

THEATRE OF OPERATIONS
KUNSTHALL 3.14 AND VÅGESTYKKE
proudly present

**IT IS ONLY
THROUGH YOUR
THOUGHTS
THAT I CAN
REMEMBER
WHO I AM**

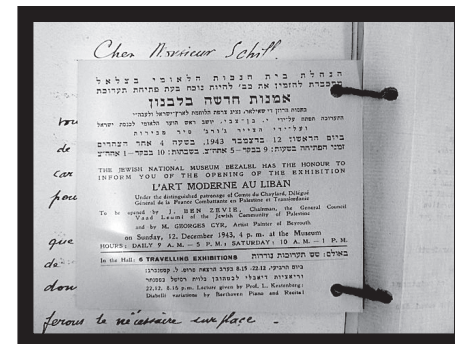
AN EXHIBITION IN THREE ACTS

CAST

THE ARCHIVE CHORUS _____ Researchers I, II, III
MYSTERIOUS PAINTER _____ Madame M.S.
THE MUSEUM MAN _____ Mordechai Narkiss
THE CURATOR _____ George Cyr
THE COLLECTOR _____ Genevieve Moron
THE COMMANDER _____ Leon Moron
THE ARCHITECT _____ Antoine Tabet
THE POET _____ George Schihade
MR. PRESIDENT _____ Yitzhak Ben Zvi
NARKISS'S ASSISTANT _____ Franz Schiff
THE FLOWER PAINTER _____ Sophy HaLabí
JUSSFUF _____ Else Lasker-Schuller
GUEST I
GUEST II

PLOT

Madame M.S rises from the archive to unfold the story of the forgotten exhibition *L'Art moderne au Liban*. She tasks the Archive Chorus with reimagining the past in order to transcend a political reality in which an artistic exchange that happened then is rendered inconceivable now.



ACTS

**THE ACTION TAKES PLACE
BETWEEN BEIRUT AND JERUSALEM AND BETWEEN
PAST AND PRESENT.**

ACT I: SEEKING MADAME M.S.

The Archive Chorus turns to the occult to conjure up the lost memories of the mystery painter.

ACT II: TEA PARTY AT THE MORONS

SCENE I: THE PARTY

In a letter dating to April 1943, Mordechai Narkiss reports on his mission of cultural exchange in Beirut: a congenial tea party held in his honor at the house of Genevieve and Leon Moron goes awry when the subject of Zionism comes up.

SCENE II: Silo'e

A surreal painting by Genevieve Moron depicting the Silwan (Silo'e) valley in East Jerusalem in 1934 comes to life to foreshadow the sinister future of the embattled and conflicted city.

INTERLUDE I: A PLACE NOT YET A PLACE

ACT III: THE OPENING

The Bezalel Jewish National Museum transform into an Arab house when a sketch by the Lebanese architect Antoine Tabet gets a life on its own. A voice echoing through the historical building of the museum reimagines the opening reception of *L'Art moderne au Liban* from the distance of 73 years.

INTERLUDE II: THE LOST ROAD TO BEIRUT

EPILOGUE: SAINT GEORGES PREVAILS

The road that the characters make ends at the iconic Saint Geroges Hotel, at the shores of Beirut. The battered and ghost-haunted skeletal structure of the hotel is restored to host the research materials, the historical references, the sketches and the drafts that form *It Is Only Through Your Thoughts That I Can Remember Who I Am*.

**IT IS ONLY
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An Exhibition in Three Acts

By
The Theatre of Operations:
Hakim Bishara & Hagar Ophir

In December 1943, an exhibition entitled *L'Art moderne au Liban* was opened at the Bezalel Jewish National Museum in Jerusalem, where it featured works of modern art by leading artists from neighboring Lebanon. Hailed as a success, it was presented by its organizers as a gleam of hope amidst the horrors of the war raging all across the globe. The exhibition was to be followed by a reciprocating display of works by Jewish artists from Mandatory Palestine at the National Museum of Beirut. That never happened, and in time all cultural ties between the two communities ceased. Aborted before its completion, *L'Art moderne au Liban* has since sunk into forgetfulness, and it remains impossible to complete until today.

