SENTENCES on the banks and other ACTIVITIES

Introduction by Abdellah Karroum

The exhibition project Sentences on the banks and other activities is conceived as an arena for research activities, a project experimenting with display formats and ideal narratives of artworks and their histories. The main room acts as a headquarters, connecting the roads and passages built between the artists’ studios and the surrounding urban mountains.

Today an exhibition space is to the curator what a studio is to the artist: a nomadic mental space, more an imprecise field for ideas than a factory for objects. The main role of an exhibition is to share artistic production in the ‘Cry’. An exhibition is a space of freedom where a diversity of artworks coexists without words in a poem. This exhibition acts as a hub for collaborative operations: provoking statements or dialogue with other fields and disciplines. The action of production and the space of visibility are intertwined.

Among the ideas behind the exhibition in Amman is the importance of building bridges between different areas and mountains, and connecting the local art scene to other arenas. The artworks in the exhibition appear at the same time as the activities initiated in different parts of the city by its activists and citizens. Artworks do for the city what the word does for the novel, what the flower does for the forest, or what the stone rose does for the desert; it creates an exceptional moment for thinking or contemplating. In a time where cultural production is instrumentalised by touristic projects and financial gains, the challenge is to retain the soul of the artworks by underscoring the strength of their meaning while ensuring that they are connected to the urban environment and produced to be shared in a situation where culture is not the priority.

Amman is a city of passage, with a significant number of exiles arriving from surrounding countries plagued by war or endemic conflicts. A constellation of relevant notions is contained in the artworks such as fear, desire, belief, displacement, and social ecology.

The project deals with establishing links between edges as well as looking at fixed passages and limits between spaces, disciplines, and conventions. It is important that cultural production makes sense of the here and now. Creating an exhibition means building a space that gives sense to the multiple expressions contained within artworks and this project hopes to create freedom in a place where people are confined at different levels (religion, politics, land divisions...).

The format of the exhibition is fused with the idea of ‘publishing’, as Amman has known public reading since antiquity, from The Suspended Odys (al-ma’il-baq), which date to before the time of Ishmael, to Mahmoud Darwish and the songs repeated in coffee shops and on the terraces of mosques. The first publication (Volume 1) acts as a space for listening, it is an invitation to address specific issues. Art can be used as a tool for changing society or act as a current against it. Volume 1 is an instrument of correspondence between the artist and curators as actors, and the audience as associates in the formulation of ideas that construct the exhibition space as a place for dialogue.

Cultural production, art spaces, theatres and universities are an important part of society but can only be active when their production is shared within a larger context. The breadth of cultural bodies can provoke “practive” dialogues when they connect to other spheres. Any individual or collective activity can have an exponential effect on the rest of society. No renaissance can be valid if the dream is not continuously charged.

When an expression, be it an art project, a film, a book, a performance or even an exhibition, creates a passage between the proposition of the creator and the user, the context is activated. In architecture, foundations and walls are not eternal and precarious structures can be more solid than bunkers.

How can we make an exhibition project the centre of the world when we only believe in a fragmented universe? This project integrates production across disciplines and social practices, associating the exhibition space with public and private spheres, and cultural sites around the city. It deals with the city as a shared space. The politics of the use of public space interacts with ways of living in private places. The project is launched with an invitation for people to join a collective space for thinking, where they are encouraged to express ideas of realities and imagination. It is not about making sentences but rather about making sense.

The curatorial enunciation sack the simultaneous appearance, in time and space, of art production, post-production and encounters; it experiments with the idea of the emergence of artistic expression as part of the formulation process. The urgent nature of this idea of sharing while creating interrogates the speed of this day and age, and the unaccounted distance between real facts and history, documentary and fiction.

Sentences on the banks and other activities is a project that speaks to the "here and now," proposing an open perspective and imagining a possible correspondence between the inside and outside of the art fields.

Notes:
1 Abdellah Karroum is an independent curator and art researcher based in Morocco.
2 The city of Amman expands across mountains (originally seven) and thus consists of areas defined more by geography than by cultural or ethnic divisions.
3 Here “practive” means the production of discourse and its active practice.

