

# HOW TO FIND MEANING IN DEAD TIME

## EXHIBITION

OPENING 26.08.2021 19:00

AT SAVVY CONTEMPORARY

ON VIEW 27.08.–12.09.2021 Daily 14:00–19:00

WITH Adel Abidin Lawrence Abu Hamdan Kamal Aljafari Filipa César with Sana na N'Hada and Zé Interpretador Bady Dalloul Martin Ebner Haytham El-Wardany Dana Enani and Nadine El Banhawey Maria Iorio and Raphaël Cuomo Nihad Kreševljaković and Clarissa Thieme Anna Kutera Randa Megahed Bodo Pagels Walid Raad Anri Sala Sanaz Sohrabi Fiona Tan Dorothee Wenner

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Curated by Kayfa ta (Maha Maamoun and Ala Younis), and commissioned by Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art in the context of Archival Assembly#1.

Archival Assembly #1 is a festival of the Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art within the framework of "Archive außer sich" in cooperation with the project partners silent green Film Feld Forschung,, Harun Farocki Institute, SAVVY Contemporary, pong film, International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, and the Master's program "Film Culture: Archiving, Programming, Presentation" at Goethe University Frankfurt. "Archive außer sich" takes place as part of the HKW project "The New Alphabet".

FUNDING Funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media on the basis of a resolution of the German Bundestag.

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archive außer sich

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# HOW TO FIND MEANING IN DEAD TIME

In the framework of Archival Assembly #1 – the (temporary) end of the five-year project and extended international collaboration “Archive außer sich” – this exhibition by the independent publishing and curatorial platform Kayfa ta (Maha Maamoun and Ala Younis) takes a closer look into experimental languages of cultural production and dissemination, as well as the alternative histories and possibilities embedded in the archive. How to find meaning in dead time reflects on some of the key issues surrounding the archive – its agency, inert and active modes of resistance, as well as its transformative potential in expanding personal and collective histories beyond the dominant conventions of constraint and erasure.

What is dead time? In physics, it is a technical term referring to the time that passes unrecorded by our detection systems due to a technical lag in the recording device. As such, dead time is unrecorded time. In history, dead time may refer to time that has disappeared from the records, due to a deliberate act of deletion, because it has been deemed unworthy or incongruous with the desired canonization of history. It may also refer to time that goes unaccounted for because the records attesting to its existence are no longer materially present, concealed by loss or decay. Moreover, the records of this time may be of a nature that is unreadable by our devices; records in minor languages, voiced by unacknowledged subjects or subjectivities, and contained in subsidiary media. Alternatively, dead time may be time that has wilfully withdrawn from our reach, “playing dead” in wait for a more opportune time to reinsert itself into the purview of the living. In all the above cases, time is not dead in itself, it is only insular to us because of our inability to attend to it.

1. If you sit in your room for hours on end with nothing to do, place an empty cassette tape in the player and press the record button.<sup>1</sup>

This exhibition contains fragments of time that are inert, have escaped the record or are in the process of resurrecting from their transitory host media. These host media include but are not limited to: 16mm films, 3D-printed cassette tapes, CCTV footage, colonial photo archives, human bodies, a jeweller’s closet, matchboxes, VHS tapes, the vaults of the Louvre museums, VHS tapes, a Persian carpet and others. More than a finite collection of material that we visit and employ, this archive of temporalities is also an immaterially expansive being that chose to visit and employ us, animating our bodies and possibly expanding our narratives of self, place and time.

7. Listen one more time. Note that what you are hearing is the sound of long, empty hours, and that the new-found meaning that you have gradually grown accustomed to is that very emptiness you had been experiencing, now abstracted from your feelings, and thoughts, and presence. You will discover that emptiness is not in itself an absence of all meaning, but rather your inability to understand new meaning.<sup>2</sup>

## ABOUT KAYFA TA

Kayfa ta is a publishing initiative that uses the popular form of how-to manuals (how = kayfa, to = ta) to respond to some of today’s perceived needs; be they the development of skills, tools, thoughts, or sensibilities. These books situate themselves in the space between the technical and the reflective, the everyday and the speculative, the instructional and the intuitive, the factual and the fictional. Kayfa ta was founded in 2012 by Maha Maamoun and Ala Younis.

<sup>1</sup> The title of the exhibition and this excerpt are from “How to find meaning in dead time,” one of the exercises in the manual by Haytham El-Wardany, *How to Disappear* (Cairo: Kayfa ta, 2013), 23.  
<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 24.

