

# Contingency, Dissonance and Performativity

## Critical Archives and Knowledge Production in Contemporary Art

Anthony Downey

**[T]he question of the archive is not [...] a question of the past. It is not the question of a concept dealing with the past that might already be at our disposal or not at our disposal, an *archivable concept of the archive*. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.**

***Jacques Derrida*<sup>1</sup>**

How do we define the ongoing relationship between contemporary art and the archive? Considering the unprecedented levels of present-day information storage and forms of data circulation, alongside the diversity of contemporary art practices, this question may seem hopelessly open-ended. In an age defined by the application of archival knowledge as an apparatus of social, political, cultural, historical, state and sovereign power, it nevertheless needs to be posed. In what follows, I will suggest that we can more fully refine the question and offer a series of conditional answers if we consider, in the first instance, the extent to which contemporary artists retrieve, explore and critique orders of archival knowledge.<sup>2</sup> A central, if not defining, element in this process has been the co-option of archives as both primary resources and structuring devices within contemporary art. Although difficult to fully determine (in terms of its historical, sociological, pedagogical and theoretical cogency), this has invariably produced systems of archival knowledge that are often at odds with more formal, institutional archives. It is within this nexus, the point where art practices create alternative, often speculative archival forms, that we can begin to formulate a provisional answer to our prefatory question.

The collation and storage of information within the archive, in the second instance, is an international concern. As a global reality, however, the archive does have a regionally defined, if not national, inflection that is located

in a series of formal contexts, including the architectural site-specificity of the archive; the localized politics of admission to it; the categorical terms of collation and dissemination that underwrite its procedures; and, of course, its increasingly virtual, digitized dimension. All of these determine access (and denial of access) to the information contained within archives. These patterns of access and non-access, utility and redundancy, materiality and immateriality are defined, in turn, by historical circumstances and localized, regional dispositions. Whilst not necessarily hermeneutically or historically definitive as such, we encounter a phenomenon here that has come to define, to varying degrees, significant elements in the work of artists as diverse as Emily Jacir, Walid Raad, Akram Zaatari, Khalil Rabah, Mariam Ghani, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Zineb Sedira, Ruanne Abou-Rahme and Basel Abbas, Benji Boyadgian, Lamia Joreige, Maryam Jafri, Adelita Husni-Bey, H ela Ammar, Roy Samaha, Uriel Orlow, Amina Menia, Vahap Av sar, Lucien Samaha, Eric Baudelaire and Jananne Al-Ani. These artists have produced and continue to produce work that specifically engages with regionally determined, historically localized forms of archived knowledge, be they photographic, art historical, cultural, sociological, anthropological, textual, institutional, oral or digital.<sup>3</sup> To observe as much is to propose a more manageable field of enquiry: how do we understand the historical relationship of contemporary art to the regional archives of, say, the Maghreb, the Levant or the Gulf States? What, furthermore, do the artists mentioned above reveal about the archive across an admittedly broad region and, as a consequence, what do they disclose or make manifest about the politics of cultural production in, for example, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and Palestine?

These enquiries are admittedly far from straightforward, but there is an imminent critical need to ask why a commitment to working with archives has become an apparently dominant aesthetic strategy for contemporary artists engaged with the heterogeneity of cultural production across the Middle East? If we provisionally accept that significant gaps have emerged in archives in countries such as Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia and Iraq, does it follow that these epistemological fissures have offered a productive aperture for artists to situate their research and subsequent forms of engagement? A primary consideration here is the extent to which archives are used to explore conflict and the reconstruction of individual and collective histories, be they revolutionary or national. Which begs a further question: do these practices ultimately foster a nostalgic fetishization of the archive as a locus of knowledge production or, conversely, suggest an ongoing, possibly systemic, crisis in institutional and state-ordained archiving across the region?

What forms of knowledge, we also need to ask, are being produced in the moment that art interacts with archives and how do we articulate the epistemological substance of these forms? In posing this question, we need to

note that art does not produce verifiable knowledge as such, rather it engages in a series of ruminative gestures that give rise to non-definitive narratives and tentative forms of suppositional knowledge. A further consideration here is how the archive circulates as an apparatus that discursively produces knowledge and is often utilized by artists to reveal a set of mechanisms that are simultaneously situated in the present but inevitably projecting meaning into the future. The archive, to recall the epigraph from Jacques Derrida above, 'is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow'. This allusion to an ethics of the archive is an acknowledgement that, as a collation of historical documents that records and orders information about people, places and events, the archive should take responsibility for the functioning and formal application of its knowledge systems.<sup>4</sup> It is within the context of these demands that contemporary art engenders archives that are troubled and contentious spaces haunted by their own repressions and occlusions. In works by artists as diverse as Zineb Sedira, Jananne Al-Ani, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Walid Raad and Akram Zaatari, as we will see below, alternative forms of archiving and archival knowledge emerge that question the material, formal aspect of an archive and its immaterial, informal procedures of archiving. In exploring and producing archives, be they alternative, interrogative or fictional, these artists are not simply questioning veracity, authenticity or authority, or, indeed, authorship; rather, they interpose forms of contingency and radical possibility into the archive that sees it projected onto future rather than historical probabilities.

### **Contemporary Art and the Archive in the Middle East**

In 2010, Zineb Sedira produced *Image Keepers*, an installation that includes a documentary film of an interview with Safia Kouaci, the wife of Mohamed Kouaci. Considered one of the pioneers of photography in independent Algeria, Mohamed Kouaci was responsible for many of the images that have today become inextricably linked with the events of that time.<sup>5</sup> Kouaci died in 1996 and his extensive archive, or what is left of it, is currently under the custodianship of Safia Kouaci, who houses it in her apartment in Algiers. Sedira's complex film, which is made up of two parts, takes Kouaci's photographic archive as a starting point for discussing a number of interrelated matters, ranging from the intimate and familial (love, loss and ensuing solitude); the socio-historical (the war of independence and its aftermath in Algeria); the aesthetic (the importance of Kouaci's images in offering a counter-narrative to Eurocentric representations of Algeria); and, crucially, the notion of historical transmission (in the context of relaying history from one generation to another).<sup>6</sup> At the time of the film's making, over the summer of 2010, the

archive had yet to be formally organized and it becomes obvious that Safia has not only become the archivist, the eponymous ‘keeper’ of the images, but the interpreter too insofar as her husband’s death left little by way of time to classify his images (nor, as we discover, did it leave adequate time to discuss what to do with the archive in the long term). Safia Kouaci’s memories function here as an archive of sorts against the more tangible and yet decomposing archive of photographs she safeguards in honour of her husband. One of her laments is that, following her husband’s death, the clearing out of his studio was done in such a chaotic way that some photographs were discarded or destroyed. We witness here a precariousness emerge in the status of the archive, a sense of its instability and susceptibility to time. These images may be a record of the past, but they are contingent on the circumstances of the present and, in that moment, foreshadow future uses (and abuses) of the archive.

Towards the end of Part I of the film, Safia suggests that ‘an archive should never change. It should remain the same until the end of time’. These comments, made in the context of the overthrowing of a political party or government, where archives are often instrumentalized within collective or nationalist versions of history, are provisional and, as Safia eventually admits, the archive is always in flux. It is this radical instability that would appear to attract historians and others, including artists and filmmakers, to archives in the first place. Ongoing disruption and dissolution, rather than continuity and aggregation, underscore an inherent dissonance within the archive as a material and immaterial form. This dissonance, this refusal to ‘add up’ or unquestioningly reside in the present, gives rise to a further degree of historical contingency. The fact that Kouaci’s archive, perhaps the single most extant and authoritative archive of a period that included wars of independence and the emergence of the Algerian state, remains neglected and in a state of confusion must, in due course, say something of the current priorities of the Algerian state and how it continues to be riven by its own private discords, public denials and historical disavowals. *Image Keepers* tells us more here about the concerns and exigencies of the present than it does about the past. Crucially, as we will see throughout this volume, those concerns look to the future and to how people will understand and judge the motives and motivations of present-day attitudes towards an archive.

