

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THIS IS NOT AN EXHIBITION.
AND THIS IS NOT BEIRUT

by
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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A free-format curatorial platform exploring the space of Beirut in the aftermath of the August 4 explosion. Interventions Website and Curatorial Research Paper.

This is not an exhibition. is a platform for experimentation in the public spaces of the city through timely interventions in the form of installations, performances, discussions, walks, etc. These interventions aim at questioning and contesting established artistic and curatorial practices by transgressing the normalization of social, political and urban dynamics in the spaces they take place in and invite the audience to participate in the production of the works. The pilot version of *This is not an exhibition. And this is not Beirut.*, engages with Beirut in the aftermath of the August 4 explosion through artistic interventions taking place in public. The works produced shed light on the present and the reality of the city, as opposed to projecting an illusory future in which the city's inhabitants are mere observers of the city's transformations. Public installations have been utilized since the mid 1990s in Beirut as a means to counter the reconstructive policies urban development by the company Solidere (Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction du Centre-ville de Beyrouth) which reshaped the city and erased its collective memory. In the wake of the explosion, there is a lingering fear of continuity of this mnemonic politics of erasure and further displacement of its residents. The works presented on this platform are non-representational and engage with the present and reality of the city rather than projecting a unified image of Beirut. Concocted in the *BePublic* lab –a timely experimental lab engaging with the social, political and urban dynamics that form the given space– *This is not an exhibition. And this is not Beirut.*, maps out the produced interventions across different points of the city. Through these works, the audiences are invited to navigate and explore the space of the city across a myriad of contributions, not restricted to a medium or an approach. The multimedia and multidisciplinary platform in the form of a website archives the produced spatial and temporal ruptures in Beirut. By navigating the city, we are able to perceive it in its heterogeneous fragments, instead of a collective and enforced romanticization of the blast. The importance of these works lies in the process, through which we allow ourselves to discover the needs of social, economic, political and urban spheres as we frame their ruptures.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is not an exhibition. a curatorial platform

This is not an exhibition. is a curatorial platform that conceptualizes a series of timely spatial interventions taking place in public spaces. I call interventions all installations, performances, city walks, discussions, screenings, workshops, among other things, for all these practices interrupt and alter the produced and regularized spaces through political, social, economic and urban dynamics. These interruptions are a call to halt and rethink the nature of these dynamics as a product of neoliberal policies of the market emancipation and state weakening applied to the scale of cities. The curatorial platform engages with political artistic productions as forms of relational aesthetics, a key mode of artistic production along with a political understanding of art. Resonating with the works of the Situationist International (SI), and later on theorized by French philosopher Jacques Rancière and curator Nicolas Bourriaud, the proposed or commissioned artistic productions and interventions contest the organization and formation of the city's landscape that stem from the social, political and urban conditions. Along with Rancière's proposition of artworks as disruptive of the frames of visibility, the project considers the relevance of artistic productions challenging the *status-quo* on aesthetic terms as in and of themselves proposing a politics of framing

and visibility that transgress the pre-established aesthetic regimes. According to Rancière,

[...] they are specific distributions of space and time, of the visible and the invisible, that create specific forms of 'commonsense', regardless of the specific message such-and-such an artist intends to convey and or cause he or she wants to serve. This is not a simple matter of an 'institution', but of the framework of distributions of space and the weaving of fabrics of perception. Within any given framework, artists are those whose strategies aim to change the frames, speeds and scales according to which we perceive the visible and combine it with a specific invisible element and a specific meaning. Such strategies are intended to make the invisible visible or to question the self-evidence of the visible.¹

This passage expands on the politics of art as a regime of visibility and perception. The naturalized distribution of time and space builds a particular perceptive structure of what eventually becomes visible. The visible is not only and as much what is directly perceived, but it refers more to our understanding of time and space. Artistic productions breach the agreed upon commonality of the distributed time and space and articulate the invisibilities. In this sense, *This is not an exhibition.* puts forward the transgression of reality, or the "specific forms of 'commonsense'"² through the proposed interventions. This platform is a space to requestion our role as producers, curators and artists in a social, political and urban context through a thorough engagement with the conditioning framework of time and space. In light of Jacques Rancière, Guy Debord

¹ Rancière, Jacques, "The Paradoxes of Political Art" in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing: 2010), 141.

² Ibid.

and the reconceptualization of cities proposed by the Situationists Internationals, and Nicolas Bourriaud and his theory of relational aesthetics as artistic productions which are accessible to the public, this project looks into the heteronomous form of aesthetics, as not only grounded in the social but also emanating from it. Effectively, producers of art are very much anchored in the given conditions of time and space. The role of producers is to bring out the invisible informalities, the ruptures in the framing of space and time that customary conditions burry. For this matter, throughout the project, the term "contributors" is used to identify curators and artists. In light of Rancière and Bourriaud, both the interest in the role of curators and artists is in their possible contributions to disclosing the ruptures, articulating what is unspoken and defying the commonsense.

The second notion of interest to me is the production of relational aesthetics. What is political in these interventions is their power to challenge the limits of art by constituting "a new landscape of the visible, the sayable and the doable."³ The political according to Rancière is the ability to articulate the invisible, through "a mode of action that is enacted by a specific subject,"⁴ a formulation and litigation of our agency. The political is the use of aesthetics to analyze "relations with the superstructure and the layer of obligatory behavior underpinning its use, it becomes conversely possible to

³ Rancière, Jacques, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, 149.

⁴ Rancière, Jacques, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, 27.

produce models of relations with the world."⁵ These interventions function as ruptures in the commonsense by challenging the practice of daily life. Finally, in the quoted passage Rancière alludes to the institution as a form of framing time and space through language. through this platform I attempt to develop an understanding of the institutionalization of aesthetics in producing forms of visibility, which Rancière defines as "consensus" or when the "sensory is given as univocal."⁶ The platform of *This is not an exhibition.* chooses space as its starting point and dismantles its social, political and urban dynamics. The project tackles the adopted commonalities in the city of Beirut in the wake of the August 4, 2020 disaster.

1.2. And this is not Beirut.

Before the event of the explosion is made to settle in some unexamined past, the first edition of *This is not an exhibition., And this is not Beirut.* contests the present and reality of Beirut in the aftermath of the event. The proposed interventions aim at challenging the prevailing apolitical narrative of rebirth, return and resilience, as gives for a passive transition to an uncertain future. The produced works shed light on the present and the reality of the city, as opposed to projecting an illusory future in which the city dwellers are mere observers of the city's transformations. In the wake of the explosion, the fear of the city's erasure through reconstruction is reinstated in fear of the

⁵ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. (Paris: Les Presses du Réel, 2009).

⁶ Rancière, Jacques, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, 149.

calamitous scenarios that would reproduce the post-war experience of reconstructing Beirut.

Borrowing from Naomi Klein, urbanist Mona Fawaz voices the concerns of "disaster capitalism", the global strategy of capitalizing on disasters by private agents who take advantage of the disasters to impose neoliberal reconstructive policies which dispossess the vulnerable people from their urban rights of existing in the city, while furthering gentrification and marginalization.⁷ Fawaz refers to Klein's notion of the "shock doctrine", a practice of neoliberal reconstruction that revives a city without a people.⁸ This process entails the takeover of private institutions and agents of reconstructive projects of schools, housing, hospitals and other urban infrastructures and affect the urban planning of the city, weakening and denying the role of the state in the organization and distribution of welfare. It also means the withdrawal of the state from any regulatory influence on the market and daily life policy making. Thus, in the wake of disasters, these private agents fund projects which impoverished or vulnerable states cannot take care of, and gain the power to control the sectors, such as housing, health and education. In the wake of Solidere's emergence, a corporation that planned the reconstruction of the Central District of Beirut after the official end of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) signed in the Ta'ef agreement, "the huge machine that is

⁷ Fawaz, Mona. "Disaster Capitalism." *Eurozine*, Last modified January 5, 2021. <https://www.eurozine.com/disaster-capitalism/>

⁸ Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine*. (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2010).

reconstructing and regenerating the city is already wiping out the memory of old Beirut, relentlessly tossing the rubble of the old city into the sea."⁹

In the wake of a new disaster and renewed fears, we investigate the role of public interventions in evaluating the transformations of the city. The planned interventions through this platform question the implemented policies after the explosion which affect the life of the city dwellers. Some of the policies are the ambiguous law No. 194 drafted on October 16, 2020 with the aims of protecting the residents of the areas affected by the explosion,¹⁰ the approval of the demolition of the grain silos two years later which remain the last witnesses to the crime,¹¹ the role of NGOs in the distribution of aids to the residents of Beirut and the neglected open investigations and the problems of the judiciary system.¹² Two years later, with an open

⁹ Khoury, Elias. "The Memory of the City." *Grand Street*, no. 54 (Autumn 1995), 139. DOI: 10.2307/25007930.

¹⁰ "Law No. 194 Dated 16/10/2020 Relating to the Protection of the Damaged ..." ALDIC-The Lebanese Association of Taxpayers' Right, n.d. <https://www.aldic.net/law-no-194-dated-16102020-relating-to-the-protection-of-the-damaged-and-affected-areas-and-their-reconstruction-following-the-explosion-of-the-port-of-beirut/>.

Moreover, Public Works Studio published a study detailing what loopholes in this law are, and how it is not as effective as it appears to be.

“صفر إخلاء: لحماية سگان المناطق المتضررة من تقجير 4 أب وضمان عودتهم” Public works studio, Last modified August 2, 2021. <https://publicworksstudio.com/en/node/104>.

¹¹ Soha Mneimneh and Mona Fawwaz, "Demolishing the Beirut Port Silos Will Deepen Lebanon's Collective Amnesia," *DAWN*, Last modified May 6, 2022, <https://dawnmena.org/demolishing-the-beirut-port-silos-will-deepen-lebanons-collective-amnesia/>.

¹² Sader, Marie Jo. "How Did Local Ngos Handle Tens of Millions in Private Donations after the Beirut Explosion?" *L'Orient Today*, Last modified December 28, 2021. <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1285702/how-did-local-ngos-handle-tens-of-millions-in-private-donations-after-the-beirut-explosion.html>.

wound, the residents of the city resume their daily lives. They continue their quest for better days in the midst of alarming signs. Hence the duty of curators, artists and mostly contributors by putting forward these signs, triggering people to question the inherent normalized practices of being in the city, practices which do take over their rights as residents, and a reminder of their legitimate role in producing the city.