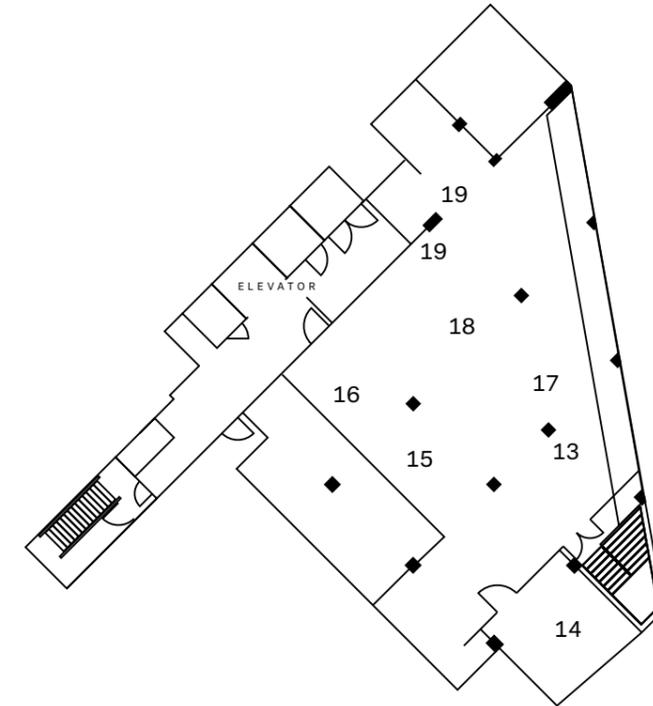
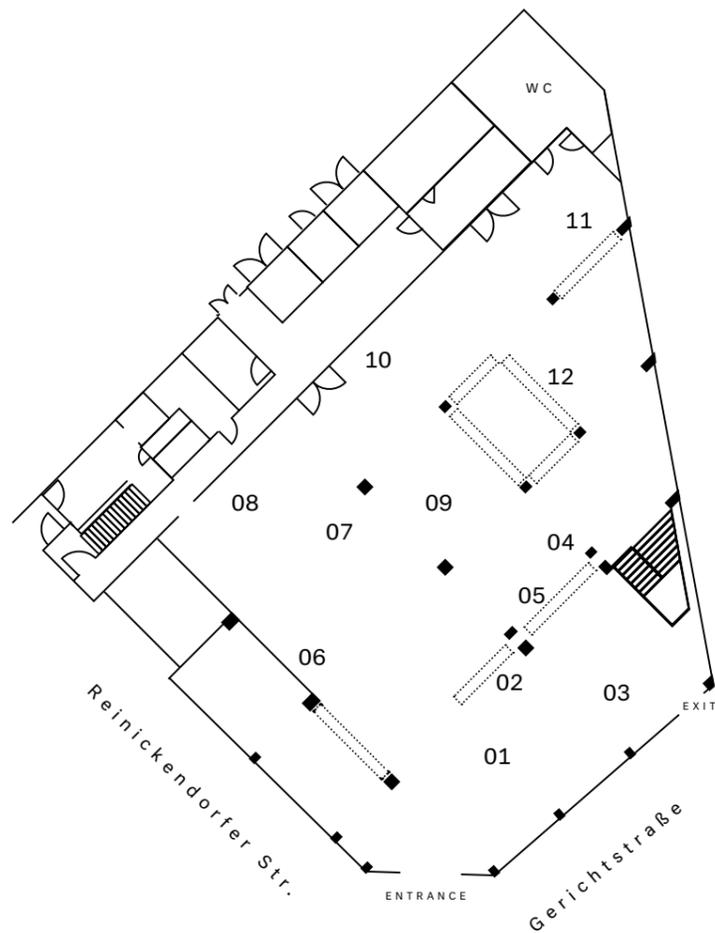
## COLLABORATION

This exhibition developed in the context of Archival Assembly #1, in resonance with the extended conversations held with the various individual and institutional partners that shaped the direction of the festival’s program. Kayfa ta is an independent publishing and curatorial platform that focuses on alternative publishing practices, their ephemeral histories and modes of survival, dissemination and concealment. In 2019, Stefanie Schulte Strathaus (Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art) invited Kayfa ta to curate the exhibition of the Archival Assembly, taking as a starting point the affinities in the curatorial focus of both Arsenal and Kayfa ta, amongst which are the interest in experimental languages of cultural production and dissemination, as well as in the alternative histories and possibilities embedded in the archive. The exhibition reflects on some of the key issues surrounding the archive – its agency, inert and active modes of resistance, as well as its transformative potential in expanding our personal and collective histories beyond the dominant conventions of constraint and erasure.

## ARCHIVAL ASSEMBLY #1: ARCHIVE AUßER SICH

Archival Assembly #1 marks the (temporary) end of the five-year project Archive außer sich. During the festival, film archives and other archival projects will meet for a public exchange. While the work of some is guided by and committed to concepts of national legacy, genre, or historical time periods, others are resistant to such ideas. Some of them are state archives and as such either easily accessible or effectively closed off to the world. The specific holdings of others have yet to make any inroads at all into the writing of film history. Archives and counter-archives: It seems as if neither can do without the other. When film archives are seen not as closed entities, but as a site for the negotiation of a transnational practice and the forging of new alliances, perhaps the old idea of so-called “world cinema” can shake off its power structure, allowing us to rethink concepts of both the world and the cinema. There is indeed hope, for the archives are beside themselves. This means: they have become subjects that are no longer satisfied with people looking into them. They want to get out of themselves. They don’t just want to simply be maintained and preserved for some unknown world to come; they want to shape that world themselves. They want to turn their innermost core outwards. Being digitised is exciting, it provides them with a certain lightness and creates new opportunities and paths. Past the old archivist who was once the gatekeeper, controlling who came in and who could go out, towards a multitude of new archivists. Out of the institution and into that living reality that it once created. If they ever come back, it will be into a changed cinematic landscape, one that is right now in the process of inventing itself. But not without their help.

# FLOORPLAN



**01 ADEL ABIDIN**

*Back to the Future*  
Kinetic sculptures, five 3D printed cassette tapes, rotation mechanism, media players, pencils, speakers and pedestals. 6 x 12,5 x 1.3 cm each, durations: 4:22 min, 3:19 min, 2:14 min, 1:28 min, 1:48 min, 2019  
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Tanit, Beirut

**02 ANNA KUTERA**

*Shortest Film of the World*  
Photograph, 70 x 70 cm, 1975

**03 FILIPA CÉSAR, SANA NA N'HADA, AND ZÉ INTERPRETADOR**

*FAIRE APPARAÎTRE DES BETES*  
Letter by Chris Marker addressed to Sana na N'Hada, ca. 10x20 cm, aluminium on black paper with zx printer, ca. 1980s and 2020s

**04 HAYTHAM EL-WARDANY**

*How to find meaning in dead time*  
Wall text

**05 KAMAL ALJAFARI**

*An Unusual Summer*  
Video, 80 min, 2020

**06 FIONA TAN**

*Shadow Archive*  
6 Photogravures, 2 x (78 x 100 cm) and 4 x (28 x 38 cm), 2019  
Courtesy: the artist, Frith Street Gallery, London, and BORCH Editions, Copenhagen / Berlin

**07 LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN**

*Once Removed*  
Video, 29 min, 2019

**08 BADY DALLOUL**

*A Country Without a Door or a Window*  
Marker and colored pencils on paper, series of 70 drawings in matchboxes, 4.1 x 2.7 x 1.5 cm each, 2016/2021

**09 MARTIN EBNER**

*Film Without Film*  
(after *The Evil Faerie* by George Landow, FLUX Film No. 25, 1 min., 1966)  
Painted wood, ca. 300 x 10 x 10 cm, 2013/2021

