



Leaves for Burning

Artur Żmijewski

Cog•nate Collective

Bassem Saad

Curators

Juli Carson

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Leaves for Burning

Juli Carson

Leaves for Burning takes its title from Peter Weiss's play *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade* (1965), wherein the assassin Charlotte Corday decries the literal death drive beating at the heart of the French Revolution's aim for national *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. By 1793, Paris was overrun with the spectacle of mass incarceration of political heretics, followed by their public execution. It was a dark libidinal machine from which no one was immune. As Corday inveighed:

*Look at this city
Its prisons are crowded
with our friends
I was among them just now
in my sleep
They all stand huddled together there
and hear through the windows
the guards talking about executions
Now they talk of people as gardeners talk of
leaves for burning
Their names are crossed off the top of a list
and as the list grows shorter
more names are added at the bottom
I stood with them
and we waited
for our own names to be called¹*

Over the years, Corday's warning rings differently, depending upon which trauma has activated a rereading of Weiss's play. In 2001, her voice rhymed with that of Jacques Derrida, who conceived of the Enlightenment as being

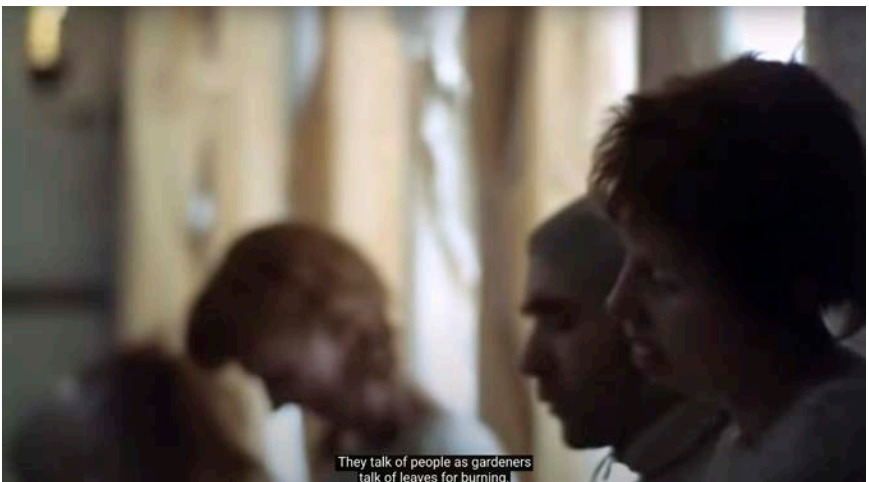
¹ Peter Weiss, *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the direction of the Marquis de Sade*, (Long Grove: Waveland Press, Inc., 1965) pp. 87-88.

the West's "autoimmune disorder," a fact revealed to us by the "event" of September 11. In *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, Derrida notes that the "terrorism" we perceive as coming from outside is one actually generated from within the Western tradition. Witness Thomas Hobbes, Carl Schmitt, and Walter Benjamin. "To be sure," Derrida reminded, "the political history of the word 'terrorism' is derived in large part from a reference to the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, a terror that was carried out in the name of the state and that in fact presupposed a legal monopoly on violence."² Accordingly, the root of terror hitting the towers on September 11th was not Saudi derived alone. Rather, it was a boomerang effect of the Enlightenment's original sin: colonialism.³ In the American Autumn of 2020, against the backdrop of Trump's cultural wasteland—one littered with ICE Internment Camps, a runaway pandemic body count, a government backed voter suppression campaign, and threats of martial law over blue state "anarchistic jurisdictions"—the violence within was transparently on display. Trump's denouement—his violent Insurrection on the Capital, an event simply known as January 6th—made this clearer. So, too, the myth of American exceptionalism is dispelled, as similar events play out on the global stage, from Europe, the Middle East and beyond.

Meanwhile, a diverse, global majority—what Antonio Negri's *Empire* referred to as the "multitude"—stands estranged from a group of minority figure heads who impose their civic, psychic, and physical violence upon their fellow citizens. While this may be the dominant political symptom in 2022, *Leaves for Burning* argues that an "aesthetic ethics" may well be the prognosis, a tactic whereby the artist/viewer stands with the estranged majority. Appropriating Corday's words in this context, *As more names are added at the bottom of the list, we will stand with them. And wait for our own names to be called.* In so doing, we will write, we will talk, we will make art as subjects among subjects, as others among others. Simply, we will counteract the beat of this country's death drive with the blazing light of a counter life drive. *Leaves for Burning* features three installations that inspire this life drive.

