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Beirut Art Center Exposes Emerging Lebanese Artists (and Missing Nipples)

Posted on December 19, 2013 by Faisal O'Keefe in Design

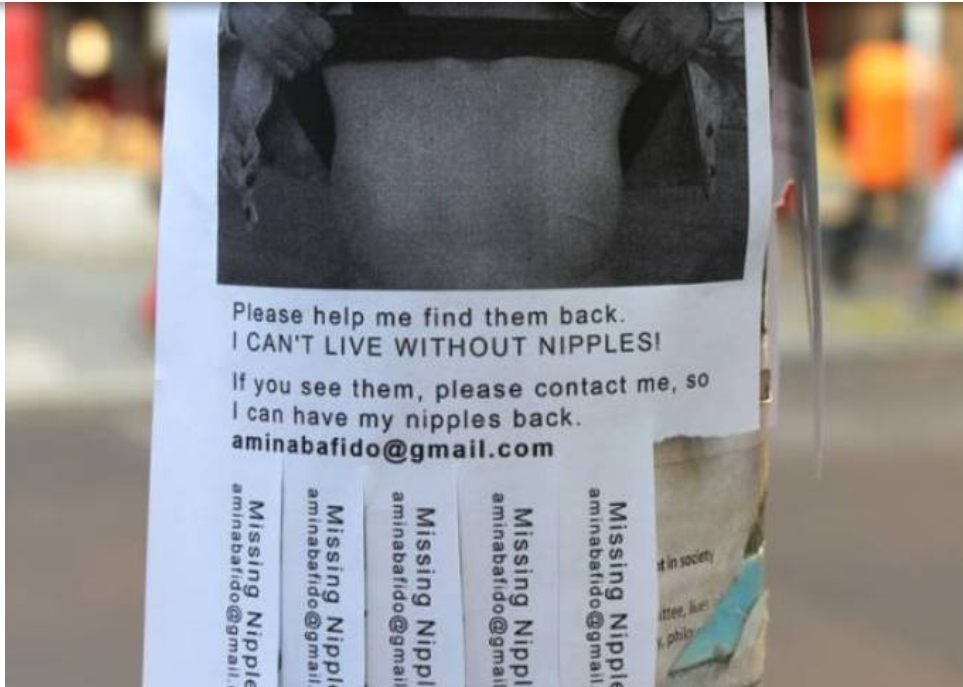
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A provocative installation by Lebanese graphic designer Wael Kodeih aims to challenge [cyber censorship](#). Part of the fifth annual *Exposure* exhibition now at the Beirut Art Center (BAC), is it art or gimmick?

According to [BAC](#), Kodeih's interactive installation titled *Lost and Found* "alludes to the kinds of technological capabilities made possible by alleged mass surveillance operations conducted by the US National Security Agency (NSA)."

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Is it a probing exploration of loosening privacy laws or simply an excuse to display [breasts](#)?

Kodeih's artwork consists of paper flyers stacked near a laptop; photocopies of a [semi-naked German protestor](#), "TOPLESS JIHAD" [scrawled across her torso](#), the nipples on her flailing breasts oddly absent. No mention if the prudish Photoshopping was by media or by Kodeih, but BAC does say that his intrigue in "a censored and defaced female body led him to research the topics of activism, internet security, and surveillance."

Another picture shows a woman's bare chest, again nipple-less, with the message: "Lost! My nipples have disappeared from the Internet!" It's unclear how Kodeih lays claim to this image as the poster was actually created by an anonymous [female activist](#) in response to active censorship of nipple images from social networking sites.

Facebook does ban "female nipple bulges and naked butt cracks", and Kodeih discovered a Moroccan censorship subcontractor that provides erasure services to Facebook, paying an employee a buck an hour to remove the offending pixels.

The artist's laptop installation riffs on the possibility that nip-pix remain stored forever inside the NSA backup server, the largest in the world.

"I wondered how women would feel if they ever saw their own body reshaped that way," Kodeih told [Beirut.com](#), adding, "What kind of



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Third time back to another, more relevant question: is this art?

EXPOSURE 2013 عتبات

The exhibit encourages every artist working in, or originating from, Lebanon to apply. This year's applicants were assessed by a jury that included artist Gregory Buchakjian, philosopher Fares Chalabi, filmmaker Rania Stefan and curator Tarek Abou El Fetouh. They selected fourteen artists from one hundred applicants, making Exposure 2013 their largest exhibition to date.

I searched for works by finalists Shirin Abu Shaqra, [Monira Al Qadiri](#), Pedro Barakat, Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh & Rozenn Quéré, [Yasmina Haddad](#), Inaya Fanis Hodeib, Maxime Hourani, Maha Kays, [Helene Kazan](#), [Christine Kettaneh](#), Wael Kodeih, [Randa Mirza](#), Camila Salame, and [Lara Tabet](#). Links to the artists' websites are provided here in every instance



enough to drop in, please answer the question: is it art or artifice?

All images from [Beirut Art Center](#)

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