**10 ANRI S A L A**

*Intervista (Finding the Words)*  
Single-channel video and stereo sound, 26 min, 1998  
Courtesy: Ideal Audience International, Paris; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Esther Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich

**11 BODO PAGELS**

*Mobile Cinema (Mobiles Kino)*  
Self-built 35mm projector, 2021

**12 MARIA IORIO AND RAPHAËL CUOMO**

*Undead Voices*  
Video, 39 min, 2019/2021

**13 DOROTHEE WENNER**

*Family Affairs*  
Video, 13 min, 2021

**14 DANA ENANI AND NADINE EL BANHAWY**

*Amateur Shooting: Through the Lens of Home Movie Stars*  
Video, 7 min, 2021

**15 NIHAD KREŠEVLJAKOVIĆ & CLARISSA THIEME**

*SJEĆAŠ LI SE SARAJEVA (Do You Remember Sarajevo) – Multitude*  
3 video-monitors, 3x Raspberry Pis with random generator, archival video footage, 2021  
In collaboration with Sead Kreševljaković, Nedim Alikadić & Zlatan Prohić

**16 WALID RAAD**

*Section 7 (In a Restoration and Conservation Workshop, Paris), Section 11 (In a tunnel under the Paris Louvre), Section 17 (The Louvre)*  
Video, 19 min, 2019  
Courtesy: the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery Beirut/Hamburg

**17 SANAZ SOHRABI**

*One Image, Two Acts*  
Video, 45 min, 2017–2020

**18 ANONYMOUS**

*Red Color Filter (Rotlichtfilter)*  
Object found in 2019

**19 RANDA MEGAHED**

*All that's left are some words on a tag*  
Installation and live performance, 2021

## 01 ADEL ABIDIN

### *Back to the Future*

Kinetic sculptures, five 3D printed cassette tapes, rotation mechanism, media players, pencils, speakers and pedestals. 6 x 12,5 x 1.3 cm each, durations: 4:22 min, 3:19 min, 2:14 min, 1:28 min, 1:48 min, 2019  
Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Tanit, Beirut

“Traveling in time to replay old memories while lacking the actual devices to access them. In our digital world it is as difficult to access our saved analogue as it is to access our memories. In the process of digitizing those memories, we tend to distort and deconstruct them. This piece was my first experiment with replaying old folklore songs that I used to listen to and sing as a kid, of which I have no originals. I started rewinding a cassette tape with a graphite pencil in a way to rotate the reel of time, which resulted in a distorted memory. Rewinding them at different speeds evoked a change in my perception as I found odd connotations in them. Those intangible songs were only known as lullabies, which had turned into folksongs for children.” (Adel Abidin)

ADEL ABIDIN currently resides between Helsinki and Amman. He received a B.A. in painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad (2000) and an M.F.A from the Academy of Fine Arts in Time and Space Art in Helsinki (2005). He represented Finland at the Nordic Pavilion in the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007), and his work has been shown in numerous shows including: Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels (2015), 56th Venice Biennale in the Iranian Pavilion (2015), The Glasstress-Gotika, 56th Venice Biennale, International Exhibition, Palazzo Franchetti (2015), 5th Guangzhou Triennial, The Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou (2015), The Pera Museum, Istanbul (2015), Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, Canada (2015), Gwangju Museum of Art, South Korea (2014), The Jerusalem Show VII, Jerusalem (2014), Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark (2014), MACRO-Museum of Contemporary Art,

Rome (2014), Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2013-2012), 54th Venice Biennale, Iraq Pavilion (2011), 10th Sharjah Biennale, UAE (2011), MOCCA, Toronto (2011), Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar (2010), 17th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney (2010), 11th Cairo Biennial, Cairo (2008), Abidin was selected for the Finland Prize for Arts in 2015, and in 2011, he was a nominee for the Ars Fennica Prize in Finland.

## 02 ANNA KUTERA

### *Shortest Film of the World*

Photograph, 70 x 70 cm, 1975

“The photo shows the final frame from the film strip of my work *DIALOG* (16mm, black and white, 1973). The back of my head is visible in the frame. When I look at the photo, it seems that I am looking at the face of the person in the frame, but of course I can also see the back of their head. The film narrative is created between what is visible and what can be imagined.” (Anna Kutera)

ANNA KUTERA is a multimedia artist: video-film, photography, installation and performance. Born 1952 in Zgorzelec, Anna graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław (1977). In 1975-1985, together with Romuald Kutera, she ran the Gallery of Recent Art (Galeria Sztuki Najnowszej) in Wrocław. In 1975-1980, together with Jan Świdziński, she co-organised the international movement of Contextual Art, focused on researching contexts of artistic productions, which extended the concepts and patterns of the then-dominating Conceptual Art. Among her significant cycles of works are *Morphology of New Reality* (1975-1976), *Stimulated Situations* (1976-1990), *My Houses* (1990-), *Genetic Contexts* (2009-), and *POST – massmedia* (2010-). The artist's works have been presented at over 40 individual exhibitions and numerous group exhibitions in Poland and abroad.

## 03 FILIPA CÉSAR, SANA NA N'HADA, AND ZÉ INTERPRETADOR FAIRE APPARAÎTRE DES BETES

Letter by Chris Marker addressed to Sana na N'Hada, ca. 10x20 cm, aluminium on black paper with zx printer, ca. 1980s and 2020s

13 NOVEMBER SALUT SANA. TU VOIS COMME JE SUIS SNOB, J ECRIS A L ORDINATEUR. MAIS C EST PLUS LISIBLE QUE MON ECRITURE, ET PLUS AMUSANT QUE LA MACHINE, ET PUIS ON [PEUT] FAIRE APPARAÎTRE DES BETES [...] (HI SANA. YOU SEE HOW SNOB I AM, I WRITE TO YOU ON A COMPUTER. BUT IT IS MORE READABLE THAN MY HANDWRITING, AND MORE FUN THAN THE MACHINE, AND THEN WE [CAN] MAKE BEASTS APPEAR [...])

