

MANAL ABU-SHAHEEN

35-12 Bradley Ave., #2F, Long Island City, NY 11101

www.manalabushaheen.com

EDUCATION

2011 MFA Photography, Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT

2003 BA Liberal Arts, Photography Concentration, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY

1999 Lebanese American University, Byblos, Lebanon

SOLO & TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2019 *To Look at the sea is to become what one is*. Manal Abu-Shaheen and Oscar René Cornejo, Radiator Gallery, Queens, NY

2019 *2d Skin*, Soloway, Brooklyn, NY

2018 *Theater of Dreams*, Bernstein Gallery, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

2017 *Beta World City*, Lord Ludd, Philadelphia, PA

2017 *Familiar Stranger*, A.I.R. Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

2017 *Beirut*, York College Fine Arts Gallery, Jamaica, NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019 *Our Land*, Amelie A. Wallace Gallery, curated by Anthony Hamboussi, SUNY Old Westbury, NY

2019 *Forced Collaboration*, curated by Jacob Rhodes, Field Projects offsite exhibition, Lyme, CT

2019 *Artfare Inaugural Exhibition*, 9 W 8th St., New York, NY

2017 *Taken on Trust*, A.I.R. Gallery at Governors Island, curated by Roxana Fabius, Governors Island, NY

From an Object into an Active Subject, Alexander's Garage, curated by Felix R. Cid, Brooklyn, NY

Photo Speaks Annual International Photography Exhibition, The Society of Korean Photography, curated by Jun Hyung Yim, Seoul, South Korea

Wish You Were Here (vol. 3), Month of Photography LA (MOPLA), curated by Brian Guido and Stephanie Gonot, Los Angeles, CA

2016 *Anthology: Somewhere Not Here*, Crosstown Arts, curated by Tommy Kha, Memphis, TN

Bomb Pop Up Production, 1822 Fulton St, curated by Drea Cofield, Brooklyn, NY

Queens International 2016 Biennial, Queens Museum, curated by Lindsey Berfond and Hitomi Iwasaki, Queens, NY

Transitional Landscapes, The Center for Fine Art Photography, organized by Natasha Egan, Fort Collins, CO

2015 *An Invitation to Sleep*, Salvage Vanguard Theater Gallery, organized by Alexis Powell, Austin, TX

Bronx Calling: The Third AIM Biennial, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, curated by Laura Napier and Hatuey Ramos-Fermin, Bronx, NY

2014 *No Greater Fiction*, Bosi Contemporary, curated by Agnes Berezcz, New York, NY

Video Snack 3, The Print Shop at MoMA PS1 hosted by ALLGOLD, curated by Lauren Francescone and Zeynab Izadyar, Queens, NY

- Faculty Biennial*, Main Gallery, Pennsylvania College of Art & Design, curated by Heidi Leitzke, Lancaster, PA
Video Snack 2, hosted by The Varick Sessions, curated by Lauren Francescone, Brooklyn, NY
Sarah Lawrence College Alumni Art Exhibit, Heimbold Visual Arts Center, organized by Conrad Vogel, Bronxville, NY
- 2013 *Pairings/Collaborations*, Lynn and Carl Goldstein Gallery, curated by Joel Werring, Fashion Institute of Technology, NY
Buy What You Love, Bleecker Arts Center, organized by the Rema Hort Mann Foundation, NY
Post tech, Fashion Institute of Technology, organized by Doug Mulaire, New York, NY
Swerve and Fracture, Camera Club of New York, curated by Kelly Cannon, New York, NY
Video Snack, 56 Bogart, curated by Lauren Francescone, Brooklyn, NY
Transformation, Lynn and Carl Goldstein Gallery, Fashion Institute of Technology, NY
Postcards from the Edge, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York, NY
- 2012 *Occupy! ICP Occupies Governors Island*, organized by the International Center of Photography, New York, NY
Death is the Destination, Welch School of Art and Design Galleries, curated by John Decker, Nancy Floyd, Ruth Stanford, and Christina West, Atlanta, GA
Sarah Lawrence College Alumni Exhibition, Heimbold Visual Arts Center, Bronxville, NY
- 2011 *Yale MFA Photography, 2011*, Curated by John Pilson organized by Nicole Klagsbrun Project, NY
Yale Open Studios, Yale School of Art Edgewood Gallery, New Haven, CT
College Art Association New York Area MFA Exhibition, Hunter College, Times Square Gallery, NY
- 2010 *Second Year MFA Show*, Yale School of Art Green Gallery, New Haven, CT
- 2009 *First Year MFA Show*, Yale School of Art Green Gallery, New Haven, CT

RESIDENCIES, AWARDS & HONORS

- 2019 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship in Photography
 2019 Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship
 2019 Queens Council on the Arts New Works Grant
 2018 Cycle 49 PSC-CUNY Research Award, PSC-CUNY Research Foundation
 2017 Aaron Siskind Foundation Individual Photographer's Fellowship Grant
 2017 Jerome Foundation Travel and Study Grant
 2017 Cycle 48 PSC-CUNY Research Award, PSC-CUNY Research Foundation
 2017 Queens Council on the Arts New Works Grant
 2016 Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace residency program
 2016 New York University Visiting Scholar program
 2016 A.I.R. Gallery Fellowship
 2016 John Gutmann Photography Fellowship Award, Nominee
 2015 The Bronx Museum of the Arts Artist in the Marketplace residency
 2013 Camera Club of New York Curatorial Program – Collaboration with Kelly Cannon
 2012 Fotovisura Student Spotlight Grant – Honorable Mention
 2009 – 2010 Yale School of Art Scholarship

