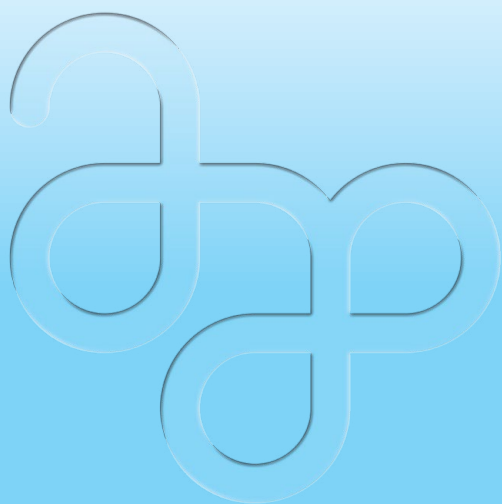


artasiapacific



NEWS
CULTURAL CURRENCY
THE ARTISTS OF 2020
& ONE TO WATCH
CITY REPORTS
FESTIVALS
EXHIBITIONS
PREVIEWS

SYDNEY AND CANBERRA

SEOUL

TAIPEI

SHANGHAI

MANILA

HONG KONG

JAKARTA

KUALA LUMPUR

BANGKOK

NEW DELHI

ALMATY

BEIRUT

RAMALLAH

ISTANBUL

NEW YORK

VOLUME

XVI

A
L
M
A
N
A
C

2
0
2
1

59
CITY REPORTS

60
SYDNEY AND
CANBERRA

62
SEOUL

64
TAIPEI

66
SHANGHAI

68
MANILA

70
HONG KONG

72
JAKARTA

76
KUALA LUMPUR

78
BANGKOK

80
NEW DELHI

82
ALMATY

84
BEIRUT

86
RAMALLAH

88
ISTANBUL

90
NEW YORK

BEIRUT

State of Siege

When the world is filled with a sense of catastrophe, is it possible to convey anything of the scale and quality of what's besieging Lebanon? That's the question at the back of my mind whenever I speak to anyone outside the country. "How are things in Beirut?" they ask sympathetically. When I explain that things are falling apart, they nod yes,

they understand, things are really tough there too, before describing the anxieties of the pandemic, its restrictions and economic ramifications. There's no point trying to explain over another Zoom call. So, in turn, I nod.

A couple of weeks ago, the popular Instagram comedian Farixtube posted a question on his Stories. "One wish," it stated, before giving his followers a choice between two options, "No Corona in the world" or "Dollar back to 1500." The result of this admittedly unscientific survey might surprise people who did not spend the last year here: 58 percent chose the exchange rate, which had pegged the Lebanese lira to the dollar at a fixed rate since the mid-1990s. More than life before Covid-19—with its endless lockdowns, daily death tolls and infection rates, economic hardship, enforced isolation from family and friends, face masks and hand sanitizer—Lebanese yearn for the time before a catastrophic national economic collapse. Counterintuitively, given that nowhere is untouched by the ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic, all the restrictions we've also been living in Lebanon keep us feeling tethered to a sense of normality.

It is a struggle even to remember everything that happened here, and harder to know what to prioritize. Is it the revolution, which filled us with enthusiasm but was strangely lacking in any genuine hope of eventual success? For six months, we dutifully trudged down to city squares and streets, set up soup kitchens, debating tents, and partied in abandoned and previously forbidden buildings, reclaiming monuments to wars that had entrenched warlords as the political class we were trying to finally rid ourselves of. We were met by tear gas, gangs of thugs paid to beat and break us, and sinister units of riot police who fired live rounds of buckshot into the crowds.

Is it the economic collapse, which has produced the second highest rate of inflation in the world by some measures, wiped out savings, pushed 50 percent of the population into poverty, and left everyone juggling three versions of the same currency: the official dollar rate still pegged at 1,500 lira, the dollar counted at 3,900 lira by the banks, or the 10,000 lira you could get in July for a real cash dollar from a black-market exchange house?