ARTISTS AND CONTRIBUTORS (IN PROGRESS)

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* Artists participating. The project using the Volume 1 publication, and proposals are part of an experimental set-up and also presented in Volume 2.

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PUBLICATIONS

The Volume 1 is a “white pages book” sent to artists, writers and other creators as an invitation to contribute to the project with “sentences”, drawings and ideas.

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The Volume 2 is conceived as the archive of the exhibition project, containing documentation on all projects, activities, and commissioned texts. A chapter in this volume documents the contributions initiated in the curatorial correspondence.

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The Khalid Shoman Foundation

darat al funun
written by El-Baz while in Sicily as a possible “form” for a public building in Amman, and later this text “imposed itself” onto the structure. In fact, the text “les fleuves brillent...” (rivers are burning...) was engraved in the artist’s memory since 2007, during his stay in Bamako, from then on has changed, travelling from one form to another, like the ensemble of elements that the artist has long explored.

Yto Barrada has developed a visual language that relies on photography, publications, film, and interventions in urban and exhibition spaces and that is embedded with deep political commitment. Barrada often uses Tangier and the Straits of Gibraltar as the sites of her inquiring which is both artistic and documentary. Cinema and graphics augment the artist’s activist approach that navigates between investigating historical reality and generating ecological commentary. BEAU GESTE documents an “action” in a vacant lot, inspired by the Diggers Movement. The owner of this vacant lot has made a fatally deep notch into a palm tree, a PHENIX CANARIENSIS, and is waiting for it to fall. Once this occurs, the owner can build on his lot. The “action” sets out to interrupt or delay this process.

Mohamed El-Baz has been working on his extensive project entitled Bricoler l’incurable since 1993, drawing on a visual lexicon of elements – photographs, objects, symbols, and words – that he creates, collects, and reuses differently each time he installs his work. Born in Morocco, and having immigrated to France at a very young age, the artist is highly influenced by “images” (in the sense of the imagined) of the political, social and “poetic” situation of Morocco, a context he encountered only years later as an artist. In his art, El-Baz showcases objects according to established codes of representation, constructing a situation of tension that interrogates the concepts of alienation according to established codes of representation, constructing a situation of tension that interrogates the concepts of alienation

Mohsin Harraki is a multi-disciplinary artist whose practice interrogates cultural conventions and post-colonial consequences. His work focuses on deconstructing collective memory through objects and knowledge. His film two sides of one piece makes direct reference to the relation between the image, politics and money. It features imagery of a spinning coin and the sound of the coin’s movement across the surface, its rapid movement transforming it into a foreign, aesthetically pleasing object. Harraki recently graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Dijon, and is developing a project that draws on books used in several countries by massive educational systems.

Mona Hatoum, Medal of dishonour, 2008, bronze, 9 x 65 mm diameter. Courtesy of The Khalid Shoman Private Collection.

Part of an ongoing investigation around visual practices in Jordan, Samah Hijawi has developed a multi-layered collaborative and documentation project that questions the position of art and it’s reception in Jordan. The artist uses physical works from two institutions that play a role in the education of the public on visual art in Jordan; The Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts and the University of Jordan. While they have different functions, both play a passive or active role in defining an aesthetic language and an understanding of ‘fine arts’. The interrogation brings forward questions on formal and informal art education in relation to the status of these principle institutions; the work thus inquires into the projected ‘role of art in a society’, and the part played by the institution in creating definitions for the arts.

Mona Hatoum, Medal of dishonour, 2008, bronze, 9 x 65 mm diameter. Courtesy of The Khalid Shoman Private Collection.

Fauzi Latiris, Vis-à-vis, 2010, mirror, wood, two elements of 150 x 100 x 2.6 cm each. Courtesy of the artist.