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2019 Bishara, Hakim, "A Photography Exhibition Corrects a Mainstream Museum's Failure," *Hyperallergic* (Web)
- 2019 Hamboussi, Anthony, *Our Land* Catalog, L. Nour Publications, Brooklyn, NY
- 2017 Cardoza, Kerry "Photos of the Capitalistic Imagery that Overwhelms Beirut's Landscape," *Hyperallergic* (Web)
- Martinez, Christina "Artist Profile: Manal Abu-Shaheen," *Foundations Magazine* Issue 5
- Smithson, Aline "Manal Abu-Shaheen: Beirut," *Lenscratch: Fine Art Photography Daily* (Web)
- Degnan, Luke "Artist Profile: Manal Abu-Shaheen," *The Felt Issue* 3 (Web)
- Collins-Fernandez, Gaby and Escudero, Florencia, *Transformation*, Precog Magazine
- Kiernan, Kat "Manal Abu-Shaheen: Photo of the Day," *Don't Take Pictures Magazine* (Web)
- 2016 Acha, Beverly, Zine: "Love for Love/Hate for Hate: A Glossary of Our Time"
- Martin, J.M. "New Horizons in Road Trip Photography," *Hyperallergic*
- Ruiz, Alan. "Uneven Development: On *Beirut* and *Plein Air*." *Queens International 2016 Catalog*
- Berfond, Lindsey and Iwasaki, Hitomi, *Queens International 2016 Catalog*, Queens, NY
- Cofield, Drea and Collins-Fernandez, Gaby, Zine: "Bomb PopUp 1," Brooklyn NY
- Ciprian, Dexter and Felix, "Attaining the Unattainable: A Landscape in Conflict," *Fresh Curators, Spain Fresh* (Web)
- 2015 Napier, Laura and Ramos-Fermin, Hatuey, *Bronx Calling: The Third AIM Biennial Catalog*, Bronx Museum, NY
- 2014 Berecz, Agnes, *No Greater Fiction Catalogue*, Bosi Contemporary, New York, NY
- Knoblauch, Loring, "No Greater Fiction @ Bosi Contemporary," *Collector Daily*, New York, NY
- "'No Greater Fiction' At Bosi Contemporary," *Musee Magazine*, New York, NY
- "Fictional Realities," *The Vernissage*, New York, NY
- 2013 Baker, Peter, "Swerve and Fracture," *Twice Two blog*, New York, NY
- "Swerve and Fracture @ CCNY," *F-Stop Magazine*, New York, NY
- 2011 Salameh, George, "Mapping Memories, 10 Lebanese Photographers," *WIP Issue 12* (Web)
- Benson, Richard, *The Book Remains the Same*, Yale MFA Photography, 2011 GHP, West Haven, CT
- Cannon, Kelly, "Artist Profile," *Dimensions Art Journal*, Yale University, New Haven, CT

COLLECTIONS

The Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library at Yale University

VISITING ARTIST LECTURES

- 2019 SUNY Old Westbury, Long Island, NY
- 2018 Christie's Education, Field Studies Visiting Artist, New York, NY
- 2018 New York University, Senior Studio Visits Critic, New York, NY
- 2017 Montclair State University Art and Design Forum, Montclair, NJ
- 2017 Eugene Lang College, The New School, New York, NY
- 2017 Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
- 2017 Pennsylvania College of Art & Design, Lancaster, PA
- 2017 The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ
- 2017 County College of Morris, Randolph, NJ
- 2017 A.I.R. Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2016 International Center of Photography, New York, NY

2015 The City College of New York

BIO:

Manal Abu-Shaheen (b. 1982, Beirut) is a Lebanese-American photographer currently living and working in Queens, NY. Her recent solo exhibitions include *2d Skin*, Soloway, Brooklyn, NY (2019), *Theater of Dreams*, Bernstein Gallery, Princeton University, NJ (2018) and *Beta World City*, LORD LUDD, Philadelphia, PA (2017). Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Amelie A. Wallace Gallery, SUNY Old Westbury, NY (2019); The Society of Korean Photography, Seoul, Korea (2017); Queens Museum, NY (2016); and The Bronx Museum of the Arts, NY (2015). She is a recipient of the Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship (2019), NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship (2019), Aaron Siskind Foundation Individual Photographer's Fellowship (2017), LMCC Workspace Residency (2016), A.I.R. Gallery Fellowship (2016), and AIM Residency at the Bronx Museum (2015). Abu-Shaheen holds a B.A from Sarah Lawrence College and M.F.A in Photography from Yale School of Art. She teaches at The City College of New York.

HYPERALLERGIC

New Horizons in Road Trip Photography

J.M. Martin September 16, 2016



Photo by Dru Donovan (courtesy the artist)

MEMPHIS — The American tradition of road photography has typically captured a certain spirit of adventure, a search for unexpected beauty, oddity, maybe even enlightenment out there in the far corners of the country. The gaze is most commonly male, white, and aloof (think Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, Alec Soth). The idea is to locate something new — the “other” — that might illuminate or reinvigorate the things we thought we knew back home.

The photographs and videos in *Anthology: Somewhere Not Here*, the current group exhibition at Crosstown Arts, point to different reasons to light out for open territory, different types of journeys, and a different vision of the other. “You walk down the street an innocent black man, and you getting stopped and frisked for no reason,” says an aspiring rapper rolling a blunt in the backseat of an SUV in Hannah Price’s 20-minute

experimental documentary “[Blueprint](#)” (2014). [Johanna Case-Hofmeister](#)’s 14-minute video “[Go By Feel](#)” juxtaposes a scene of cowboys burning a mattress with a woman’s harrowing story of her mother running through the woods after being set on fire by her deranged boyfriend. These videos push the boundaries of road photography by pointing to urgent motives outside of our romanticized vision of the open road and beyond the artist’s control.



