

Maha Maamoun's first institutional solo exhibition focuses on her films, with which she injects history into existing images, texts and sounds: *Domestic Tourism II* (2008) compiles cameo appearances by the Pyramids of Giza in Egyptian cinema since the 1950s. This ancient Wonder of the World in its role as a backdrop for discussions of national, individual and gender identity in Egyptian mainstream cinema advances to become the protagonist of a dramatic feature film. When the text of a contemporary science fiction novel meets the reenactment of an iconic film image from the 1960s, the idea of imagination as potentiality is reduced to absurdity in *2026* (2010). Digging through blurred mobile phone footage on youtube which has captured the storming of the state security buildings in Cairo and Damanhur in spring 2011, Maamoun sets up an arduous course of decoding the past (*Night Visitor: The Night of Counting the Years*, 2011). In her latest film, *Shooting Stars Remind Me of Eavesdroppers* (2013), Maamoun likewise refuses to direct actors or scenes and instead orchestrates images and sounds recorded in Al-Azahr Park together with an intimate conversation about eavesdropping, truth and trust.

With her films, Maamoun trawls through the cultural imaginary in search of historiographical framing in which to set the present. This is also reflected in the exhibition title, which stems from the cinema classic by Shadi Abdel Salam. Maamoun's works indicate that the question of whether art can step out of the symbolic circle in order to have an effect in the lifeworld is posed incorrectly: it's all about the how. Art is opening out almost of its own accord when Maamoun takes seriously symbolic representations and has them clash with one another. In this process ruptures are caused in the representations, enabling the painful points of current questions to be intuited.

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