² Giovanna Borradori, ed., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), p. 103.

³ I am thankful to Daniel Joseph Martinez, with whom I formulated key connections between Derrida's notion of the Enlightenment and the legacy of Jean-Paul Marat, during Martinez's production of: *IF YOU DRINK HEMLOCK, I SHALL DRINK IT WITH YOU* or *A BEAUTIFUL DEATH*; player to player, pimp to pimp. (As performed by the inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the direction of the Marquis de Sade). The work was first exhibited at Roberts Project in Los Angeles, April 9 – May 21, 2016. <https://www.robertsprojectsla.com/exhibitions/daniel-joseph-martinez5>



Marat/Sade, 1967 film adaption of Weiss's play, directed by Peter Brook

Artur
Żmijewski

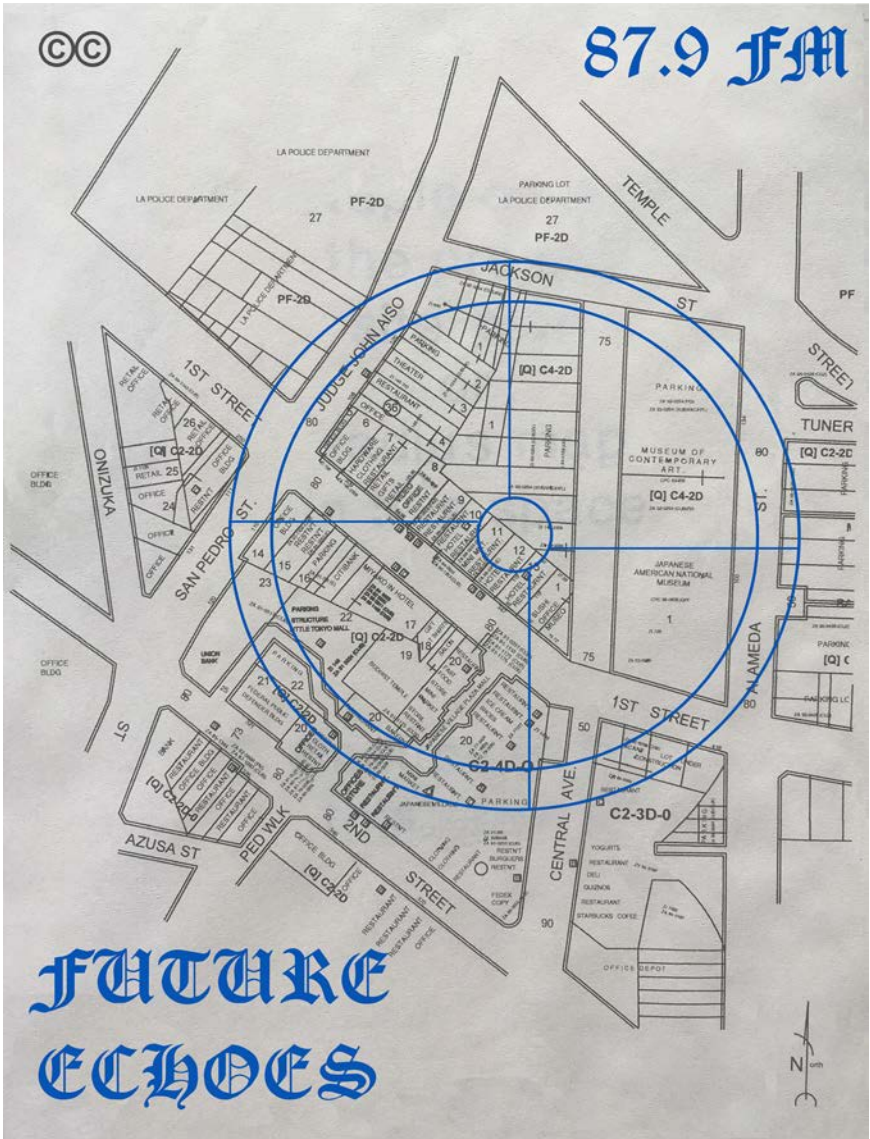


Artur Żmijewski, *Repetition*, 2005, film still, courtesy of the artist, Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich.



