

SFEIR-SEMLER GALLERY

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Walid Raad

Better Be Watching the Clouds

and with **Bernard Khoury: Preface (2016-2026)**

Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut

Opening: August 31st, 2017 from 7-9PM

Exhibition runs until December 30th, 2017

BEIRUT- Sfeir-Semler Gallery is proud to announce the opening of a solo show with new works by WALID RAAD on August 31st, 2017 from 7PM to 9PM. The exhibition also presents *A proposal for a Beirut Site Museum: Preface (2016-2026)*, a recent collaboration with architect Bernard Khoury. The exhibition debuts some of Raad's new works from three ongoing art projects:

The Atlas Group (1989-2004) is a fifteen-year project that engages the Lebanese wars of the past few decades. Raad follows an artistic and investigative process that leads to the production of various documents (notebooks, photographs, videos) that he attributes to imaginary (and historical) figures and institutions, and organizes in an archive. *Better be watching the clouds* can be described as Raad's portraits of the various local, regional and international personalities that have shaped Lebanon's political and military life in the past few decades. Raad portrays political and military leaders through the code names he discovered were given to these players by Lebanon's security services.

Raad initiated *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow* in 2007 at the same time that the building of new infrastructures for the arts (museums, galleries, schools, etc.) was accelerating in cities such as Abu Dhabi, Beirut, Doha, and others. These material developments were matched by equally fraught efforts to define, sort, and stitch "Arab art" along three loosely defined nodes: "Islamic," "modern," and "contemporary." The three artworks presented, *Les Louvres*, *Preface to the ninth edition: On Marwan Kassab Bachi*, and *Letters to the reader* concentrate on some of the stories, situations, forms, lines, and colors made available by these developments. Raad's artworks with this project are attentive to how cultural artifacts react to the historical events and changes that the region is witnessing. In *Les Louvres*, we confront artifacts that "exchange faces." In *Letters to the reader*, artworks lose their shadows. And with *Preface to the ninth edition: On Marwan Kassab Bachi (1934-2016)*, paintings prefer to hide on the backs of other paintings.

The exhibition also includes a series of large-scale photographs from the *Sweet Talk: Beirut (Commissions)* project. In the late 1980s, Raad committed himself to photographing the city of Beirut, referring to the various photographic self-assignments as "Commissions." *Sweet Talk* focuses on Beirut's residents, as well as its buildings, streets, storefronts, gardens, monuments, and other objects, situations, and spaces in the city. In the exhibition, Raad presents six photographs of various "scenes" he encountered in Beirut in the early 1990's, and two photographs from his ongoing "public monuments" series.

In *Preface (2016-2026)*, Raad and architect Bernard Khoury (living and working in Beirut, Lebanon) present their (non-winning) submission to the architectural competition initiated by the The Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon (APEAL), to design the Beirut Museum of Art (BeMA). The proposal forwards a museum that is in tune with Raad's and Khoury's affinity to Lebanese artists and their works, but also cognizant of the architecture competition's technical, aesthetic, historical and administrative mandate.

Born in 1967 in Lebanon, Walid Raad is Professor of Art at The Cooper Union (New York, USA). His solo exhibitions include the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015), The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (2016), Museo Jumex Arte Contemporaneo (2016), Museo MADRE Napoli (2015), Carré d'Art, Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes (2014), Louvre, Paris (2013), Kunsthalle Zurich (2010), and The Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2010). Raad is also the recipient of numerous awards, among which the Hasselblad Award (2011), the Alpert Award in Visual Arts (2007), the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (2007), and the Camera Austria Award (2005).