The interest in site-specific public interventions for this project, was instigated by a close engagement with the work of artist and architect Rana Haddad who started in the late 1990 opposing the destructive-reconstructive policies through artistic productions. According to Haddad, "Beirut's survival was only made possible through its informalities."¹³ Echoing Rancière, the city's survival was only possible through constant contestation of the commonsense or the normalized narrative of the return of the city through the neoliberal reconstructive policies. Concocted within the BePublic Lab,¹⁴ an urban and architectural lab of which Haddad is the founder, *This is not an exhibition. And this is not Beirut.* takes on the naturalization of urban social and political practices of the city of Beirut by considering the August 4 explosion as a trajectorial and historical turning point. This platform maps out the produced interventions across different points of the city. This multimedia and multidisciplinary

¹³ Haddad, Rana, "Iplace", 351-6 in Benyamin, Jasmine., Reynolds, Kyle., Zell, Mo., Bouchard, Nikole., and Moon, Whitney., *Play with the Rules.* (ACSA Fall Conference Proceedings, 2018). <https://www.acsa-arch.org/chapter/iplace/>.

¹⁴ Bepublic is design lab which invites its participants to produce installations addressing the city and its practices. Participants acquire hands-on experience while addressing everyday issues including their rights as citizens. For further information please refer to <https://ranahaddadworks.com/home/bepublic> and https://www.domusweb.it/en/design/2016/09/22/silence_in_beirut.html.

platform archives the produced spatial and temporal ruptures in Beirut. Through these works, the participating audience are invited to navigate and explore the space of the city across a myriad of contributory productions, not restricted to a medium or an approach. By navigating the city, they are able to perceive it in its heterogeneous fragments, instead of a collective and enforced romanticization of the blast.

1.3. Structure of the curatorial thesis

The study of this curatorial platform is divided into three chapters. The first chapter draws on defining artistic practices as site-specific and non-representational. Contrarily to the installed monuments in the city, these works do not attempt at monumentalizing the moment of the blast, nor do they represent the city-to-come in an illusory form. They do not romanticize or immortalize a particular reality. Building on the arguments of French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, Rancière and Bourriaud I analyze the relevance of non-representational forms of artistic productions, which Lyotard calls figural or critical art,¹⁵ which allow a more comprehensive public engagement with the interventions rather than putting the audience in the position of observer and consumer. This chapter highlights the importance of navigation as a tool to understand the discrepancies in the space of the city. The works produced through this platform emanate from the nature of the given space. They are only valid in public spaces, as they are specific to the social, economic, political and urban condition of this

¹⁵ Lyotard, Jean-François. "Notes on the Critical Function of the Work of Art", In *Driftworks* (London: Semiotext(e), 1994).

very particular space. Public space also means accessibility in terms of both space and content. It means that the work is a communal product. Thus, the importance of these works is in the process through which we allow ourselves to discover the needs of the space as we frame these ruptures. Moreover, the city appears in its fragments manifested through social, political and urban practices but also through imbalanced spatial transformations. The third chapter looks at the concept of relational aesthetics as defined by Bourriaud and its limitations. It engages with the readings of Clair Bishop, Anthony Downey, and Stewart Martin who oversaw the limits of relational aesthetics as it is proposed by Bourriaud and considered the lacking arguments which could give relational aesthetics productions a more critical approach. The reading of these texts is accompanied by Rancière's definition of the political allowing me to ground the proposed and commissioned interventions.

The last chapter is an overview of the first three interventions produced through this platform along with the resonating theory. The first intervention, "stories from the other city", took place on July 6, 2022 on the Vendome stairs connecting the districts of Geitawi and Mar Mikhael in Beirut, and have been highly gentrified with bars in the late 2000s. The screening showcased three films, "Ana Beirut" Episode 4 (2021, 6') directed by Bachir Asmar, "Recovery" (2021, 5') directed by Jean-Claude Boulos and "Re-Destruction" (2021, 40') directed by Simon El Habre, followed by a discussion. The screening intervention told stories of the city in the aftermath of the August 4 explosion through the eyes and lens of the contributing filmmakers.

The second intervention, the performance walk titled "through a city" with performer Petra Serhal, takes the audience on a journey from Beirut's city center (Riyad Al Solh Square) towards the Al Khodor area (Karantina) to experience the changes that were imposed on its population and its urban fabric through the reconstruction policies. This walk was first commissioned by Legal Agenda in August 2021 on the one-year commemoration of the port explosion. Finally, the performance "it's a public invitation" by performer Hashem Adnan brings people together in a conjuration session during which the participants write together an incantation after several failed attempts to overthrow the system ever since October 19, 2019, and to organize politically. If nothing else is left for us to do, what about resorting to supernatural powers, aligning with the people and creating a change? The discussion on the three interventions is accompanied by an elaboration on the curatorial method that took form in producing these works.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALIZING THE CITY.

This is a curatorial project, this not an exhibition.

This chapter presents the curatorial concept encapsulated in the name *This is not an exhibition. This is not Beirut.*, The produced site-specific works documented on this platform come as a response to the existing commemorative statues holding the discourse of the reconstruction of the city and the promise of rising up from the ashes.¹⁶ In a short video commentary essay published on YouTube and titled "مسابقة النصب أو "السباق على من يثبت رواية الانفجار" (*The competing commemorative statues, or the competition over the narrative of the explosion*), visual artist and filmmaker Ghassan Halwani enumerates the commemorative monuments that were erected in the wounded city after the blast.¹⁷ Halwani argues that these monuments impose a narrative indorsed by the ruling elite as a humanitarian message and a melancholic representation of the wounded city. The continually repeated narratives –after each disaster– celebrating the return of the vibrant image of the city in an undefined and unclear future, aim to remind the people that they are resilient and will always make it through hardships. Such monuments portray a hopeful future amidst an agonizing present. Moreover, these

¹⁶ Auji, Hala. "As the Dust (Un)Settles: Consuming Disaster In Beirut's reconstruction." *Platform*, Last modified October 5, 2020. <https://www.platformspace.net/home/as-the-dust-unsettles-consuming-disaster-in-beiruts-reconstruction>.

¹⁷ Halwani, Ghassan, *السباق على من يستحوذ على سردية انفجار بيروت*, (Youtube, 2021). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0OHuJt19ZQ>.

representations of the city distract the people from the current reality by decontextualizing the narrative of the explosion from its political, economic and social embeddedness. The narrative of the return of a glorified Beirut clears the state of its responsibilities and holds no one accountable for the crime. These monuments represent the moment of the blast in the past through the return of the wounded city in the future. (Figure 1,2.)

In what follows we will elaborate on significant notions to our discussion behind the concept of *This is not an exhibition. And this is not Beirut*. We first look at the fetishization of the past through monumentalization and romanticization of the moment of the explosion. We then trace the forged representation of the image of the city and elaborate on the need to engage with the present. Finally, we look at the relevance of navigating the city.

2.1 Exhibitionary spaces and monumentalization

In his book *Posthumous Images Contemporary Art and Memory Politics in Post-Civil War Lebanon*, art historian Chad Elias argues for the relevance of monuments in the spatial preservation of collective memory to move past an event particularly after the end of the civil war in Lebanon. he claims that monuments “console[s] viewers or redeem[s] tragic events.”¹⁸ As an acknowledgement to the end of

¹⁸ Elias, Chad. “Suspended Spaces; the Void and the Monument In Post-Civil War Beirut”. in *Posthumous Images Contemporary Art and Memory Politics In Post-Civil War Lebanon*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 133.

the war. In this sense, these installed monuments after the blast console the people by encapsulating the moment of the blast as a past event. In his book, Elias argues for the importance of commemorative monuments after the civil war, , a historical remembrance of a particular event and a revival of the collective memory that was forcefully erased by the reconstruction plans of Solidere.¹⁹ The generation that survived the war was not only forced to put fifteen years behind them, but also to forget these years of rifles. However, Elias's argument is no longer valid after 2020: the city has been turned into a commemorative museum of the blast and the victims of the crime are called martyrs. With the commemorative statues and structures invading the area surrounding the scene of the crime, habitants and users of the city are incited to perceive August 4 as a past disaster and look forward to better days with hope. Monumentalization is an invitation to consume and fetishize the past.

Literary theorist Andreas Huyssen identifies the condition of the consumption of the past through the preservation of [falsified] memory.²⁰ Huyssen fears us that "we have come to read cities and buildings as palimpsests of space, monuments as transformable and transitory, and sculpture as subject to the vicissitudes of time."²¹ Beirut after the blast appears as a conglomeration of past elements, or a commemoration of a past instant still on display in the present. The fascination is a means to "counteract

¹⁹ Ibid, 134.

²⁰ Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. (California: Stanford University Press, 2009).

²¹ Ibid, 7.

this fear and danger of forgetting with survival strategies of public and private memorialization,"²² according to Huyssen's argument. This conception of the past that Huyssen critiques transforms the city space into a museum or an exhibitionary space by objectifying the city's formative dynamics –the urban, the social and the political– and their manifestation, and turning them into commemorative palimpsests.

Turning the city into a commemorative, exhibitionary or museum-like space resonates with art historian Donald Preziosi's critique of the colonial spectacular exhibitionary order. In the essay "The crystalline veil and the phallic imaginary" Preziosi looks at the transformation of modern cities as art historical and museological objects of desire.²³ The Crystal Palace, the glass structure in the Victorian England which was built for the Great Exposition of 1851 serves as a crystallization of an order of representation that Preziosi attributes to colonial modernity. The Great Exposition in London sets the stone for a capitalist and "colonialist exhibitionary order and its supportive modes of representation (in which objects are signs of some abstract system of meanings and values, whose reality is in turn made manifest 'in' material things and peoples)"²⁴ which was not only particular to museums and other national institutions but constituted the essence of urban planning of the cities in the Middle East in the nineteenth century.

²² Ibid, 18.

²³ Preziosi, Donald, and Johanne Lamoureux. "The Crystalline Veil and the Phallic Imaginary" In *In the Aftermath of Art: Ethics, Aesthetics, Politics*. (London: Routledge, 2006), 95–113.

²⁴ Ibid, 100.