This is how Chris Marker begins the little note addressed to Sana na N'Hada, processed with the newly introduced ZX81 home computer in the early eighties. Marker proceeds with another reflection of media formats – the innovative 2 to 3 hour long recordable VHS tape easily permitting the duplication of any film from Marker's video library for Sana's collection in Bissau. The little black paper receipt addressed to Sana na N'Hada, aluminium-coated and 10cm wide, ends with at least five signatures: “chris”, a violet handwritten Chris Marker signature, a pixelated cat pictogram, Guillaume, and “zx printer”, the printer itself. But indeed other beings had been authoring through eating of the note, and for this presentation, a few more were added to the list.

This archival presentation is a collaboration between Sana na N'Hada, Filipa César, and Zé Interpretador. Produced by Mediateca Onshore and Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art.

ZÉ INTERPRETADOR is a musician and a skilled weaver from Guinea Bissau who works with pano de pente (literally, comb fabric), a centuries long traditional weave with long straight bands of colour made initially by Pepel and Manjak people. Zé has collaborated in the collective film project *Quantum Creole* (2019).

FILIPA CÉSAR is an artist and filmmaker, living in Berlin. Since 2011, César has been looking into the origins of militant cinema in Guinea-Bissau, its imaginaries and decolonizing potencies, developing that research into the collective projects *Luta ca caba inda* and *Mediateca Onshore*.

SANA NA N'HADA is a pioneer of Guinean cinema, his filmography includes the documentaries *O Regresso de Amílcar Cabral* (1976), *Les Jours d'Ancono* (1978) and *Fanado* (1984), the fiction film *Xime* (1994), *Bissau d'Isabel* (2005) and *Kadjik* (2012). N'Hada initiated *Luta ca caba inda* and *Mediateca Onshore* projects.

## 04 HAYTHAM EL-WARDANY

### *How to find meaning in dead time*

Wall text

“How to find meaning in dead time” is the fourth of the preliminary exercises devised by Haytham El-Wardany in his book *How to disappear* — a book he describes as one “grounded in the experience of the unseen listener.” *How to disappear* was published by Kayfa ta in 2013.

HAYTHAM EL-WARDANY was born in Cairo and lives in Berlin. His book *The Book Of Sleep*, published by Alkarma Cairo 2017, revolves around the politics and poetics of sleep. An English translation is available from Seagull Books. In 2013, he published *How to disappear* in the Kayfa ta series. The book focuses on the nature of listening, and attempts to explore the potentialities of passive activities. His recent book is *Irremediable*, a short stories collection published by Alkarma Cairo 2020.

## 05 KAMAL ALJAFARI

### *An Unusual Summer*

Video, 80 min, 2020

Following an act of vandalism, the Palestinian filmmaker's father decides to install a surveillance camera to record the scenes unfolding in front of the house. Between glimpses of family life and neighbours going to work, *An Unusual Summer* captures fleeting moments of poetry, while in the background the daily choreography of Ramla, located in today's Israel, comes to the surface.

KAMAL ALJAFARI is a filmmaker and visual artist who graduated from the Kunsthochschule für Medien (Academy of Media Arts) in Cologne, Germany. His filmography includes *The Roof* (2006), which won the Best International Award at the Images Festival in Toronto and Best Soundtrack at Fidmarseille; *Port of Memory* (2009), which received the Prix Louis Marcorelles at Cinema du Reel Paris; *Recollection* (2015) and *An Unusual Summer* (2020). *Bon Voyage* (2021) marks the last work in a trilogy that intervenes in found film materials to reclaim the Palestinian image. He was a featured artist at the 2009 Robert Flaherty Film Seminar in New York, and in 2009-10 was the Benjamin White Whitney fellow at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute and Film Study Center. His work was shown in numerous film festivals and art institutions, including showcases at the Lussas Film Festival in France and the Cinémathèque québécoise Montréal. He taught at The New School in New York, and at the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin. In 2021, Aljafari was a member of the jury at Visions du Réel film festival in Nyon, and the Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland.

06 F I O N A T A N

*Shadow Archive*

6 Photogravures,

2 x (78 x 100 cm) and 4 x (28 x 38 cm), 2019

Courtesy: the artist, Frith Street Gallery, London, and BORCH Editions, Copenhagen / Berlin

A strange glow pervades Fiona Tan's *Shadow Archive*, illuminating a well-organized collection of endless archival drawers. The starting point for the series of six black-and-white photogravures originates from Tan's fascination with the Belgian visionary Paul Otlet (1868–1944), and his ambitious goal to catalogue all human knowledge in order to achieve world peace. Together with Henri La Fontaine, Otlet initiated the creation of a world archive, the Mundaneum, in 1895. For almost forty years Otlet worked determinedly on the archive, cataloguing all kinds of human knowledge on index cards stored in large wooden cabinets. Otlet and La Fontaine developed the "Universal Decimal Classification", a numerical system of cross-references to offer permanent free access to the archive. Today, the Mundaneum, also known as the "Paper Google", might be considered a milestone in data collection and management, sharing the basic ideas behind the Internet.

F I O N A T A N has built the architecture of Otlet's Mundaneum in 1:1 scale using computer generated imagery software. Whilst Tan's circular architecture is registered in all its details, the actual place does not exist. The series of photogravures shows Tan's imagined interior views of Otlet's never completed utopian archive.

Fiona Tan studied at the Rietveld Academie and at the Rijksakademie voor beeldende kunsten. Over the past twenty years, her video installations, films and photographic works have gained increasing international acclaim and have been exhibited all over the world. In 2009, she represented The Netherlands at the Venice Biennial and in 2010 she took part in the Architecture Biennial in Venice. Presentations of her work have included Documenta 11 as well as many international biennials. In 2016-17 she was artist in residence with a fellowship at the Getty Center, Los Angeles. Solo exhibitions have taken place at institutions including the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, Museum für moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Vancouver Artgallery, the Baltic, Gateshead, Museum de Pont, Tilburg, MAC's, Grand Hornu. Her work is included in collections such as the Tate Modern, Guggenheim, Centre Pompidou, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, MCA Chicago and Schaulager, Basel. In Autumn 2020 the mid-career retrospective *With the other hand* opened with a double solo exhibition simultaneously at Kunsthalle Krems and the Museum der Moderne Salzburg, Austria.

