen Umgebungen in nostalgischer Wehmut. Doch welche Rolle gibt Nabil der Nostalgie in seinen Arbeiten und wie bewusst wird sie eingesetzt?

Die Farben der Fotografie sind beinahe zu echt und makellos, um real zu sein. Dies liegt daran, dass sie nicht den ursprünglichen Farben der fotografierten Szene entsprechen. Youssef Nabil vermischt in seiner künstlerischen Arbeit das Medium der Fotografie mit der Malerei. Er macht kontrastreiche Schwarz-Weiss-Fotografien mit einer analogen 35-Millimeter-Kamera (Wilson-Goldie). Anschliessend koloriert er seine Fotografien mit verschiedensten Materialien, darunter unter anderem Wasserfarben, Gouache oder Bleistift (Messina). Diese Technik ist sehr aufwändig und zeitintensiv. Jeder Abzug wird individuell gestaltet und durch die Handkolorierung zum Unikat. Nabil erklärt, dass er von alten ägyptischen Filmen inspiriert wurde und seine Bilder in diese Zeit zurücksetzen wollte (Neshat 9).

Die Selbstportraits, zu welchen auch *Self-portrait with Roots, Los Angeles* gehört, entstanden, nachdem der Künstler seine Heimatstadt Kairo verlassen hatte und nach Paris übersiedelte (Neshat 9). Die Bilder strahlen eine Ruhe, aber auch eine Melancholie oder gar Traurigkeit aus. Nabil selbst spricht oft von Nostalgie. Wenn man seine Selbstportrait-Serie betrachtet, fällt auf, dass er nie direkt in die Kamera blickt. Er zeigt sich von hinten, versteckt seinen Kopf unter den Armen, schliesst die Augen, oder schaut an der Kamera vorbei an einen unbestimmten Ort. Der Betrachter wird zum Komplizen des Künstlers, der auf dieselbe Szene schaut und dann unweigerlich nach etwas sucht. Youssef Nabil ist überzeugt: "There is always something that we look for, that we wish to have or understand or achieve, nothing is complete, and nothing will remain the same" (Wilson-Goldie).

Als Nabil Ägypten im Jahre 2003 verlassen hatte, fühlte er sich oft wie ein Besucher oder ein Reisender und wollte diese Stimmung in seinen Arbeiten wiedergeben (Wilson-Goldie). Doch Nabil spielt auch mit der Nostalgie. Sie kann als Stilmittel für seine Kunst verstanden werden. Für ihn war es ein künstlerischer Entscheid, sich mit der schmerzlichen Erfahrung des Vermissens seiner Heimat, dem „Entwurzeltsein“ auseinanderzusetzen. Zusätzlich spielt Nabil mit der Vorstellung des Exotischen, die vielleicht auch an Orientalismus grenzt. (Zaya 40).

In vielen Interviews spricht Nabil über seine Beziehung zu seiner Heimat Ägypten, wie ihn in der Ferne die Nostalgie einholt und ihn über seine eigene Existenz nachdenken lässt. Er ist der Meinung, dass seine Nostalgie darauf zurückzuführen ist, dass er das „alte Ägypten“, das er kennt und liebt, erhalten möchte. Der einzige Weg dies zu tun, sei für ihn die Kunst („Art of Youssef Nabil“). Hier kann eine Parallele zu Svetlana Boyms Auffassung von Nostalgie gezogen werden. Sie schreibt „Nostalgia (from nostos-returnhome, and algia-longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a

romance with one's own fantasy" (Boym xiii). Durch Nabils Technik der Handkolorierung wird das Gefühl von Sehnsucht und Nostalgie zusätzlich unterstützt. Vielleicht ist seine Kolorierung als Romantisierung der eigenen Fantasie zu verstehen, die Boym erwähnt. Die Kolorierung der Szene wirkt so perfekt, dass es schwierig zu erraten ist, ob sie einer realen Szene gleichen will, oder ob sie Nabil selbst in einem Traum darstellen soll. Es scheint, als würde ein Nebelschleier über das Bild ziehen und alle Farben, so unterschiedlich sie auch sind, vereinen und eine sinnliche und verträumte Geschichte erzählen. Laut der Historikerin Lucie Ryzova (308) braucht Nostalgie die Abwesenheit von Kontext und Sinn, um zu funktionieren. In Nabils Fall ist die Schwelle zwischen Realität und Traum sehr verschwommen. Sinn und Kontext der Bilder sind daher schwierig zu deuten.