Photo by Justine Kurland (courtesy the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York)

The wall opposite these large-scale projections is mostly blank, except for a series of postcard-sized photographs backed by aluminum and set on ledges like a distant line of train cars. Presented at that scale, the pictures seem to hold secrets; they require you to lean in and take a closer look. In them, we witness the malaise of travel: [Rory Mulligan](#)’s black-and-white images of an old-model sedan in different weather; [Justine Kurland](#)’s photo of a shirtless man draped over a motorcycle. We find hints of tension and unease: [Curran Hatleberg](#)’s nighttime shot of an elderly white couple glowering at a biracial couple in front of a garish, overgrown azalea bush. We see ghostly shadows in Price’s photos, and outright madness in Case-Hofmeister’s “After the Assassination.” These are postcards of things we weren’t meant to see, things we won’t soon forget.

The photographer [Tommy Kha](#), who curated the show, has assembled a strangely cohesive collection of 40 photographs, six videos, and one video mixtape. As an “anthology,” the exhibition makes the case for something of a new generation of American road artists scattered across the country and representing many

different racial, cultural, and sexual identities. The sheer spectrum of voices points to a shift in the notion of “the other” on the American road. The other is now behind the camera — quite literally in Jen Davis’s self-portraits — and speaks in a multitude of voices. Kha, a first-generation Chinese-American who grew up gay in Memphis and now lives in New York City, has a strong feel for narrative that holds these individual voices together.



Manal Abu-Shaheen , “Beirut/Big Ben. Dbayeh Suburb of Beirut, Lebanon” (2014), archival fiber inkjet print, 16 x 24 in (courtesy the artist)

The title, *Anthology: Somewhere Not Here*, suggests displacement, a desire for movement, a dream state, but also a futile search for a sense of place. It echoes the adolescent lament “anywhere but here,” a siren call for photographers to take to the road. And the photographs here evoke both the thrill and the potential nightmare of giving in to that impulse. The first photograph that we encounter along the set of ledges is Dru Donovan’s profile shot of a house, which on second glance is actually just a fragment of a house, all façade propped up by two-by-fours like a child’s drawing of a house, the mere idea of home. In between the travel images, several other photographers hark back to Donovan’s idea of home and the disruption of its illusion. Manal Abu-Shaheen photographs *trompe l’oeil* billboards of familiar scenes (suburbia, Big Ben) partially hiding the rubble-filled and unfinished landscape of her native Beirut.

This vacillation between the road and domesticity is perhaps the strongest statement of the exhibition. It dramatizes the pull between old and new, between the familiar and the strange, and the artist’s experience of

not fitting in either place and longing for a place you can't go back to. This tension is particularly strong in Ka-Man Tse's depiction of the first meeting between her new wife and her Chinese parents. The three subjects are seated around the dinner table, not making eye contact, while the father holds up a pale piece of meat in front of the mother's face. Tse's unofficial title is "steakface." The other that we once sought on our road trip adventures has come home to roost.



Photo by

Ka-Man Tse (courtesy the artist)

None of the artists in the show hail from Memphis. The closest they come is Pixy Liao, who has an MFA from the University of Memphis, but her material is set on the Chinese train system and at Coney Island. This openness to outside perspectives is part of the mission of Crosstown Arts, which strives to cultivate a rich local arts community by connecting it to artists from other places and larger cultural trends. Memphis's situation matches perfectly the in-between state captured in the exhibition; located deep in the heart of the country, a crossroads between east and Midwest, north and south, the city is a melting pot of styles and sounds, part rockabilly, part hip-hop. It's also the hometown of William Eggleston, and his influence can't be ignored in the sublime and secretive nature of the objects and scenes captured in many of these photographs — and in their humor.



Photo by Ryan James MacFarland (courtesy the artist) (click to enlarge)

For all the dark shadows that fall over the canvas of *Anthology: Somewhere Not Here*, threads of levity and playfulness are woven throughout, reflecting the droll comedy we find in Kha's own work. What appear at first to be abstractions of water, grass, and sand in Ryan James MacFarland's photos turn out to be the artist's stream of urine hitting various surfaces. Liao's video mixtape reenacts the ultimate staycation: a threesome version of John and Yoko's lie in.

The last piece we encounter, having made the round of the gallery space, is Lilly McElroy's video "Hopeful Romantic" (2011), which features her in various natural landscapes, from Maine to California, boombox raised over her head as she shimmies to the Bruce Springsteen anthem "Dancing in the Dark." It is a parting gesture of humor and defiance, dancing across the country, heading west, which, for the Arizona-born McElroy, is home.



Sara Maria Salamone, “Christmas Day 2006” (courtesy the artist)



Photo by Pixy Liao (courtesy the artist)

Anthology: Somewhere Not Here continues at Crosstown Arts (442 North Cleveland Street, Memphis, Tennessee) through September 17.

HYPERALLERGIC

[GALLERIES](#)

Photos of the Capitalistic Imagery that Overwhelms Beirut's Landscape

Manal Abu-Shaheen records a city in the midst of being overtaken by billboards but still, for now, showing its history.