Artur Żmijewski, *Compassion*, 2022, film still, courtesy of the artist, Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich.

Cog•nate
Collective



Cog•nate Collective, *Future Echoes*, 2019, online poster indicating the range/radius of the pirate-radio broadcast, courtesy of the artists.

Bassem
Saad



Seeds in Dialogic Imagination: Towards a Horizon of Life Lived

Heather M. O'Brien

In the green escape of my palace, over a bridge, under a canopy of opalescent light, through there, between dark branches and their shivering leaves, I'm lost in the scent of yellow roses, arrested by the range's filtering light.

- Etel Adnan, *There: In the Light and the Darkness of the Self and of the Other*

Before leaves for burning, they were seeds. Planted with intentionality, coddled by water and earth. Gently they grew, mangled vines and foliage—offering shade and protection to all those who crossed their soiled paths. Time and light were the enemy, both necessary to grow and constitute history, both blinding and disheveling to the present. While Charlotte Corday insinuated that our bodies were as disposable as *Leaves for Burning*, contemporary biopolitics remind us that the gardeners of the state frame us differently: they must constantly remove and sell our flowers to allow their plants to grow.

Flames distill leaves down to their very essence—hollow veins provide food and water to living cells. Prior to becoming ash, an outer layer is removed, revealing the vein network within, creating a ghostly, yet striking appearance. A skeleton weaved intricately in temporality, struck down in haste, without conscious. The swipe of the match is sudden, rupturing a life un-lived, creating pale ashes, cottony as snow. I distinctly remember the smell of burning leaves in Autumn—robust and pungent, nostalgic and grotesque all at once.

Here I consider the trials and tribulations of three artist projects: seeds in dialogic imagination. In collaboration their pieces offer elaborate vistas onto

the events and people upon which they gaze. Their resistance to fire is a chorus rooted in their fluid voices, at some moments chanting in unison, at others silenced by the depth of their own reckoning. As Brecht points out in *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, this is the maker's vision: "to imitate incidents that take place between people, with the result that one feels one is in the presence of real life."¹

The artists here also consider bare life; their work is situated in the realm of biopolitics, they prod carceral backdrops. To set the stage, as Mary Kelly has said, we must look to the artists' political primal scenes.² In this case, Japanese Internment during WWII, The Vietnam War, 9/11, and Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse. More recent atrocities are also considered: ICE Detention Camps at the US/Mexico Border, the ongoing Lebanese Economic Collapse since 2019, Black Lives Matter uprisings and the murder of George Floyd, the August 4th 2020 Beirut explosion, and the Kafala system in Lebanon that places migrant domestic workers in highly abusive conditions amounting, at worst, to modern slavery.

Human behavior is incredibly pliable, plastic.

- Philip Zimbardo

In the summer of 1971, set against the backdrop of the Vietnam war, psychology professor Philip Zimbardo led the Stanford Prison Experiment, in which he paid University students \$15 a day to play the roles of guards and prisoners. The experiment was ended after six days of ferocious psychological abuse of the prisoners by the guards. Many argue that Zimbardo played the unethical role of a menacing and calculating warden, basking in the violence. In 2005, artist Artur Żmijewski recreated this experiment in *Repetition*, a re-enactment film set in Warsaw. This time the Iraq war and Abu Ghraib were the backdrop, and Żmijewski offered an "out" for the prisoners, so if they wished to exit the experiment, they simply stated their request to be released. One could argue that Żmijewski's exit offer was a more humane approach than Zimbardo, yet the same chaos and abuse by the guards ensued. The performative biopolitics of power are embedded into this work, especially considering how, in the years after filming, the main guard "actor" of Żmijewski's film becomes a real-life fascist right-winger.

Zoe and bios constitute the two dimensions of life; zoe being the eternal and

¹ Bertolt Brecht, *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, (London, Methuen, 1995), p. 1.

² See: *Mary Kelly's Concentric Pedagogy: Selected Writings*, edited by Juli Carson, forthcoming, (Bloomsbury Press, UK, 2023).

infinite, bios being linear (and a manifestation of zoe). A state of exception occurs when law is suspended, stripped bare. These prison experiments show us what happens when life is reduced, when the simple fact of living is reduced to bare life. Giorgio Agamben reminds us that the rupture of sovereignty is always possible—the law can be thrown out the window; we can all become criminals, do unimaginable things. Biopolitics refers not only to death of the other, but to the death of the self.