Or is it the explosion in the Port of Beirut in August? So big that it was measured in megatons and proportions of Hiroshima, killed over 200 people, made half a million homeless, and wiped out much of East Beirut; so big that even miles away people thought it was targeting their neighborhood politician.

With all of these catastrophes, we know exactly who is responsible and what we have to do about it. We know how the warlords legislated their own amnesty after the civil wars to install themselves as dynasts; we know how the central bank created a junk bond that pauperized half the population and stole savers' deposits; and we know that for seven years successive governments ignored their own officials' warnings that the ammonium nitrate stored illegally at the port could ignite and wipe out the capital. What we now know is that knowledge isn't enough, that power here is immune to knowledge. The *sulta*, or rulers, are indifferent to the fact that we know every forensic detail of their crimes, their negligence, and their violence. They carry on regardless.

How has the art world responded? The revolution started in October 2019, the same day as the opening of Ashkal Alwan's (AA) Home Works, our most important art-world event. The difficult decision was swiftly taken to cancel. That set the tone for the year. A consensus soon formed that in this time of catastrophes, now is not the time for "doing" art. Many nonprofits soon gave over their spaces to community projects and NGOs. Initially a temporary measure, it ended up stretching deep into 2020.

In October 2020, the new directors of Beirut Art Center (BAC), Haig Aivazian and Ahmad Ghossein, two artists who took charge of an institution in probably the most difficult climate imaginable, sent a newsletter that proposed a "rhetorical shift." Instead of "what can an art center do?" it stated that its new motivating question is "what can an art center be?" The shift seemed odd, but in a way it's a sign of the times for the art world here. By that I don't mean ontology has displaced praxis in Beirut, so that a new "jargon of authenticity" reigns over the art scene. But it certainly is a sign that what can be done is stiflingly

constrained: to online programming (from BAC, Metropolis Cinema, the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, AA) and publications (by BAC and AA); expending labor power and dwindling capital on rebuilding spaces from the debris of the explosion, as Surssock Museum, Mina Image Center, Arab Image Foundation, Marfa' Gallery, Galerie Tanit, Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Agial Art Gallery, and Beirut Art Residency are forced to do; and organizing fundraising auctions to respond to one crisis after another. This is the climate in which "what can you do?" gives way to "what can you be?"

And yet, I miss the humble exhibition, the live performance, and the public screening. Of course, artists shouldn't be pushed to produce now when they're struggling to survive, or put their health at risk by presenting live. But to make sense of what's happening here, I've been hoping that the institutions would discuss more openly, or at least help artists ask their own questions more publicly. For a decade Lebanon had been in the thrall of a generation of artists asking deep philosophical questions about historical representability—think Walid Raad's Atlas Group—in an attempt to make sense of 15 years of war and its aftermath. More recently, a form of critical human-rights activism that uses knowledge to challenge power—think Forensic Architecture's Lawrence Abu Hamdan—has been in the ascendance. Neither can be expected to ask the questions demanding answers today. Maybe we have to wait for the dust to settle, for the aftermath, to find the next generation of questions.

BAC eventually reopened for a week in November with an exhibition, "20/20/on/offline" (11/12–2/13/21) before another Covid-19 lockdown. It was moving just to be back, visiting an exhibition after this long year; but disappointing because the commissions were dominated by attempts to represent the moment of the explosion, the most spectacular and thus easiest event we've lived through this past year representationally. There were other themes too. The one that stuck with me, especially apparent in a few of the illustrations by Tracy Chahwan and Raphaëlle Macaron, was migration and exile.

