

**steirischer herbst 2017**

**Walid Raad: Kicking the Dead**

Premiere

24/09 – 14/10/2017

steirischer herbst festival centre

Palais Attems, Sackstraße 17, 8010 Graz

Opening Sat 23/09, 17.00

Tue & Wed 11.00 – 17.00, Thu – Sun 11.00 – 22.00

Admission free



Walk-through with the artist: Sat 23/09, 15.00, 18.00 & 21.00, Sun 24/09, 13.00, 15.00 & 18.00

Thu 28/09 & Fri 29/09, 18.00 & 21.00, Sat 30/09, 13.00, 15.00 & 18.00

In an exhibition and a number of walk-throughs, the internationally renowned artist Walid Raad proposes artworks and stories about Islamic art, World War I and the building of new infrastructures for the arts in the Arab world.

In late 2017, the Louvre Abu Dhabi will open to the public. This Louvre opening follows the opening of the Département des Arts de l'Islam in the Paris Louvre in 2012, which also coincides with the opening of new wings for Islamic arts in various museums around the world (most notably in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; The Museum of Islamic Arts in Doha; and The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto). This renewed interest in Islamic arts further coincides with dramatic geo-political events in the past few decades, beginning with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 on to the ongoing wars in Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. Moreover, it overlaps with the 100th anniversary of World War I, a war that saw the emergence of the Middle East as we know it today.

These issues are central to the work of Walid Raad, who was born in Beirut and is now based in New York. For the exhibition in the state rooms of Palais Attems he has conceived a series of installations and stage sets. During the first two weeks of the festival, the artist presents a number of walk-throughs. In these, he concentrates on the building of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi, the shift from synthetic to natural dyes in the late 19th century, the writings of Jalal Toufic, and how culture and tradition are impacted, both materially and immaterially, by violence and war.

**Walid Raad (US/LB)**

Walid Raad, born in Chbanieh/Lebanon in 1967, is a visual artist based in New York City where he works, among other things, as a teacher at the Cooper Union School of Art. Raad left his home country in the early 1980s and studied photography at the Rochester Institute of Technology as well as cultural and visual studies at the University of Rochester. In 1999 he founded the Atlas Group, a multimedia archive which examines the contemporary history of Lebanon from a non-traditionalist perspective and combines elements of photography, video art and installation art, the latter a characteristic feature of the multimedia artist's practice. In addition to solo exhibitions at MoMA and the Louvre, Raad has participated, inter alia, in the Venice Biennale and the documenta in Kassel, receiving the Camera Austria Award in 2005 and the Hasselblad Award in 2011.

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WALID RAAD: Kicking the Dead

**Kicking the Dead** is a 75-minute audio-visual presentation, presented in 4 rooms, performed by Walid Raad three times a day, and is limited to 40 audience members at a time.

Raad's *Kicking the Dead* comprises 11 parts and includes lecture-style powerpoint presentations, video screenings, and walks in the exhibition spaces where his artworks (or stage sets) are on display. Thematically, Raad concentrates on the opening of the Louvre Abu Dhabi as well as the Département des arts de l'Islam in the Paris Louvre. His inquiry leads him to engage World War I, arts education, insurance, sweat, and the history of tall buildings. Along the way, Raad also introduces several characters, including a Vietnam veteran/World War One buff; Carpet restorers; Real estate moguls; and various sheikhs, princes, and emirs.

The walkthrough's 11 parts are titled:

- Les Louvres: Footnote 117 \_ Jack in Ypres*
- Les Louvres: Footnote 47 \_ The Cooper Union*
- Les Louvres: Section 7 \_ The Carpet*
- Les Louvres: Footnote 118 \_ Jack in New York and/or Kicking the Dead*
- Les Louvres: Section 11 \_ The Tunnel*
- Les Louvres: Preface to the third edition \_ Acknowledgments*
- Les Louvres: Second Introduction*
- Les Louvres: Section 17 \_ Opening of Département des arts de l'Islam*
- Les Louvres: Part IV \_ The Contract*
- Les Louvres: Part V \_ Le Département*
- Les Louvres: Section 43 \_ More Letters to the Reader or Kicking the Dead Again*

Raad's artworks (or stage sets) will be available to the public when the walkthroughs are not in session. The displayed artworks (or stage sets) are (by room):

