

KW

Schering Stiftung Award for Artistic Research 2020

Rabih Mroué

Under the Carpet

19 February – 1 May 22

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Rabih Mroué (born 1967 in Beirut, LB) is the 2020 recipient of the Schering Stiftung Award for Artistic Research, which is supported by the State of Berlin. Over the past three decades, Mroué has developed an acclaimed body of work spanning theatre, the visual arts and literature, in the roles of theatre director, actor, visual artist, and playwright. Working at the intersection of personal and political history as well as media criticism and concepts of authorship, his complex and engaging practice has secured Mroué's position as a key figure in both contemporary Lebanese art and the global conceptual artist community.

According to Mroué, his work deals with issues and perspectives in contemporary Lebanese and Middle Eastern politics, which have been, and still are, neglected and disregarded. In an attempt to reflect this neglect, Mroué ceaselessly points to the power of images, exploring their precarious relationship with both truth-telling and deception as well as that between fact and fiction. Between what pictures can tell us, without talking, and what speech, in turn, provides in between the lines, the exhibition *Under the Carpet* at KW Institute for Contemporary Art constitutes a survey of Mroué's work to date abiding artistic concerns while debuting a suite of newly commissioned works.

The artist's personal and professional biography is closely intertwined with Lebanon's political history. Growing up during the country's extensive civil war, marked by exhausting guerilla warfare and abominable carnage, he observed how the accelerated circulation of media images was turned into imperative (political) tools used for rendering the conflict, shaping its narratives and controlling collective memory, affecting not only for the artist but also the people in the region.

In 1989, Mroué received a degree in theatre from the Lebanese University in Beirut. Here, he met his partner, Lina Majdalanie, who also became his trusted collaborator. Staging critical inquiries by using theater and performance strategies, Mroué and Majdalanie were pushing the boundaries of Lebanese theatre, taking it beyond its traditional spaces and towards more conceptual expression—staging performances in unconventional venues like provisional storage houses and domestic homes. With a disregard for the dualism of non-mediated and mediated reality, Mroué later took his inquiries into the becoming of the image and its political power to the medium of video performance, further probing image production in the age of digital technology.

In 2004, Mroué started his ongoing series of 'non-academic lectures'—performative talks integrating



Elias Khoury and Rabih Mroué, *Three Posters*, 2000, Video still from performance. Courtesy the artists

sourced visual material, moving images, documentary, and fiction—which took their cues from the recent political turmoil in Lebanon and the surrounding regions, including the July War in Lebanon (2006), the Arab Spring (2010–2011) and the Syrian civil war (since 2011). Throughout this practice, Mroué has repeatedly sought to deconstruct the image, often by searching for, appropriating, and reenacting its flaws. His critical inquiries into images of conflict and protest can be seen in the non-academic lectures *On Three Posters* (2004), *Make Me Stop Smoking* (2006), *The Inhabitants of Images* (2009), *Sand in the Eyes* (2018), as well as in his groundbreaking work, *The Fall of a Hair, Part 1: The Pixelated Revolution* (2011–2012), which elaborates on the democratic potential of mobile phones during the protests in Syria. In his trademark lectures, Mroué pixelates the narrative of the image, disrupting its integrity as a historical document by using strategies of essayistic montage.

In his more subtle works on paper as well as collages and sound pieces, poetic contemplation abounds as Mroué traverses his personal archive, family misfortune, and the dialectical nature of memory. Employing other montage strategies like repetition and reenactment, Mroué instead offers a place to the forgotten, the blanks, and that which evades documentation altogether, as seen in the works *In a Public Park* (2018), *Cheers to Our Wishes, Part 3: Letter to My Sister* (2021) and the monumental work *Diary of a Leap Year* (2006–2016).

For his exhibition at KW, Mroué accomplished major new productions, including the two large-scale cinematic pieces *Images Mon Amour* (2021) and *The Other, the Unknown Other and Other Stories* (2021), as well as re-stagings of his ongoing series of so-called non-academic lectures for video, on view in recorded form for the first time. Arranged across two floors, his new material is set within various

constellations of works drawn from the last twenty years. While KW's first floor is dedicated to moving images, which are on display without verbal explanation, the second floor stages an abundance of formats, including speech, text, and documentary material, conveying the intense polyvocality of the artist's approach to narrative.

Published together with the exhibition is a new anthology of interviews with Mroué, framing the last twenty years of his practice (2001–2021). Thematically, too, throughout twenty conversations, the publication revolves around ways of speaking (in scripted conversations, confessions, reports, questions). Alongside historical documents, it features a collection of newly commissioned interviews with Lisa Deml, Maria Hlavajova, Charlotte Klonk, Lina Majdalanie, and Nadim Samman, as well as an introductory essay by the latter, who is also the curator of the exhibition *Under the Carpet*. The interviews contribute to creating even more tentative versions of Rabih Mroué, in his own words.