Żmijewski's *Repetition* re-illuminates how power operates on the body. At one point a guard states, "I thought this was a movie, instead it's a bad trip." Here, an aesthetic modality becomes a political one.

In contrast, Żmijewski's recent film, *Compassion* (2022), offers viewers a divergent observation onto body politics. Inspired by the scientific cinema of the Italian neurologist Vincenzo Neri and uncannily similar in style to the *Marat/Sade* 1967 film adaption of Weiss's play, directed by Peter Brook, rapid movement and pungent analog colors punctuate and liven a strangely silent space. True to its title, the camera treats the body with console and care, amidst the erratic and lunacy of flailing limbs, ticking heads, and fluttering eyes. The backdrop evokes an institution-like asylum, but here bodies move freely with repetitive Tourette-like symptoms, lyrically sweeping the empty hallways, jolting in open rooms. Closing with a nod to the straightjacket, sweaters envelope heads in lieu of locking arms. In this free-floating parallel universe of *Repetition*'s prison, one can't help but wonder: where are all the guards? Is this what happens to a scrutinized body set free of the state?

Another thread between the *Leaves for Burning* artist projects is performativity and collaboration with actors, in a myriad of ways. In a recent interview, Żmijewski offers insight on this conceptual decision:

Neri began filming the patients to study their movements provoked by the illnesses ... These are stories about human body, about human existence, about people suffering from different diseases, accidents, or post-traumatic stress disorder ... In my film there are professional actors who reproduce human behavior and movements. There are stories, human body, desolation, unhappiness that sometimes comes from the human body, but also beauty. So, you can see a double meaning: I always find a certain harmony between what is beauty and what is the lack of beauty. Symptoms of neurological diseases are certainly strong and disturbing, but they can also be beautiful. And the choice of

the title *Compassion* is intended to express precisely this empathy I have for people who are ill. I hope I won't upset anyone, and the spectator will also see this beauty.³

The work of memory collapses time.

- Walter Benjamin

Two months after Pearl Harbor, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which forcibly relocated and incarcerated about 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, most of whom lived on the Pacific Coast, in concentration camps in the western interior of the US. The US Census Bureau assisted the incarceration efforts by providing specific individual census data on Japanese Americans. The camps that Hitler began in March of 1933, the camps the US would claim to be fighting against in Nazi Germany, had reached home in the US. Which begs Judith Butler's question, in war, *whose* lives are grievable?

One way of posing the question of who "we" are in these times of war is by asking whose lives are considered valuable, whose lives are mourned, and whose lives are considered ungrievable. We might think of war as dividing populations into those who are grievable and those who are not. An ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all. We can see the division of the globe into grievable and ungrievable lives from the perspective of those who wage war in order to defend the lives of certain communities, and to defend them against the lives of others—even if it means taking those latter lives.⁴

In other words, *all* leaves may burn, but we only grieve *some*.

In late 2019, just before the world turned, Cog*nate Collective was invited by the Little Tokyo Service Center in Los Angeles to participate in a +LAB Artist Residency, under the premise "Ending Cycles of Displacement." Cog*nate states on their website that they created a site-specific sound installation titled *Future Echoes* that "connected resonances between historical accounts of displacement/detention suffered by Japanese-Americans during WWII, and contemporary experiences of Central-

³ Artur Żmijewski, "Artur Żmijewski: Fear Eats the Soul," (March 31, 2022), in *Say Who*, <https://saywho.co.uk/interviews/artur-zmijewski-interview-fear-eats-the-soul/>

⁴ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London, New York: Verso, 2009), pp. 38.

American asylum-seekers.”

Using pirate radio waves to unpack forgotten histories, the project makes resistance audible. The sounds are housed gracefully in the sculptural apparatus of an open wooden dome, lined with several blue triangle blue tarps, mirroring the sky. This structure evokes the opposite feeling to that of the confining cages of *Repetition*, a formation designed to enclose bodies rather than cocoon radios. The raw wood triangle offers an open-ended multiplicity versus a stagnant series of metal vertical bars constructed to confine. If we take Buckminster Fuller’s geodesic dome as an example, triangular elements distribute the structural stress throughout, making it able to withstand very heavy loads for its size. This distribution of stress seems important given the context of Cog•nate’s complex subject matter: wars of the past and present.