This sense of the archive as a ‘question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow’, to recall Derrida’s point, together with the way artists consistently encourage readings of the archive’s latent potentiality, are a significant feature of Jananne Al-Ani’s *The Aesthetics of Disappearance: A Land Without People* (2007–ongoing). Consisting mainly of images of archaeological sites, the research for these works—which also includes two films, *Shadow Sites I* (2010) and *Shadow Sites II* (2011)—involved visiting and interacting with relatively disparate archives containing landscape and aerial photography, including the extensive holdings of the Arab Image Foundation (AIF) in Beirut.<sup>7</sup>

Here Al-Ani came across publications relating to the work of early pioneers of aerial photography in the Middle East, including the French archaeologist and Jesuit missionary Antoine Poidebard, who was responsible for the production of aerial photographs of Roman sites in Syria in the mid-1930s. Observing how, when the sun is low in the sky, the outlines of archaeological features on the ground are thrown into sharper relief, Al-Ani has remarked that the long-term result of her research into these archives was 'the revelation that the discipline of aerial archaeology had developed as a direct result of the discovery of previously unknown sites during aerial operations carried out in the course of the First and World War IIs'.<sup>8</sup> To this already extensive formal archival research, the artist interpolated material found on blogs, in oral history archives and from transcripts of war crimes tribunals, including interviews with anthropologists and sociologists who had worked with survivors of mass killings in Kosovo, in the late 1990s, and in Iraq following the downfall of the Ba'athist regime there in 2003. Influenced by the work of Margaret Cox, a forensic anthropologist who had worked in Kosovo in the 1990s and, latterly, in Iraq in 2003 to identify victims of Saddam Hussein's regime, Al-Ani relates how she became increasingly interested in 'what happens to the evidence of atrocity and how it affects our understanding of the often beautiful landscapes into which the bodies of victims disappear'.<sup>9</sup>

*The Aesthetics of Disappearance: A Land Without People* explores *inter alia* political, military, archaeological and personal archives and how they relate to historically contested landscapes and the topography of the Middle East, specifically Iraq. Implicit within this work is the understanding that newer, less linear and latent narratives emerge out of what first appear to be fixed sites of archival documentation. Aerial reconnaissance photographs from decades ago presage the work of forensic anthropology and, consequently, articulate a demand that justice be served on behalf of those who are no longer able to petition for it. The artist becomes an archivist who—in collating, rearranging, and interpreting forms of archival information—produces alternate, perhaps unconventional but no less convincing, narratives of near disappearance and eventual re-emergence. These concerns reflect an abiding interest in the archive as a central component in unearthing, so to speak, and bringing together apparently disparate strands of historical narrative and testimony. The juridical, moral and political claims of the present provoke, in this framework, a contemporary rereading of archival images and their aesthetic repurposing.<sup>10</sup>

The hermeneutics of the archive, the interpretations wrought from it and their simultaneous dissemination, reveals the performative, contingent and ultimately dissonant, if not anachronistic, elements that underwrite archival procedures. In Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's *Wonder Beirut (History of a Pyromaniac Photographer)* (1997–2006), we encounter the elusive photographer Abdallah Farah, who published a series of postcards of Beirut in 1968. In 1975, according to the artists, Farah began mutilating the archival





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Stills from Zineb Sedira, *Gardiennes d'images*, 2010.  
Part I: Double projection with sound, 19 min—Format  
16/9. Production SAM Art Projects, 2009. © Zineb  
Sedira. Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie Kamel  
Mennour, Paris.

negatives so that they mirrored the destruction he was witnessing during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90). In 1997, Hadjithomas and Joreige began working on a project with Farah (whom they had met at the beginning of the 1990s) and his archive. The fact that Farah’s postcard images were still available in bookshops, although the scenes they depicted—including buildings and monuments—had long since been destroyed, led the artists to consider a number of issues, not least the difficulties associated with archiving civil conflict. This sense of hermeneutic anxiety and an impending collapse, if not utter destruction, of the archive becomes all the more evident in the second phase of the project where, the artists record, Farah added other injuries to the negatives that were not directly related or attributable to bombings or destruction. This phase was termed the ‘plastic process’ and seemed to predict, through the use of archival images, future disasters. The archive here is riven by a troubling anachronism whereby events that are yet to happen are proleptically projected into the future. These portents of doom, out of place and out of time, signify the latent element in these images—that which is repressed and yet nascent.<sup>11</sup>

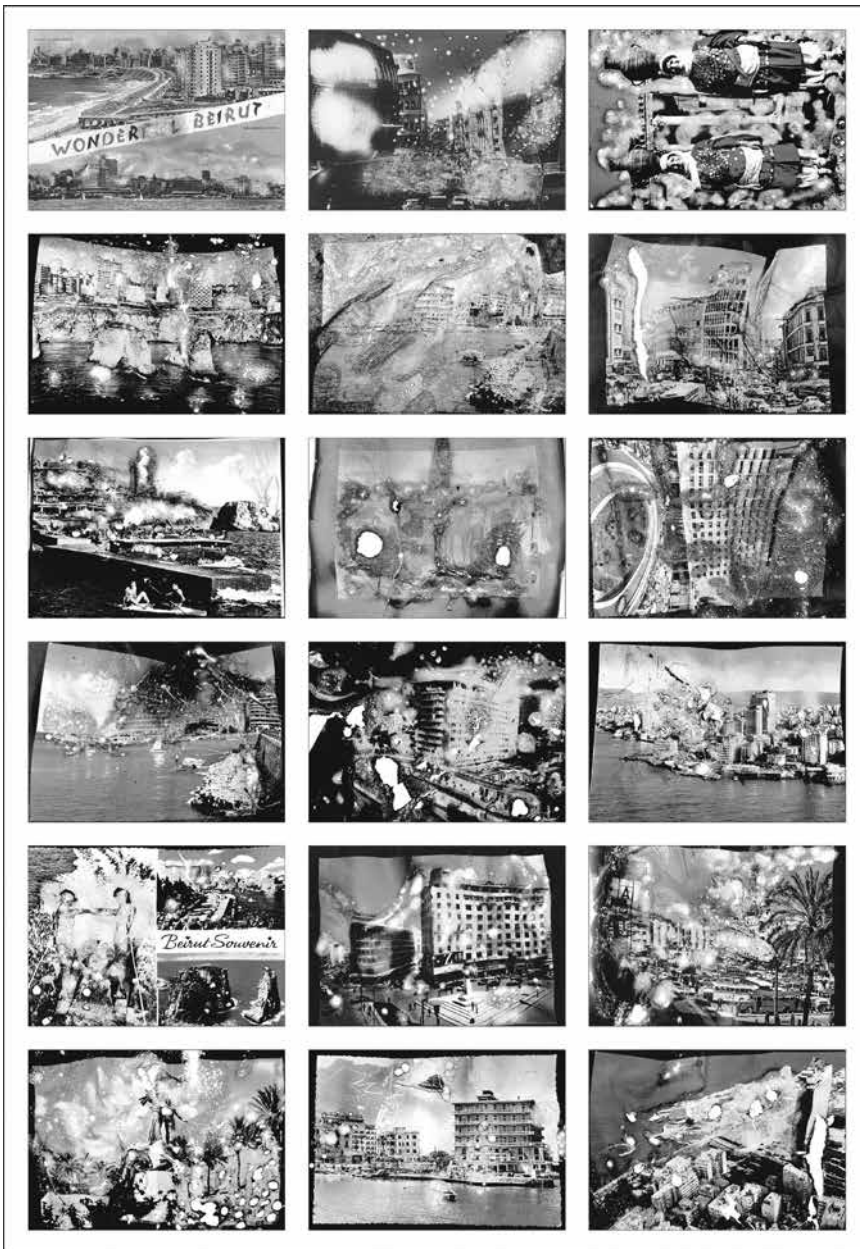
*Wonder Beirut* reveals a monitory premonition of what can happen to archival images; the sense that they are inherently predisposed to radical forms of destruction and deconstruction—both literal and conceptual—and can, in the face of trauma, become both withdrawn and indeed destroyed.<sup>12</sup> What authority, in this defaced and withdrawn state, can they bring to the representation of historical events and our understanding of conflict? It is this concept of archival withdrawal that remains key to the work of Walid Raad and the Atlas Group. Forming a core conceptual link within any discussion of contemporary art and the archive, Raad’s work is largely concerned with an immaterial force: historical trauma and its discursive production and transmutation within given social, aesthetic and political archives. Influenced by the work of Jalal Toufic (specifically the latter’s writings on the idea of the “withdrawal of tradition” during times of conflict), Raad’s *oeuvre* calls on the past, present and future of archival and cultural knowledge to form a timeline that accommodates representational ambiguities and, to a certain extent, speculative anachronisms.<sup>13</sup> As we will see in a number of the essays included here, specifically those concerned with Raad’s *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow: A History of Art in the Arab World*, (2007–ongoing), the strategic withdrawal of the archive and its tentative reappearance alludes to the precarity that undermines archives of modern and contemporary art in the region, some of which have been destroyed without trace. These gaps in art historical knowledge not only complicate aspects of art history but, crucially, also produce spaces for alternative ones to materialize.