That's what we're all asking ourselves and thinking about today. Are you one of the lucky ones with a second passport, or a residency permit, or even a visa? If not, how to get ahold of one and leave? Just like our parents did a generation ago, and the generations of Lebanese before. So perhaps let's not dwell too long on what Lebanon as a system—its regime and rulers, *nizām* and *sulta*—have done to us over the years; or how this brutal form of power, indifferent or immune as it is to our knowledge of its crimes, can be confronted. If we must for the moment speak in the jargon of authenticity, then "being Lebanese" means asking whether it's time to leave.

STEFAN TARNOWSKI



Exterior view of the third smoke plume on the north west of the warehouse, from FORENSIC ARCHITECTURE's *The Beirut Port Explosion*, 2020, still from video: 11 min 58 sec. Copyright and courtesy the artists.



RAPHAËLLE MACARON, *Force majeure*, 2020, digital illustration, 30×24 cm. Courtesy the artist.

ABU DHABI

NYUAD ART GALLERY

www.nyuad-artgallery.org
nyuad.artgallery@nyu.edu
New York University Abu Dhabi, Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi
T +971 2 628 8000
Mon-Sat 12am-8pm

An academic museum-gallery presenting exhibitions by internationally-established artists, curators, and scholars, on topics of regional relevance and international significance.

ANTWERP

AXEL VERVOORDT GALLERY

www.axelvervoordtgallery.com
info@axelvervoordtgallery.com
Kanaal Stokerijstraat 19, 2110 Wijnegem
T +32 3 355 33 00
Thur-Sat 2pm-5pm or by appointment

From its inception in 2011, the gallery has been a strong supporter of Zero and Gutai art. Our vision has gradually evolved into contemporary art with a special interest in the concept of the void, space, and time.

BANGKOK

100 TONSON GALLERY

www.100tonsongallery.com
info@100tonsongallery.com
100 Soi Tonson, Ploenchit Road, Lumpini, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330
T +66 2010 5813
Thur-Sun 11am-7pm

100 Tonson exhibits cutting-edge contemporary art by Thai and international artists.

RICHARD KOH PROJECTS

www.rkfineart.com
projects@rkfineart.com
Unit A, 3/F, N22 Art Warehouse,
2198/10-11 Narathiwas Road Soi 22,
Chong Nonsi, Yannawa, 10120 Bangkok
T +66 2037 6944
Tues-Sat 11am-7pm

BEIJING

BEIJING COMMUNE

www.beijingcommune.com
info@beijingcommune.com
798 Art Zone, 4 Jiuxianqiao Road,
Chaoyang District, Beijing 100015
T +86 10 8456 2862
Tues-Sat 10am-6pm

Since 2004, many influential figures in the Chinese art scene have launched watershed solo exhibitions at Beijing Commune. The gallery continues to be an incubator for emerging artists.

CHAMBERS FINE ART GALLERY

www.chambersfineart.com
bj@chambersfineart.com
Red No. 1-D, Caochangdi, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100015
T +86 10 5237 0742
Tues-Sat 10am-6pm

INK STUDIO

www.inkstudio.com.cn
info@inkstudio.com.cn
Red No. 1-B1, Caochangdi, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100015
T +86 10 6435 3291
Tues-Sun 10am-6pm

MAGICIAN SPACE

www.magician-space.com
info@magician-space.com
798 East Road, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100015
T +86 10 5978 9635
Tues-Sun 10:30am-6:30pm

PÉKIN FINE ARTS

www.pekinfinearts.com
info@pekinfinearts.com
241 Caochangdi Village, Cui Gezhuang Xiang, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100015
T +86 10 8434 0791
Tues-Fri 10am-6pm
Sat 11am-6pm

TANG CONTEMPORARY ART

www.tangcontemporary.com
info@tangcontemporary.com
798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100015
T +86 10 5978 9610
Tues-Sun 11am-6:30pm

GALERIE URS MEILE

Beijing-Lucerne
www.galerieursmeile.com
galerie@galerieursmeile.com
D10, 798 East Street, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100015
T +86 10 576 260 51
Tues-Sun 11am-6:30pm