It Is Only Through Your Thoughts that I Can Remember Who I Am reimagines the story of *L'Art moderne au Liban* into a theatrical exhibition in three acts. *Madame M.S.*, a mysterious Lebanese painter who was one of the participating artists in the 1943 exhibition, is conjured up from the archive to recount the tale of her time through imagined and recreated environments that combine text, image, light and sound.

This journey began in 2015, when we discovered the original catalogue of *L'Art moderne au Liban* in the Israel Museum's archive by sheer chance. At a time when French art is stifled by the reign of the Vichy

regime, and Europe is embroiled in a brutal all-out war, the invitation to the exhibition, written by director of the Bezalel Jewish National Museum Mordechai Narkiss, reads:

„This exhibition is a beginning of a series of exchange exhibitions with our neighboring country... Its title alone demonstrates our interest in the work of artists hailing from Paris, where modern art pulsed and will hopefully return to pulsate. It pleases us to know that there are cultural centers around us still keeping that pulse alive.”

Touched and surprised at the very existence of this unremembered exhibition, we embarked on a two-year research through archives and various other sources in Jerusalem, Paris and Beirut, to unearth its chronicles, its main characters and the conditions that brought it into life. This work finally took the shape of an exhibition in three acts, which glides in time between 1943 and present day to tell the story of an artistic collaboration that was the first and last of its kind.

Unlike *L'Art moderne au Liban*, this new rendition can currently be on view anywhere in the world but its original location - Jerusalem. It comes not only to deliver an ode to the bygone era of borders open to a free flow of people, artworks and ideas, but also to protest and disrupt the lingering hopelessness of the present. Driven by the desire to relive a dream that was killed before we were born, we reimagine the past into the now to illuminate the possibility of a better future.

THEATRE OF OPERATIONS WAS FORMED IN 2015 BY HAGAR OPHIR (ARTIST, PERFORMER) AND HAKIM BISHARA (ARTIST, WRITER) IN THE COASTAL CITY OF JAFFA IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE BEFORE THEY MOVED TO BERLIN AND NEW YORK. THE DOU'S NAME IS TAKEN FROM THE MILITARY TERM THAT HAS BEEN USED BY THE GREAT POWERS SINCE WWII TO DESCRIBE THE MIDDLE EAST AS A WARFARE ZONE.



PRODUCTION

It Is Only Through Your Thoughts that I Can Remember Who I Am is curated by Sissel Lillebostad and Trond Hugo Haugen in collaboration with Malin Barth. The exhibition is part of Vågestykke—a series of time-limited artworks 2016-2018 at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL) by KORO - Public Art Norway.

THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

Hagar Ophir and Hakim Bishara

SOUND WORKS BY

Miriam Schickler

LIGHTING AND PROGRAMMING BY

Rachid Moro

SET DESIGN BY

Studio Martha Schwindling

RESEARCHER IN FRANCE

Ellie Armon Azoulay

RESEARCHER IN BEIRUT

Stephanie d'Arc Taylor

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR IN BERGEN

Adriana Alvis

VOICES

Yasmine Daher, Tamar Novik,
Mai Zidani Yufany, Basheer Baransi,
Adi Ophir, Eyal Vexler,
Anna Cohen Yanay, Lipopette Berlin,
Shanti Suki Osman, Rajaa Shamam,
Wasim Ghriou

It is with particular pleasure that we want to express our feelings of deep appreciation for the generous efforts of the curators of this show—Sissel Lillebostad, Trond Hugo Haugen and Malin Barth—and our great gratitude to Eyal Vexler and Helene and Michel Cernac. This exhibition would not have taken place without their indefatigable support and good advice.

AND MORE THAN THANKS TO

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Special thanks to the friends and colleagues in and from Lebanon, whom we cannot name without putting them at risk due to our governments' lack of imagination: N.O (Researcher); R.S (Curator); W.R (Artist); R.N (Artist).

Published as part of the exhibition *It Is Only Through Your Thoughts that I Can Remember Who I Am* at Kunsthall 3.14, Bergen, Norway, 21 October-17 December 2017.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

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kunsthall314.art

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