07 L A W R E N C E A B U H A M D A N

*Once Removed*

Video, 29 min, 2019

This audiovisual installation acts as a portrait of the time travelling life and work of Bassel Abi Chahine, a 30 year old writer and historian who has managed to obtain the most comprehensive inventory of extremely rare objects, photographs, and interviews related to the Lebanese civil war's socialist militia. He taught himself how to read and identify all manner of military equipment, including every pattern of camouflage and the origin of every AK 47, in each of his images. All this obsessive analysis and unprecedented research into this one militia was done in pursuit of material that could reconstitute what he describes as flashbacks and unexplainable memories from a previous life. Through his research, Abi Chahine realized that the lucid and personal memories of the war that he had lived with his whole life, were due to the fact that he was the reincarnation of soldier Yousef Fouad Al Jawhary, who died on February 26, 1984, in Aley, at age 16.

L A W R E N C E A B U H A M D A N is a "Private Ear". His interest with sound and its intersection with politics originate from his background as a touring musician and facilitator of DIY music. The artist's audio investigations have been used as evidence at the UK Asylum and Immigration Tribunal and as advocacy for organisations such as Amnesty International and Defence for Children International together with fellow researchers from Forensic Architecture. Abu Hamdan completed his PhD in 2017 from Goldsmiths College University of London. He exhibited at the 58th Venice Biennale, the 11th Gwangju Biennale and the 13th and 14th Sharjah Biennial, Witte De With, Rotterdam, Tate Modern Tanks, Chisenhale Gallery, Hammer Museum L.A, and Casco, Utrecht. Abu Hamdan's work has been awarded the 2019 Edvard Munch Art Award, the 2016 Nam June Paik Award for new media and in 2017 his film *Rubber Coated Steel* won the Tiger short film award at the Rotterdam International Film festival. For the 2019 Turner Prize Abu Hamdan, together with nominated artists Helen Cammock, Oscar Murillo and Tai Shani, formed a temporary collective in order to be jointly granted the award.

08 B A D Y D A L L O U L

*A Country Without a Door or a Window*

Marker and colored pencils on paper, series of 70 drawings in matchboxes, 4.1 x 2.7 x 1.5 cm each, 2016/2021

Bady Dalloul's work *A Country Without a Door or a Window* takes as its starting point the civil war in Syria, the home country of the artist's family. Since 2011, the artist has observed the development of the conflict by way of images disseminated by the media, which he reclaims in the form of miniature drawings with childish

lines. The colorful and schematic vignettes are framed in empty matchboxes, a metonymous invocation of the country's ignition. Arranged in no chronological order, they show the blending of those external and distant events as they gradually permeate the artist's imagination. This intentionally crude material, deprived of its content, also expresses the artist's helplessness in the face of these distant events.

B A D Y D A L L O U L is an artist based in Paris, his work imbued with a political, sociological and historical dimension confronts and creates a dialogue between the imagined and the real, calling into question the logic of the writing of History. Bady Dalloul uses different mediums: writing, performance, drawing, video and object. His works are part of the permanent collections of the MAC / VAL Museum, the Frac / le Plateau, the Frac Champagne Ardenne, the Darat al Funun, the Institut du Monde Arabe and the Kadist Art Foundation. Sciencespo Prize for Contemporary Art in 2016; in 2017 he received the Prize for Contemporary Arab Creation from the Friends of the Institute of the Arab World. In 2020, his work participated in the exhibitions "How to maneuver: Shapeshifting texts and other publishing tactics" curated by Kayfa ta for Warehouse421, Abu Dhabi, and in "Our world is burning" at the Palais de Tokyo as well as "Orientalisms" at the IVAM in Valence. In 2021, his work will be exhibited with the BNF collections at Louvre Abu Dhabi.

09 M A R T I N E B N E R

*Film Without Film*

(after *The Evil Faerie* by George Landow, FLUX Film No. 25, 1 min., 1966)

Painted wood, ca. 300 x 10 x 10 cm, 2013/2021

*The Evil Faerie*, by George Landow aka Owen Land, was made in 1966 as part of George Maciunas' Fluxfilm Anthology. Following a comprehensive title sequence, *The Evil Faerie* only shows a single gesture by an actor whose identity remains unknown. The film is thus of a purely informative nature, communicating nothing more than this one, not a clearly decipherable gesture. What the "evil faerie" wants to express, we don't know, and it is left open for interpretation. We do not even know for sure who made the film (Landow or rather Maciunas himself?), but at least – and this is agreed upon – even if it is a very short one, it still is a movie. It even found its way into an archive. The work *Film Without Film* (after *The Evil Faerie*) acts as a kind of Non-NFT (Non-non-fungible token), stored in loose pieces of painted wood instead of chains of data blocks, invoking a decidedly communitaristic and playful approach to copyright, ownership, memory, and proof, as practiced by a generation of maybe humble, maybe disillusioned, maybe artists, some years ago.

M A R T I N E B N E R is an artist living and working in Berlin. For the past decade he has focused on film

and video, while engaging with installation, sculpture and images.

10 A N R I S A L A

*Intervista (Finding the Words)*

Single-channel video and stereo sound, 26 min, 1998  
Courtesy: Ideal Audience International, Paris; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Esther Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich

In the process of moving houses with his family, Anri Sala discovered a 20-year-old 16mm newsreel film, containing images of a congress of the Albanian Communist Party. In the film a young Valdet, leader of the Communist Youth Alliance, is seen making a speech, and later giving an interview. But Sala could not make out what she was saying, because the sound had been lost. This woman is Sala's mother who had left behind these hopes, fears, ideals, disappointments, deceptions, and rebellions of her youth. Intent on learning the contents – which Valdet herself cannot remember – Sala takes the film to a school for the deaf in Tirana, and with the help of lip readers, his mother's words are deciphered. *Intervista* captures the moment when Sala shows his mother a video of the film again. This time, with her words recovered and subtitled on the screen, she confronts her younger self. Her communist ideals and the current chaos in Albania collide, offering a moving opportunity for reflection on the country's – and one woman's – history and present state.