The deferral of archival knowledge and access to it suggests a temporal disjunction, a caesura or aporia in a body of knowledge that suggests both historical forms of dissonance—in the form of a civil war, for example—and





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Joana Hadjthomas and Khalil Joreige. *Latent Images-01*, from the project *Wonder Beirut, the Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer*, 1997–2006. Drawer of films (extracts). Films from 11/04/98–4/11/98 (# 654-808). Photos indexed but not developed. Courtesy of the artists, Galerie In Situ Fabienne Leclerc (Paris), The Third Line (Dubai) and CRG (New York) © Joana Hadjthomas and Khalil Joreige.

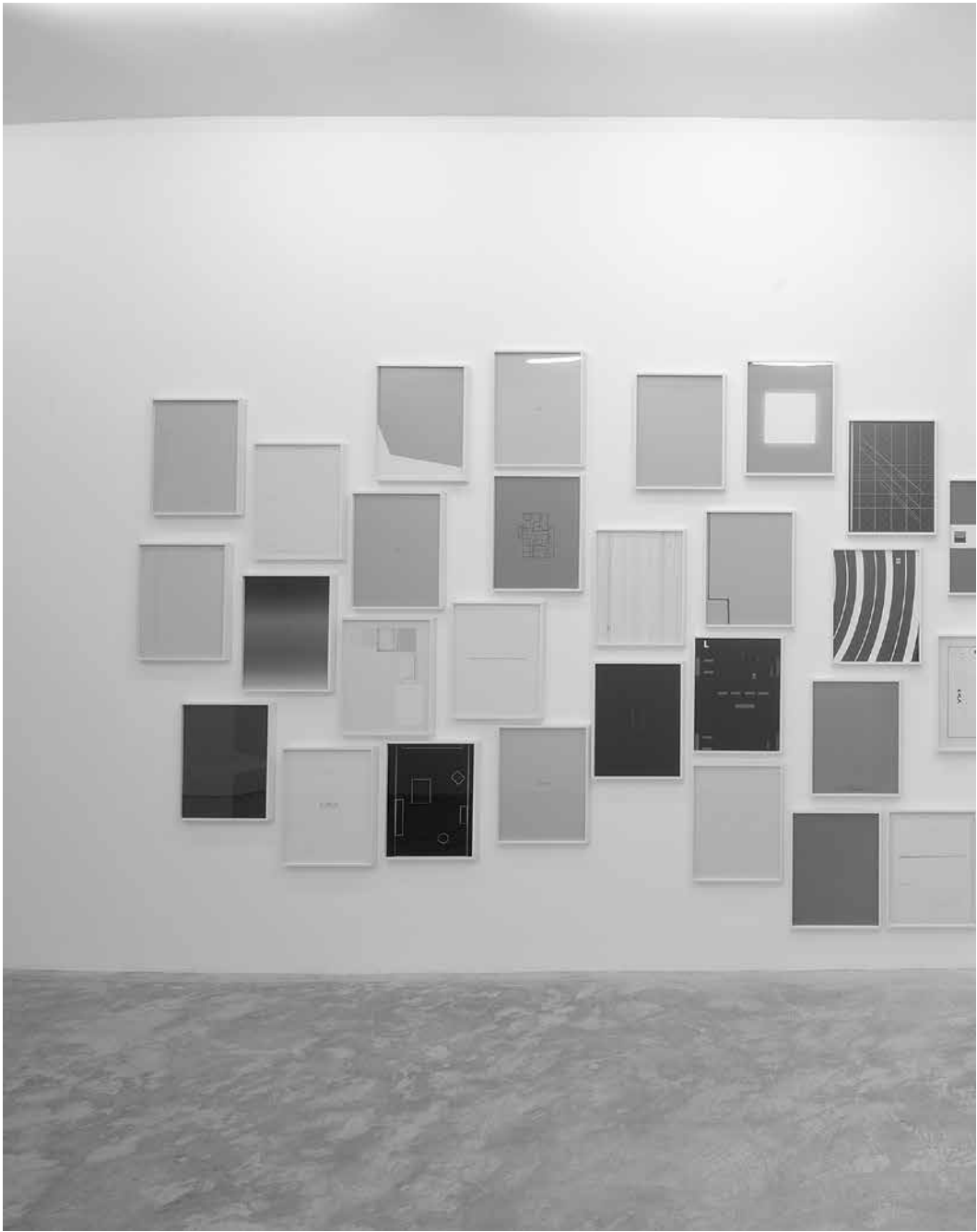


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 Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige. *Postcards of War*, from the project *Wonder Beirut, the Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer*, 1997–2006. 18 original postcards, each 4.13 x 5.75 in. Courtesy of the artists, Galerie In Situ Fabienne Leclerc (Paris), The Third Line (Dubai) and CRG (New York) © Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige.

cognitive dissonance: a sense that the archive (and the artists who work with it) enter into a pact of sorts that presents the archive as both a limitless and ordered field of research and, contiguously, an epistemically unstable source that is liable to imminent collapse if not total disappearance. In 2012, as part of Documenta 13, Akram Zaatari, with the help of a team of workers, dug a square hole in the grounds of a public park in Kassel and placed 16 wooden boxes—each containing painted photographic objects that were inspired by photographic film formats—in a steel mainframe structure. This was then covered with liquid concrete, leaving only an inconspicuous huddle of steel rods visible above ground as a marker for what lay beneath. The work in question, *Time Capsule* (2012), is an example of an artist archiving works that may never conceivably see the light of day again. In this instance of entombment, Zaatari's act recalls another by the then Director of National Museum of Beirut, Emir Maurice Chehab and his wife Olga who, at the height of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90), removed artefacts from the museum and encased others too heavy to move in wooden shuttering and concrete. To dissuade looters, antiquities were also buried in the museum's basement behind a series of steel reinforced concrete walls.<sup>14</sup> Almost the entire catalogue of the museum, including its card indexes and photographic archives, were destroyed during the civil war but the damage would have been far greater had it not been for Chehab's prescience in protecting it.<sup>15</sup> The conundrum, of course, was that the protection of the collection also ensured its withdrawal from public viewing and Zaatari's burying of his own work in *Time Capsule* not only references Chehab's fortuitous act of foresight, but also emphasizes the extent to which the photographic archive can become, as a result of trauma or the exigencies placed upon it in the present, withdrawn and thereafter deferred.

