



fluent

Reza Abdoh,
*Quotations from a
ruined city.*

03/10 – 22/12/2024

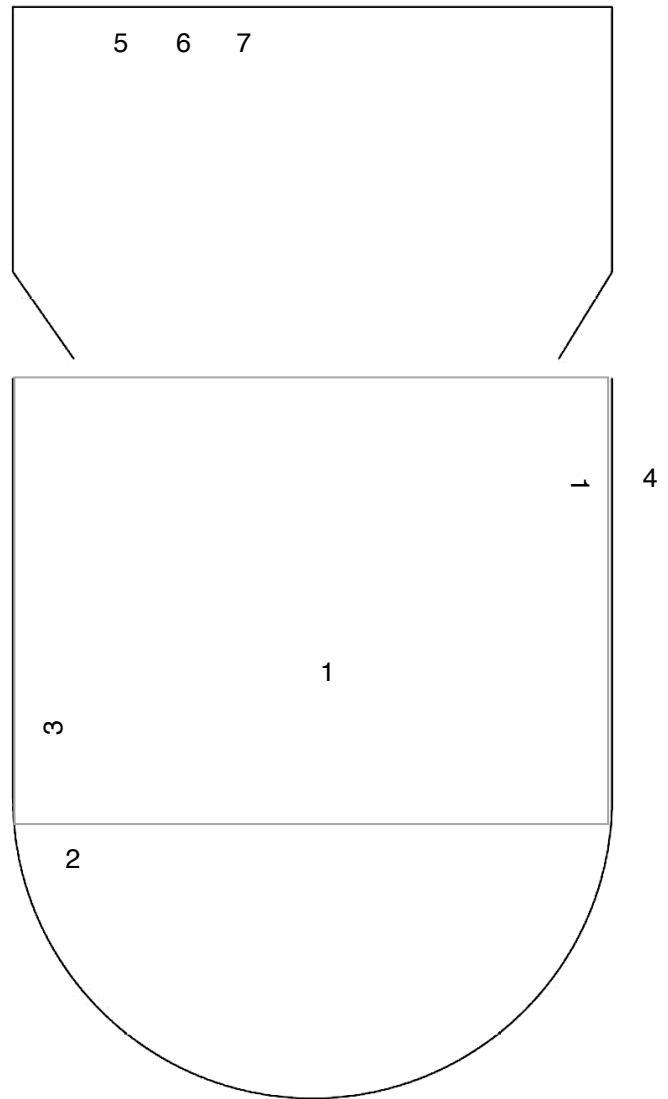
Quotations from a ruined city is the title of the last theatre play produced by late Iranian playwright, Reza Abdoh (1963–1995).

This exhibition takes such work as a case of study, to reflect on the violent political realities of his (and our) time. The performance centers around two male couples: the first one is a pair of gay men, shattered and sometimes shattering each other. The second couple wanders across history, starting out dressed as Puritans and ending up as modern businessmen. The play is fragmented and relies on the repetition of images and text –a recurrent formal resource in Reza's language–. Many of these juxtapositions, collages and repetitions can also be traced through the exhibition's spatial and narrative tactics, as a means for both insistence and confusion.

Over a career that spanned twelve years, Abdoh developed an aesthetic grammar where mythology, music clips, fairy tales, BDSM, rave culture, religion and avant-garde theatre merged, to speak eloquently about human degradation, genocidal politics (from the AIDS crisis to supremacism and war), structural segregation, oppression, racism and the institutions' refusal to diversity. What underlies all his interests is the paradox noted by Daniel Mufson quoting Adorno, through which health eventually contains and embodies disease—and the corresponding repression of that which is healthful, the labeling of the cure as a disease itself. That inversion frames the conditions and point of view explored in *Quotations from a ruined city*. It is not a metaphor, but an ideology.

On the week of its premiere at the L.A. festival, the play was described as "a violent attack on violence. A sort of apocalyptic follies, evening of song, dance, poetry, nudity and torture set in a world" that is still dying today.

Just before his death, Abdoh gave instructions that his plays never be performed again, thus making his work only available through videos, photographs, texts and other kind of documentation materials, some of which are presented in the space as a performative archive out of time.



1. Video documentation of *Quotations from a ruined city*, 1993, performed at Los Angeles Festival. 86 min (loop). Recorded by Dar a Luz.

2. Peter Jacobs in *Quotations from a ruined city*, 1994. Photograph by John Zalewski. Courtesy of John Zalewski and Daniel Mufson.

3. Scripts from *Quotations from a ruined city*, 1993 –ENG & ESP–. Text by Reza Abdoh and Salar Abdoh.

4. Sonic diagram from *Quotations from a ruined city*, 1993. Courtesy of Salar Abdoh.

5. L-R Sabrina Artel, John Jahnke, and Tom Pearl in *Quotations from a ruined city*, 1994. Photograph by Paula Court. Courtesy of Paula Court and Daniel Mufson.

6. *Quotations from a ruined city* performed in 1994. Photograph by Paula Court. Courtesy of Paula Court and Daniel Mufson.

7. Peter Jacobs and Tom Pearl in *Quotations from a ruined city*, 1994. Photograph by Paula Court. Courtesy of Paula Court and Daniel Mufson.