Die Arbeit *Self-portrait with Roots, Los Angeles* strahlt Einsamkeit und Verletzlichkeit aus. Aber Nabil zeigt sich auch von einer sehr sinnlichen Seite. Die Nacktheit seines Körpers in Kombination mit der künstlichen Kolorierung wirft die Frage auf, welche Rolle die Intimität für ihn spielt. Nabil zeigt sich nackt und verletzlich und doch addiert er eine künstliche Ebene der Farbe, unter der er sich und seinen Körper verstecken kann.

In einem Gespräch mit der Künstlerin Marina Abramović erklärt Nabil, dass sich die in der Fotografie abgebildeten Baumwurzeln in der Nähe von Los Angeles befindet. Jedes Mal, wenn er daran vorbeiging, erinnerten ihn der Baum an seine eigenen Wurzeln und an Ägypten (Abramović und Nabil). Abramović liest die Wurzeln in *Self-portrait with Roots, Los Angeles* als Verlängerung der Armvenen von Nabil. Für sie wirke es, als würde er zwischen den Wurzeln fliegen und die Welt durch seinen Körper nähren.

In einem anderen Interview erklärt Nabil, dass er Ägypten hauptsächlich wegen seiner Arbeit verlassen habe (Aciman und Nabil). Ein zentrales Thema seiner künstlerischen Auseinandersetzung ist der Körper. Mit diesem Thema musste er in Kairo immer vorsichtig umgehen. Ausserdem habe sich Ägypten in seinen Augen verändert. Dieses Phänomen der Veränderung Ägyptens wird auch von Ryzova aufgegriffen. Sie erklärt, dass der arabische Begriff *zamān* in vielen Online-Foren und Archiven für alte ägyptische Fotografien von Usern verwendet wird. *Zamān* heisst wörtlich „Zeit“ oder „Zeitraum“, wird umgangssprachlich jedoch mit der Bedeutung „früher“ oder „vor langer Zeit“ verwendet. Ryzova (308) versteht das Wort als Begriff für das Nachtrauern einer Zeit, oder den Wunsch, alte Zeiten wieder aufleben zu lassen. *Zamān* entspricht also einer nostalgischen Idealisierung vergangener Zeiten. Youssef Nabil offenbart an dieser Stelle selbst nostalgische Gefühle, wenn er wehmütig anmerkt, dass das offene und kosmopolitische Ägypten von früher verschwunden sei. Vielleicht ist aber auch die romantisierte Vorstellung des Künstlers ein Grund für sein persönliches *zamān*. Nabil ist 1972 geboren. Hat er das „alte Kairo“ wirklich miterlebt?

Youssef Nabil erzählt durch diese Selbstportrait-Serie seine Geschichte. Er zeigt uns die Geschichte eines Künstlers, der seine Heimat verlassen hat. Mithilfe von Fotografien, die er bearbeitet und koloriert hat, wird das Gefühl der Nostalgie verdeutlicht. Anhand von Farben hebt Nabil seine inneren Gefühle im Medium Fotografie hervor. Somit erhalten die Bilder sowohl eine inhaltliche Tiefe, wie auch einen einzigartigen Charakter (Parry). Obwohl Nabil Ägypten verlassen hat, liebt er sein Heimatland nach wie vor und will mit seinen Bildern diesem wehmütigen Erinnern Ausdruck verleihen. So erzeugt der in der Fremde lebende Künstler, durch die künstliche Verfremdung seiner Fotografien, den Eindruck der Nostalgie.

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Mina Achermann

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## Interwoven Collective Memory

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Figure 12: Khadija Baker. *My Little Voice Can't Lie*. 2012. Performance and sound, various durations. The 18th Sydney biennale, Cockatoo Island, Australia. © Khadija Baker. Photographer unknown.



This essay examines Khadija Baker's performative work *My Little Voice Can't Lie* and its relationship with certain aspects of collectivity and its physical expression. Khadija Baker was born in Amuda, Syria, and has lived and worked in Montreal, Canada, since she left Kurdistan about twenty years ago. Having experienced displacement herself, she addresses this topic in her artistic work using various media and methods of research. Besides her artistic research, she also has an academic approach as a member of the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia University.