A N R I S A L A constructs transformative, time-based works through multiple relationships between image, architecture, and sound, employing these as elements to fold, capsize, and question experience. His works investigate ruptures in language, syntax, and music, inviting creative dislocations, which generate new interpretations of history, supplanting old fictions and narratives with less-explicit, more-nuanced dialogues. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Kunsthau Bregenz (2021); Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, Houston (2021); Centro Botin, Santander (2019); Mudam, Luxembourg (2019); the Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2019); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2017); the New Museum, New York (2016); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2014); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2012); Serpentine Gallery, London (2011); Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami (2008); and ARC, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2004). He has also participated in major group exhibitions and biennials internationally, including the Fifty-seventh Venice Biennale (2017), documenta (13) (2012), the Twenty-ninth São Paulo Biennial (2010), the Second Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2007), and the Fourth Berlin Biennale (2006). In 2013, he represented France in the Fifty-fifth Venice Biennale.

11 B O D O P A G E L S  
*Mobile Cinema (Mobiles Kino)*  
Self-built 35mm projector, 2021

When his workplace, the Arsenal Cinema, had to be closed due to corona, the projectionist Bodo Pagels temporarily went down into his cellar. Thinking back to the Landfilm, a mobile film setup that was used during the GDR years to bring cinema to rural populations, he wanted to build a mobile 35mm projector that could be carried and set up by one person. He set himself the goal of exclusively using recycled material. Searching in the storage rooms at the Arsenal he found components that were no longer being used, such as a single shutter mechanism that was not appropriate for screening silent films. To reduce noise he built the case for the projector out of wood and old aluminum plates. Thanks to LED technology he was able to find a suitable projection lamp that allows the image to be stopped without risking burning it. What we know from color correction work in the laboratory can also now be used by a wider public for installations, performances or film analyse.

B O D O P A G E L S is an amateur filmmaker, projectionist and cinema technician. He was trained in the 1980s in the former GDR where he also worked for Landfilm, a state initiative which organised mobile cinema screenings in rural areas. Since 2000, he works as projectionist at the Arsenal.

12 M A R I A I O R I O A N D  
R A P H A Ë L C U O M O  
*Undead Voices*  
Video, 39 min, 2019/2021

*Undead Voices* focuses on the archive as a subject rather than a repository of material, and invites us to reflect critically on the absences it encompasses, on the politics of knowledge, and on possible alternative ways of writing history. The starting point is a Super 8mm amateur film, *Donne Emergete!* (1975), by Isabella Bruno. Examination of the reel, recently rediscovered and consigned to the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia ANCI, revealed that the film is, according to archival criteria, damaged beyond repair. Reviewing its devastated chemical emulsions, the project exposes the effects of marginalization on “minor cinemas” as well as the dissemination or destruction of the material culture related to 1970s protest movements in Italy. Nevertheless, it manages to reactivate the documentation of feminist demonstrations and assemblies, gestures of resistance and love, and several songs that populate the soundtrack–ghostly sequences that reveal strange and transgressive invocations of undead voices calling out to us from the afterlife.

M A R I A I O R I O A N D R A P H A Ë L  
C U O M O are an artist duo based in Geneva and Berlin. Favouring a collaborative praxis and long-term development, the duo’s artistic projects retrace different past and present mobility regimes and manifest the intertwined histories of these movements of life and migrant cultures. Their recent films focus on the conditions under which narratives can emerge and resistant knowledge be transmitted and translated; by questioning the hierarchy between the semantic and the vocal, they shift attention to unheard or neglected voices and to the aesthetical and political dimensions of listening. Their work integrates a curatorial approach and revisits the expanded field of moving image practices and “minor” cinemas – amateur, feminist, decolonial.

I O R I O / C U O M O have shown their work internationally in various exhibitions and film festivals, including Cronache di quel tempo (Istituto Svizzero, Palermo); Documenta 14 Public Program (Athens); If Not For That Wall (CiC, Cairo); Quadriennale 16 (Rome); Visions du réel (Nyon); Logica del passaggio (Querini Stampalia, Venice); Europe. The Future of History (Kunsthau Zürich); FID (Marseille); Twisted Realism (Argos, Brussels); Courtisane Festival (Ghent); Chewing the Scenery (54th Venice Biennale); Der Standpunkt der Aufnahme, (Arsenal, Berlin); The Maghreb Connection (Townhouse Gallery, Cairo).

13 D O R O T H E E W E N N E R  
*Family Affairs*  
Video, 13 min, 2021

Almost 60 years after its inauguration, Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art does not just possess a comprehensive collection of films, but has become an archive of its own history. Unlike most film archives, no official criteria were ever agreed upon acquiring works. The archive grew instead from a curatorial practice, emerging both from film programming work as well as through cooperation with an international network of contacts and the necessary responsibility this implies. Thus, not only single films but also collections threatened by censorship or damage found shelter in the archive. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Arsenal was able to obtain parts of the Soviet Army’s film holdings which would otherwise have been destroyed. Erika and Ulrich Gregor tell the story in a new video as part of the series *Family Affairs* by Dorothee Wenner.

D O R O T H E E W E N N E R is a free-lanced filmmaker, film curator and writer based in Berlin. Among other employers, she serves as external curator at Humboldt Forum for film/cinema and as delegate to Berlin International Film Festival for the Subsahara-Africa region. Since inception in 2005, Dorothee Wenner belongs to the jury of Lagos based African Movie Academy Awards. Her latest work as a filmmaker was the web-series *KINSHASA COLLECTION* (www.kinshasa-

collection.com). As longtime collaborator of the Arsenal and member of the selection committee of the Forum (until 2019), she began her ongoing interview series *Family Affairs* in 2011 the framework of the project Living Archive – Archive work as contemporary artistic and curatorial practice.