In many ways, *Time Capsule* reverses the archival impulse that has long been a feature of Zaatari's work, including *In This House* (2005), *Hashem el-Madani: Studio Practices* (2006–ongoing), *On Photography, People and Modern Times* (2010) and the artist's long association with the Arab Image Foundation (AIF). As a one-time member and co-founder of the AIF, Zaatari is concerned with how the archival impulse—the will to collate, order and produce value—decontextualizes images by removing them from their original social and political economy. Speaking of *On Photography, People and Modern Times* (2010), Zaatari has observed that the work was supposed to 'juxtapose two lives and two worlds that photographs in the collection of the Arab Image Foundation experienced: once in the hands of their original owners and once in the custody of the AIF [...] In this work I raise for the first time some kind of critique on the narrow understanding of photograph preservation, which considers photographs as objects isolated from social and emotional ties'.<sup>16</sup>

There is a profound insight here into what an archive does in both a material and immaterial sense: in the moment of decontextualizing an image, a photograph for example, the archive not only takes it out of its social and



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Walid Raad, *Appendix XVIII: Plates*, 2012 from the project *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*. Archival inkjet prints on archival paper, 54 plates, framed. 54.3 x 42 cm, each. Exhibition view, Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut. Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg.





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Walid Raad, *Index XXVI, Artists, Saadi Wall 004*, 2011 from the project *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow*. Detail. Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg.

emotional environment, it simultaneously effects a system of radical deracination whereby a social, historical and political element is displaced from its immediate conditions of production and circulation. The photograph thereafter becomes an object of speculation, be it financial, aesthetic or otherwise, and this foundational displacement becomes a corroborative gesture that substantiates the exclusive authority of the archive. In disallowing the presence of experience (in considering, say, photographs in isolation from their social and emotional ties), the archive not only demarcates its records but also what is missing from those records: the emotional, day-to-day, social and experience-based interactions that produced the very economy out of which the image first emerged. It is with this in mind that Zaatari has proposed, perhaps fancifully but no less seriously, that the archive of the AIF be returned to the people with whom it first resided and thereafter back into the social orders from whence it came.

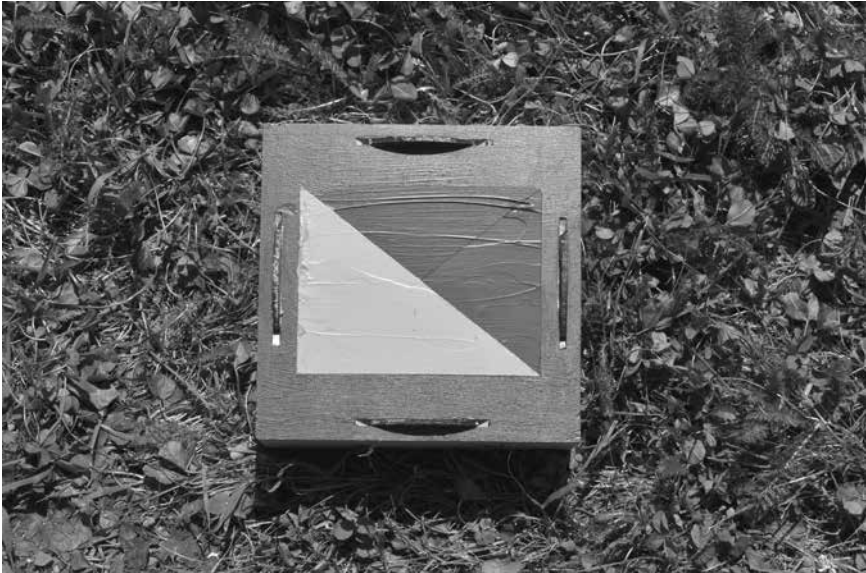
The command of an archive, its purview and influence, is based upon the ideal of prerogative—the right exercised by an individual or group who hold office—and aggregation; the accrual, that is, of information within an authoritative and formally reproductive edifice.<sup>17</sup> The institutional, governmental, social, cultural and administrative function of the archive, its development as a body of information into an unquestioned system of applied narratives and beliefs, should not, however, overshadow the personal, dissonant, contingent and performative aspect of the archive as a contested site of enunciation. Throughout *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*, these elements not only recur in contemporary art practices, they also reveal the archive as a structure that is far from epistemically stable, historically fixed or hermeneutically coherent. As we will see in the essays outlined below, this is a contingent, fortuitous and co-dependent moment that promotes conjectural possibility, potentiality and uncertainty and, in so doing, perhaps foretells of a radical emergency in the very ideal of the archive as a system of knowledge production in late modernity.

### **Archival Dissonance and the Future of the Archive**

The precariousness of the archive as a material form, prevalent throughout Zineb Sedira's *Image Keepers*, is the focus of **Mariam Ghani's** essay, 'What We Left Unfinished: The Artist and the Archive'. Archives are more than the sum of their materials, Ghani argues, and the apparatus of the archive—in the context of recent historical events in Afghanistan—needs to be understood in performative terms, one that includes administrators, historians, redactors, janitors-cum-archivists and readers, all of whom, in different ways, 'perform' the archive for its public. Lamenting how it can be also destroyed (or become withdrawn) through a performative act such as burning, Ghani details the







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Akram Zaatari, *Time Capsule*, Karlsae Park, Kassel,  
2012. dOCUMENTA 13. Courtesy of the artist and  
Thomas Dane Gallery.

destruction of the Afghan Films archive in 1996. In a comment that chimes with regional concerns, she explains that it is neither easy nor is it straightforward to work with archives in a country like Afghanistan, 'where books, films and monuments have all been subject to burning; stupas are looted and statues shattered; and sites sacred for one reason or another are eroded by both natural and human disasters'.

If the material reality of the archive is subject to change, then its immaterial narratives are subject to the same forces. To this observation, we may want to enquire further into the role that state and institutional archives can play in not only maintaining a shared or collective history through archiving, but in disrupting the narrative of archived histories. In **Nick Denes'** 'Measures of Stillness and Movement: The Poster in Cinema of the Palestinian Revolution', film posters are examined in relation to their state-building, revolutionary function. The film poster, as an archived artefact, Denes suggests, signalled ideological and institutional allegiances across a broad spectrum of competing and contesting factions within Palestine and beyond. When subjected to a mode of 'archival stilling', the 'moving' poster image was subsequently reproduced as a static resource from which 'new political-aesthetic movements might be derived'. Referring to the work of Raoul-Jean Moulin, Denes further remarks on the forward-looking aspect of the archive, namely, that '[t]he unmoving poster-as-record [...] "becomes a kind of oracle to be consulted", not least by artists concerned with "forging weapons for the future"'.<sup>18</sup>

The issue of the archive as a historical, future-oriented reality needs, of course, to be considered in relation to other more immediate forms of archived information. In **Tom Holert's** essay, 'Coming to Terms: Contemporary Art, Civil Society and Knowledge Politics in the Middle East', a useful distinction is offered between art practices that address concerns around the archival accessibility, suppression, exploitation, racialization, gendering and monetization of knowledge, and thereafter engage in 'epistemic' or 'knowledge politics', and those who engage with a more general notion of 'cultural knowledge' and its circulation.