Kerry Cardoza May 15, 2017



Manal Abu-Shaheen, “Nahawand. Beirut, Lebanon” (2014) (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

PHILADELPHIA — Manal Abu-Shaheen moved to the US from Beirut in 2000. At the time, Beirut was undergoing rapid development changes, still recovering from a 15-year civil war that ended in 1990. The photographer remembers the first McDonald's opening in 1998. “Before that, most global chains and products were not available,” she wrote in an

email. Now she sees many familiar chains and restaurants there, from Dunkin' Donuts to H&M.

Beirut's ever-changing landscape is the subject of Abu-Shaheen's exhibition *Beta World City*, now on view at Lord Ludd. Through beautifully composed black-and-white photographs and sourced architectural renderings, the artist seeks to create a visual record of Beirut's contemporary landscape because little formal documentation of the city exists. She likened the city to "a family without a family album," adding, "I am building my own photographic archive of what Beirut looks like today: a city dominated by billboards."



Manal Abu-Shaheen, "Untitled (Cat). Beirut, Lebanon" (2016)



Beta World City, installation view

In both the architectural pieces and the artist's photographs, Western companies offer images of an idealized life that is largely at odds with the reality surrounding the advertisements. In "Kate Winslet. Beirut, Lebanon" (2016), a larger-than-life Winslet reclines in a park sporting a Longines watch. In "Ripple. Beirut, Lebanon" (2016), an advertisement featuring a tropical domestic landscape sits at street level in front of what appears to be an apartment complex. Yet the black and white flattens the imagery, making it hard to decipher where the billboard ends and the real world begins. The apartment building itself could easily be an ad: It looks brand new and shows no signs of life.



Manal Abu-Shaheen, “Kate Winslet. Beirut, Lebanon” (2016)

Though she originally shot in color, after living with the pieces, Abu-Shaheen realized “the color was acting as a barrier from getting to the content of the pictures.” The images carry their own meanings, and the same colors were used in many different billboards, which the artist said made her feel like she was ceding control of her artistic vision.

For the same reason, the architectural renderings are also displayed in black and white. Provided by advertising agencies, these digital pieces clearly show the companies’ aspirational, Eurocentric visions. In “Beirut Render #10” (2017), a thin white woman sits on a lawn by a pool reading a magazine. The computer-generated people in “Beirut Render #3” (2017) also appear to mainly be Caucasian. They are congregating in what looks like a public plaza displaying sand or perhaps some type of ancient ruin. In perhaps the most obvious of the renderings, “Beirut Render #12” (2017), a U.S. \$100 bill is being handed from one business-suited white man to another. In the background, Corinthian-style columns sit on an ocean shore to the left, and a massive desert rock sits in the water to the right. Installed on a pillar near the rear of the gallery, the picture is easy to miss — don’t.



Manal Abu-Shaheen, “Beirut Render #8” (2017)



Manal Abu-Shaheen, “Beirut Render #12” (2017)

The construction boom in Beirut has generated plenty of local criticism, as historic buildings have been razed and public areas nearly decimated. A [2015 article](#) from *The Arab Weekly* cited increased profits for developers as a major driver of construction, noting that apartment rents in the city have gone up 3.5 to 5.6 percent since 2004. And the number of old buildings has fallen from around 2,000 in 1990 to less than 200 today.

For Abu-Shaheen, having a record of Beirut’s visual history is crucial. “This under-documented place is now occupied by images of a different place and people,” she wrote. Using imagery as their primary communication tool, the companies moving into Beirut

overwhelm citizens with an idea of progress that is blatantly Western and capitalistic. How do such images and ideas transform a culture? In “Kate Winslet. Beirut, Lebanon,” a man wearing a Union Jack sweater poses beneath the actress while his friend snaps a picture of him, the two of them standing in front of yet another series of advertisements, this time showing distant locales. Barbed wire lines the top of the ads. Behind the figures is graffiti, rundown buildings, a business with an Arabic store sign. The picture was taken in 2016, and it’s likely that the ads have been updated or the graffiti removed since. This image, as with all the images in this show, provides a record of a city in flux, one in the midst of being overtaken by billboards but still, for now, showing its history.



Manal Abu-Shaheen, “Omg. Beirut, Lebanon” (2015)

Beta World City continues at Lord Ludd (306 Market Street, Philadelphia) through May 20.

HYPERALLERGIC

[ART](#)

A Photography Exhibition Corrects a Mainstream Museum's Failure

Our Land, mounted as a reply to a controversial show at the Brooklyn Museum, features contributing artists from North Africa and West Asia and their diasporic communities.

Hakim Bishara [March 13, 2019](#)



Camille Zakharia, “Al Bar 5, Kingdom of Bahrain” (2008-2016) (all images courtesy the Amelie A. Wallace Gallery unless otherwise noted)

In the spring of 2016, Brooklyn-based, Egyptian-American photographer Anthony Hamboussi visited the [Brooklyn Museum](#) to see the exhibition *This Place*, eager to view works by world-renowned photographers that he admired. But after seeing the controversial show, his excitement quickly gave way to anger.

This Place was an exhibition on Israel and Palestine featuring works by 12 photographers including [Josef Koudelka](#), [Stephen Shore](#), and [Rosalind Fox Solomon](#). The show faced backlash for “art washing” the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and for [accepting funding from organizations](#) that support and fund Zionist causes. “It was a propaganda project,” Hamboussi told Hyperallegic. But what irked him most about the show, he said, was the total lack of representation of Palestinian or Arab photographers in an exhibition depicting their native landscapes. In response, Hamboussi has organized and curated a new exhibition featuring the photography and video works by West Asian and North African artists.



