

How We See

Film screenings, talks and discussions

Lina Attalah, Jano Charbel, Ute Holl & more

In November 2012, *Beirut* hosted a second series of evenings with film screenings and talks, presenting select works from Harun Farocki's seminal filmography (1969-2014) for the first time in Cairo. The film screenings were combined with talks and conversations with Cairo-based political scientist Amr Abdelrahman, journalists, activists and writers Lina Attalah, Tom Dale, Jano Charbel, Ahmed Shokr, and Basel-based author, filmmaker and scholar Ute Holl.

The select program of experimental and documentary films looked at televised revolutions, labor in cinema, and the image as a site of power, war and history making. Through corresponding talks, conversations and discussions, a number of young and acclaimed activists, journalists, researchers and media theorists shared their thoughts on the nature of how labor issues and movements are represented through images, social codes and mechanisms of journalism, the role played by media and different strategies of documentation in the context of upheavals and revolutions, the idea of use value and exchange in the neoliberal circuit, cinematic techniques and the ways in which the image-making process in itself becomes (sediment) content. The series of evenings provided an opportunity to engage in timely issues that correspond to the social, economic and politically shared realities that shape our different ways of participating, interpreting and of seeing.

"As we know, the 20th century is filmic. But only the video camera, with its heightened possibilities in terms of recording time and mobility, can bring the process of filming history to completion. Provided, of course, that there is history."

These words by Romanian writer Andrej Ujica allude to many aspects of Harun Farocki's work: filming events and historical instances that become part of our image of the world; rendering the complexity of things, their rooted and long-term causes and their inevitable elements of arbitrariness; retaining the memory of (image) events, experiencing the feeling of being able to influence their flow; acknowledging there isn't a plausible and uncontroversial concept of History as a sum of objectified elements, but a process of permanent revision.

In this sense, how can we be faithful to the present? How do we avoid aestheticizing, unconsciously instrumentalizing and being instrumentalized by this moment? How do we reveal invisible processes of the everyday immaterial labor, social hierarchies, and mental structures? Considering these and other questions, we hoped to offer an introduction into the world of Harun Farocki's

filmography, thought and practice.

To present a selection of his work in the context of Cairo at this very time opens new paths to engaging the changes in the current social, economic and political realities and shared conditions. Here and now, with the varied input and participation of activists, journalists, researchers and media theorists, Harun Farocki's work met the reality of the hosting context.

### **Saturday, 24 November 2012**

19:00 *Videograms of a Revolution*, 1992, 106 min.

21:00 A conversation between Amr Abdelrahman, Lina Attalah and Ahmad Shokr

### **Sunday, 25 November 2012**

19:00 *Workers Leaving the Factory*, 1995, 36 min.

19:45 A discussion with Jano Charbel and Tom Dale

### **Monday, 26 November 2012**

19:00 *Inextinguishable Fire*, 1969, 25 min.

19:30 *A New Product*, 2012, 37 min.

20:30 Talk by Ute Holl, *Part 1: Images of Power*

21:30 *Prison Images*, 2000, 60 min.

For the first part of her talk, Ute Holl took one of the earliest and most successful films of Harun Farocki and his latest one as vantage points to speak about forms of the documentary and images of power.

### **Wednesday, 28 November 2012**

19:00 *As You See*, 1986, 72 min.

20:30 Talk by Ute Holl, *Part 2: Images of War*

21:30 *War at a Distance*, 2003, 58 min.

In the second part of her talk, Ute Holl spoke about images of war and its representation in film and digital media, drawing connections to the representation of the most recent events in Egypt and the region via the Internet and social media platforms.

### Biographies

**Harun Farocki** is a German filmmaker and artist best known for his experimental documentaries produced since 1969. In more than a hundred films and installations he draws our attention to the visible and invisible complexities of everyday life. With his distinctive camera and montage techniques Farocki assesses the fabrication of perceptual habits and how it is altered by the advent of new technologies, consistently pushing formal boundaries with the persistent eye of a critical observer to raise questions dedicated to social coexistence, power relations, politics, the horror and cruelty of warfare, and the dominance of growing capitalization.

**Amr Abdel Rahman** is one of the founding members of the Socialist Popular Alliance (SPA). Born in 1980, Abdel Rahman was one of the founders of the Democratic Left, a group that emerged in 2007 and modeled itself after Europe's social democratic parties. He worked as a political analyst for the European Union Commission in Cairo and is currently a researcher at Essex University. He often criticizes the commitment of the Egypt's conventional left to classical Marxism.

**Lina Attalah** was chief editor of the former Egypt Independent, the English edition of Al-Masry Al-Youm daily, and recently founded Mada, a new platform for independent journalism in Egypt.

**Tom Dale** is a journalist, writer and occasional photojournalist based in Cairo. He has worked as news editor for Egypt Independent, the English edition of Al-Masry Al-Youm daily and is part of Mada.

**Jano Charbel** is a labor journalist and formerly reporter of Egypt Independent, the English edition of Al-Masry Al-Youm daily, and works with Mada. He focuses on labor rights and related issues including minimum/maximum wage, state crackdowns on workers' rights, industrial actions,

independent organizing and unionization, among the others.

**Ute Holl** is an author, filmmaker and scholar who teaches at the University of Basel. Her recent publications include *Choreographie für eine Kamera. Maya Derens Schriften zum Film* (with Jutta Hercher, 1995), *Kino, Trance und Kybernetik* (2002) and *Suchbilder. Visuelle Kultur zwischen Algorithmen und Archiven* (2003). Ute Holl lives in Basel.

**Ahmad Shokr** is an activist, doctoral candidate in Middle East history at New York University and former editor of Egypt Independent, the English edition of Al-Masry Al-Youm daily.

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