Detailing, in particular, **Adelita Husni-Bey's** multi-part installation, *(On) Difficult Terms* (2013), where the artist—working with journalists at *Mada Masr* in Cairo—created a 'mind-map', Holert outlines how this project highlighted the ideological vagueness and impracticability of key terms such as 'revolution', 'coup', and 'Arab spring' as they were being deployed by western media to report on the 'Egypt situation'. Arguing that journalism, as pursued by *Mada Masr* and certain contemporary artists, participates in a radically political economy of knowledge, Holert proposes that epistemological ambiguity can also play a part in archival knowledge production and, conversely, its fallibility as a model of applied knowledge.

The idea that an archival method could speak to the historical condition of culture in a specific milieu is an attendant if not pivotal concern for a

significant number, if not all, of the artists' projects included in this volume. In thinking about the artist as a *de facto* archivist, **Lucien Samaha** presents his own particular approach to archiving and indexing through the ordering of his vast photography collection that has become, over time, a systematic biographical register. Recalling the stirrings of his career as a photographer in an interview with **Walid Raad**, also included here in an abridged version, Samaha recounts how he indexes his personal archive by inviting friends to go over past images and provide keywords and the names of those they once knew.<sup>19</sup> The archive is presented here as a performative, idiosyncratic and socially interactive entity; it is open-ended and subject to uncertainty and alternative modes of recall and application.

There is, in **Ruane Abou-Rahme** and **Basel Abbas'** *Incidental Insurgents* (2012–13), a similarly unique contemporary archive mapped out across apparently diverse figures. This multilayered, narrative-based work references the writings of Roberto Bolaño—author of *The Savage Detectives*, 1998, and a quixotic, itinerant author in his own right—and traces an unlikely allegiance between the Russian revolutionary and author Victor Serge, his contemporary anarchist-bandits in 1910s Paris and a bandit gang involved in a rebellion against the British in 1930s Palestine. Into this already combustible mix, the artists emerge as protagonists in a narrative that is fraught with wrong-turns and dangerous possibility. This singular archive produces a form of insurgent knowledge that articulates the incompleteness of a shared language across oppositional movements. Fragmentation and an unreconciled, perhaps ultimately irreconcilable, impulse for political allegiances competes with a technique that flirts with disaffection and more radical forms of action.

For **Héla Ammar**, this sense of insurgency is revealed in *Tarz* (2014), where the current Tunisian political situation is explored through archival objects and photographs. Using embroidery—*tarz* is the Arabic word for the practice—in conjunction with official archives, Ammar explores historical memory and forms of popular resistance with direct and personalized reference to their political ramifications in post-revolutionary Tunisia. Elsewhere, **Naeem Mohaiemen's** *Asfan's Long Day (The Young Man Was, Part 2)* (2014) presents the archive as an integral element in an exposition on national borders, revolutionary wars and insurgent belonging in post-partition South Asia. Exploring a strain of radical politics from the 1970s, this essay film, which follows on from Mohaiemen's *United Red Army (The Young Man Was, Part 1)* (2011), details the dissolution of the so-called Left and draws connections between German radicalism and Bangladeshi activist politics through extensive archival footage.

Independence and insurgency are also recurring elements in **Maryam Jafri's** research into the archives of erstwhile colonies where, in *Independence Day 1936–1967* (2009–ongoing), she gathered over 67 archival photographs of the independence day celebrations in countries including, but not



▲ Akram Zaatar, *Damaged Negatives: Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari*, 2012. Inkjet print, framed. Made from 35 mm scratched negative from the Hashem el Madani archive. Courtesy of the artist.



▲ Akram Zaatar, *In This House*, 2005. Courtesy of the artist.

limited to, Indonesia, India, Ghana, Senegal, Syria, Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Benin, Burkina Faso, Tunisia and the Philippines. The immediacy of revolution and its aftermath are further revealed in Adelita Husni-Bey's *Residents on Tripoli Street Archive War* (2014), where she archived the landscape of Misrata, the third largest city in Libya and the site of one of the longest and bloodiest sieges during the 2011 civil war. This archiving of a specific topographical place is likewise subjected to a more personalized form of remembrance in **Amina Menia's** *The Golden Age* (2011–ongoing), where she tellingly reveals an archival nostalgia for Orientalist-inspired images of Algeria in the urban frescoes that dot the city of Algiers.

This prevalent tradition of artists interrogatively engaging with the archive as an institution, and the ideological contexts they give rise to, is key to **Guy Mannes-Abbott's** reflections on the work of Emily Jacir. Drawing on Hal Foster's 2004 essay, 'An Archival Impulse', Mannes-Abbott's explores the way in which Jacir's work positions the archive as a way of working from fiction (the production of an ideological reading of events) to fact (the actuality of an event and its immanent incontrovertibility as a historical reality).<sup>20</sup> In the case of Jacir's *Material for a Film* (2006–ongoing), a project that examines the archived facts and fictions around the contested life of the Palestinian intellectual Wael Zuaiter, there is a concerted effort to recover fragments of his life story that obviates a version of his life that portrays him as a 'terrorist' involved in the deaths of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. We return here to the conceptualization of the archive as an extra-judicial space, a realm of contested and contestable knowledge production and historical consciousness.

In **Rona Sela's** 'Rethinking National Archives in Colonial Countries and Zones of Conflict', she considers the archive as an ideological tool for constructing national, historical and political narratives that shape a country's modern-day perception and presentation of itself. Observing Israel's National Photography Archives, Sela explores how the archive constructs, conserves and contextualizes photographs to serve Zionist ideals and how, as a result, information on Palestinians can be extracted from the archive to write an alternative history of a subjugated people for political purposes. Continuing this sense of the archive as a dissonant, if not incommensurate space for the production of knowledge, **Ariella Azoulay's** contribution, 'Archive', reconsiders Derrida's propositional notion of 'archive fever' and contrasts it with what she calls the 'abstract' and the 'material' archive. Analysing Emily Jacir's *ex libris* (2010–12) and her own archive, *Constituent Violence 1947–1950*, Azoulay reconsiders the potential inherent in 'archive fever' and how it offers an opportunity to articulate the archive as a formal mode of political engagement for our time.

A number of the essays collected in *Dissonant Archives* remind us of a key point, albeit one consigned to a footnote, in Derrida's *Archive Fever* where he proposed that there is no political power without control of the archive. 'Effective democratization,' he argued, 'can always be measured by

this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.<sup>21</sup> In this context, Derrida focuses on a singular desire inherent within the archive: the provision of a foundational authority for state power and sovereign command. This sovereign, state-controlled sense of the archive has become an emblematic factor in delegitimizing forms of subjectivity and the sense that the figure of the 'occupied', or the migrant, has become the exemplary rather than the exceptional subject of our times.<sup>22</sup> Archival power, in the context of collating information, producing knowledge and effecting hermeneutic authority over the knowledge produced, validates an authoritarian power that is at once visible—it gives rise to laws that affect individuals and communities—and invisible insofar as it often remains hidden from public view and only accessible through forms of mediation and intermediaries. This discretionary and discriminatory logic of archiving, as applied to the voice of the migrant, is explored in **Lawrence Abu Hamdan's** *Aural Contract Audio Archive* (2010–ongoing). In this work, individual components of the artist's extensive archive are pooled, extracted and produced as audio essays, texts and investigations into the political function of archival knowledge in producing exclusionary modes of existence within sovereign-defined notions of statehood and citizenship.<sup>23</sup>

The archive as an architectonics of knowledge, an edifice within which enunciative possibilities are produced, contested and rendered provisional, is further examined in **Chad Elias'** analysis of Walid Raad's multi-volume *History of Contemporary and Modern Art in the Arab World* (2007–ongoing). Setting this work within the conditions of a broader discussion about the future of arts pedagogy and cultural infrastructure in the region, Elias argues that Raad's approach to historical Islamic art could demonstrate a way for cultural and artistic institutions in the region to collect, archive and preserve work for future generations.