The particularity of the Crystal Palace as opposed to other structures of great expositions is the visibility of those standing outside of the exhibited world inside, this being the result of the glass structure which constitutes a window to the inside. Thus, the universalist discourse of modernity, the reductionist homogenizing approach to progress, becomes the object of desire surrounded by glass walls, considered to be the "first fully realized modernist institution."²⁵ In other words, inside the glass walls, the technological progress and economic growth of cultures of the world is evaluated through the same western-centric and capitalist spectrum turning them into objects of desire for the viewers and the exhibition visitors. Colonized cities were built on this same logic of exhibitionism, through which space, as social, historical and economic dynamics is offered as the object of desire to the imperialist gaze. The formation of a city in this sense, responded to an exhibitionary complex that brought to the same level the various temporalities of the city – its past and present– as a proof of progress and evolution. Through this dichotomy, one falls into the observation and fetishization of the other, being the one inside the city, or the exhibitionary space when they distance themselves from the social, political historical and economic conditions responsible for the formation of this given space. For this reason, this is a curatorial project or platform and not an exhibition. While it is an invitation for the audiences to navigate and participate across various interventions in the city, this platform does not put forward the city and its residents on display where space and its components are fetishized as the

²⁵ Ibid, 108.

representation of a tragic past and its dwellers as mere observers, becoming objects of desire. This project aims, in this sense, to break the distance of observer and contributors, where both participants and contributors are asked to engage with the space of the city.

2.2 Image production and representation

I begin my discussion on the notion of representation with a close reading of Lyotard's and Rancière's theorizations on the function of critical art. Lyotard's "Notes on the Critical Function of the Work of Art" approaches the critical function of an artwork in relation to reality through language. According to Lyotard, reality is a "set of perceptions, signifiable in words, exchangeable by gestures, has gaps, is lacunary; there are regions that remain outside reach, that cannot be approached, that are utterly unrecognized"²⁶ and is communicable and representational. He is interested in what produces a rupture in the communicable, or in what he perceives as reality, in other words, a rupture that is a gap with no linguistic signification. He calls this a "figure", one that is not "[...] transformable and not linguistically communicable [...]."²⁷ In other words, figural artistic productions at no point represent a given reality. Figural art is non-representational. What Lyotard describes as a communicable production of art

²⁶ Lyotard, Jean-François. "Notes on the Critical Function of the Work of Art", in *Driftworks*. (London: Semiotext(e), 1994), 69.

²⁷ Ibid, 70.

attempts to fulfill the viewer's or audience's desires, whereas figural art engages with the fragments of "the here and now" without any attempt at representing reality.²⁸

Specifically, instead of an encompassing representation of reality, the role of the figural artist is to delineate reality's fragmented ruptures by the formulation and productions of indicators to these ruptures. By doing so, these artistic productions formulate the conditions of living in the city, the gaps in reconstructive projects and articulate the urge to protect the city from its re-destruction at a social, political, economic and urban level.

Lyotard maintains that representational art affects the perception of the real. He states: "If desire can be fulfilled in the work of art, then the work of art gives something to hope for. I believe that what is revolutionary is precisely to hope for nothing."²⁹

Lyotard perceives the representation of reality as a window to a false perception of the real. Hence, the impossibility of a revolutionary and critical approach to art through representation. Lyotard views the modernist avant-garde artist, with their political and ideological artistic productions, as one with power to distance themselves from the audience, and thus ineffective to be critical and immersed in the social context. His argument is centered on a critique of avant-garde art which he believes "means that artists show the way,"³⁰ or that an avant-garde artist is one who uses art as a political

²⁸ Ibid, 78.

²⁹ Ibid, 78.

³⁰ Ibid, 80.

tool to affect the masses. Lyotard trusts that representation is the manifestation of ideology as false consciousness, as it (re)presents a particular version of reality. Effectively, to engage with reality, artistic productions should be non-representational in addition to presenting and framing what is discriminated by language or the ruptures of the real, that have not been linguistically consumed. These works are not an end in themselves as they satisfy no desires and give no hope. He pushes for the abolition of the distant position of the artist through the revolutionary approach of critical and figural artistic production. Moreover, figural artistic productions are uncanny as they disrupt the habitual space, the communicable reality. For figural art engages with what is not consumed through language, what is not acknowledged and what has been made visible. The audience is left with a sense of unease at the encounter of these artistic productions.

The unusual and uncanny encounters encourage questioning the normative aspects of our living. This thought resonates with Haddad's works in challenging the *status-quo*. Her installation *Corniche Extended* (2012) (Figure3) along with her students in the Bepublic Lab – a timely experimental lab engaging with the social, political and urban dynamics that form the given space– looks at the violations of the public space on the lower corniche in Ain El Mraisseh. While being maintained by public funds, the stretch of the corniche in Beirut was closed to public access under the pretext of public safety. However, this rule did not apply to all visitors.³¹ How does a public space get

³¹ “Pause.” Beirut Shifting Grounds, n.d. <https://beirutshiftinggrounds.com/Pause>.

privatized, who monopolizes it and under what conditions? To answer all these questions, one had to enter this space. For that matter, a piece of the old train rail of Mar Mikhael was installed along the corniche, permitting the entrance to the audience without breaching the no walking inside policy. Along this journey, explanatory signs were installed that highlighted the infringement of the naturalized spatial practice.³² Such an intervention put to question our avoidance to use a space supposedly made for all, however closed to many. While being negatively received by the authorities and the municipality, one's journey in this trolley highlights the privatization of the public and the need to take action to reappropriate it.

The engagement with the *Here and Now* in *Corniche Extended* is effectively political. Thus, one finds in Rancière an elaboration of Lyotard's postmodern and depoliticizing argument into a political action and reaction. He theorizes the disruption of the hegemonic narrative as the creation of a "dissensus". Rancière argues that "Political and artistic fictions introduce dissensus by hollowing out that 'real' and multiplying it in a polemical way. The practice of fiction undoes, and then re-articulates, connections between signs and images, images and times, and signs and spaces, framing a given sense of reality, a given 'commonsense'."³³ Artistic practices ought to be contextualized and anchored in the real. Fiction does not reflect an evasion and disconnection, however, Rancière perceives it as a framing of the real which

³² Interview with the artist, June 2021.

³³ Rancière, Jacques, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, 149.

highlights the unseen or the unperceivable. By doing so, the political artistic engagement creates an uncanniness, a dissensus. For Rancière,

"Fiction", as re-framed by the aesthetic regime of art, means far more than the constructing of an imaginary world, and even far more than its Aristotelian sense as "arrangement of actions". It is not a term that designates the imaginary as opposed to the real; it involves the re-framing of the "real", or the framing of a dissensus. Fiction is a way of changing existing modes of sensory presentations and forms of enunciation; of varying frames, scales and rhythms; and of building new relationships between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective.³⁴

Fiction is reality. In Rancière's words, a different framing of reality, one which "sensory presentations and forms of enunciation"³⁵ is not the product of imagination but a way of perceiving what does not stand out or framed by the commonsense. It is when the invisible is made visible, and the uncommunicable is articulated. Thus, fiction brings out the attributes of the real by creating discomfort at the moment of encounter.

Filmmaker Jayce Salloum explores the modes of articulating the visible and the invisible of Beirut, by questioning whether Beirut is not Beirut. *This is not Beirut (There was and there was not)* (1992) revolves around attempts at representing the city of Beirut after the civil war of 1975-1990.³⁶ Heading to Beirut from New York City, Salloum takes on an exploratory journey searching for the lost city. Salloum's film is an

³⁴ Ibid, 141.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Salloum, Jayce, *This Is Not Beirut (There Was and There Was Not)*. (Vimeo, 1992). <https://vimeo.com/81045456>.

experimental video art that juxtaposes images of Beirut with images in Beirut. He investigates the production of images and narratives of a city. Salloum begins by listing touristic postcards of Beirut with a sonorous announcement of the arrival to the airport of Beirut. In his search of what Beirut is and its forms of representation, Salloum goes on to explore the streets, interviewing the people and looking at the way in which the media represents the events taking place in Beirut.

His investigation entails two aspects. On the one hand, he is interested in the production of imagery related to the representation of the city. To this end, Salloum uses language to accompany the visual production of the city as a means to conceptualize the space of Beirut. On the other hand, he investigates the concept of representation as a western construct shaping the city's identity which echoes Preziosi's argument. The film examines the representation of the representations of Beirut as an exploration of the city's image and identity beyond the western representation defining Beirut as sometimes a touristic city, sometimes a city in a war. Salloum enumerates metonymies describing the city without mentioning it, such as "City of one thousand and one nights", "City of eternity", "Improbable city", "City in crisis", and many more (Figure4). Beirut appears as an object of interest, research, investigation, but most significantly of desire. Identified as such, the metonymies exemplify how the city is perceived as an object of desire represented by its function as either a center for the attraction of capital or one of endless tragedies.

Through this title, the object of language, which is the code/name Beirut, is pointed at –this is not. Salloum refutes the equation that the object of perception differs

from reality. Thus, a constant questioning of what Beirut is. The possibility to question through *This is not Beirut* appears as an interactional discursive sentence as it presupposes that one would recognize an image of Beirut and entails that the recognized images are not effectively what they are.³⁷ The proposition of *This is not Beirut* is indexical as it shifts one's perception from one context to another, one in which we try to imagine the city of Beirut. The indexical and denotational deictics (this, not) give this sentence a metapragmatic function.³⁸ *This* directs one's attention. *Not*, on the other hand, diverges this hailed attention to something beyond the represented, an unrepresented image of the city. While these shifters do not incorporate meaning on their own, they set the tone of the whole film. In this sense, the title offers a metasemantic and metapragmatic formulation as it forces the viewer to question the meaning (through a conditional use of language) of what they are directed to see, but most importantly, of Beirut as a word.³⁹ The reading of the title following the linguistic theories of Russian linguist Roman Jakobson allow the audience of *This is not Beirut* to requestion their perception of the space of the city identified as Beirut. Effectively, *This is not Beirut* imposes on the viewer the meaning of Beirut. One should know that Beirut does not resemble what is represented on the screen. The meaning of Beirut exists beyond the

³⁷ Silverstein, Micheal. "Metapragmatic Discourse and Detapragmatic Function", in *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 36.

³⁸ Ibid, 42.

³⁹ Jakobson, Roman, and Waugh, Linda, *On Language*. Cambridge, Mass. U.A.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990.

realm of the footage used, beyond what is represented. Salloum is not providing an answer; however, he points at the existence of the city beyond the space of the screen, an image of a city he has not seen, a city he is in search of. Moreover, the structure of *This is not Beirut* also imposes on the viewer conditions of usage of the word Beirut, as it is incomparable to what is projected on the screen. If one says Beirut, then what one sees does not correspond to the name. Salloum invites the viewer to think with him regarding the representation of the city in addition to the representations of the representation. Beirut does not seem to be graspable and representable, as attempts to do so are failing, and whatever we see is not Beirut.