Baker has performed her work *My Little Voice Can't Lie* in art institutions across Canada and Australia and various public spaces such as libraries, on the street, and on a ferry (Baker 4). Resting in a seated position for about one hour, she has her hair plaited in several long braids with in-ear headphones embedded at the end of each braid. Viewers are invited to approach the artist and listen to a recorded text created from stories of displaced Kurdish women, including the artist's own story. The soundtrack is looped, and viewers need to stand quite close to Baker to hold the braids in their hands and press the ends to their ears in order to hear the recordings. Thus, the performance includes not only an experience of listening but also physical proximity with the artist and the other viewers.

Two aspects of collectivity emerge in the reception of this performance. The first consists of the act of listening to the re-transmission of the displaced women's stories, which ensures their preservation in contemporary memory. The second aspect is that the performance is based on participatory storytelling. Several women with similar experiences of displacement tell different stories about their experiences. This plurality of voices is essential to the process of remembering, where the common denominators of belonging and having similar experiences find their way into a chorus. These two forms of collectivity—the act of listening and the practice of storytelling—result in an expanded communal authorship. The concept of collective remembering thus also includes the recipients and becomes a joint performative act.

By creating this plurality of voices, Baker allows a diversity of experiences to co-exist among a group of displaced Kurdish women. This heterogeneous group is not represented by just one voice; instead, individuals speak for themselves, thereby underlining the power of the spoken word. The spoken word plays a crucial role in Kurdish culture. Although the history of the oppression of the Kurdish people in all its complexity lies beyond the scope of this article, what is important here is that the act of displacing Kurdish people has been a common experience in many settlement regions for decades. In addition, Kurds have been forbidden (in some places even until today) to use their language and perform other fundamental cultural practices in public. This explains the vital role of oral transmission in Kurdish culture to this day as a form of free expression and as a central component of historical memory. When listening to the recorded stories in Khadija Baker's performance, orality is interwoven with the act of remembering.

Remembrance, which this performance initiates, happens against the background of nostalgia. As the women involved in Baker's project have lost their homeland, practices tied to their culture are likely to be associated with a sense of distance and longing. When orally remembering, they reflect on Kurdish culture. Here, the notion of "reflection" refers to the category of "reflective nostalgia" described by Svetlana Boym. Boym defines reflective nostalgia as a way of remembering that does not try to restore the past but rather reflects on it as simply the passage of time (49). This also means that memory is not being imposed on the present, but that the past "might act and will act by inserting itself into a present sensation from which it borrows the vitality" (Bergson 59).

Both the transmission of the collected stories and Khadija Baker's presence at the performances are strongly connected to physicality. To hear the recordings, the audience must get close to the artist's body and touch her hair. This means crossing the boundary of natural physical distance as the artist exposes her body to this act of transgression. Baker herself has said that "there is the crossing of the cultural border of the Middle Eastern female body and conventions about its exposure in public space" (Baker 4).

Baker's actual embodiment of collectivity is particularly evident in her hair braids. Especially with regard to the female body, the fascination with hair has a long, symbolically charged history. Since antiquity, long hair has been a symbol of female attributes of seduction and has been interpreted as a danger that emanates from women (Adomeit 66). In some cultures, the covering of female hair is still widespread today (66). When uncovered, single strands of hair and hair as a collective whole sit at the intersection of strength and fragility. One hair by itself is thin and fragile, but hair as a collective whole is quite resistant. There is also a certain degree of imperishability in that it grows constantly throughout a person's lifetime and does not change its shape even after the person's death. Long hair in particular is a powerful symbol of duration and of what is experienced during the period that the hair grows. In this way it appears as though Khadija Baker's own history is "interwoven" into each of her braids, as memories of the past years have grown into her hair and function as witnesses of time.

