

Moderna Museet hosts create short films inspired by Walid Raad

STOCKHOLM.- The exhibition by Walid Raad: Let's be honest, the weather helped opened on 15 February, and had barely been open for five weeks when [Moderna Museet](#) closed temporarily due to the covid-19 pandemic. The hosts who would have been greeting and talking to visitors to the exhibition – and who had been specially trained for this in workshops with Walid Raad himself – suddenly had none of the tasks they had been preparing for.

Eventually, however, they began to feel a connection with the situations in which Walid Raad's art had emerged. The result can now be viewed on Moderna Museets YouTube channel, in six short videos, created by seven of the Museum hosts.

- In hindsight, we saw how the corona virus and its consequences – including the closure of Walid Raad's exhibition – put us in a situation where we actually experienced aspects of what he speaks of through his art, says Fredrik Liew, curator of the exhibition.

Walid Raad's artistic practice centres on the influence of violence on people and their senses, cultures and objects. He tells of strange things that have happened to works of art in vulnerable situations. Raad shows that the simplified logics and structures we are accustomed to are inadequate in times of crisis. In fact, the world is far more complicated, and this is clearly revealed under these conditions. Even if we do our best to try to survive according to the old pattern, it is no longer possible.

For someone who has not experienced life at war, as Walid Raad did during the civil war in Lebanon, parts of his artistic practice may seem

rather strange. Almost like ghost stories or modern myths. "Surely, that can't be true?" But spring 2020, when our everyday life and surroundings suddenly didn't work the way we're used to, might have made us a bit more open. It is mainly issues such as these that prompted the short videos created by the Moderna Museet hosts.

At two workshops, thoughts, ideas and observations were formulated, giving perspectives on the Museum and the exhibition in the current conditions. These thoughts were then transformed into short videos where each participant authored a video each. The project was led by Ulf Eriksson, curator of learning, assisted by Kristoffer Svenberg, artist and freelance art educator, who served as the process manager. - The masterclasses Walid Raad held especially for the hosts opened many exciting new windows into his artistic practice. This is evident not least in the wide stylistic range of the hosts' multifaceted video stories, says Ulf Eriksson.

One of the videos shows the host Huda Mounahi on her way to work at the Museum, passing a row of shops that have all gone bust due to the pandemic. Their windows have notices about sales. The protective shutters are rolled down. She sees a pattern – the pictures in Walid Raad's exhibition of closed shop fronts. All crises seem to have something in common. In another video, the host Mark Bengtson Skypes his sister Lilly in New Jersey. They share memories of their father's native Lebanon, which Lilly visited for the first time in 1971, before the war broke out. A country Mark did not visit until 2004.

After having seen the films, Walid Raad sent the following message to the hosts: "A few weeks ago, on my last visit to Stockholm, I left thinking I would be back soon and that I would see you, the museum, the exhibition, the works, and the city again. These few weeks seem so long ago. The urgencies of the pandemic, economic collapses, black lives

matter, climate change, wars and protests from Honk Kong to Yemen to Lebanon to Minneapolis do overwhelm. They certainly overwhelmed my body, mind, and emotions. An exhibition sometimes feels like a pebble thrown in a pond. The artist rarely knows whether, where and how it will ripple. Your videos brought me back to Stockholm and Beirut for a few minutes, and allowed me to ride your waves down streets, spaces, sounds, images, and colors I missed. For this, I am grateful"

The videos are available on Moderna Museet's YouTube channel, and on 16 June, the Museum will reopen and visitors are welcome once more to see the exhibition Walid Raad: Let's be honest, the weather helped.