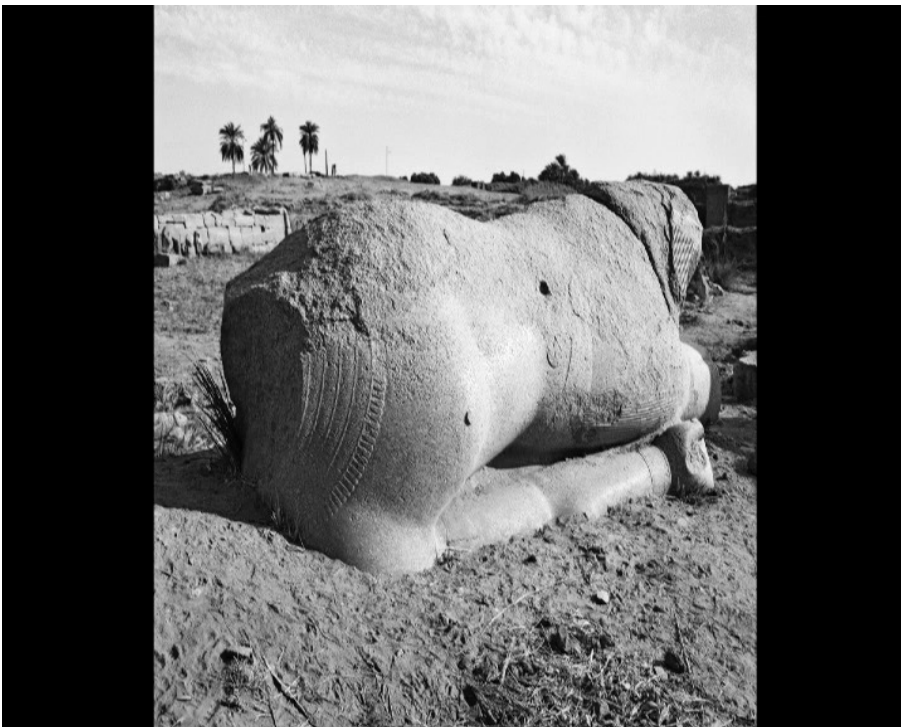
Exhibition view of *Our Land* at the Amelie A. Wallace Gallery

As its title intimates, *Our Land* focuses on the landscapes of Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain; its contributing artists hail from these countries or their diasporic communities. Its aim is to reclaim the genre of landscape photography from its colonialist and Orientalist origins and to allow photographers from the region to tell their home countries’ stories as they see them.

A standout of the exhibition is Lebanese photographer [Fouad ElKhoury](#)’s three-channel [video projection](#) “[Ruins](#)” (2011). ElKhoury is a pioneer of modern Arab photography and the co-founder of the Beirut-based [Arab Image Foundation](#). “Ruins” juxtaposes images taken of Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War and the Israeli invasion of 1982; it also includes photographs from a 1991 expedition ElKhoury took, where he retraced [Gustave Flaubert’s journey to Egypt](#) in 1849. From the pairing of Beirut’s shattered buildings and rubble-filled streets with the awe-inspiring relics of Egypt, a question surfaces: Which ruins are to be preserved, and which removed?



Fouad ElKhoury, video stills from “Ruins” (2011)



Fouad ElKhoury, video stills from “Ruins” (2011)

This problem is at the center of an ongoing debate over the changing face of downtown Beirut. A real estate boom, aided by foreign investment, is erasing landmarks in favor of exclusive development projects for the rich. Lebanese-American photographer Manal Abu-Shaheen’s works reveal a city in which buildings blown out by wartime bombings find themselves clothed in the wall-to-wall vestments of large-scale advertising. The billboards captured by Abu-Shaheen reveal the increasing domination of the cityscape by Western ideals — of luxury, prosperity, and happiness — while at the same time they hint at how a shift to a neoliberal

economy will transform this Middle Eastern city. In “Beirut/Big Ben” (2014), the colossal jeans ad dominating the image superimposes the streets of London over a cramped Beirut neighborhood in the background. In some of the billboards, advertisers explicitly evoke war themes to sell their products. An ad for Johnnie Walker places its iconic striding man logo on a bombed bridge. (The 2006 campaign was responding to Israel’s destruction of several of the city’s main bridges.) The caption on the billboard reads: KEEP WALKING.



Manal Abu-Shaheen, “Johnnie Walker Post-War Advertisement, Beirut, Lebanon, 2006-2014” (2014) (image courtesy the artist)

Images from Rhea Karam’s book *Breathing Walls* (2009) trace the political posters of Beirut and explore how the city’s walls serve as canvasses onto which political conflicts are mapped. The wall in “Hariri” (2007) shows peeled-off posters of the assassinated former Prime Minister Rafik El Hariri, while a makeshift barrier in “Red Cars” (2009) features posters of the Hezbollah party, which was suspected of orchestrating the assassination in 2005.



Rhea Karam, “Hariri, Lebanon,” (2007)

Egyptian artist Rana ElNemer’s photographic series *The Khan* (2010–2016) turns its lens on the abandoned desert town of Khan El-Azaizah, an ambitious “smart city” project that quickly deteriorated into a real estate flop. Another testimony of Egypt’s flailing economy is Youssef Chahine’s semi-documentary film *Cairo As Told by Youssef Chahine* (1991). The film was banned by the Egyptian government for its all too realistic portrayal of the hardships of the city’s residents. Hamboussi’s own images of the decrepit resorts of Nuweiba in the Sinai desert, a once thriving tourism attraction, continue that narrative: a lonesome unemployed camel under a palm tree in a barren yard; an empty, rusted pool at the Safari Hotel Resort (both from 2016).