Without going back to the numerous appearances of hair motifs in mythology, the idea that in human hair lies the force of life is widespread. Hair is often perceived as representing the whole person as a *pars pro toto* (Vogt 21). For example, when parents stick a lock of their child's hair in the family photo album, it is not necessarily because they find that lock of hair beautiful or valuable on a material level, but rather because it is directly connected to their child as a person and to memories of childhood. The same can be said about Baker's work, in which the hair braids evoke much more than their materiality. Each braid can be seen as an actual embodiment of that person telling their personal story of displacement through that strand of hair. As the stories are interwoven into the braids, the associated memory also manifests on a physical level. Khadija Baker's body functions as a kind of medium for displaced Kurdish women's stories, a physical medium for interwoven collectivity.

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Ramona Tschuppert

## Petro(leum)Melancholia, Ecologies & Gulf Futurism in the Work of Design Earth



Figure 13: Rania Ghosn, *El Hadi Jazairy. After Oil: Das Island, Das Crude*. 2016, inkjet print on canvas, 70 × 70 × 2 cm. © Design Earth.

This essay addresses *Das Island, Das Crude*, a drawing from the series *After Oil* by Design Earth. By considering the cartography of time that the drawing offers and taking into account the notion of nostalgia, this essay seeks to explore how possible future scenarios in the Persian Gulf might be narrated.

Design Earth is a collaborative practice led by the Algerian architect El Hadi Jazairy and the Lebanese architect and geographer Rania Ghosn. Their work has embraced the anthropocenic turn (Anker and Edwards Anker). The Anthropocene is a term used to designate the era of earth's history that follows the Holocene in which humanity is seen as a force with a dominant influence on the climate and the environment (Latour 9). Usually, such grand environmental scales easily escape the human eye. Design Earth's goal is to develop a language that translates global changes into humanly relatable designs, stimulating the viewer to approach the environment responsibly.

*After Oil* renders the embeddedness of petroleum visible in different oil-producing economies and foregrounds the past and present geographies of oil in the Persian Gulf and the surrounding islands (Jazairy and Rania 28). The single works of the series focus on three nodes in the system: firstly, the transit chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz; secondly, the site of one of the largest oil spills in history, Bubiyan Island; and thirdly, the offshore oil extraction and processing facility on the Emirati island Das Island. This essay discusses the drawing *Das Island, Das Crude*, which is part of *After Oil*.

The drawing presents a cross-section of the infrastructure of Das Island, consisting of an oil production station and a fictional subterrestrial scenario made of rock layers, deserted gas, water, and carbon dioxide fields surrounding a vertical drill hole. The drill hole forms the central element of the drawing and connects the subterranean area with the sea as well as parts of Das Island above ground. Within the hole, and thus within the void of exploited oil reservoirs that are marked as white geological formations, are iconic architectural forms stacked on top of each other in a significantly oversized way when compared to the oil infrastructure. Two timelines along vertical axes on the left and right also frame the drill hole. The timeline on the left shows the geological history of the region. This is juxtaposed with the timeline on the right, which presents the architectural history of the United Arab Emirates since 1965. The timeline on the left side starts in the lower corner, at its lowest point in the Jurassic Period, where geological layers of shale are situated five thousand meters below the earth's surface. It rises vertically up to the tertiary period, which lasted from approximately 66 million to 2.6 million years ago, and is present in up to fifty meters of sandstone below the surface. The timeline on the right side starts in the upper right corner and goes downwards, starting with Deird Clocktower (1965) and continuing chronologically with the Central Bank of Dubai (1976), ADMA OPEC Headquarters (1980), Al Attar Tower (1998), Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque (2000), ADNOC Headquarters (2006), Index Tower (2004), Burj Al Arab (2007), and finally Burj Khalifa (2010). This list of architectural landmarks that shape the skyline of Abu Dhabi and Dubai corresponds with the iconic buildings shown in the middle of the drawing.

Shifting now to the notion of nostalgia as an analytical category, I draw on Svetlana Boym's definition of nostalgia as "a sentiment of loss" and as "romance with one's own fantasy" (xiii). Concerning temporal directions in which nostalgic feelings can strive, Boym writes that nostalgia "is no longer directed toward the future. Sometimes nostalgia is not directed toward the past either, but rather sideways" (xiv).

To explore possible future scenarios in the Persian Gulf that the drawing integrates as potential "sideways" forms of nostalgia, I first address a vision that could be considered as a rather conventional reading of the Persian Gulf before shifting to an alternative vision of the future. Both

visions are strongly related to the rise of oil production at the beginning of the twentieth century, which is considered a crucial moment in the history of Persian Gulf societies.