Something curious occurs when one reads a letter aloud. What was once envisioned as a personal, intimate account for a specific person becomes public address. Suddenly, within the barren landscape of bare life we’re also gazing upon the bare. It reminds me of a sentiment I often share with my photography and cinema students: the more vulnerable you are with your story and the more open you are to your visuality, the more universal and relatable your voice and vision potentially become. One must, however, tread lightly with the letters and lives of others, for the looming voices of potential exploitation are always lurking.

The language scattered in Cog•nate’s collected letters is littered with non-descript words—relocation, camp, internment—words that minimize the reality of what was/is really going on: people being held against their will in a cage, slavery. Those writing from inside the walls may have to censor themselves if their words are being monitored, while those of us outside can call things what they are. While working with political organizing groups in LA, including Critical Resistance and School of Echoes, I learned the power of language when speaking of the Industrial Complexes (Prison, Medical, etc.): saying incarcerated person versus prisoner, for example, or as the local activist group J-Town Action & Solidarity⁵ states, unhoused versus homeless. Something changes when we call out the systems and structures responsible for unjust living instead of placing the burden on the individual.

A troubled past and expansive future both play a role on the contested present ground of the First Street North block in Downtown Los Angeles.

⁵ See: jtownactionandsolidarity.com

The original radio project opened with a conversation between Tina and Jessa Calderon, two indigenous women from the Tongva people. Tina states the vitality of inclusion, “if you’re talking about critical issues that affect people, then you should include the original people at the table.”⁶ The discussion touches on acknowledging and honoring First Nations, potential practices of solidarity, native plants and species to the area, and how the asphalt, cement, and garbled highways of Los Angeles have created a lack of a connection to the land.

Moving deeper into the earth, subsequent radio pieces offer modes of speculative fiction that flash us into the future. In another radio stream, *The Echo Chambers*, TK Lê leads us through looming resistance efforts:

...an entire secret network of vessels lies deep beneath the city surface, far from the sidewalks, sinuating traces of earthquake shakes and bad development. Far from the feet of the most overworked and underpaid, toiling in the sweltering heat of back kitchens and our increasingly barren fields, far below, and around the tunnels of unfinished subway lines, that tangle of unfulfilled promise, the resistance fighters were not digging their escape, they were plotting ours. Burrowed down and across the sprawling neighborhood was an entire underbelly of Little Tokyo. Each enclosure wasn’t a hideout, it was an echo chamber, a place for us to listen to each other, and to remember.⁷

Cog*nate’s decision conjure an analog form reminds us the medium can be the message. Archaic waves summon voices from the past that fuel us into a frequency of the future. If the state cuts our Wi-Fi, we go back to pirate radio waves. The chamber created in this project embodies the true definition of an echo: a sound or series of sounds caused by the reflection of sound waves from a surface back to the listener. Through reflective stories of detention, we, as the listener, are confronted with our own positionality in history, reflected and refracted, forced to consider our complicity in unjust detention practices: echoes of past, present, and future.

Why sometimes do images begin to tremble?

- Chris Marker, *A Grin Without A Cat*

⁶ Conversation with Tina and Jessa Calderon. cognatecollective.com/futureechoes-en.html

⁷ TK Lê. *The Echo Chambers*. cognatecollective.com/futureechoes-en.html

On August 4, 2022, two years after the birth of my first child in Beirut, the same day of a catastrophic explosion, I watched the grain silos fall. I became re-traumatized, enraged. As we shared our collective resistance and memorial on this horrific day, we were confronted yet again by a sea of toxic dust blaring towards us from the port. How will my child deal with “birthplace: Beirut, August 4, 2020,” forever imprinted on their passport?

On his website biography Bassem Saad includes he was born on September 11th in Beirut. What does it mean to have one's birthday become a vicious historical event? Or, as my co-curator Juli Carson has put it, when did Bassem's birthday no longer belong *just* to him but to the world? In looking at Saad's film, *Congress of Idling Persons* (2021), I start to see the effect that this political primal scene may have had on his social and aesthetic visions of a post-9/11 image landscape. The film presents us with an array of five performative actors/voices, from translators to musical artists, organizers to DJs. Fact and fiction are vividly presented side by side, under a range of camera presentations, from the stoic and well-lit, to the trembling, documentary handheld shake—both first-person accounts in the presence and reflection of the events. And such is life, a rehearsal and a performance all at once.