Anthony Hamboussi, “Pool at the Safari Hotel Resort” Nuweiba, Sinai, Egypt (2016)

Palestinian artist Yazan Khalili’s photographic series *Landscape of Darkness* (2010) takes on the point of view of cities cloaked in a nighttime military curfew. In one image, the winding bypass roads that are

designed for Israeli settlers to avoid entering Palestinian towns in the West Bank curl like a serpent. In a video recording, the night lights of the coastline city of Yaffa shimmer over the expanse of darkness covering a hilltop near the West Bank town of Birzeit, where Khalili holds his camera — the video was taken during the Israeli incursion of 2002, on a night when the artist and his friend had broken curfew and snuck out. The far-off lights of Jaffa — a city that Palestinians from the West Bank are not allowed to enter — beckoned so temptingly that they decided to walk all the way there. But as dawn broke and they saw more clearly just how far away they still were, they realized that their quest for freedom was an illusion prompted by a more forgiving landscape of darkness.



Yazan Khalili, “30’/f5” Beirut, West Bank, Palestine, (2010)

The restrictions imposed on Palestinians’ freedom of movement in the West Bank are also addressed in activist-photographer [Aisha Mershani](#)’s series *Apartheid Wall* (2003–2005). Mershani, born of a Moroccan father and a Jewish mother, produced her work during a transformative visit to Palestine in 2003 as part of her peace studies. “I traveled to the Middle East to conduct fieldwork, only to realize that there was no conflict at all, but instead a violent Israeli occupation,” she writes in the catalogue. It was then that she picked up a camera for the first time to follow the popular resistance against the 26-feet-high wall that Israel built around and between Palestinian cities. Much like Khalili’s, although more direct and confrontational, her images show the fragmentation of space and time that characterize the Palestinian condition.



Aisha Marshani, “Day in the Life of the Wall,” (2005) Abu Dis, occupied Palestinian territory

The theme of displacement cuts through the entire exhibition, but it takes on a less somber point of view in the works of Bahraini photographer Camille Zakharia and Saudi Moath Alofi. Zakharia’s *Al Bar* series (2008–2016) captures an arid tent city that stands empty for half of the year due to the punishing desert heat. When the weather cools off, the colorful tents are inhabited by people of all walks of life who seek a closer connection to nature, and a refuge from the gulf’s blustering consumerist culture. Alofi’s *The Last Tashahhud* project (2015) traces the path leading to Al Madinah Al Munawara, the holiest city for Muslims after Mecca, through the mosques encountered on the way. These temples — often little more than stucco boxes crowned with miniature minarets — are the antithesis of the most famous mosques of the region. It’s a geometry not often associated with the Islamic temple —all ninety-degree angles and meager flat roofs — but Alofi captures their unlikely beauty with reverence.



Moath Alofi, “Last Tashahhud v2 (39)” (2015) Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

In a better world, an exhibition like *Our Land* shouldn't be an oppositional project with a corrective statement. This comprehensive survey, although modest in production value and physically remote (approximately an hour and a half by car from downtown Manhattan), leaves the Brooklyn Museum and other institutions in New York a model to follow.

Our Land runs through March 13 at the Amelie A. Wallace Gallery (on the campus of SUNY Old Westbury, Long Island, New York). The exhibition was curated by Anthony Hamboussi.

Uneven Development: On Beirut and Plein Air

Alan Ruiz

When viewing the 2016 Queens International, it seems impossible not to consider the exhibition against the backdrop of a vanishing environmental commons brought about by rampant forms of privatization and development. Collectively, the works in the exhibition produce something akin to a structure of feelingⁱ, toggling between the specificity of each work and their collective illumination of what it means to produce art under the global conditions of our social and political moment.

Manal Abu-Shaheen's photographs sharpen this focus – confronting the viewer with the hyper-development of an urban environment. Scenes of construction sites, and billboards serving corporate advertisements of touch-screens, white men, ice cream, and the eroticized female body dominate the field of her photographs. At first glance, these elegant images appear digitally constructed, as if they were renderings; their compositions evocative of a Retina display of windows within windows. And though these seemingly synthetic environments could easily present familiar non-sites — they could be any number of congested, aspiring global cities—Abu-Shaheen's titles reveal that these pictures are in fact documentation of Beirut, Lebanon.



Manal Abu-Shaheen. *Nahawand. Beirut, Lebanon*, 2014. Archival pigment print. 16 x 24 in.

As documentation of forms of display Abu-Shaheen's work belongs to a history of photographic practice documenting the urban environment. For instance, her work recalls the early 20th century photographs of Eugène Atget and his investigation of modernity through Parisian shop windows. In Atget's images, the storefront window is as architecture instrumental in the construction of desire, producing perceptually ungrounding effects. The glass windows of Parisian storefronts function as both reflective and transparent screens in which scenes of Paris are collapsed onto the tableaux of the window displays, and vice versa. Similarly, in Abu-Shaheen's work, figure/ground relationships are also destabilized by images of commerce. For instance, In *View From Hotel Window. Beirut, Lebanon* (2016), an empty hotel room is surveilled by a building advertisement bearing the face of a

white male model. Framed by windows and billowing curtains, his voyeuristic gaze simultaneously looks over the city below and into the intimate space of the bedroom, collapsing interior and exterior space. Recalling the transparency found in Atget's pictures, the model's face is literally a screen we must look through in order to view the city beyond. In relation to the dominant visual character of cities-as-products, *View From Hotel Window* illuminates what Henri Lefebvre has observed: "sight and seeing, which in the Western tradition once epitomized intelligibility, have turned into a trap"ⁱⁱⁱ. If Atget's work documents the intersection between modern urbanism and visuality, Abu-Shaheen takes this principle a step further by not only capturing but setting this trap for the viewer. It is not only Beirut and the bedroom that are surveilled by this domineering male gaze, but the viewer



Manal Abu-Shaheen. *View from Hotel Window. Beirut, Lebanon*, 2016. Archival pigment print. 16 x 24 in.

of Abu-Shaheen's work as well. *View From Hotel Window* points to the way urban visuality is conditioned by the persistence of colonial forms of western patriarchy. Here familiar branding and advertising function not only as ideology, but as supraideological systems that shape both the look of global cities and the subjects who inhabit them.