2.3. Temporal projection and engagement with the present

Lyotard's "Notes on the Critical Function of the Work of Art" is an invitation to engage with the "here and now". In light of our critique of the contemporary monuments around the city and the deriving narrative I attempt to understand the existing relationship between the discourse of a hopeful illusory future and the present we avoid. For this we explore "In the Presence of the Corpse", an essay by artist Walid Sadek in which he speaks of a "protracted temporality, indeed protracted now."⁴⁰ While the end of the 1975 war was announced to be in 1990, the protracted now refers to a prolongation of the reality of the war. This protracted now is "accompanied by a wishful

⁴⁰ Sadek, Walid. "In the Presence of the Corpse." Essay. In *The Ruin to Come: Essays from a Protracted War*. (Pully: Motto Books, 2016), 16.

discourse on the necessary future release from the binds of sectarianism, labeled a false ensnarement with the past rather than a foundational structural component of the making of modern Lebanon."⁴¹ The framed temporality denotes a merged sanguineous past with an uncertainly hopeful future, detached from its sectarian and political foundations in which the actual present, the present corpse, is avoided. The confrontation with the present is uncanny; to coexist with the corpse is an impossibility to frame it and represent it.⁴² Hence, the commissioned site-specific productions through this platform dismantle the here and now. Rather than avoiding the present conditions of the formed space, this project is an invitation to encounter the present in all its multifaceted layers.

The prevailing political, social and spatial practices of ordering and organizing the city as a space taken away from its people, obliterate the ruptures of reality and simplify the entanglement of their conditions. Art historian Judith Naef, in her recent book *Precarious Imaginaries of Beirut* confirms that the narrative adopted nationally directs the focus on a possible return of a better future, dismissing the past and the traumatic effects of a catastrophe –be it a civil war– on the present. The present is a "transitional phase."⁴³ The inhabitants of Beirut are left hanging in a suspended now due to the precarity of the present. Moreover, Naef differentiates between the suspended and

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Sadek. "Place at last.", In *The Ruin to Come: Essays from a Protracted War*, 71.

⁴³ Naef, Judith. "Beirut's Suspended Now" in *Precarious Imaginaries of Beirut: A City's Suspended Now*. (New York: Springer International PU, 2018), 38.

protracted now. The "protracted" temporality is a prolongation of the past into the present, while the "suspended" now indicates a transitional phase into the promised prosperous future.⁴⁴ Despite the differences in these two terminologies, both Naef and Sadek critique a transition into a time that revokes the present. Thus, she invites us to engage with the here and now, an invitation to focus "on an ethical engagement with the vulnerability in the present."⁴⁵ Invoking the here and now untangles how the authorized reconstructive policies deprive the residents affected by the disaster of being active and vocal contributors partaking in the formation of their city.

2.4. Navigating the city

This is not an exhibition. And this is not Beirut. proposes a new reading of the map of the city. This reading is based on the collected and documented interactions with the installations scattered around the city. In this section, I elaborate on the importance of rereading the city through a close engagement with the writings of Guy Debord, Keith Basset and Michel De Certeau, in light of the proposed interventions. In his vigorous search for understanding cities and constructed spaces, French sociologist Michel De Certeau reflects on narrativization as an essential tool for seizing the city by its inhabitants. "Stories [...] traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial

⁴⁴ Ibid, 73.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 68.

trajectories."⁴⁶ De Certeau accredits the relevance of narrativization to spatial formation. He thus differentiates between the meaning of space and place, for spaces are activated places, or delimited fields, through a precise configuration of elements. He then proceeds with developing his argument related to space and place and the production of narratives and stories to the understanding of the difference between maps and tours as spatial navigation tools.

The organization that can be discerned in stories about space in everyday culture is inverted by the process that has isolated a system of geographical places. The difference between the two modes of description obviously does not consist in the presence or absence of practices (they are at work everywhere), but in the fact that maps, constituted as proper places in which to *exhibit the products* of knowledge, form tables of legible results. Stories about space exhibit on the contrary the operations that allow it, within a constraining and non- "proper" place, to mingle its elements anyway, [...]⁴⁷

A map allows the wholistic perception of space, an exhibitionary product to the redistribution of knowledge. On the other hand, touring space restructures these elements into a more intimate relationship, one of "going"⁴⁸, participating and living these experiences. While one is more visual and descriptive, the second is experiential and perceptual. It creates closer relation to space which permits the untangling of its construction. Philosopher Sharon Meagher's builds on De Certeau as he takes

⁴⁶ Certeau, Michel de. "Spatial Stories" in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 115.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 121.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 119.

philosophy to the streets, and anchors of the theoretical into the practices of everyday life. Meagher states that by worrying about the idealistic views of the city, one fails to account for the everyday life and experience of it.⁴⁹ Meagher refers to Decerteau's *Practice of Everyday Life* in which he visualizes cities as disparate spaces, conditioned by and social structures. Taking philosophy to the streets is an attempt at reading cities as practices of everyday life, unraveling the conditions which participate in its formation. Meagher refers to Henri Lefebvre's critique of positivist studies and views of cities which are reductionist as they reinforce the totalizing bird-eye view, turning the city into a homogeneous object of study. Accordingly, the salience of an imminent view of the conditions forming the space of the city for a rightful understanding of the formation of space.⁵⁰ De Certeau provides a theorization of the problematics of the totalizing view of the city. The city planner approach, of overlooking the whole of the city space, mistakenly believe such views to be applicable to the totality of space, disregarding the variations in the conditions of the formation of space. "Visibility obscures everyday life"⁵¹ putting together a whole, an illusory image quite different from reality, a representation of the city. Accordingly, De Certeau, believes that in order to understand and realize the space of the city one has to go back to the streets, dissect

⁴⁹ Meagher, Sharon. "Philosophy in the Streets." *City* 11, no. 1 (2007): 7, DOI: 10.1080/13604810701200722.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 9.

⁵¹ Ibid, 15.

the understanding of the city in its totality, to regasp it as intertwined social and economic dynamics forming the urban space.

Hence, in order to reconceptualize Beirut, we follow the bottom-up approach proposed by De Certeau and Meager, in which the city is perceived at a micro level in all its intricate components which put together constitute the macro image of the city. This project is an assertion why this is not an exhibition and why this is not Beirut, participants are invited to explore the space of the city as an amalgam of interdependent fragments rather than a unified entity or a map. The body navigating through the fragmented stories and narratives acknowledges the space of the city as a construct and entanglement of its social, political and urban dynamics producing the everyday practices. This practice dismantles a uniform image of the city, or any attempts to represent the city. At no point would the perception of the city as a whole be possible. The whole of the city-object would be conceived rather than perceived. These concepts reiterate the Situationist International's notion of the *dérive*. The *dérive* is an invitation to experience the city.⁵² It doesn't mean to simply wonder and get lost, it rather implies an active appropriation of the city from a subjective and political perspective. It also means to let go of our urge to get to destinations. Additionally, it also implies to let go of the preconceived and reified image of the city and to requestion the normalization of social, economic and urban dynamics under capitalism. The Situationists' *dérive* touches upon the study of the ambience of the city space of Paris in light of the conditions

⁵² Knabb, Ken. "Definitions" in *Situationist International: Anthology*. (1981): 52.

grounded in the context of the post WWII and the growth of the capitalist city.⁵³

Debord's introductory description of the *dérive* exposes implicitly both its goals and its limits. The *dérive* (translated to English to the 'drift') is a navigation in the space of the city. The drift aims at reconnecting the individual or the group with the psychogeography of the terrain.

In a derive one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a derive point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. But the derive includes both this letting-go and its necessary contradiction: the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities.⁵⁴

The Situationists "psychogeography" refers to the examination of the ambience of a space and its effect on our presence in it. For example, one maps out a street by studying the feelings of encountering the space and the walking pace. The examination of the body's existence in space is affected by the constituent conditions, namely the capitalist urban structure of the city which orders its use and consumption. In other words, the drift invites the participants to let go of the constituents of the spectacle and reconceive the space of the city in a new light. The drift is a quest to reconnect with the

⁵³ Debord, Guy. "Theory of the Dérive" (1958) in Knabb, Ken. *Situationist International: Anthology*. (1981).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

terrain hosting the social and urban dynamics in its raw form, in its geographical, topological and geological expressions⁵⁵. Reading the Situationists in the context of Beirut and drifting in the city denounce the impact of neoliberal reconstructions of the consumerist city by shedding light on the historical transformation of the space and the social transgressions which took place and deprived the residents of their rights to the city, first in the 1990s and again in the aftermath of the blast.

Urban geographer Keith Bassett believes that walking practices inspired by the drift "provide a rich source of ideas for exploring, experiencing and, it is hoped, understanding cities."⁵⁶ While the Situationists were not the first to utilize walking as an aesthetic tool to consider the space of the city, Bassett traces it back to the modernist practice of *flânerie*, the Dadaist events and the surrealist's *déambulation*. Walking as an aesthetic experience encounters the uncanny and produces reflections on the reality of space and the intertwined social, political, economic and urban layers. Thus, developing the practice of walking as an aesthetic experience is a pedagogical practice. It involves "an active and self-critical way in translating theoretical ideas into practical strategies on the ground, and then using their experiences to criticize and comment on those ideas."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Debord, Guy. "Introduction to a critique of urban geography" (1955) in Knabb, Ken. *Situationist International: Anthology*. (1981).

⁵⁶ Bassett, Keith. "Walking as an Aesthetic Practice and a Critical Tool: Some Psychogeographic Experiments." *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 28, no. 3 (2004): 403. DOI: 10.1080/0309826042000286965.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 408.

The works discussed in the last chapter are centered around the navigational body in space. highlighting the dissimilarities and discrepancies in the reconstruction and recovery of Beirut after the blast entails a realistic and contextual understanding of what has become of Beirut after the blast. All three interventions to-day, along with the ones to come, do speak of Beirut, and yet, all go back to the street as a point of origin, where all the social, economic, political and urban turmoil unfolds. Going back to Meager, the bottom-up approach to grasping the city offers a richer, more realistic and concrete perception of space as it positions the contributors and participants at the heart of the conflicting conditions rather than acknowledging a positivistic, reductionist and unifying view of these conditions. While the explosion did happen in Beirut, however, not all neighborhoods were affected similarly, and not all are recovering similarly. Dismantling the totalizing image reminds us that in fact, the Beirut we imagine is not Beirut.