BEIRUT

BEIRUT ART CENTER

www.beirutartcenter.org
info@beirutartcenter.org
Jisr el-Wati, Off Corniche An-Nahr, Building SAFE, Street 93, Zone 66 Adlieh
T +961 (0) 1 397 018
Mon, Tues, Thur, Fri 12pm-8pm
Wed 12am-10pm
Sat 11am-7pm

BERLIN

A3 ARNDT ART AGENCY

www.arndtagency.com
contact@arndtagency.com
Fasanenstraße 28, 10719 Berlin
T +49 30 88 71 34 43
Hours vary by project

A3 Arndt Art Agency presents curated exhibitions in collaboration with international artists, museums, and private collections.

ZILBERMAN | BERLIN

www.zilbermangallery.art
zilberman@zilbermangallery.com
Goethestraße 82, 10623 Berlin
T +49 30 3180 9900
Tues-Sat 11am-6pm

In 2016, Zilberman opened its new Berlin space in a turn-of-the-century building in the city's Charlottenburg neighborhood, where it also runs an artist-in-residency program.

BRISBANE

INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART

www.ima.org.au
ima@ima.org.au
420 Brunswick Street, Brisbane, QLD 4006
T +61 732 525 750
Tues 11pm-6pm

Since its establishment in 1975, the Institute of Modern Art has been a leading venue for the production, presentation, and circulation of art in Australia.

BUSAN

KUKJE GALLERY

www.kukjegallery.com
kukje@kukjegallery.com
F1963, 20 Gurak-ro 123 Beon-gil, Suyeong-gu, Busan 48212
T +82 51 758 2239
Tues-Sun 10am-6pm

CHEONAN

ARARIO GALLERY CHEONAN

www.arariogallery.com
43 Mannam-ro, Dongnam-gu, Cheonan-si, Chungcheongnam-do
T +82 41 551 5100
Mon-Sun 11am-7pm

CHICAGO

SMART MUSEUM OF ART

www.smartmuseum.uchicago.edu
smart-museum@uchicago.edu
5550 S Greenwood Ave, Chicago, IL 60637
T +1 773 702 0200
Tues-Sun 10am-5pm

DOHA

MATHAF: ARAB MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

www.mathaf.org.qa
Education City, off Al-Luqta Street, Doha
T +974 4402 8855
Sat-Thurs 9am-7pm
Fri 1:30pm-7pm

DUBAI

ALSERKAL AVENUE

www.alserkalavenue.ae
info@alserkalavenue.ae
17th St, Al Quoz 1, Dubai
T +971 4 333 3464
Sat-Thurs 10pm-7pm
Fri Galleries closed; other spaces open

JAMEEL ARTS CENTRE

www.jameelartscentre.org
hello@jameelartscentre.org
Jaddaf Waterfront, Dubai
T +971 4 8739 800
Fri 12pm-10pm
Sat-Thurs 10:00am-8:00pm

JAKARTA

ROH PROJECTS

www.rohprojects.net
info@rohprojects.net
new location opening soon
T +62 21 2123 1631

HONG KONG SAR

10 CHANCERY LANE

www.10chancerylanegallery.com
info@10chancerylanegallery.com
G/F, 10 Chancery Lane, Central
T +852 2810 0065
Tues-Sat 10am-6pm

Since 2001, 10 Chancery Lane Gallery has covered a broad range of Asia-Pacific artists of culturally diverse backgrounds, and focuses on emerging movements as well as historically important artists.

ALISAN FINE ARTS

www.alisan.com.hk
info@alisan.com.hk
21/F Lyndhurst Tower, 1 Lyndhurst Terrace, Central
T +825 2526 1091
Mon-Sat 10am-6pm

Founded in 1981, Alisan Fine Arts is the first professionally run gallery in Hong Kong and promotes contemporary Chinese artists including: Chao Chung-hsiang, Chu Teh-Chun, Gao Xingjian, and Zao Wou-ki.