Abu-Shaheen's work depicts the material and mediated effects of neoliberal capitalism in which private interest and pursuits of individualist pleasure have become hegemonic western standards. Here the viewer is given access to the transformation of Beirut through the implementation of a repeatable spatial condition akin to what architectural theorist Anna Klingmann has called "brandscares". For Klingmann, "brandscares constitute the physical manifestations of synthetically conceived identities transposed onto synthetically conceived places, demarcating culturally independent sites where corporate value systems materialize into physical territories."ⁱⁱⁱ

In *Nahawand. Beirut, Lebanon* (2014) an ice cream advertisement proclaims “The Pleasure Is All Mine” amidst a spatial matrix of luxury products. Here images not only sell a branded lifestyle but also demarcate the privatization and development of urban space, a recurrent condition in Lebanon’s capitol. For the past two decades following the devastation of the 1975-1990 Lebanon war, the private corporation Solidere has largely dominated Beirut’s redevelopment. Luxury shopping malls, historic street recreations, and a bronze medallion plated “Heritage Trail”^{iv} is among just some of Solidere’s 200 hectare-spanning

solidere

Solidere.com

development portfolio. With the objective of reconstructing and revitalizing a postwar landscape through symbolic value, Solidere has also introduced forms of exclusionary zoning laws that have lead to the expulsion of local residents and property owners – all under the auspice of restoring Beirut to its prewar glory. However, as David Harvey has observed,

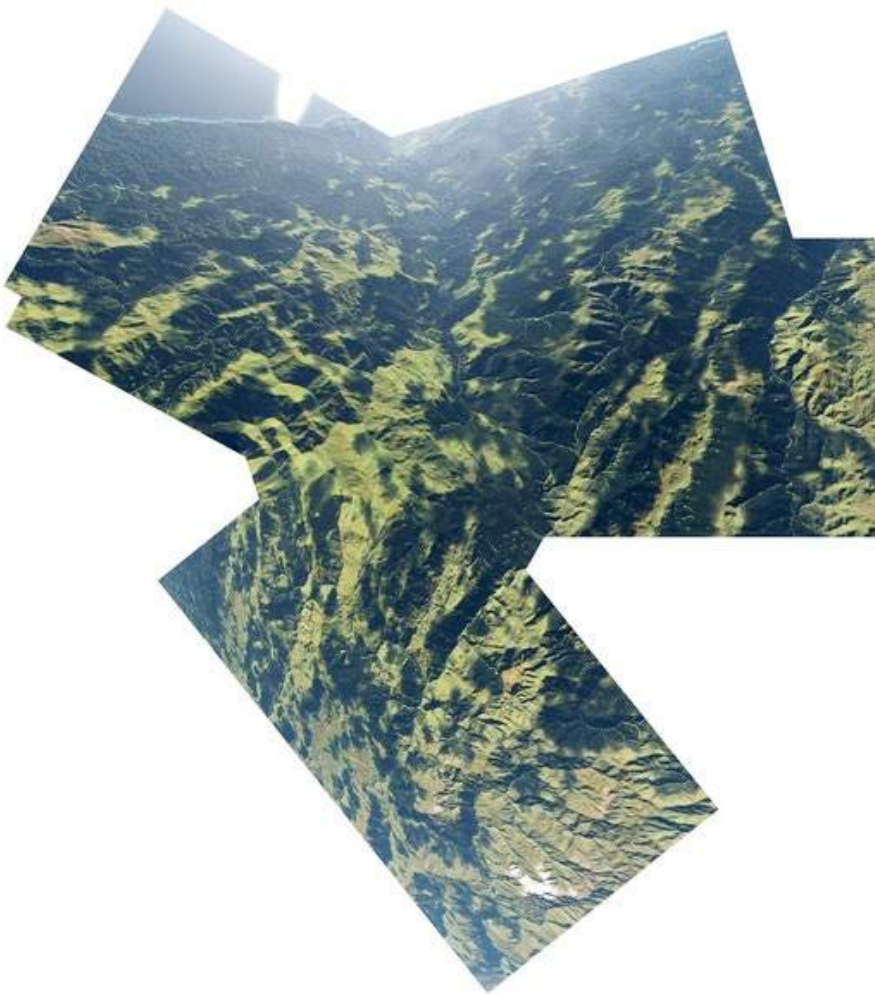
this type of development “brings in its wake all of the localized questions

about whose collective memory, whose aesthetics, and whose benefits are to be prioritized.”^v Abu-Shaheen highlights the way Beirut’s infrastructure of images, or brandscape, is indicative of Western imperialism, and a form of “vigilantism under color of the law”^{vi} that might come gift-wrapped in incentivized urbanism^{vii} and luxury goods.



Manal Abu-Shaheen. *Beirut/Big Ben. Dbayeh Suburb of Beirut, Lebanon*, 2014 . Archival pigment print. 16 x 24 in.