CHAPTER 3

RELATIONAL AESTHETICS AND AESTHETIC OF POLITICS

In this third chapter I consider relational aesthetics – a concept coined by curator Nicolas Bourriaud as part of the conceptual framework this project adopts. Relational aesthetics is relevant for the project since it analyzes receptivity and the vital role of the audience in bringing about these works. Relational aesthetics as its names indicates, is based on the need to produce works which are relatable and accessible and thus heteronomous and contextualized in social, political, economic and urban spheres. While expanding on the notion of relational aesthetics, this project also points at the limitations of the term, derived from the critiques of Clair Bishop, Anthony Downey and Stewart Martin. Finally, the project connects Rancière's concepts of politics with the relational aesthetics theory and the application of relational aesthetics and its limitations in the produced interventions. Rancière provides theoretical tools to pragmatize heteronomous aesthetics as part of the political mode of action.

3.1. Relational aesthetics according to Bourriaud

In 1998, Bourriaud published his text *Relational Aesthetics* with the aim to "recreate the complex set of problems that arise in a particular period or age and take a

close look at the various answers given"⁵⁸ in relation to contemporary art and curatorial practices. Relational aesthetics as defined by Bourriaud produces art that is experienced and that engages with economic and social conditions. Relational aesthetics represents a theory of form, or in other words, relational aesthetics defines ways and means of artistic productions which uses the medium as a means rather than an end.⁵⁹ In other words the theory of form looks at the use of medium as a mean to convey the content which is the priority. Relational artworks create encounters that are inter-subjective which are affected by the envioning conditions the works are produced in. Thus, relational works are heteronomous and come to life through experiences and encounters around which a community is formed. The constructed community around these works participate in the happening and the validation of the work. Relational artistic productions are a form of producing art critical of the conditions of the time and space they exist in. Viewers do not simply look at an auratic art object, but rather engage with the work in the sense that the work cannot exist on its own.

As Bourriaud puts it, relational aesthetics aspires to abolish the dichotomy between gallery or museum goers from the rest of society widening the scope of the audience and public. Relational aesthetics does not induce change, however, triggers its recipients and pushes them to question and reconsider the social, economic and political condition of their time. Relational aesthetics as a theory of form, or how social relations and economic conditions materialize into artistic productions, sets the ground to

⁵⁸ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*, 2009, 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 7.

thinking about production of art with and for the community, but most importantly to question the understanding of community. However, as a concept proposed by Bourriaud in which he studies the installations and performances of Félix González-Torres, Pierre Huyghe, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, relational aesthetics comes with a set of limitations which I look into before drawing conclusions and proposing the aesthetic and social framework of these interventions. For example, Tiravanija moved what was found in the gallery office and storeroom into the exhibition space of 303 Gallery in New York, the director included. He then set up a kitchen and cooked in the space. The used cutlery became the art exhibited in the absence of the artist, however, during his presence they would be used by the visitors. Tiravanija used food as a convivial approach between artist and audience to break the distance created usually within the gallery space. In this sense, the artists discussed by Bourriaud within the relational aesthetics framework,

3.2. Limitations of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics theory

In the reading of the critiques of Clair Bishop, Anthony Downey, and Stewart Martin,⁶⁰ I identify two facets which are found to be ill-defined in Bourriaud's

⁶⁰ The texts I refer to are: Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." *October* 110 (2004): 51-79. DOI: 10.1162/0162287042379810.

Downey, Anthony. "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics." *Third Text* 21, no. 3, (2004): 267-75. DOI: 10.1080/09528820701360534.

Martin, Stewart. "Critique of Relational Aesthetics." *Third Text* 21, no. 4 (2007): 369–86. DOI: 10.1080/09528820701433323.

formulations. The first aspect is in relation to his perception of the community that is formed around the works produced, and the second aspect is in relation to the haziness in the critique of the modes of production of such artworks. In other words, relational aesthetics looks at the public as a homogenous entity abolishing all antagonism and social distinction which are at the core of the urban structure, organization and division. Additionally, while being critical with the commodification as a form of reification of capitalism in institutions, Bourriaud's proposition of relational aesthetics does not provide a self-critical tool to producing art under capitalism.

Bishop believes antagonism to be an essential social structure in her critique of Bourriaud. She bases her argument on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Social Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* in which they claim that social division does not counter democracy in the public sphere but rather elucidates the conditions of the public realm. Bishop supports that "a democratic society is one in which relations to conflict are *sustained*, not erased."⁶¹ Hence, rather than pushing for a homogenization of society through a consensus, antagonism as the relationship between incomplete entities or communities allows an identification of the self, the other and the conditions of one's being. The understanding of the incomplete arises from the fact that social entities or communities cannot exist without the opposing other, which validates and puts to question the existence of said community. In other words, Bishop fears, that

⁶¹ Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." *October* 110 (2004): 59.
DOI: 10.1162/0162287042379810.

through relational aesthetics and the attempt to make artistic production accessible, such a theory of form ignores social and economic conditions, essential to the formation of space and perceives the audience as one homogeneous entity.⁶² In more relatable and concrete terms, *This is not an exhibition. And this is not Beirut.* platform materializes from the knowledge of conditions forming the space, such as class division, exploitation, marginalization, racism, sectarian divisions. Through the proposed interventions, while it is primary to make the production relatable, relatability is very much framed by the previously mentioned conditions.

The second layer which Bourriaud fails to investigate, according to Anthony Downey and Stewart Martin, is how do relational aesthetics as a critique of the commodification of art, of the art market and of accessibility does not fall into the commodification of inter-subjective relations in addition to replicating and serving the neoliberal economic structure and the relationships formed within it?⁶³ Two problems are identified here, Downey's argument in relation to analyzing the mode of production of artistic works within the framework of relational aesthetics and Martin's fears one would fall into the trap of further commodification, not of the object, but rather of the subject. A realization of both concerns elaborates and concretizes an application of relational aesthetics which takes into consideration social structures, provides a critique

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Martin, Stewart. "Critique of Relational Aesthetics." *Third Text* 21, no. 4 (2007): 369–86. DOI: 10.1080/09528820701433323

Downey, Anthony. "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics." *Third Text* 21, no. 3, (2004): 267-75. DOI: 10.1080/09528820701360534.

of the economic structure of artistic productions and evades a commodification of inter-subjective relations. Downey asks:

If relational art practices are indeed reflecting, or utilizing, channels of inter-subjective relations, then there is a need to enquire into whether or not they are applying the already invasive practices of neo-liberalist commodification to both the so-called private realm and, subsequently, to the interstitial relational space between art institutions and their public.⁶⁴

Artistic productions as relational aesthetics are not merely a transposition of art productions from the private to the public realm. While this transition is quite essential, questions in relation to the formation of the private versus the public are vital. These questions target the structure of production itself, systems of funding and financial sustainability. *This is not an exhibition.* is interested in examining such concerns without romanticizing an anti-capitalist approach. In other words, while acknowledging the reified practices in capitalism, what are the tools which we can provide, to critique but also to produce art? At this stage these questions haven't been answered in the project, nevertheless, in each intervention, we have brought these questions up. To think of a collaborative network is to think of how can we bring in different skillsets together with no exploitation of labor? How can such a network grow so that it becomes self-sufficient? Is there a capital needed for such endeavors? Going back to Downey's argumentation, he finally pushes for these practices to be critical, to say the least, rather than simply reflecting the same socio-economic conditions of art practices Bourriaud

⁶⁴ Ibid, 271.

critiques. At a time where "increased commodification of relationships, artistic practices, opposition and the sphere of political action effectively fragments and absorbs the transitive power of critical statements,"⁶⁵ we can hope for the development of spaces and tools for the critique of how such conditions came to be.

Additionally, Martin shares the same apprehension towards artistic productions within relational aesthetics as it leads to the commodification of inter-subjective relations instead of the commodification of the object of art, or the fetishization and commodification of the relation formed due to the encounter with the object of art. For that matter Martin initiates a conversation between Theodor Adorno's theory of art and autonomy and Bourriaud's proposition of heteronomy of art in the form of relational aesthetics. For Adorno, autonomy is anti-social and "is constituted through its irreducibility to the audience that receives or experiences it, as well as to the artist who produces it."⁶⁶ This autonomy induces the fetishization of the object of art, taken itself as an autonomous object and subject. However, Adorno's claim is that art criticizes the illusion or fetishization, especially when autonomous, asserting that nothing is valuable independent of its exchange value. "Therefore, art is a self-conscious illusion, or an illusion mobilized to criticize another illusion."⁶⁷ For that matter, autonomous art requires a heteronomous dimension for it to be self-critical of the conditions of value

⁶⁵ Ibid, 272.

⁶⁶ Stewart. "Critique of Relational Aesthetics", 374.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 375.

and its exchange. Hence, Adorno adheres the autonomy of art as a negative mirror of social relations. Based on this, Martin pursues his argument with a close look at Bourriaud's theory of relational aesthetics rethinking it through Adorno. "Whereas Adorno seeks the critical force of art through the radicalization of its *fetishism against exchange*, Bourriaud seeks it through the radicalization of its social *exchange against fetishism*."⁶⁸ Bourriaud dissolves the object of art into social relations, particular to its reception. However, this dissolution of the fetishization of the art object or of relations to the object of art is turned into a fetishization of relations between members of the audience, those receiving and engaging with the work. Bourriaud contributes to a form of political fetishism which claims that the abolition of the commodity object eliminates capitalist exchange. It is then important to understand the type of social relations that are required and formed through the engagement with the interventions. This leads us to our final discussion on aesthetics and politics as a drive to the interventions and the project, which helps us avoid the fetishization of relations.

3.3. Aesthetics and Politics

In his ten theses on politics, Rancière distinguishes between politics and the political. In practice, this celebration of pure politics relinquishes the virtue associated with the political good, handing it over to governmental oligarchies enlightened by their experts. This is to say that the supposed purification of the political, freed from

⁶⁸ Ibid, 382.

domestic and social necessity, is tantamount to the pure and simple reduction of the political to the state.⁶⁹

Politics is the materialization of the political in an oligarchic ruling class, secluding political practice to this minority. Politics is emptied out of its "domestic and social" aspects, in relation to the practice of everyday life, the organization of the economic, the social and the urban conditions. This reductionism of the political to politics eliminates all modes of action, as it reserves the legislative and executive rights to a particular ruling class in the form of authority. On the other hand, the political is the mode of action, which gives the tool to redefine the economic, the social and the urban conditions. Rancière believes the political is the creation of a dissensus, when those who are not integrated in the system, or acknowledged as legitimate in the framing of politics reclaim their voices. We can think of the example of the local and migrant working class, refugees, old tenants of gentrified neighborhoods... these exploited communities are silenced as political entities and have no voice in politics. Thus, political action of the dissensus is the reacquisition of the mode of action, or the reappropriation of the mode of articulation, the ability to formulate a countering discourse and acquire political rights. The reading of Rancière in light of the relational aesthetics, allows us to realize the need for artistic production not only for the people, but by the people. Doing so is a political action of reacquisition of the political right to contribute to the organization of space and practice of everyday life.