Public Program

Curator's tour with Nadim Samman

6 March 22, 2 pm

In English

Admission: free during Museum Sunday Berlin

Focus tour with Jeanne-Ange Wagne

16 March 22, 5 pm

In English

Rabih Mroué

Before Falling Seek the Assistance of Your Cane

Non-academic lecture

30 April 22, 8:30 pm

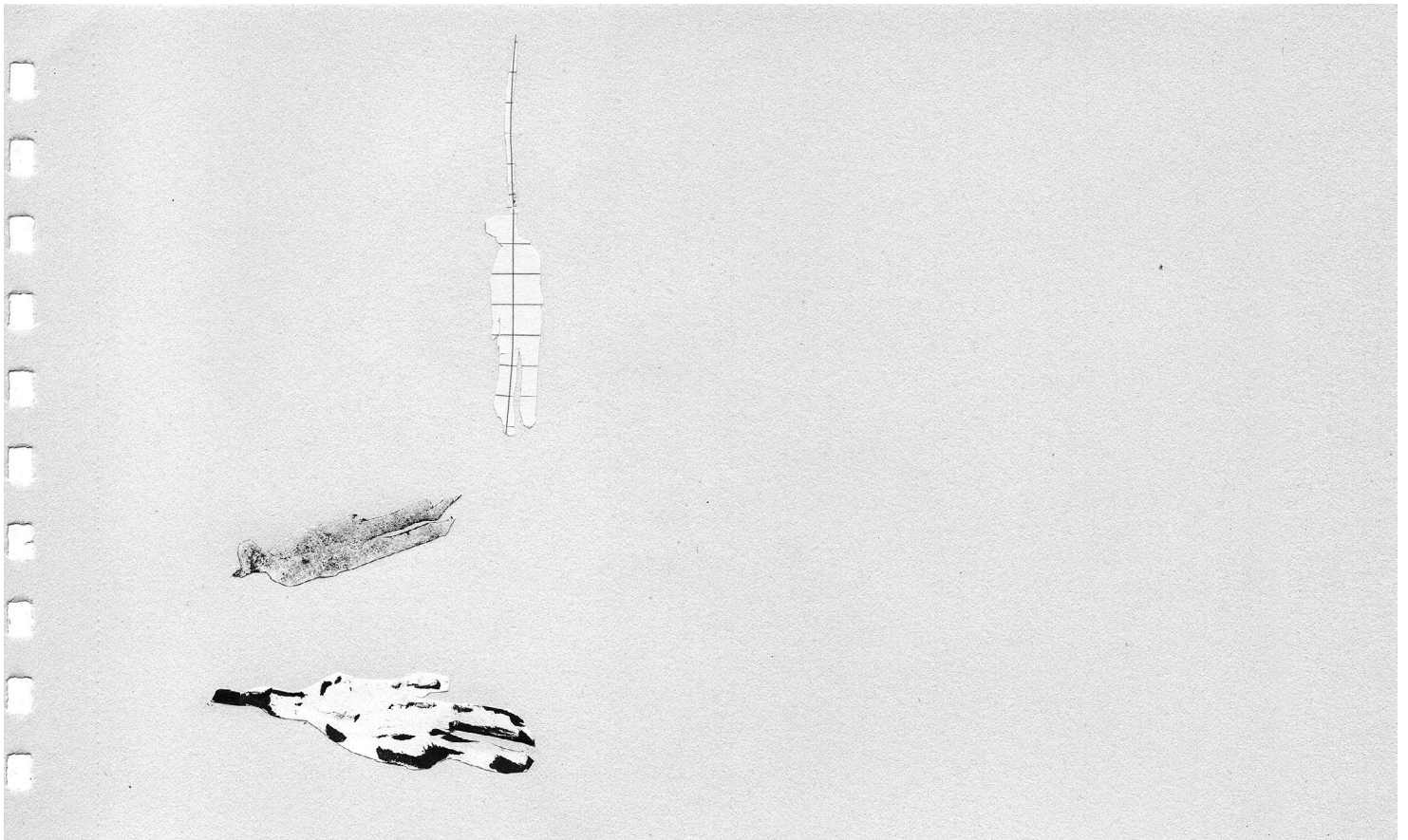
In English

Curator's tour with Sofie Krogh Christensen

1 May 22, 2 pm

In German

Admission: free during Museum Sunday Berlin



Rabih Mroué, *In a Public Park*, 2018, collages and ink. Courtesy the artist

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Opening Hours

Wednesday–Monday 11 am–7 pm
Thursday 11 am–9 pm
Closed on Tuesday
Modified opening hours during Gallery Weekend on
Friday, 29 April 22, 11 am–9 pm

Admission

8 € / reduced 6 €
berlinpass holders 4 €
Free admission to visitors up to and including 18,
Friends of KW and Berlin Biennale, and KW Lover*.
Free admission to all visitors on Thursday evenings
6–9 pm, during Museum Sunday Berlin and during
Gallery Weekend, 29 April 22, 6–9 pm.

Tours with KW Guides

During regular opening hours, visitors of KW can
participate in short introductions to the exhibitions by
the KW Guides. Please reach out to our staff at the
ticket counter. Participation is free of charge.

Public guided tours

Saturday, in English: 26 February, 19 March,
9 + 30 April, at 4 pm
Sunday, in German: 27 February, 20 March, 3 April
(Museum Sunday Berlin), 10 April, 1 May (Museum
Sunday Berlin), at 4 pm
Admission: included in exhibition ticket. Participation
only after prior registration with Museumsdienst Berlin.
Limited capacity.

Museumsdienst Berlin
Tel.: +49 (0)30 247 49 888 (Mon–Fri: 9 am–4 pm,
Sat–Sun: 9 am–1 pm)
museumsdienst@kulturprojekte.berlin

Hygiene measures

In accordance with the applicable standards of the
State of Berlin, comprehensive hygiene measures have
been taken to protect visitors and staff. Updated
information will be available on our website. Wearing a
FFP2 mask is obligatory during your stay at KW.

Please only visit KW if you feel healthy. We look
forward to your stay!

Colophon

Curator: Nadim Samman
Assistant Curator: Sofie Krogh Christensen
Public Program and Outreach: Linda Franken
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Technical Management: Wilken Schade
Head of Installation, Media Technology: Markus Krieger
Installation Team: KW Installation Team
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The exhibition is part of the Schering Stiftung Award for
Artistic Research 2020 and realised with financial
support from the Senate Department for Culture and
Europe, Berlin.