

### MEMORY & OBLIVION

Exhibition of Contemporary Video Art

Curated by Barbara Polla and Paul Ardenne

November 18-29, 2015



**Memory & Oblivion** Video Exhibition November 18-29, 2015

**Opening Wednesday November 18, 6-9pm**  
Curated by Barbara Polla & Paul Ardenne

**Thursday November 19, 8pm**  
VIDEO FOREVER evening with art historian Paul Ardenne and Barbara Polla, exploring the links between memory and video art.

Artists  
Leila Alaoui  
Janet Biggs  
mounir fatmi  
Laurent Fiévet  
Shaun Gladwell  
Maha Kays  
Ali Kazma  
Frank Smith

Hybrid  
Cultural  
Space  
Jisr El Wali, Beirut, Lebanon | +961 71 684 218 | stationbeirut.com

**STATION**

**MEMORY & OBLIVION** brings together a constellation of eight international artists, well known for their contemporary video art practice – **Leila Alaoui** (Morocco), **Janet Biggs** (USA), **Laurent Fiévet** (France), **mounir fatmi** (Morocco), **Shaun Gladwell** (Australia), **Maha Kays** (Lebanon), **Ali Kazma** (Turkey), as well as poet, writer and filmmaker **Frank Smith** (France).

**Opening** Wednesday, November 18, 6pm

**On view** November 18-29, 2015

The themes of both memory and forgetting are intimately bound up with the life of Lebanon, and of Beirut in particular. **MEMORY & OBLIVION** will be presented at STATION, Beirut, by invitation from Nabil Cnaan, director of the hybrid cultural space.

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Memory is an essential dimension of our relation to time: it makes life complex and keeps us from living in an eternal present. At times insistent, at others light, it substantiates a relation to a body time that is never homogenous. The memory of political states, consequently, cannot be the memory of individuals; these are two strata that do not dovetail. As an individual act that on some occasions expresses a collective reality, the memory that serves as an artistic vehicle is, for that very reason, complex, fluctuating and heterogeneous. The persistence of time that it proves posits the principle of protean recollection. Memory does not exist, but memories do. Memories are cerebral and corporeal, but also cellular, immunological, electronic and physical. They are social and collective. Hence their extraordinary complexity.

But not all memories are the same, for sure. When nostalgic, they are ponderous, when the past sucks in the present. In the name of justice, memory serves to settle outstanding scores. Or it can commemorate, its primary function being to maintain thoughts of an event that has become a monument. Likewise, artists use memory from differing angles, and the approaches mentioned here can be combined or opposed or overtly avoid each other.

Then there is the corollary of memory, its indispensable companion: forgetting, which lightens, a force for relief, regeneration and rebirth. The loss of memory, all losses of memory, and particularly the loss that comes at the end of life, can be considered not as negative phenomenon, but as a return to something earlier, to a virginity of memory, and as the vector of a possible “living again.”

Without a doubt, Beirut is one of those cities that are both historically rich, the product of ancient civilisations, and strongly grounded in the present. It is a city that holds memory and forgetting in the same grip: the memory of the past, of all pasts, both glorious and terrible; the memory of war. Forgetting linked to the long-term and its passing; an active, deliberate forgetting tinged with nostalgia; a relative and fragmentary forgetting dotted with traces, scars, the dead, unelucidated disappearances of loved ones who have become ghosts. Remembering so as to give flesh to the past, forgetting to enable the free present, but not just in any condition. **MEMORY & OBLIVION**, an inseparable couple. For in reality, forgetting does not exist. The active burying of traumatic memories is merely an attempt at pacification for which memory usually has no difficulty avenging itself. Only transformation by means of creation, whatever its nature, allows what Boris Cyrulnik expressed in a famous oxymoron: “marvellous unhappiness.”

Video proceeds as memory does: the video image acquires the status of a memory the moment it ceases to appear before us; the recording of what is seen and the “stocking” of the image are almost simultaneous. We can then call on the images thus

stored or preserved, the way memory summons a specific recollection when we need it (the phenomenon of “destocking”). Video, a mirror of memory: a camera that films stocks and recycles the huge quantity of images and data that we accumulate in the course of our lives. The movement, instability and incompleteness of video images requires that the observer mobilize their memory and keep its perceptual system in a state of permanent alert. We can therefore say that, simply as a medium, video offers a landscape of perception in which space and time articulate thought in images, which is the working of memory itself.

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## **VIDEO FOREVER | Memory Games | Thursday November 19<sup>th</sup>**

The day after the exhibition opening, art historian Paul Ardenne and Barbara Polla will present VIDEO FOREVER, an evening of art critique that, for this 26<sup>th</sup> session, will explore the links between memory and video art.

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### **FOR INTERVIEWS**

The curators are available for interviews, along with some of the international artists.

#### **Schedule**

Barbara Polla	Curator	Mon Nov 16 – Thu Nov 19
Paul Ardenne	Curator	Wed Nov 18 + Thu Nov 19
Leila Alaoui	Artist	Mon Nov 16 – Fri Nov 20
Ali Kazma	Artist	Wed Nov 18 + Thu Nov 19

#### **Contact**

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#stationbeirut

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### **A collaboration between**

ANALIX  
FOREVER

VIDEO  
FOREVER

STATION



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Embassy of Switzerland in Lebanon

**STATION** is an artist-run, hybrid cultural space dedicated to identifying, presenting and promoting progressive cultural projects. Since opening in 2013, STATION has regularly organized exhibitions of video, photography and installation art by local and international artists. Programming by the Swiss-Lebanese director, Nabil Canaan, and guest curators has included *Maripolarama: New York 1980s*, *PhotoMed Festival* (in collaboration with La Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris) and *In Medias Res* (exhibition of emerging Lebanese interdisciplinary artists). The venue has also hosted some of Lebanon’s landmark cultural events, including Beirut Design Week, Beirut Art Fair and Beirut & Beyond International Music Festival. Curatorial focus is on art, design, music and lifestyle projects.