⁶⁹ Rancière, Jacques, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, 28.

CHAPTER 4

THIS IS NOT AN EXHIBITION. AND THIS IS NOT BEIRUT. PILOT INTERVENTIONS IN THE SPACE OF THE CITY

This chapter discusses the three interventions that took place in Beirut in the framework of this curatorial thesis project during the months of July and August 2022. The site-specific artistic productions allow us to perceive the space of the city in a different light. Two years after the explosion and no advancement in the investigations, as the silos, the silent witnesses of the crime are bound to vanish, the city hasn't recovered and many haven't returned. As we go on to practice our daily life, every corner of the city brings out reminders of the effect of the blast on the city and its citizens. In "Public installations or how to reclaim our rights as citizens" Haddad explores the political relevance of public interventions as "urban catalytic tactics" in creating change.⁷⁰ As a reaction to given conditions, these ephemeral interventions on the urban space stimulate the civic engagement of the participants, which produces a ripple effect. "Being on the street," she asserts, "has a ripple effect bound to make a constellation of changes."⁷¹ The ripple effect is the engagement of participants or the public that engenders transmissible reactions, according to Haddad. Whereas the ripple

⁷⁰ Haddad, Rana. "Public Installations or How to Reclaim Our Rights as Citizens." *Art & the Public Sphere* 9, no. 1-2 (2020), 97–106. DOI: 10.1386/aps_00035_1.

⁷¹ Recorded interview with Rana Haddad, June 2021.

effect does not produce immediate change it offers the possibility of reexamining the *status quo* caused by the transgression of the normalized space. In other words, these works prompt the audience to resist and reconsider the practice of space they are accustomed to.⁷² She believes that these installations are acupuncture, similar to the medical needle, engage with the particularities of the space and its problematics and tap on the specific informalities in it. Interventionist artistic productions are not produced for the space; rather it is the space itself that produces them. Her "acupuncture"⁷³ work of installations and performances are interdisciplinary and stem from the socio-political conditions that partake in the production of the space of the city. In what follows we detail all three interventions by describing their content along with the process of execution that took place.

4.1. Stories from the other city

The first intervention (Figure 5) was a screening on the Vendome stairs in the Mar Mikhail area on July 6, 2022 (Figure 6). The docu-films that were showing were *Ana Beirut* (2021) Episode 4 directed by Bachir Asmar, *Recovery* (2021) directed by Jean-Claude Boulos and *Re-Destruction* (2021) directed by Simon El Habre, followed by a discussion. The aim was to look how through film and the lens of the filmmaker one can record the ruptures within the everyday life practices. Additionally, these films

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Haddad, Rana. "Iplace", 351.

stress on the transformations of the space of Beirut, how the city and its inhabitants haven't healed, that justice hasn't been served after so many crimes and disasters. The first scene of *Ana Beirut's* fourth episode opens with the shot of the filmmaker during a therapy session, that he had been attending for several months after the explosion. During these sessions, and throughout the film, Asmar attempts to find himself and what remains of the city after it blew up in his face. He walks around looking at what has become of the wounded city. Hiding behind his lens, the ghostly shadow of the filmmaker appears and accompanies him through his wanderings. Not only was the city of 1990-2020 destroyed, but so was Asmar. He draws parallels between his emotional, mental and physical state after the blast with the city itself, still in recovery, however still quite aggrieved. With the little that has been done to bring life back to Beirut in many areas, the reality of the present is put before our eyes, with no justice, no welfare system and no protection to the community, any conceptualization of the return of the city is impossible.

Jean-Claude Boulos pursues a similar navigational journey in his film *Recovery* in which he tracks his personal physical recovery and the one of Beirut. *Recovery* draws parallels between the images of his X-rays of his body, photographs of the reconstruction sites, weddings as well as images of the victims. While walking his dog, not only does Boulos's lens reveal the intricate reality of the city but the inconsistencies of the return to life. Both films start from their home, where Asmar and Boulos attempted to record the smoke coming out of the port, after the fire erupted on that day. Little did they know that this shot would change their lives, and the one of the city. In

both films the filmmakers look at the city as a site of construction. A construction of buildings, stories, spaces, people and relationships. Asmar ends his film with the shot of the explosion before he loses his camera. His closing scene represents the beginning of the search for the self and the city incorporating social, political and urban dynamics. The fragmentation shown through the close ups mimics the shattering explosion and the shattered self: a destroyed window, intertwined electricity cables on a pole, overflowed sewage, closed shops. Both shot a year after the blast, it is revealed to the viewer that the state of the city is affected daily by several political, economic and urban policies resulting in an unresolvable crisis worsened by the blast.

Similarly, Simon El Habre's film looks into the transformations of Beirut in light of the reconstruction in the 1990s. *Re-destruction* evaluates and questions reconstructive policies in the city after the civil war, and the potential effect of similar reconstructive practices after the explosion. El Habre leads the way with the Grand Theatre of Beirut, an abandoned theatre in the heart of the city, demarcated by Solidere and called the "Downtown". The Grand Theatre is probably the last untouched remaining witness of Beirut since the days of the French mandate, whose structure survived the war. The film looks at Beirut as divided districts and areas, all heavily affected by the explosion, however, each individual space has either been affected differently, or recovering differently. Considering the port area, along with Mar Mikhael and Medawar (or what is also known as Karantina) areas the viewer realizes the dissimilarities in the reconstruction of these spaces. The historical overview of the expansion and transformation of the three mentioned areas is accompanied by narratives

of residents and urbanists who have witnessed and studied the impact of the weakened state in the face of the neoliberal reconstructive private agents who further deprived the people from their right to the city. The fear of the destructive reconstruction appears through the many scenes in which co-writer and performer Petra Serhal sprays on the wall the iconic statement of "my government did this." This film projects the application of the "shock doctrine" and its impact on everyday life, a strategy aiming at constantly transforming cities into spaces of consumerism and capital exchange emptied from its people from whom all agency and legitimacy is taken away.

The gentrified Vendome stairs were the perfect location to begin with. For the past decade, bars have invaded the space alienating the neighboring residents. The screening as a cultural activity allowed the neighboring residents to reappropriate a space they no longer use except to move from one point to another. And as it takes place in a public space and involves the neighborhood, this project was commenced first with a municipal attestation, an authorized form to legitimize our right to use public spaces. Public interventions as a social practice are made for the people and by the people. In fact, being on the streets eliminates the selectivity of participants, categorized as museum or gallery goers.

This intervention does not merely gather people in one space without a target audience. I have met at several points with the "August 4 residents of Mar Mikhail and Gemmayzeh committee" with whom I shared the aims of the intervention. Members of the committee along with several neighbors attended the screening and profited from the following discussion as a platform to share their agenda to mobilize more people in

their fight to reappropriate their neighborhood. Finally, such intervention are collaborative spaces. Besides the participating audience, I considered through this intervention the possibility of the formation of a collaborative network through which people provide the needed logistics and skills to install. The first screening *Stories from another city* put together a network of collaborators who put in time and material.

Additionally, going back to Rancière, the political action of the dissensus is the reacquisition of the mode of action, or the reappropriation of the mode of articulation, the ability to formulate a countering discourse and acquire political rights. *Stories from another city* looks at the existence of muted communities in the spaces of the city and the need to action. In the conversation following the screening, the committee of residents in Mar Mikhael and Gemmayzeh, presented their action plan in their fight against gentrification and used the conversational platform to invite people to organize and take action. The municipality and representative of the area haven't been responsive to their claims as it is less profitable. Hence an urge to understand how through artistic contribution one can find the way to regain spaces –as a politics of organization and distribution of wealth– and rights to the public. After getting the authorization of the municipality, I received a phone call on the day of the screening from the police department of Al Nahr –the area of Gemmayeh-Mar Mikhael– asking about the details of the intervention. He then asks me if I did get an authorization, to which I answer that I did in addition to informing the people of the neighborhood. His reply was that he did not care for the people, his main concern is for us not to do anything illegal. In the aftermath of the phone call, I realized how laws are abstracted, and the people

component is removed. If these laws are not to protect the people, then what are they for?

4.2. Through a city

On July 16, 2022, at 5 pm, Petra Serhal takes us on walk through the streets and the story of Beirut. Taking off from the Riad El Solh square near the Grand Serail, the walk ends in the Medawar district (Figure 7). Serhal begins the performance by saying that what comes next is sometimes fiction, sometimes reality. It is up to the participants to decide how to perceive it. Throughout the spatial movement, her narration is also chronological. The story starts with the Beirut of the Roman Empire and its eight gates. What is now known as the city center was, in fact, the whole of the city surrounded by walls and gates. After mentioning the transformations of the city, she describes the contemporary city, the city center of which is also delimited by gates represented by military presence, secluding the center of the city from its surroundings. What happens behind the barricaded eight gates to the parliament is a mystery. Nevertheless, it seems that the silhouettes, behind these gates, control everyone's fate. The narration follows through the ancient to the contemporary city, in the post-war era with Solidere, the uprisings, an economic crisis, and an explosion. The erasure of the city through the constant reconstructive project makes the city Serhal speaks of seem imaginary.

The walk took the form of a protest. We protest consumerist policies which transformed the space and evicted the people from their homes. We walk in streets that no longer exist and in a city that no longer exists. We walk in protest as we realize that

this is not Beirut. As we walk, Serhal indicates places that had been annihilated and stories that had been obliterated. No traces remain of the places and divisions the performer catalogs. What remains however, is the mystery of what goes on behind the closed doors of the center of the city, where our lives seem at stake.