Using raw material as well as recycled popular imagery, Fauzi Latiris redefines the idea of ‘sculpture’ as a tool for shaping art that is self-critical and that can present critical views on ‘contemporaneity’ Morocco. Vis-à-vis is a work composed of two almost-identical “mirrors”, representing an oversized detail taken from the ornamental patterning employed to decorate ceramic tiles in classical Islamic architecture, developed in specific from a mosaic found in a Moroccan palace. Installed in a symmetrical manner, the two mirrors face each other, with one facing forward and the other, partly amputated, turned to reveal its back side. The work literally reflects the environment of the exhibition site and can be seen both as a ‘reflection’ of the exhibition space and an instigation of our consciousness of our position in the world. The double motif becomes more than a sculpture, changing when we move between its two parts, and when the work itself is moved from one site to another.

Samah Hijawi, This work does not mean anything to me: Masques around art and art-discount, 2010, an intervention with art and sound at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts. Courtesy of the artist.

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lyrical installations and performances. Filmed on a roof in the old market area in the centre of Seoul, Loop the Loop is a video of a performance in which the three members of Part-time Suite walk on the roof's edge, connected to one another by rope and by holding each other’s hands. The performance, accompanied by music by the artists themselves, reveals their common destinies, the shared risk of falling, and documents a moment of mutual trust and cooperation. The members’ only attachment to life is the other members of the collective, and as such the work proposes an experimental way of thinking about collaboration.

Yousouf Rahmon, Al-dina/Hund (Ghorfa project), 2007-2010.

The work of Yousouf Rahmon is based on repetition and spirituality, with Sufism, Buddhism, naturality, mathematics, and the artist’s personal life acting as strong influences. Rahmon has realised a specific installation for “Sentences on the banks and other activities” in Amman, travelling from the Rif Mountains, where he built his Ghorfa, to the exhibition space in Jordan, via Tétouan and Damascus. During this trip, the artist conceived of ways to share his project with the public in Amman through acts and documentation. The issues of documenting an ephemeral project, archiving traces, and building a form for the sake of sharing it are among the largest challenges faced by the artist as he works on the不属于 transtional object.

Part-time Suite

Part-time Suite is a collective consisting of Migeon Lee, Byungjae Lee and Jaeyoung Park, initiated in April 2009. Their production springs from searches for spaces within the city. They rent vacant sites in urban areas for a month and transform them into their own creative spaces through beautiful and lyrical installations and performances. Filmed on a roof in the old market area in the centre of Seoul, Loop the Loop is a video of a performance in which the three members of Part-time Suite walk on the roof’s edge, connected to one another by rope and by holding each other’s hands. The performance, accompanied by music by the artists themselves, reveals their common destinies, the shared risk of falling, and documents a moment of mutual trust and cooperation. The members’ only attachment to life is the other members of the collective, and as such the work proposes an experimental way of thinking about collaboration.


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From Jabal Qalaa to Jabal Luweibdeh
Invitation for a tour in the city
Organized with Hamzet Wasel
Tuesday 09 November 2010 at 4:30 pm
From the future of the Jabal Qalaa Community Park, a journey takes off to rediscover informal routes that lead to “Imaginons...”, a monumental work by Mohamed El-Baz at Al Fuheis Complex in Jabal Luweibdeh. The inhabitants, children, activists, and experts exchange ideas on ways to create shared spaces such as the park project within the city.

Hani Alqam, Painting on Jabal Nasr’s Stone Mine
Paintings inspired by a childhood memory in the city of Amman
Hani Alqam’s project serves as an imagined souvenir from the artist’s memory relating to a particular place, Jabal Nasr. Visiting this place twenty years later, the artist reflects on the feeling and perception of time and its passing. The paintings are imagined in dialogue with the inhabitants of the area based on their recollections of Hajjan Salha. Hani Alqam works in places around Amman, both anonymous and well-known, adopting them as the main subject of his artistic production. This stone mine is among many others that have become empty places, in opposition to the phenomenon of urbanisation that uses their stones to build the city.