In the first scenario, fossil fuels, the archetypal modern energy source, contributed significantly to modern prosperity and accelerated the general progress of life as it is known today. For example, Das Island, an island lying off the coast of Abu Dhabi, has developed into a major oil and gas facility since the first expeditions there in 1953. Here Abu Dhabi processes, stores, and exports crude oil pumped from offshore fields. Such exports are a mainstay of the economy and, consequently, a significant driver of urbanization (Bukhamseen and Karimi 204). On the one hand, the desire to continue this success story may seem obvious. Accordingly, contemporary future-oriented development plans projected by Gulf state governments usually integrate megaprojects, high-tech infrastructures, and militarized spaces of consumption and surveillance, fostering utopian scenarios of hyper-driven and technology-focused times-to-come (Parrika 46). On the other hand, predictions of oil depletion, the negative consequences of oil production for the environment, and the threat of climate change may produce somewhat dystopian future visions in a social, economic, and environmental sense.

To what extent does the drawing *Das Island, Das Crude* arrange time, and in which ways might nostalgic feelings be explored here? At first glance, when one looks at the timelines that co-exist on the map, one might think the drawing tells stories about the past in particular. But when we take a closer look, an unusual way of creating temporal complications becomes visible. The represented timelines move in opposite directions. With that, time markers located on the same horizontal level on the geological and the architectural history timelines become connected at a certain point in time. For example, Burj Khalifa is brought in connection with the Jurassic Period. As the tallest building on earth, is rising up, and at the same time, drilling goes deeper and deeper into the ground. The ambiguity in the drawing between the linear notion of progress and an entanglement with the past remains unresolved. Within the idea of the Anthropocene, humanity has become a geological force that is willing and able to extract oil from a depth of five thousand meters. In this context, the deserted oil fields and the architectural landmarks in the center of the drawing represent the exploitative treatment of the earth by humans since the turn of the twentieth century (Anker and Edwards Anker). One way of reading *Das Island, Das Crude* from today's perspective is that the drawing may evoke nostalgic feelings as sentiments of loss, of the unbroken belief in narratives of modernity, of the world as a commodity, and of industrial progress as an escape from nature's determinations and limits (Jazairy and Rania 13).

In yet another reading of the drawing, connecting these two different temporalities suggest a more troubling message. On one side of the drawing is the very long and slow timescale of the earth's geological history; on the other side, there is the timeline of Dubai's architectural history, which is very short in comparison. By juxtaposing these timescales, a kind of opposing acceleration can be noticed. The hyper-driven progress caused by oil wealth has caused a quantum leap and a temporal gap in the history of the societies in the Persian Gulf. Two different temporalities that present the times before and after the discovery of oil have been stitched together, and a piece of history is missing (Orton). In this sense, the architectural elements in *Das Island, Das Crude* could be read through the idea of nostalgia as a sentiment of loss that is longing for a temporal epoch that has never actually existed in the societies of the Persian Gulf states. In this case, nostalgic feelings are directed sideways toward a dislocated temporality.

The iconic buildings can simultaneously be seen as representing the oil-driven past-to-future visions of the United Arab Emirates and as an expression of the cultural expectations that were fabricated in the period of modern civilization towards the future (Parrika 43). These expectations might have been accompanied by nostalgic feelings as a kind of romance with a fantasy of one's

own making. In a way, this fantasy has materialized in the buildings depicted in the drawing, which seem to refer to different temporalities. For example, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, as a sacred building, may refer to tradition and religion. In contrast, Burj Khalifa may refer to excessive growth and a technology-fixated future in which all issues can be solved by technology and capital.

In conclusion, the way time is arranged in *Das Island, Das Crude* has a liberating potential that works against already existing conventional future visions. *Das Island, Das Crude* tells stories in a way that creates a different sensitivity to time and in which the future may be read as a scenario that is not already prescribed in set temporal coordinates or continuums. The drawing invites the viewer to imagine possible future scenarios that oscillate between the utopic and the dystopic. In this way, it has the potential to stimulate the disentanglement of the complicated relationship between humanity and earth.

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