A participation fee was required in order to cover the cost of materials used during the performance, such as the printing and spray paint. The remaining amount went to support the production of other interventions. While the fee meant inaccessibility to the low-income class, it was also a solution to sustain further productions. Throughout the walk and in the form of a protest, participants along with Serhal were asked to think of ways to respond to identifiable visual indicators of the appropriation of the city by real estate developers and authoritative agents, present in the sculptures around the port area, the advertisements on reconstruction sites, barricades... Thus, the participants graffitied under the statue in Gouraud street in Gemmayze مزبلة التاريخ ("the trash of history") (Figure 8), on top of a garbage bin. This sentence also referred to the particular historical narrativization which such sculptures impose on the city, one which does not take into consideration the residing people. The second graffiti was an intervention on the flex boards on Charles Helou Avenue which say *Beirut mille fois morte, mille fois revecue* ("Beirut died a thousand times but rose back a thousand too"). Participants have crossed words for it to become *Beirut Morte*. Or Beirut is dead. In fact, such an act of protest on the street is a marker of the present and real state of the city, one in which no recovery plan has been implemented that would benefit the city dwellers, in particular the old tenants, migrant workers and

refugees, rather than the ruling oligarchy. Serhal's performance shows how through fiction and the performing bodies the pre-given idea of Beirut can be dismantled and why Beirut is not Beirut. In fact, the Beirut that we see during the moment of the walk does not resemble the one we hear about or read about. Through her walk Serhal points at spots which have disappeared, such as the eight Roman gates (we can still see a few stone blocks from these walls on the entrance of Gemmayze, next to a French café called Paul), the red district, the access to the beach from Karantina...

As we walk through the city, we identify the disparities in the city each time it was built and rebuilt and every time the city was reconstructed. I distinguish between building and reconstructing where the first denotes bringing about of the space of the city through spatial reorganization while the second is a product of neoliberal policies and strategies which disregards the residents' right to the city. The Gemmayze street, Armenia street and many other districts, considered outside of the boundaries of Solidere, or the at the edges of the center of the city, have been heavily affected by the reconstructive projects of the 1990s. While the stories of the people and the space in both Gemmayze street and Armenia street are very particular to the "places", they provide a larger understanding of the story to the space of the city. To walk these streets is to be in touch with individual stories and individual practices of everyday life. Experiencing and perceiving space in its fragments is indicative of what the city is really about. And it turns out that Beirut is not really Beirut. Urban geographer Keith

Bassett believes that such walking practices "provide a rich source of ideas for exploring, experiencing and, it is hoped, understanding cities."⁷⁴

4.3. It's a public invitation

This intervention is the first on the platform which was produced through and for it. It necessitated several meet ups between the performer, Hashem Adnan and I, in order to be able to conceptualize it. The initial idea came from the need of public spaces. In reference to De Certeau, public spaces are not only places that belong to the public, but rather space is one in which we can all use and participate in their formation, being the product of a communal collaboration. After the walk with Serhal I have noticed the fact that children in Karantina all play in front of the public park rather than inside it on Saturdays afternoon. I was intrigued to the reasons behind this fact and found the interest in elaborating this thought through a performance. After several meet ups and site visits, Adnan and I discovered that the public park was still closed after the ministry of interior requested the closing of all public spaces in early 2020. And similarly, to all other free public spaces, this park was still closed until today. Additionally, it would only open to NGOs with the authorization to throw events in it, in which Syrian children are deprived from the same rights as the Lebanese toddlers.

Adnan's idea originated as an elaboration to a performance he has been writing in the past year, an incantation to a terrorist, begging him to rethink his action to come,

⁷⁴ Bassett. "Walking as an Aesthetic Practice and a Critical Tool: Some Psychogeographic Experiments.", 403.

to not blow himself up, the city, and Adnan. In the framework of *This is not an exhibition. And this is not Beirut.*, Adnan developed the writing of an incantation into a political act of reconciliation with fiction. At times where reality seems dystopic, fiction helps rejuvenates the political imaginary in the face of extremism, violence, and constant reconciliation with all forms of oppression and discrimination. Incantations, even if in the form of a curse, summons the magic required to contrast the system's violence and the hardships of reality. The incantation that was written collectively, transforms the assembly into a tool for collective imagination and critical thinking. What was collectively written to fight our collective fears, contributed to the reclaiming of public spaces and their hospitality, and in particular the public park which was closed right behind us as we stood on the pavement.

On August 27, 2022, Adnan, Lama El Charif, Nassim Banna –who assisted Adnan in the performance– and I arrived to Karantina (Figure 9). While we had already spoken to some residents who we know of an area, we went on a tour calling the people of the neighborhood to join us as we chanted "يا اهل الحي الحي" (this expression translates to “O the living people of the neighborhood”). At 6 pm the performance started in a process that involved the writing of words in a list on a 2mx2m piece of cloth, which are then transformed into sentences and sentences into a chant (Figure 10). The final chant aims to protect the city and brush away the daily fears.

Interestingly and to our surprise, at 7:30, when the performance was about to end, the municipal electricity poles lightened up seeming to be the effect of the chant. While it is common knowledge that it is not, it was very interesting to see the children

of this neighborhood, who were the largest participating age range, and with an extensive lexicon in relation to death, pain and despair, find a motivation in an artistic practice to protect the city. This incantation will be sprayed on the walls of Karantina in the following weeks in addition to repeating this exercise in other neighborhoods.

This incantation works, first of all, with Rancière's idea of fiction as a framing of reality and the articulation of the dissensus. In this work, the participating audience brought up the challenges they have been suffering from, especially in the case of Syrian refugees, in terms of class struggle, racism and sectarianism. It offered the unheard voices, those which are rejected by the system, a platform for critically thinking our reality. Additionally, this performance shows how does work emanate from the nature of space rather than being imposed on it, as it takes into consideration its restrictions and conditions. To have done it inside the park, would mean a reproduction of NGOs and state strategies of engagement with the people, where we maintain the statement that this space is closed and that only a particular class has access to it. For the production to be outside of the park, sheds the light on the reasons behind its closing and the need to reappropriate our rights as residents and our public spaces.

Finally, the title plays two roles. First it is a reminder that such works are in fact public invitations, accessible in space and content. But most importantly, it highlights the fact that in this area, invitations are based on nationality, and consequently, not so public. For this matter the public invitation challenges the *status quo* by destroying this

barrier between residents, while taking into consideration the antagonism that takes place in space, stressing on it and being critical of it.

5.4. Curatorial notes

The platform of *This is not an exhibition., And this is not Beirut.* takes the form of a website documenting the interventions (Figure 11). Interventions are divided into on site and digital ones. For the pilot phase, we have only executed three site-specific ones. As it does not follow the traditional structure of an exhibitionary space, the platform is not limited in time or duration; works are done progressively and are ongoing. Each work involves the participation of the curator and artists. The process takes off with visits of different locations around the city in which we investigate the complexities of space, meet the people of the neighborhood, and involve them in the process of production. The website maps out the interventions in the space of Beirut allowing its visitors to read more about the work and locate the space on the map (Figure 12).

Additionally, this website provides a platform for critically thinking about the city through artistic productions. Thus, at a later stage, it will include published texts and reflections in relation to the city and the challenging of the existing modes of productions. Each work varies in its production, depending on what it requires. Especially if the aim is to break from the prevailing modes of productions within the framework of institutions, curators and artists are required to consider and research alternative mediums of doing so. Further collaborations would involve Public Works

Studio, with an installation performance, filmmaker and artist Alaa Mansour, with site-specific installation and digital intervention. *This is not an exhibition* is also proposed to be in several editions, where curators or collective of curators take on the framework provided in this curatorial proposal and define the nature of a chosen city or space, in which they come up with public interventions challenging the *status quo*. It can take place in Tripoli, Sidon, Zahleh, Tyre or any other city or town in which the working group dismantle the image of the consumable town or city portrayed through the media, and unravel its historical, political, economic, social and urban intricacies.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING WORDS

In this project, I propose a curatorial platform *This is not an exhibition.* in a pilot edition *And this is not Beirut.* The platform of *This is not an exhibition.* considers artistic productions in public spaces which question the normalization of social, political and urban dynamics in the spaces they take place in and invite the audience to participate in the production of the works. These interventions vary from being installations, performances, discussions, walks etc. and contest established artistic and curatorial practices within the institutional framework. Thus, through this platform, curators and commissioned artists visit the chosen sites, meet with the people of the neighborhood, develop the work, and rethink a strategy of production which involves a collaborative network of people. This project is not an exhibition as we attempt to break from transforming the city into an exhibitionary space, an object of desire where visitors are mere observers and residents are objects on display. The works produce engage both visitors and residents as participating audience.

In this pilot edition, *And this is not Beirut.* sheds light on the present and the reality of the city, as opposed to projecting an illusory future in which the inhabitants of the city are mere observers of the city's transformations. The works are primarily non-representational and engage with the present and reality of the city rather than projecting a unified image of Beirut. these works do not commemorate, monumentalize or romanticize the explosion of August 4, nor the city of Beirut. Instead, these works

invite the participants to navigate in the space of the city and contemplate the inconsistencies in the produced spaces in Beirut. Important to note that these works do not bring out social or political change, however, they trigger conversations around the practices and dynamics of the city. Concocted in the *BePublic* lab –a timely experimental lab engaging with the social, political and urban dynamics that form the given space– *This is not an exhibition. And this is not Beirut.*, maps out the produced interventions across different points of the city. Through these works, people are invited to navigate and explore the space of the city across a myriad of contributions, not restricted to a medium or an approach. The multimedia and multidisciplinary platform in the form of a website archives the produced spatial and temporal ruptures in Beirut. This project is still a work in progress and a space for experimentation, however, layed out is the roadmap to its beginning.

APPENDIX



Figure 1: Commemorative Statue by Hayat Nazer, Beirut, Port area, 2020, steel and glass, by Mohammad Azakir for Reuters



Figure 2: Commemorative Statue by Nadim Karam, Beirut, Port area, 2021, steel, Photo by Nadim Karam



Figure 3: Corniche Extended, a project by Bepublic, with Rana Haddad and her students, Jalal Makarem, Farah Harake, Marianne Safi, Mustafa Chehab, Rami Saab, Beirut, 2012, screen capture from <https://ranahaddadworks.com/public-beirut>.