14 D A N A E N A N I A N D  
N A D I N E E L B A N H A W Y  
*Amateur Shooting: Through the Lens of Home Movie Stars*  
Video, 7 min, 2021

“I witness what you capture. I observe, I investigate, and I reminisce. Egyptian film archivists explore home movies collected by Magdy Rafla, a jeweller and a film enthusiast, from the 1950s–1970s. We identify what is known and what isn’t. Through the presence of known Egyptian movie stars, we wonder about the differences between the private world and the commercial.” (Dana Enani) \*\*

D A N A E N A N I is an independent filmmaker born in 1996 in Cairo. She graduated as a media designer from the faculty of Applied Arts and Sciences of the German university in Cairo. She worked on five short films independently that are experimental, essay documentary, and fiction.

N A D I N E E L B A N H A W Y is an aspiring filmmaker currently living and working in Cairo. She graduated from the German University in Egypt, with a major in media design. She expresses herself through her visuals, thoughts and passion in experimenting. She finds herself in poetic documentaries and personal films; *Between Vocals and Veins* is one of her personal documentaries tackling spaces and bodies, which are topics of great interest to her; And “Why” is always a great lead for her to discover things.

15 N I H A D K R E Š E V L J A K O V I Ć &  
C L A R I S S A T H I E M E  
*SJEČAŠ LI SE SARAJEVA (Do You Remember Sarajevo)*  
– *Multitude*  
3 video-monitors, 3x Raspberry Pis with random generator, archival video footage, 2021  
In collaboration with Sead Kreševljaković, Nedim Alikadić & Zlatan Prohić

This experimental spatial setup lets the Library Hamdija Kreševljaković – Video Arhiv Sarajevo speak for itself. The Video Arhiv is a private collection of amateur videos filmed by a group of friends around the siblings Kreševljaković and Nedim Alikadić between 1992 and 1995 in besieged Sarajevo. Video Arhiv was community driven and collected a diversity of individual perspectives. Recurring viewings, in which randomly picked videos were watched and discussed, were as important as filming and collecting the footage. *Sječaš li se Sarajeva – Multitude* translates this archival

forum to the gallery space and invites visitors to encounter the raw material of the Video Arhiv in a spatial arrangement. There are three different types of material characterizing the collection: amateur documentaries, local broadcasts and artistic films. A random generator continually selects videos by chance, while ensuring that material from each of the different collection strands are presented concurrently on the three monitors. A reset button allows visitors to restart the selection process at any time.

N I H A D K R E Š E V L J A K O V I Ć is director of the MESS International Theatre Festival in Sarajevo since 2016. Before, he worked as the director of Sarajevo War Theatre, and the International Theatre Festival MESS where he worked as executive producer since 1994. He graduated from the University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History. Together with his twin brother Sead, realizing the extreme importance of the siege of Sarajevo and the war, they documented events and daily life under the siege with their camera. This activity resulted in a video-library that holds over a 1000 hours of recorded materials, leading to formation of the local NGO Videoarchive – Library Hamdija Kreševljaković. He is the author of a significant number of documentaries. The two brothers, together with Nedim Alikadic, are also coauthors of the documentary film *Do you remember Sarajevo?* Since 2005, he also works as artistic director of Memory Module, a special program of International Theatre Festival MESS. In 2019 Nihad Kreševljaković was awarded with the KAIROS Prize.

C L A R I S S A T H I E M E 's work ranges from photography, film/video, installation, performance as well as text and often traces the identity implications of memory processes and the reconstruction of collective experiences and traumas. Her practice is research-based and often collaborative. Thieme studied media arts at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK), holds a degree in cultural studies and aesthetic practice, and is a Research Alumni of the Berlin Center for Advanced Studies in Arts and Sciences (BAS). Her work has been presented internationally in numerous exhibitions and festivals, most recently including Kunsthalle Mannheim (2021); neuer berliner kunstverein (2021); Anthology Film Archives, NYC (2021); Rencontres Internationales Paris (2021); Haus der Kulturen der Welt (2021), Berlinale Forum (2020), Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (2019). Works include *Today is 11th June 1993* (film, 13', & installation/performance, 2018), *Weiter war nichts, ist nichts* (installation, 2019), *Can't You See Them? - Repeat.* (Film, 8' & Installation 2019), *What Remains / Šta ostaje I Was bleibt / Re-visited* (Film, 70', 2020), *Archival Grid, Preview* (Installation, 11', 2021 with Charlotte Eifler).

## 16 WALID RAAD

*Section 7 (In a Restoration and Conservation Workshop, Paris), Section 11 (In a tunnel under the Paris Louvre), Section 17 (The Louvre)*

Video, 19 min, 2019

Courtesy: the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery Beirut/Hamburg

“For two years, between 2010 and 2012, I was an artist-in-residence in the Louvre in Paris. I was documenting the construction of the Louvre’s eighth and newest department, Le Département des art de l’Islam, as well as the establishment of a second Louvre in Abu Dhabi. The included videos proceed from official Louvre footage I accessed during my residency in Paris. The stories I recount are informed by my various encounters in Paris and Abu Dhabi.” (Walid Raad)

WALID RAAD is an artist and a Professor of Art in (the still-charging-tuition) The Cooper Union (New York, USA). Raad’s works include *The Atlas Group*, a fifteen-year project between 1989 and 2004 about the contemporary history of Lebanon, and the ongoing projects *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow* and *Sweet Talk: Commissions* (Beirut). His books include *Walkthrough*, *The Truth Will Be Known When The Last Witness Is Dead*, *My Neck Is Thinner Than A Hair*, *Let’s Be Honest The Weather Helped*, and *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*. Raad’s solo exhibitions include the Louvre (Paris), The Museum of Modern Art (New York, USA), ICA (Boston), Museo Jumex (Mexico City), Kunsthalle Zurich (Zurich), The Whitechapel Art Gallery (London), The Hamburger Bahnhof (Berlin). His works have also been shown in Documenta 11 and 13 (Kassel), The Venice Biennale (Venice), Whitney Biennale 2000 and 2002 (New York), Sao Paulo Bienale (São Paulo), Istanbul Biennial (Istanbul), Homeworks I and IV (Beirut). Raad is the recipient of the Aachener Kunstpreis (2018), ICP Infinity Award (2016), the Hasselblad Award (2011), a Guggenheim Fellowship (2009), the Alpert Award in Visual Arts (2007), the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (2007), the Camera Austria Award (2005), and a Rockefeller Fellowship (2003).