In **Lucie Ryzova's** essay, 'I Have The Picture: The Making of Photographic Heritage in Contemporary Egypt', this sense of nascence and preservation is considered in relation to Egypt's photographic archival history. Detailing the manner in which Egypt has constructed its own image of its photographic heritage through vintage photographs, and the value assigned to them by individual collectors, Ryzova suggests that this formal production of an archived heritage is nevertheless complicated by the perception that the post-1952 Egyptian state failed to preserve the country's cultural artefacts—a failure that is all too evident in the decay of public archives and museums. In **Sussan Babaie's** essay, 'The Global in the Local: Implicating Iran in Art and History', the impact of developments within the western conception of the archive and how it impacted on histories of art is focused on Iranian cultural production. Locating her argument in an understanding of the global that is co-dependent on positioning the local, alongside a concept of the present as a space that has an awareness of both past and the future, Babaie pursues this logic through

a close examination of work by, amongst others, **Jananne Al-Ani**, Walid Raad and Slavs and Tatars.

Institutions as archives, and museums as repositories of knowledge, are subjected to forms of institutional critique that have subsequently become archives in their own right. **Burak Arıkan's** *On Networks of Dispossession* (2013) is a collective data-compiling and mapping project about urban transformation in Turkey that closely examines the relationships that exist among corporations, capital and power in the country. Similarly, in *On Higher Education Industrial Complex* (2013), the networks in higher education (specifically private universities) in Turkey are mapped so that links between boards of trustees, corporations and other private institutions are made clearer. This effort to hold corporations and institutions to account is likewise a significant feature of **Gulf Labor's** *52 Weeks* (2013–14), which reproduces a digital archive of artists' responses to the subject of coercive recruitment and the deplorable living and working conditions of migrant labourers in Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Island (Island of Happiness).

The future of the archive as a material and digital entity is of course crucial to any overall discussion about its sustainability and long-term function.<sup>24</sup> **Laura Cugusi's** essay on the recent projects of the Arab Digital Expression Foundation (ADEF) explores the digital archive in the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution and how that context affected the type of work that the ADEF was able to undertake. Similarly, in **Laila Shereen Sakr's** (**VJ Um Amel**) extended contribution, the issue of digital archiving is related to how Arabic social media has become a source for a new, transformative archive that can collate information on cultures in conflict and those undergoing radical forms of change. Focusing specifically on R-Shief, Inc., a laboratory for harvesting Arabic-language tweets, Shereen Sakr presents it as a case study into how an archived digital format allows independent and real-time stories to form part of a counter-archive to those of state institutions. Throughout **Pad.ma's** provocative take on the future of the archive, detailed here in *10 Thesis on the Archive*, there is a similar proposal that we stop 'waiting' for the state or institutionalized archive and produce our own. 'To not wait for the archive,' the authors suggest, 'is often a practical response to the absence of archives or organized collections in many parts of the world. It also suggests that to wait for the state archive, or to otherwise wait to be archived, may not be a healthy option.' For Pad.ma, the archive, in its personalized, performative and digitized state, has a greater efficiency to it, an economy of usage that suggests a viral, or indeed parasitic, context for the future of the archive and its operations.

Future archives, in the framework of both digital and material evidence, would appear to be undergoing dismaying levels of redaction.<sup>25</sup> Working with *Other Document #131*, a heavily redacted CIA report on the capture and waterboarding of Abu Zubaydah (a Saudi man detained in Faisalabad, Pakistan, on 28 March 2002), **Joshua Craze** explores the physicality of redaction in



▲ Vahap Avşar, *İpdal (C64) / Cancel (C64)*, 2014. C-print  
154 x 120 cm. Courtesy of the Estate of the Artist and  
Rampa Istanbul.



archived texts in his essay, 'Excerpts from a Grammar of Redaction'. Examining the way in which the redaction, because of the way it is carried out, renders a certain visibility to redacted information, Craze's contribution points to an imminent concern: what will the archived history of the present look like in censored form? Again, issues around legality and its suspension come to the fore here and re-emerge forcibly in **Timothy P.A Cooper's** 'The Black Market Archive' where he explores film piracy in Pakistan, arguing that whilst the black market in films is largely proscribed by the authorities it also, somewhat counter-intuitively, could form the basis of an official, national film archive.

The archive as a haunted, disturbed space that re-emerges in the present and regenerates historical lineages is a feature of **Ania Dabrowska's** project, *Drift / Resolution (from A Lebanese Archive)* (2013-14). A series of photographic grids, triptychs, diptychs and collages, all sourced from the archival collection of Diab Alkarssifi, *Drift / Resolution* presents personal work alongside found family albums and studio prints collected from across the Middle East. Stretching back to the late 1890s, and covering the Lebanese Civil War and the post-conflict years (and continuing up to 1993 when Alkarssifi emigrated to the UK), the photographs presented here are stripped of dates and captions and repositioned in seemingly random contexts by Dabrowska. This chance discovery of an archive, and its implications, is mirrored in **Mariam Motamedi Fraser's** discussion of 'Nurafkan', named after an unpublished manuscript of an epic story attributed to Ali Mirdrakvandi, and purportedly written in 1940s Iran. Motamedi Fraser's role as a link to the physical archive for Gholamreza Nematpour, a documentary filmmaker interested in 'Nurafkan', leads her to a discussion of the ways in which archives can be transformed and understood based on their accessibility and the narratives and superstitions surrounding their preservation.

Recalling Hadjithomas and Joreige's *Wonder Beirut*, **Vahap Avşar's** series of images, *İpdal* (2010), relates the events surrounding his return to Istanbul in 2010, after 15 years abroad, and his search for the postcards of the city that he had used as source material for his paintings when he lived there. Disappointed to discover that the company who produced these postcards had long gone out of business, Avşar embarked on a search that finally led him to the source archive, which he procured, and a series of images marked *İpdal*, which is Turkish for 'cancelled'. These photographs depicted various pastoral landscapes and Turkish soldiers in decorous poses with women. The Turkish military, however, had declared that such representations lacked the seriousness with which they wanted to portray their soldiers and the photographs never made it to postcard stage. Also included here are another series of images from the original archive, *Chief Commander* (2011), which depict seven large-scale photographs of popular postcards showing famous monumental statues of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first President of Turkey. As Avşar notes, these sculptures were produced by two European sculptors in the

1920s—Heinrich Krippel and Pietro Canonica—and, in their Modernist style, could be seen to represent a repressed European history of art and humanities that had long fascinated Atatürk.

The archive, as Derrida commented in *Archive Fever*, is not only a radically unstable form of inscription, it is also haunted by the moment of writing and the traces of its own ontological coming into being. In its manner of writing and recording, to put it perhaps more bluntly, it presents us with the very means of its own indelible vulnerability to reinterpretation, if not its fallibility as a document. In **Shaheen Merali's** 'The Spectre (of Knowledge): The Recordings of the Cosmopolitan', he compares the archive to a 'roaming spirit—a visible but disembodied entity'. In this unstable, haunted state the archive's susceptibility to reinscription becomes all the more evident. It is this phantasmal instant that presents the artist with the opportunity to renegotiate and rewrite, visually or otherwise, the archive as a reality in waiting. But, in this schema, the artist also becomes an unreliable archivist—a nodal point for distilling the essence and ambivalence of the archive into, on one hand, a form of radical uncertainty and, on the other, a call to action.

Writing on his acclaimed film, *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013; UK: Smoking Dogs Films), which traces the seminal influence of a figure to whom many, this writer included, are indebted for their work on the area of cultural studies, **John Akomfrah** has observed the importance of the archive in recounting forms of social memory associated with (and often produced by) thinkers such as Stuart Hall. For Akomfrah, the 'question of "honouring" begins there; with memory, with uncovering the stems of memory, the ghosts of history, sifting through the debris and detritus of past events for traces of the phantoms'. Again, fittingly given Hall's seminal influence, it is an artist's intervention into the archive that retrieves and makes sense of the past for future generations.