In an email correspondence about his work Saad states:

I came of age in the post-9/11 world, and that is somewhere always lurking in the unconscious of my practice. I'm interested in deploying historical/epochal markers when narrating events. A recent project, *This Ritual I Wish You Could See* (in collaboration with Edwin Nasr), deals most concretely with empire and counter-terrorism, along with *Permanent Trespass* (in collaboration with Sanja Grozdanić), which takes the rhetoric of American Declinism and the “end of the American century” as one of its poles. Generally, I work with psychoanalytic readings and interindividual affective responses to rupturing historical events.⁸

Saad sets the stage of *Congress of Idling Persons* with a multitude of issues: Palestine, Black Lives Matter, the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion. Each issue/voice is given a different color on screen, a backdrop brightly lit with blue, purple, or red. These colors not only punctuate the difference of what's being said, they also play to the theatricality of the piece as a whole, what Saad so poignantly calls in the project description, “a

⁸ See: bassemasad.com/triwyys & bassemasad.com/permanent-trespass

cartography of protest, crisis, humanitarian and mutual aid, migrant labor, and Palestinian outsider status.” The voices often stutter over themselves, repeating important phrases and bringing us to a space-time continuum, rupturing the script, breaking the fourth wall.

Saad mentions in one of our meetings that he was physically present in NYC when protests irrupted in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder, that he shot the footage on his phone that’s included in the film—the chanting in Brooklyn, the looting in SoHo, the burning of a cop car. This physicality strikes me as important: his body’s presence in a space of racial reckoning, not long after both our presences in Beirut’s 17 October Revolution in 2019. Too often artists point at problems without getting involved on the streets. What does it mean to be physically present in moments of resistance? How are memories imprinted onto the body differently when one hears the actual chants, tastes the real tear gas, hears one’s heart to beat in unison with others in a tightly aligned space, bones mashed up against a viciously armed law enforcement?

Saad’s film connects his experience in New York back home to Lebanon vis-à-vis Mekdes Yilma’s testimony in the film: “The shop owner asked me if I had seen how the police killed George Floyd in cold blood. I felt like I was being questioned because of my black skin. As though I was being interrogated discreetly, as if he was asking me, what side are you on?” Yilma also speaks on the Kafala system and the racism she faced as a Black woman taking part in the Lebanese protests.

Mirrored alongside *Congress of Idling Persons*, Saad’s film *Kink Retrograde* (2019) follows “intoxicated characters as they decide the social contract between themselves and the sovereign powers has always been breached ... they must devise a new and transparent contract aware of its own abjectness, risk, and deviance—one of total kink.”⁹

In one of our conversations around biopolitics, Saad mentions he has been reading *Wageless Life* by Michael Denning. This reference appears clearly in relation to *Kink Retrograde*’s framework: words flashing on screen, the choice of performers, the disappearing filmic techniques. Saad has recently reissued the film to include Lebanon’s gripping economic fall since 2019. In the past few years, the country’s currency inflation has skyrocketed as the economic crisis continues to spiral out of control, making it the second

⁹ See: bassemsaad.com/kink-retrograde

highest inflation rate globally.¹⁰ The currency has lost more than 90% of its value and plunged three quarters of residents into wageless life. Denning's words from 2010 seem all too pertinent to the case:

Under capitalism, the only thing worse than being exploited is not being exploited ... Bare life, wasted life, disposable life, precarious life, superfluous life: these are among the terms used to describe the inhabitants of a planet of slums. It is not the child in the sweatshop that is our most characteristic figure, but the child in the streets, alternately predator and prey.¹¹

In the end, Saad's nuanced practice offers a focused lens with which to navigate the states of exception that plague contemporary Lebanon.

Unprocessed anger makes particularly poor soil from which to grow political commitments.

- Maggie Nelson, *On Freedom*

Harping back to the structure of a geodesic dome, triangulation is essential. The breadth, depth, and balance that this constellation of three artist projects offers is astounding. Each piece seamlessly distributes structural stress throughout each frame, letter, and sound, making the whole able to withstand oppressive loads. Holding ravenous and bare life with compassion is a rare and complicated thing. Processing our rage through art is a delicate balance, but leaves need strong soil to thrive.