## 17 SANAZ SOHRABI

*One Image, Two Acts*

Video, 45 min, 2017–2020

With a particular focus on the historical ethnographic film and photographic surveys produced by British Petroleum (BP), *One Image, Two Acts* examines the formations of early modernist infrastructures of leisure in the oil towns of South-Western Iran. This emergent oil industry was not limited to the company’s colonial expansion; the multifaceted infrastructures produced political assets, and shaped politics along the way. This film examines the ways in which BP’s visual regimes of petro-modernity were countered by a growing anti-colonial cinema in which oil was a

central figure, with cinemas the contested emblem of colonial development. Reading the Iranian New Wave cinema against the backdrop of growing raw material sovereignty and a nationalization movement, this film analyzes two integral films of this period, namely Ebrahim Golestan’s *A Fire* (1961) and Amir Naderi’s *The Runner* (1984). It reframes oil not solely as an exchangeable commodity but rather as an archive itself, one that constitutes a web of imaginations, aspirations, and struggles.

SANAZ SOHRABI’s work at large engages with the politics of recovery in photographic archives and the role of photography and film as technologies of public-making and subject positioning. Sohrabi received her BFA from University of Tehran College of Fine Arts (2011) and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a merit scholarship (2014). Currently a doctoral candidate and supported by Fonds de Recherche du Québec Société et Culture at Concordia University, Montréal, her doctoral artistic research explores the contested historical role that visual representations of oil have played in shaping ideas about colonial petromodernity, postcolonial sovereignty, and resource nationalism in Iran. Sohrabi’s work has screened and exhibited internationally at Videonale 16 at Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Sheffield Doc/Fest, Montréal International Documentary Film Festival RIDM (nominated for national short and mid-length competition), Ann Arbor Film Festival (Winner of Juror’s Award), European Media Arts Festival, Osnabrück, Kasseler DokFest, Germany (nominated for Golden Key Award), Athens International Film and Video Festival, Fiva 06 Buenos Aires (first prize for short film), Images Festival, Iowa City International Documentary Film Festival, and Cairo Film and Video Festival.

## 18 ANONYMOUS

*Red Color Filter (Rotlichtfilter)*

Object found in 2019

In 2015 the filmmaker and critic Didi Cheeka went to look at the former spaces of the Colonial Film Unit in Lagos, later called the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC), to see if they would be suitable as a cinema for the Lagos Film Society. While there, he came across the remains of decades worth of film and cinema culture material: old film rolls, projectors, and other technical equipment, alongside an abandoned cinema. With the support of the Goethe-Institut, he invited staff from the Arsenal to visit the spaces along with him. This turned into an extensive archival and restoration project, with the participation of a large number of institutions. The Lagos Film Society, the Nigerian Film Corporation (which includes the National Film Institute and the National Film, Video and Sound Archive), and the Arsenal were soon joined by the Institute for Theater, Film and Media Studies at the Goethe University in

Frankfurt and the DFF – Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum, which led to the founding of a Masters’ Program at the University of Jos. The red light filters were found in Lagos between the film canisters on the shelves, illuminated by the sun shining through the window at that hour.

## 19 RANDA MEGAHED

*All that’s left are some words on a tag*

Installation and live performance, 2021

This project is dedicated to the activities that keep memories alive. The activity of archiving, as opposed to the sites that we call archives, sheds light on the effort needed to prevent memories from getting lost, disappearing or being covered by dust over time. Thereby, we turn to the idea of “weight” to show the heaviness and lightness involved in uncovering pieces, shedding light on them, and keeping their memories alive. We explore the invasiveness and the weight that archives carry and the dust that keeps gathering, requiring “cleaning”. On the other hand, we explore the lightness and fragility of an object archived. They may seem normal, light, and insignificant, but the memories they hold give them value and immeasurable (abstract) weight, and a certain fragility to time and dust. \*\*

RANDA MEGAHED is a media designer, artist, aspiring filmmaker and dancer. Born in Cairo, Megahed graduated from the German University in Cairo, majoring in Applied Arts. She is currently studying for a master degree of arts in Tourcoing, France. Megahed often mixes different mediums in her work, from photography and videography to performance, sound and installations. She works with themes related to memory, disappearances and relationships and uses the archives as a tool in her work.

\*\* The contribution by Dana Enani and Nadine El Banhawy as well as by Randa Megahed are artistic responses to the film collection by Magdy Rafla.

Magdy Rafla was a jeweler who lived in Cairo till his death in 2018 at the age of 87. Rafla was a dedicated cinephile who collected thousands of films from all around the world spanning from the early 1900s to the 1980s. The diverse collection material includes international classics, but the real treasure is amateur footage of Egypt shot during the 1920s and 1930s. Capturing local provinces, bustling Cairene streets, and governorates such as Port Said and Alexandria, with material shot by both Egyptians and Europeans living in the country, the footage provides a unique window into Egyptian life during the British protectorate era. It also contains footage shot in European cities by Egyptians during the 1950s and 1960s. Cimatheque – Alternative Film Centre and Arsenal are collaborating on the artistic, curatorial, and scientific examination of the collection with a group of researchers and artists from Cairo that includes Ihab Rafla, Ali Atef, Nadine El Banhawy, Dana Enani, Tamer El Said, Randa Megahed, and Maged Nader.

## MORE INFORMATION

[savvy-contemporary.com](http://savvy-contemporary.com)

[facebook.com/savvyberlin](https://facebook.com/savvyberlin)

S A V V Y Contemporary—The laboratory of form-ideas is an art space, discursive platform, place for good talks, foods and drinks—a space for conviviality. S A V V Y Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of notions of the West and non-West, to understand and deconstruct them. S A V V Y Contemporary has realized a kaleidoscope of art exhibitions, performances, film screenings, lectures, concerts, readings, talks, dances. S A V V Y Contemporary has established a participatory archive on German colonial history, a performance arts documentation centre, a library, a residency program, as well as educational projects with schools. The art space engages in its neighborhood's history and socio-political realities which are entangled with the reflections and discourses of the project.

S A V V Y Contemporary is Elena Agudio Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock Onur Çimen Sagal Farah Billy Fowo  
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