The video installation, *Chronoscope, 1951, 11pm* (2009–11), by **Alessandro Balteo Yazbeck**, made in collaboration with **Media Farzin**, also draws on a not-too-distant archival source, namely, the American television interview series called *Longines Chronoscope*. Aired on the CBS network from 1951–55, the format for this programme, in which two journalists interviewed a guest, presents a document of US television aesthetics in the making. As the artists recall, politicians, diplomats and corporate executives were invited throughout this series to discuss a wide range of issues that spanned world trade issues, Communist insurgency threats, mutual defence treaties and, frequently during the year 1951, US access to petroleum resources in the Middle East.

The archive is changing, in terms of its function and form, and its ghosts return to trouble any sense of ease or resolution in this most dissonant, if not dissident, of times. This anxiety is captured all the more eloquently in **Meriç Algün Ringborg's** project, *The Library of Unborrowed Books* (2012–ongoing), which bases itself on the concept of the library-cum-archive as a

singular institution that produces language and knowledge. Within this space, there are seminal works that have been decided upon and they circulate with an authority and inherent degree of authenticity. This is the image of the library as a canonical archive. However, *The Library of Unborrowed Books*, as the name suggests, is made up of the books that are left behind, unborrowed, unread and neglected. The framework in this instance, as the artist notes, hints at what has been disregarded, knowledge essentially unconsumed, and puts on display what has eluded us in the construction of future archives.

I began this essay with discussions of work by a number of artists who have been the subject of essays and interviews in *Ibraaz*, the online research publication that is behind the production of this current volume and the ongoing series *Visual Culture in the Middle East*. It may seem solipsistic to do so, but the intention was relatively straightforward. For one, *Ibraaz* has become a major resource for researchers and students with an interest in visual culture across the disparate regions of the Middle East, and our essays are usually lengthy and our interviews invariably in-depth. We have become, in short, an archive for anyone with an interest in, first, visual culture and, second, the politics of cultural production within, beyond and about the region. The fact that we have become an archive brings with it a significant number of responsibilities, not least the demand to make information as accessible as possible. It also brings with it a responsibility to enquire into what role art criticism can play in producing a productive (rather than merely reproductive) system for analysing, critiquing and archiving cultural production across the region.

It is with these points in mind that we need to understand how a 'knowledge economy' has emerged as an essential component in any critical and historical consideration of contemporary art and the subsequent production of archived information about culture. The virtual archive has, moreover, enabled forms of manipulation that have offered a salutary reminder of the power systems that knowledge can harness. Under these conditions, the archive has offered artists and cultural practitioners a considerable resource for exploring and interrogating precisely how knowledge is both utilized and instrumentalized, which gives rise to a further question: Can contemporary art practices and art criticism produce forms of archived knowledge to counter the instrumentalized, often monetized and politicized forms of knowledge that drive the neo-liberal will towards global hegemony? And, if so, to what use can that suppositional knowledge be put?

These, and other questions, recur throughout *Dissonant Archives* and reveal a singular concern: if we are to fully understand the function of an archive, we must consider the means and conditions of production that enable knowledge to come into being and be archived in the first place. As a discursive system of knowledge production, archives enable statements and, crucially, disallow the authority of other statements. This is a concern for artists and is evident in the logic of the archive as a system of enunciability — an

apparatus of knowledge and power—that remains crucial to understanding, if not building upon, the seminal work that Michel Foucault produced on archives. Understood as structures for not only enabling the emergence and stratification of knowledge systems, but also the contiguous categorization of subjects, the archive, for Foucault, is above all else productive, not reproductive—a singular insight that brings together many of the artists and contributors included here.<sup>26</sup> The underlying point in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1969, is not, strictly speaking, concerned with the reproduction of knowledge and subjects; it is about the production of future knowledge and nascent forms of propositional subjectivity. As a system of discursive production, we should therefore consider the enunciative, productive possibilities that the archive lays down and how it 'is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as *unique events*'.<sup>27</sup> In this reading, as we will see throughout *Dissonant Archives*, the archive is not only contingent, existing within the vagaries of time and events (and reacting to them), it is formative and performative, enunciative and secretive, future-oriented and chronic and, ultimately, an anxious, dissonant structure.

Archives, finally, speak to and attempt to prescribe how future generations will understand the constraints of the present and the far from remote petitions of the past. This inherent performativity, the demand that the archive repeatedly performs the substantiative truth of its being, is precisely what attracts artists to the formal, material structure of archives and their often informal, immaterial processes. The over-arching sense of the archive that emerges throughout what follows, therefore, and albeit in relation to distinct and disparate modes of production, is the extent to which artists produce their own deliberative and highly speculative vision of the future. Again, the question of art's relationship to the archive might seem expansive, however such enquiries do reveal a horizon of future possibility upon which art as a practice, perhaps uniquely, seems to not only increasingly orient itself but also seems, as we will now see, amply equipped to engage with.

1. Jacques Derrida, *Archive fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1996), 36. (Emphasis in original).
2. There have been a number of shows to date that have focused on the relationship of art practices to archiving, one of the more significant being Okwui Enwezor's 'Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art' (International Center of Photography, New York, 2008). A list of other events, which is by no means exhaustive, would include recent conferences such as 'Speak, Memory: On archives and other strategies of (re) activation of cultural memory' (Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, 2010); 'Out of the Archive: Artists, Images and History' (Tate Modern, London, 2011); 'Archive State' (Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia, 2014); and 'Radical Archives' (NYU, New York, 2014). The second edition of the 'Qalandiya International Biennial' (Qi) (Jerusalem, 2014) was organized around the theme of 'Archives, Lived and Shared'; and, in 2015, 'Past Disquiet: Narratives and Ghosts from the International Art Exhibition for Palestine, 1978' (Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona, 2015) presented an archival and documentary exhibition that explored the history of *The International Art Exhibition for Palestine* (Beirut, 1978). Recent publications on this subject include: Elisabetta Galasso and Marco Scotini, eds, *Politiche della Memoria: Documentario e Archivio*, (Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2014); Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and John Pedro Schwartz, eds, *Archives, Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012); Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009); Simone Osthoff, *Performing the Archive: The Transformation of the Archive in Contemporary Art from Repository of Documents to Art Medium* (New York: Atropos Press, 2009); Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008); Charles Merewether, ed., *The Archive* (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2006); and, Jane Connarty, Josephine Lanyon, eds, *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Artists' Film and Video* (Bristol: Picture This Moving Image, 2006). More recently, the *Journal of Visual Culture* dedicated an issue to the archive, see 'The Archives Issue', eds Juliette Kristensen and Marquard Smith, *Journal of Visual Culture* (Vol. 12, no. 3, December 2013).
3. The subject of the nomenclature surrounding definitions of the so-called 'Middle East' continues to productively disrupt any cursory use of the term in relation to cultural production. I have examined these issues in-depth elsewhere, see 'The Production of Cultural Knowledge in the Middle East Today' in *Art & Patronage in the Middle East*, eds Hossein Amirsadeghi and Maryam Homayoun Eisler (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 10–15; and 'The Burden of Representation: Contemporary Visual Arts in the Middle East' in *Representing Islam: Comparative Perspectives* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 168–97.
4. I would direct readers here to Benji Boyadgian's project *The Temporary Archive* (2014–ongoing), in which the artist has archived, through the use of watercolours executed *in situ*, a large swathe of land along the Wadi el-Shami valley in Jerusalem. In a premonition of the valley's destruction by encroaching Israeli settlements, Boyadgian has meticulously noted each ruin of the field houses, dating from the Ottoman period, that dot the area and the olive groves that grow there. For the artist, this archive of paintings presents a form of 'preemptive archeology' that recreates a historical ecumene, the latter a term used by geographers to mean inhabited land.
5. Born in Blida, a city 45 kilometres south-west of Algiers, in 1922, Mohamed Kouaci was a member of the National Liberation Front (FLN) during Algeria's war of independence (1954–62) and a photographer for *El Moudjahid*, the official newspaper of the FLN. Following the war of independence, he continued to serve the newly independent Algerian government and his archive includes seminal images of figures from that period who visited Algeria (including Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, King Hassan II, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon), alongside portraits of the Tunisian president at the time, Habib Bourguiba, and Ahmed Ben Bella and Houari Boumediene (the first and second presidents of post-independence Algeria, respectively).
6. Since the making and showing of the film, Sedira has noted that several academics and journalists (who discovered Kouaci's photographic archive via her film) have contacted Safia Kouaci to write about or research the archive, but there has been no movement to preserve it. Email message to author (6 January 2015).
7. The AIF was set up in Beirut in 1997 to preserve, study and archive photography from the Arab world. Apart from the AIF, Al-Ani specifically worked with the photographic archives of the Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC, where she discovered unpublished aerial reconnaissance photographs of the Western Front taken by a unit established by the renowned photographer and curator Edward Steichen during World War II; and the archives of the Freer and Sackler Galleries, where she found the remarkable landscape photographs of the German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld. For a fuller account of the background to this work, see Nat Muller, 'Technologies of History: Jananne Al-Ani in conversation with Nat Muller', *Ibraaz* (26 June, 2014) <http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/137/> (accessed 24 December 2014).
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. The question of forensics, in the context of aesthetics, is a vital element in the recently published volume *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, ed. by Forensic Architecture (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014). Observing that the term *forensis* is Latin for 'pertaining to the forum', and was therefore a multidimensional space for law, politics and economy, the ambition of this volume is to resituate and expand the idea of contemporary forensics so as to reassert its role in articulating public truths and claims for justice.
11. For a further discussion of latency in the archive, see Uriel Orlow, 'Latent Archives, Roving Lens' in *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Artists' Film and Video*, eds Jane Connarty and Josephine Lanyon (Bristol: Picture This Moving Image, 2006), 34–47.
12. For a fuller discussion of the work in relation to archives in Lebanon, see Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil

Joreige, 'Wonder Beirut' in *Out of Beirut*, ed. Suzanne Cotter (Oxford: Modern Art Oxford, 2006), 76–80.

13. Jalal Toufic's thesis in *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (2009) provides a pertinent point of departure for discussing this notion of radical withdrawal in a non-material sense. In aspects of Walid Raad's work, for example, there is the suggestion, garnered from Toufic, that certain wars and conflicts not only affect a culture on a material level (the destruction of museums, artworks, books and so on) but also on an immaterial level whereby an artwork and the ideas behind it become unavailable to vision and thereafter 'withdrawn'—that is, remote and not readily understood or legible in the present or indeed future. The role of the artist thereafter is to either recuperate or point to the modes and mechanisms of withdrawal at work within these archives and artefacts.

14. During Lebanon's civil war, the National Museum of Beirut had the unfortunate luck to be situated along the so-called 'green line' that separated east from west Beirut, and therefore the various warring factions from one another. Its edifice and interior were severely damaged by the fighting along what came to be known alternatively as 'museum alley' and 'the route of death'. The museum is the focus of Lamia Joreige's *Under-Writing Beirut—Mathaf* (2013–ongoing). For a fuller account of this work and its relationship to archives, see Anthony Downey, 'Re-Enacting Rupture: Lamia Joreige in conversation with Anthony Downey', *Ibraaz* (30 April 2014) <http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/124/> (accessed 12 December 2014).

15. The first plans to restore the museum were mooted in 1992, but the walls protecting the basement were not formally opened until the museum's doors and windows were installed. Restoration on the museum started in 1995 and it was officially inaugurated on 25 November 1997.

16. Anthony Downey, 'Photography as Apparatus: Akram Zaatar in conversation with Anthony Downey', *Ibraaz* (28 January 2014) <http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/113/> (accessed 14 December 2014).

17. This is effectively Derrida's reading of the archive as an edifice and edict, as outlined in the opening pages of *Archive Fever* where he begins with archiving the term 'archive' before observing its origins in *arkhē*: the origin or beginning, or first principle. Remarking on how the Greek term *arkheion* refers to a house or domicile where superior magistrates, *archons*, resided and issued forth commands, the principal term that emerges in these pages is the prefix *arche* which alludes to both the archive and architecture. In archiving the emergence of the archive, Derrida highlights its commencement (how it is representative of a beginning or starting point in an ontological sense) and how, in a nomological, law-giving sense, the contours of the archive contingently produce the command of law. Domicile and dominion, if not domination, become one in the edifice of the archive.

18. See Raoul-Jean Moulin, 'Posters for the Struggling Nations' in *The Baghdad International Poster Exhibition '79*, eds Raoul-Jean Moulin and Dia Al-Azzawi (London: Malvern Press Ltd, 1979), catalogue preface.

19. For the full extended interview with Walid Raad published in two parts see: Walid Raad, 'Chapters, Records, Keywords: Lucien Samaha in conversation with Walid Raad, Part I', *Ibraaz* (6 November 2013) <http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/102/> (accessed 7 February 2015) and 'Influence, Passion, Process: Lucien Samaha in conversation with Walid Raad, Part II', *Ibraaz* (6 November 2013) <http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/103/> (accessed 7 February 2015), respectively.

20. Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', *October*, no. 110, (Fall 2004): 3–22.

21. Jacques Derrida, *op cit.*, 4, note 1.

22. I have written at length on this subject elsewhere. See Anthony Downey, 'Exemplary Subjects: Camps and the Politics of Representation' in *Giorgio Agamben: Legal, Political and Philosophical Perspectives*, Tom Frost, ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 119–42.

23. This work is discussed at length in Anthony Downey 'Word Stress: Lawrence Abu Hamdan in conversation with Anthony Downey', *Ibraaz* (2 May 2012) <http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/21/> (accessed 12 January 2015).

24. The issue of archiving the internet has become all the more significant following, in no particular order, the revelations from Edward Snowden, the hyper-surveillance that defines large swathes of public and private life and the passing of recent laws allowing individuals the right to remove material from the World Wide Web. For a fuller account of the inherent problems involved in archiving the internet, see Jill Lepore's informative essay, 'The Cobweb: Can the Internet be Archived?', *New Yorker* (26 January 2015): 34–41.

25. This point was made all the more pertinently in Mohamedou Ould Slahi's recently published *Guantánamo Diary* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2015). Imprisoned without charge at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, since 2002, Slahi's book, whilst heavily redacted, is the first and only diary written by a still-imprisoned Guantánamo detainee. Although a federal judge ordered his release in 2010, he still remains incarcerated.

26. I am mindful here of not digressing into a discussion of modern-day subjectivities, but it is crucial to any broad sense of the archive as a historical construct to understand that the subject—defined as a locus of multiple affinities that reside in the various confluences of reason and unreason, experience and desire, delusion and aspiration—is a syntactical, discursive construct that is produced by normative and normalizing discourses that are, in turn, dependent on historical shifts in meaning and substance over time. To note as much is to observe Foucault's over-arching insight: the subject is the product of the operation of political technologies—often located in the archive and archival impulse of modernity—on, through and within the social body. In short, disciplinary technologies, particularly the archive, produce subjects as both the effect and affect of productive forms of power and concomitant rituals of truth.

27. Michel Foucault (1969), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (Pantheon Books: New York, 1972) 129. (Emphasis in original).