Channeling Butler and Denning, if an ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, lived only in the camp, or lived wageless under hyper-capitalism, and if carceral abolition could constitute a lived life, it should be our horizon.

The work here reminds us, as leaves under the constant threat of fire, we must not only ask ourselves what makes a life worth living, but how might we aim towards a world where *all* life is grievable?

¹⁰ Massoud A. Derhally, "Lebanon expected to record second-highest inflation rate globally in 2022," (August 17, 2022), in *The National News*, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/economy/2022/08/17/lebanon-expected-to-record-second-highest-inflation-rate-globally-in-2022>

¹¹ Michael Denning, "Wageless Life." (New York, New Left Review, Nov/Dec 2010), p. 1.

Bios

Artists

Artur Żmijewski (based in Warsaw, Poland) is an artist, film director and photographer. His work examines the dynamics of power and oppression within the social order, and the relationship between extreme emotions and their physical expressions. Żmijewski is concerned with the disruption of the human body and of cognitive functioning in extreme cases such as illness or disability, while also examining mechanisms of memory and collective trauma. His research, constructed as interviews or documentary films, is at times provocative and often direct to the point of cruelty. He has been featured in the following: selected solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Basel; The Polish Pavilion, 51st Venice Biennale; MOMA, New York; Art Basel Parcours; selected group exhibitions at the 29th Sao Paulo Biennial; Gwangju Biennial; Sharjah Biennial 10; 55th Venice Biennale; and more.

Cog•nate Collective (based between Tijuana, Mexico, Santa Ana, CA and Los Angeles, CA) was founded in 2010 and develops research projects, public interventions, and experimental pedagogical programs in collaboration with communities across the US/Mexico border region. Their work interrogates the evolution of the border as it is simultaneously erased by neoliberal economic policies and bolstered through increased militarization – tracing the fallout of this incongruence for migrant communities on either side of the border. As a result, their interdisciplinary projects address issues of citizenship, migration, informal economies, and popular culture. Therefore arguing for understanding the border not as a bifurcating line, but as a region that expands and contracts with the movement of people and objects.

Bassem Saad (based between Berlin, Germany and Beirut, Lebanon) is an artist and writer. His work explores historical rupture, infrastructure, spontaneity, and difference, through film, performance, and sculpture, as well as through essays and fiction. With an emphasis on past and present forms of struggle, he attempts to place scenes of intersubjective exchange within their world-historical frames. Saad's solo and collaborative work has been presented and screened at MoMA, CPH:DOX, Transmediale, Architectural Association, Harvard University VES, and Alserkal Avenue. His writing appears in Jadaliyya, FailedArchitecture, and The Funambulist. He was a fellow at Eyebeam, Leslie Lohman Museum, and Ashkal Alwan's Home Workspace Program. He is currently a fellow at the Berlin Program for Artists and is a nominee for the 2022 Berlin Art Prize.

Curators

Juli Carson is Professor of Art, Theory and Criticism in the Department of Art at UC Irvine and Director of the University Art Galleries. From 2018-19 she was the Philippe Jabre Professor of Art History and Curating at the American University of Beirut. Her books include: *Exile of the Imaginary: Politics, Aesthetics, Love* (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2007) and *The Limits of Representation: Psychoanalysis and Critical Aesthetics* (Buenos Aires: Letra Viva Press, 2011). Her most recent book, *The Hermeneutic Impulse: Aesthetics of An Untethered Past*, was published by PoLyPen, a subsidiary of b_books Press in 2019. Forthcoming is *Mary Kelly's Concentric Pedagogy: Selected Writings*, edited by Juli Carson (UK: Bloomsbury Press, 2023).

Heather M. O'Brien is a filmmaker, writer, and Assistant Professor of Cinema in the College of Arts & Media at Southern Illinois University. Her work builds encounters with familial archives, constructs of nationhood, and the illusion of accurate memory. From 2016-20, O'Brien was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine Arts & Art History at the American University of Beirut. Her work has been exhibited in venues such as San Francisco Camerawork; Sursock Museum, Beirut; The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, Los Angeles; and The International Center of Photography, New York. O'Brien received an MFA from CalArts and has been awarded residencies with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Santa Fe Art Institute, Marble House Project, Sommerakademie Paul Klee, and the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. Her photographic monograph, *like the delayed rays of a star*, was released in 2021, published by Seaton Street Press.

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