Open Doors at Abdul Hag Mosailem’s Workshop - Jabal Qusur
Periodic meetings, first meeting on Wednesday 10 November 2010 at 6:00 pm
A series of meetings with Abdul Hag Mosailem that begin with a visit to his studio. Mosailem is a self-taught artist who has meticulously worked on archiving the recent histories of the Palestinian people. Using available material, he recreates scenes from daily life in his lost Palestinian home that have remained vivid in his mind since his expulsion from the village of Dawaim in 1948. Mosailem has also produced extensive documentation of the recent Palestinian struggle and liberation movements in the form of painted reliefs. This “painted archive” corpus is valid as a first representation of a community movements in the form of painted reliefs. This “painted documentation of the recent Palestinian struggle and liberation of Dawaimeh in 1948. Mosailem has also produced extensive memories, sounds, and images related to creativity, yielding varied proposals. The meetings are documented with notes and interviews in the Volume 1 publication, sound recordings, and photographs.

Mones Razzaz’s Novel ‘Jumaa Al-Qiffari’ in Urban Spaces
Thursday 11 November 2010 at 3:30 pm
Titled ‘Mones Road’, the first reading is led by Samar Dudin, starting point at 44 Nimer Al Edwan Street, Jabal Luweibdeh
Mones Razzaz’s novel ‘Jumaa Al-Qiffari’ is published throughout a neighbourhood in the city of Amman. Each station-chapter is conceived as a literary and visual experience, whereby the novel is discovered at the same time as the city by the reader. Every chapter is interpreted within the context of the city as correspondences between the life of the author and his writing and famous or anonymous places are mapped out. This original work, presented in the form of an experimental publication, straddles the literary and visual art. The urban space is used for reviving the narrative act; it is established as a place of encounters, emotions, exploration and discovery. A workshop on creative writing and reading, using the novel as a point of departure, is organized at Darat al Funun, and a radio program is produced by R22 art radio.

‘Exciting Project’ at the Studio - Jabal Amman
From 08 October to 06 November 2010
A series of weekly informal meetings with an invited group of artists, writers, filmmakers, musicians and friends. Each meeting involves a randomly selected group of people with different opinions and backgrounds, and discusses issues related to creativity, yielding varied proposals. The meetings are documented with notes and interventions in the Volume 1 publication, sound recordings, and photographs.

Rap and Graffiti Workshop, led by Nidal Al Khairi (graffiti), Torabqeh (rap) and Firas Shehadeh in Jabal Nasr
From 12 November 2010 to 24 December 2010 (closed sessions)
A group of 10 participants, from eight different schools, revive a fountain in their neighbourhood in Jabal Nasr through weekly workshops over the course of two months. The workshops try to creatively vocalize ideas and thoughts on the neighborhood in the form of graffiti and rap compositions. The participants showcase the graffiti work and rap performances produced during the workshops in a public event held at the stadium of Jabal Nasr.

Sentences on the banks and other activities
Curated by: Abdellah Karram
for Darat al Funun - The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman
Thanks to the artist and contributors to the exhibition and projects in the city. Thanks also for the support of Galerie Les Filles du calvaire, Hamzet Wasel, Ruwwad, and The Studios. Special thanks to the Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Jordan, and the Greater Amman Municipality.

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Intervention at Daraj Nadim al Mallah (Darat al Funun)
An intervention on the external walls of the new building of Darat al Funun as an act of extending the space of the live museum. This project is one of a series of interventions commissioned to a group of artists for different locations throughout the city. For this location, the participating artists explore the topic of “animals, plants, machines, and urban”.

Where to go? Mapping Project by Raed Ibrahim
04 October to 10 November 2010
Raed Ibrahim experiments with a new mapping project in the city of Amman. The Where to go? map reveals truths frequently obscured in cartographic history and results from a workshop held in Jabal Natheef involving 42 participants encountered in the city. Together, the artist and participants select personal and public spaces in Amman in significance to them, analyzing the uses and specifics of each. Ibrahim then redraws a map parallel to the standard tourist map of the city using the selected sites. Ibrahim’s map serves as a manifestation of individual choices in its identification of Amman’s informal landmarks. Ibrahim thus engages the city’s inhabitants in a reflection on the routes and stations that they construct their lives around, revealing through the process the social, economic, political and religious dynamics of this young and growing urban area.

A tour of the locations of the interventions within the city, which begins in Jabal Amman and culminates at Darat al Funun in Jabal Luweibdeh, takes place on 12 November 2010 at 4:00 pm.