<b>Room:</b>	<b>Foyer</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Les Louvres: Sections 7, 11, and 17.</b>
<b>Media:</b>	Single channel video, color, sound.
<b>Duration:</b>	18:30
<b>Synopsis:</b>	<p>For two years, between 2010 and 2012, I was an artist in residence in the Louvre in Paris. I was documenting the building of the Louvre's newest and eighth department, <i>Le Département des arts de l'Islam</i> as well as the building of another Louvre in Abu Dhabi.</p> <p>The videos presented proceed from official Louvre footage I accessed during my residency in Paris. The stories I recount are informed by my various encounters with individuals, institutions, discourses, economies, and spaces in Paris and Abu Dhabi.</p>

**Room:** 1

**Title:** Les Louvres: Preface to the third edition \_ Acknowledgements.

**Media:** 3 painted, non-rectangular, wooden walls (variable width, 310cm height); 3 3D printed and painted objects (variable dimensions); 3 painted shadows; 6 Source Four lights.

**Synopsis:** In 2016, 300 objects traveled from the Paris Louvre to the new Louvre in Abu Dhabi. Of those 300, three were seriously affected by the journey, and in ways that are quite strange. The three objects that arrived in Abu Dhabi looked significantly different from the ones that were sent from Paris.

At first, this whole thing was thought to be some administrative error. Someone must have put the wrong objects in the crates. The curators checked the registration logs, and no administrator error was found.

Then the conservators thought that the objects may have been affected by the extreme heat in Abu Dhabi. After examining the objects closely, the conservators concluded that the change had nothing to do with that.

After months of not-knowing how to proceed, the Louvre had nothing to lose by allowing me to study the objects. And after 11 months with the objects, I came to see that each object was in fact a composite of two others. The objects, it seems, had decided to trade faces with each other. Moreover, I noted another consequence of the face-trade: it resulted in the objects' losing their shadows. It took me another two months to figure out how to deal with this. Only by painting a fake shadow next to the object, did the object's optical shadow return.

In this room, I present my findings.

**Room:** 2

**Title:** Les Louvres: Second Introduction.

**Media:** 11 rectangular walls (variable width and height), William Morris wallpaper; Paper cutouts pinned on wallpaper.

**Synopsis:** In this room, and on the William Morris wallpapers, I present my research about the history of the Chrysler building in New York. I began this research when I discovered that the university where I teach, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, receives most of its funding from its ownership of the land on which the Chrysler Building sits.

Built in 1929, the same year as the Great Wall Street Crash and the emergence of the Museum of Modern Art, the Chrysler Building was the tallest in the world for eleven months. In the past twenty years, the Chrysler Building was sold twice. Once in 1997

to Jerry Speyer, a real estate tycoon and chairman of the Board of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and again in 2008 to the United Arab Emirates' Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. Today the tallest building in the world is also in the United Arab Emirates where tall buildings are one part of a massive real estate and culture building boom, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

**Room:** 3

**Title:** Les Louvres: Section 43 \_ More Letters to the Reader

**Media:** 23 wooden crates (variable dimensions); Acrylic paint; Flood lights; Metal shelves; Flood lights.

**Synopsis:** The wooden crates displayed in this room were painted by Hanan Hilwé. For 40 years, Hilwé was the Abu Dhabi Museum Authority's Chief Curator and Registrar.

Sometime in the late 1970's, Hilwé purchased paintings, drawings, and carpets from the Erich Maria Remarque and Paulette Goddard Collection. She purchased from this collection because the leader of Abu Dhabi at the time, Sheikh Zayed, loved World War One and Charlie Chaplin.<sup>1</sup>

When the artworks reached Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed hated the works and asked for their return to Europe. Moreover, Hilwé was convinced that she's been sent "fakes" and also tried to return the works. But every time she shipped the artworks, they somehow found their way back to the Emirates. Uncertain as to how to proceed, she consulted experts who told her that her artworks suffered a particular fate: They "died before dying." The experts recommended that she paints "reverse magnets" and "mirror images" to keep the collection at bay. And so she did. And the paintings, drawings and carpets have stayed away since.

The crates in this room are copies of the originals which remain in Abu Dhabi for obvious reasons.

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<sup>1</sup> Erich Remarque's novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front* is the war's most read and sold book. And Paulette Goddard, Remarque's second wife, was once married to Charlie Chaplin.

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English language

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