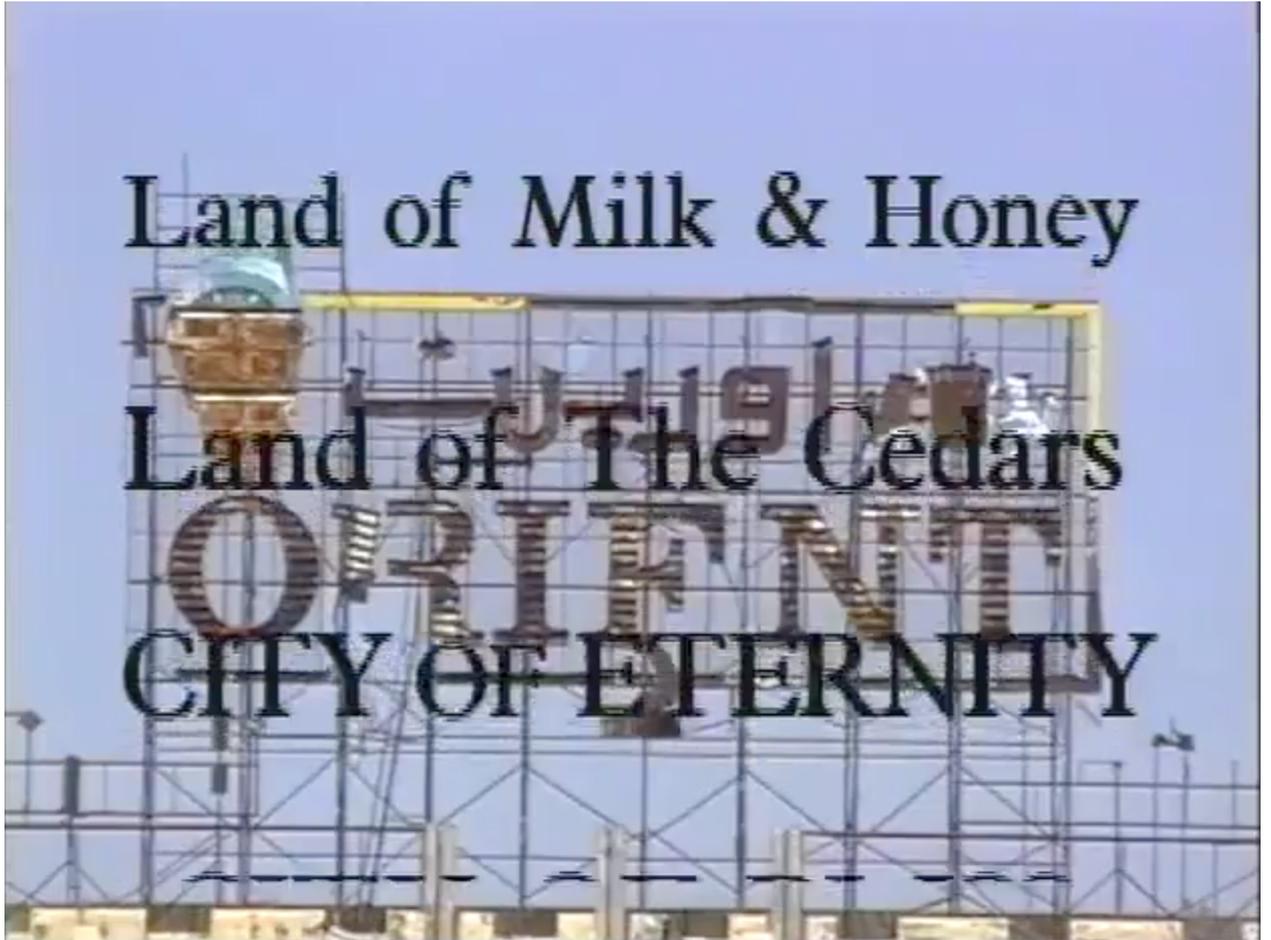


Figure 4: This is not Beirut (There was and there was not), dir. Jayce Salloum (1992), VHS film, 48', screenshot.

روايات المدينة الأخرى

stories from the other city

عرض أفلام يليه نقاش
Screening followed by a discussion

٦ تموز ٢٠٢٢ - الساعة ٨ مساءً على درج فاندوم
July 6, 2022 - 8 pm, on the Vendome Stairs

"أنا بيروت" الحلقة الرابعة إخراج بشير الأسمر (٦')
"ورشة" إخراج جان-كلود بولس (٦')
"إعادة تدمير" إخراج سيمون الهبر (٤٠')

"Ana Beirut" Episode 4 directed by Bachir Asmar (6')
"Recovery" directed by Jean-Claude Boulos (6')
"Re-Destruction" directed by Simon El Habre (40')

Figure 5: "Stories from the other city", intervention poster, 2022.



Figure 6: Screening intervention on the Vendome Stairs, July 6, 2022, by Jean-Claude Boulos.



Figure 7: “Through a city”, intervention poster, 2022.



Figure 8: Graffiti of “Trash of History” on the commemorative statue on Gouraud Street, July 16, 2022, by Presica Chaar.



Figure 9: “It’s a public invitation”, intervention poster, 2022.



Figure 10: Hashem Adnan performing the writing of an incantation in front of the Karantina public park, on August 27, 2022, by Philippa Dahrouj.

www.notanexhibition.com

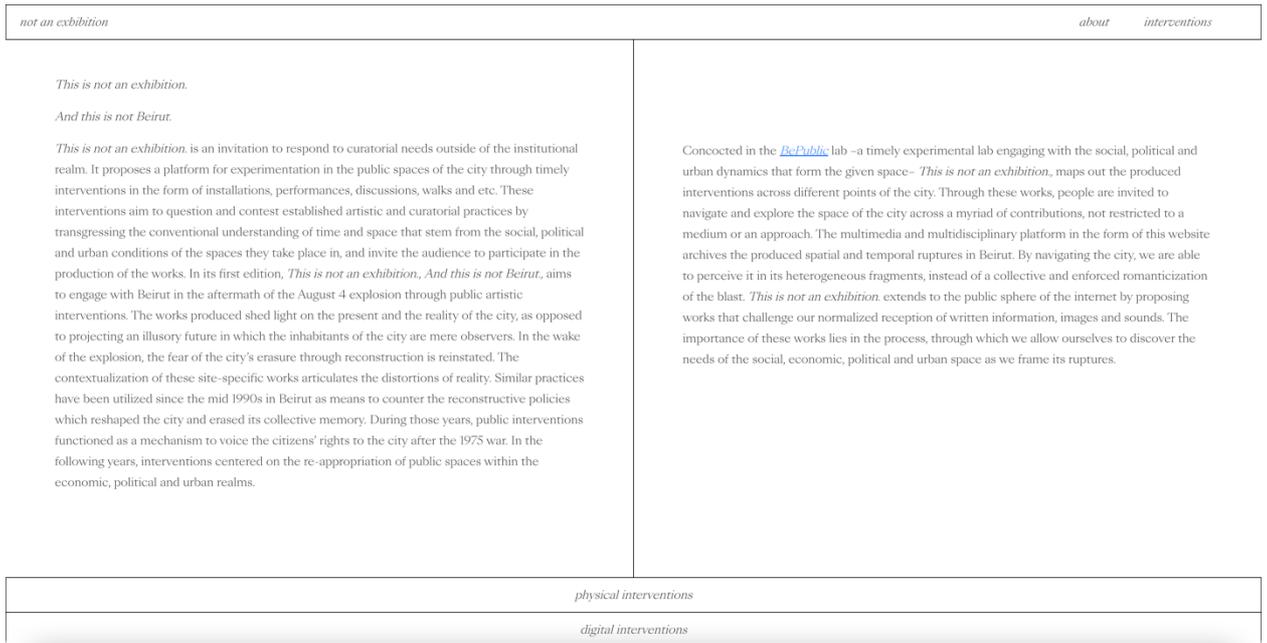


Figure 12: Screen capture of This is not an exhibition website, homepage.



Figure 11: Screen capture of This is not an exhibition website, physical interventions page display.

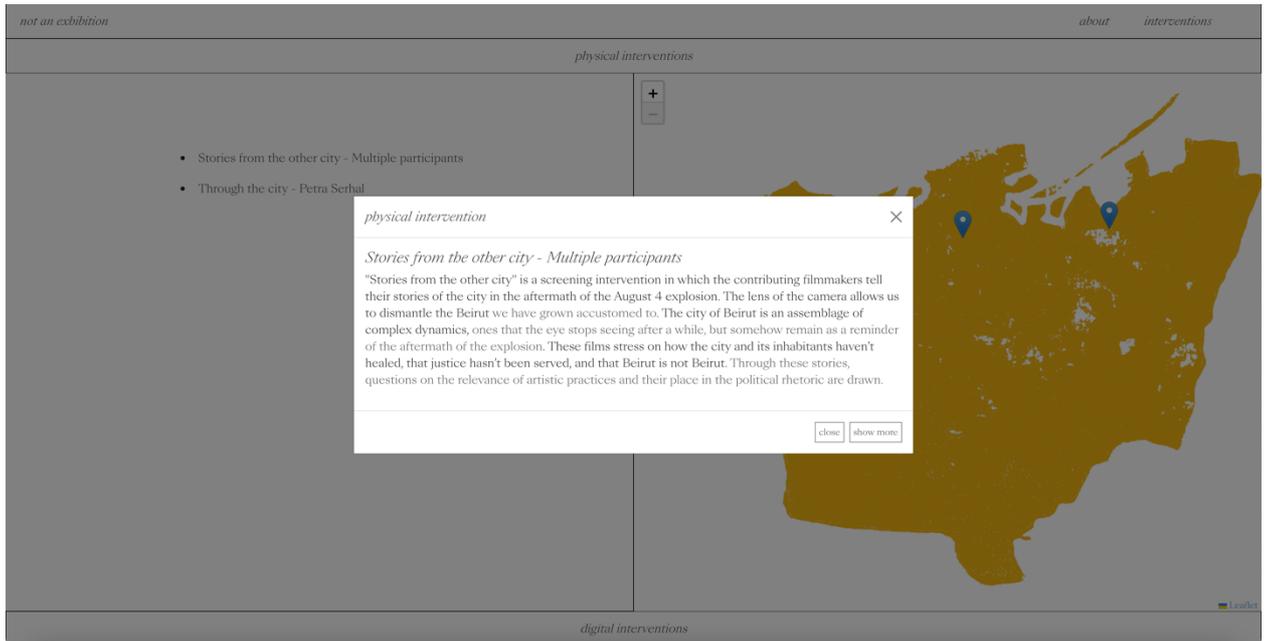
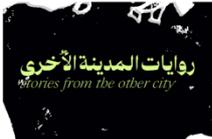


Figure 13: Screen capture of This is not an exhibition website, interventions details.



Figure 14: Screen capture of This is not an exhibition website, intervention page.

not an exhibition *about interventions*



Stories from the other city



Through the city

- Stories from the other city - Multiple participants
- Through the city - Petra Serhal

physical interventions

digital interventions

Figure 15: Screen capture of This is not an exhibition website, intervention listing.

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