

Born in Saida, Lebanon in 1966, Akram Zaatari belongs to a generation of conceptual artists who grew up during the Lebanese Civil War. Like many of them, he is interested in history and in the narratives which could possibly exist in the absence of records. Zaatari therefore compares his practice to that of an archaeologist, who excavates objects, photographs, letters, diaries, and stories. His ties to history and the archive developed while researching photographic practices within the framework of the Arab Image Foundation, which he co-founded in Beirut in 1997. The AIF was established to collect, preserve and study photography in the Arab-speaking world.

Our current exhibition, *Unfolding*, refers to Zaatari's original intervention in Saida's old market in 2008, when he identified photographs taken by Hashem El Madani, showing shop owners posing at the doors of their stores of his hometown Saida. Zaatari negotiated with the current owners of the same shops to accept that he installs reprints of Madani's original pictures that date back to the 1950s, inside their stores. Zaatari marked the locations of all the photographs on a map of the old city and distributed the map in an event that was entitled "Hashem El Madani: Itinerary" organized by the Arab Image Foundation. The work we present here includes the original set of prints, identical to those installed in Saida's market and another set of the same shops as photographed by Zaatari today. The multiple shifts in ownership and land-use are captured in a short film that speak of the history of retail commerce and real estate in the old city.

On the ground floor, we present Zaatari's video *Endnote*, 2014, where we see him sitting side by side with Hashem El Madani (1928 - ) at his Studio Shehrazade, staring at a computer screen, while a spectacle of loud Lebanese music, colors and lights gradually unfolds behind them.

Akram Zaatari lives and works in Beirut. His works are part of renowned international collections such as Tate, London; MoMA, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Walker Arts Centre, Minneapolis and Hammer Museum, L.A.. He has had solo exhibitions at Kunsthaus Zürich and Videobrasil São Paulo (2016), Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2015), Wiels Contemporary Art Center, Brussels (2014), Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2013), among many others. He represented Lebanon at the 55th Venice Biennial, and was part of Documenta13 in 2012. He is currently working on a new exhibition entitled *Against photography*, which will open at MACBA in Barcelona in April 2017.

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