While Abu-Shaheen's images depict the mediated and spatial effects after the globalization of neoliberal development, Mark Tribe's series *Plein Air* presents speculative images of massive areas of land untouched by human activity. However, unlike romantic notions of nature characteristic of landscape painting and photography, *Plein Air*'s simulated representation of the natural environment is spatially and temporally more complex. In these works, we are not only confronted with vast areas of unspoiled land, but massive assemblages of algorithmic data that invite the viewer to imagine an inconceivable time before and after human civilization, a period some scientists have referred to as the "anthropocene". Generally, the anthropocene is characterized as a new epoch of accelerated destruction caused by human impact on the natural environment beginning roughly at the start of the Industrial Revolution. Yet rather than depicting the anthropocentric effects of technological change, population growth, and corporate consumption, Tribe's work envisions a *tabula rasa*. In a sense, *Plein Air* is thus a utopian invitation to speculate about what the earth might have looked like before land enclosures, hydraulic fracturing and, capitalist development, giving the work an almost sublime quality.



Mark Tribe. *Mendocino*, UV print on shaped aluminum composite panels, 108x96"

Using digital software, each image presents a topographical simulation of a specific location created through a process of suturing various images together that are then framed by an irregular polygon. Though the contours of these irregular forms are process-driven (the results of their digital manipulation), in the context of Tribe's project they become evocative of idiosyncratic territorial boundaries. This reading is compounded by the title of each work: Mendocino, San Juan, Coconino, each location the site of a form of U.S. colony. Indeed, Tribe's *Plein Air* assumes a type of perspective that has become increasingly synonymous with militarized visuality, geopolitics, and 3-D entertainment – notably the vertical perspective embodied by a floating spectator, drone, or aircraft. If the linear perspective of a horizon once represented a point of territorial conquest and the possibilities for infinite expansion, it is now the vertical perspective of air rights, satellite maps, and drone targets which have come to constitute our sense of the globe, shifting the terrain of occupation from the land to the sky. In her essay "Free Fall: A thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective" artist Hito Steyerl insightfully characterizes linear perspective as a system of representation historically tied to colonial expansion and linear progress. If linear perspective once represented the "position of mastery, control, and subjecthood"^{viii} as Steyerl proposes, vertical perspective has now come to occupy "a new subjectivity safely folded into surveillance technology and screen-based distraction."^{ix} In this sense, the gaze becomes automated and disembodied, as Tribe's software generated vistas illustrate. They fluctuate between the space of the virtual and the real, a space similar to *Combat Flight Simulators*, *Google Earth*, and urban sprawl prediction software – abstract systems of representation that in many ways have come to constitute our contemporary existence.

Though employing different optical media, both Manal Abu-Shaheen's and Mark Tribe's works prompt reflections on the contemporary conditions of our surrounding environment. Amidst the backdrop of an increasingly vanishing environmental commons brought about by global capitalism, the series *Beirut* and *Plein Air* both reveal contrasting extremes of spatial development through visual strategies of presence and absence. If Mark Tribe's works picture the world before anthropocentric destruction, Manal Abu Shaheen's picture its cacophonic aftereffects. Calling into question our perception of reality, there is productive and perhaps unresolved tension in the way these two projects position the way visual art interacts with existing structures of power. In *Beirut* the corporate infrastructure of images appears at once artificial and naturalized, while the bump-mapped landscapes of *Plein Air* exist within a drone-surveilled uncanny valley. In an increasingly financialized world in which globalization exacerbates uneven development rather than creating conditions of uniformity, these projects offer alternative forms of visuality generated by these conditions, ways of seeing that might lead towards a perception of resistance.

-
- ⁱ Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print.
- ⁱⁱ Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Malden: Blackwell, 1991. 76. Print.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Klingmann, Anna. *Brandscapes: Architecture in the Experience Economy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2007. 83. Print.
- ^{iv} Solidere.com
- ^v Harvey, David. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. New York: Verso, 2012. 106. Print.
- ^{vi} Human rights lawyer Muhamad Mugraby's description of Solidere in *Lebanon Daily Star*. 2007.
- ^{vii} Easterling, Keller. *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*. New York: Verso, 2014. Print.
- ^{viii} Steyerl, Hito. *The Wretched of the Screen*. Berlin: Sternberg, 2012. 21. Print.
- ^{ix} *Ibid.* 24.

Beta World City
Manal Abu-Shaheen

Lord Ludd

<http://lordludd.com/exhibitions/manal-abu-shaheen-beta-world-city>

Text by Gaby Collins-Fernandez

Comprising photographs taken on-site and appropriated architectural renderings, Abu-Shaheen's work describes the effect of the visual languages of development, consumerism, and erasure on Beirut's lived urban reality.

Figures tower alongside new construction sites and settle over yet-unrepaired walls in Abu-Shaheen's Beirut. Lots are covered by rendered dreams of what they will become and the dispossessed Western glamour of advertisements. Cars, liquor, glances of empty, unmoving seduction penetrate intimate or exterior environments, and create backdrops which commingle with the city's architecture and inhabitants.

Cast in black and white, the first impression of many of Abu-Shaheen's photographs is disorientation through scale, flatness, and confusion about whether a form belongs to the real city or an ad. The mix-ups are only heightened in the achromatic slips from charcoals to silvery lights: posters of new Hyundais almost pass for parked cars newish and beat up; sidewalk trunks lurk among printed palms; atopic roads stretch arguably farther than the concrete or dirt ones they replace.

The imaginary life of attainable possessions runs parallel to that of promotions for luxury apartments and new institutional buildings. The architectural renderings Abu-Shaheen includes conjure a near-future city fit for Kate Winslet's sunglasses, tourists, yacht-owners. As in all projections, there are far-fetched mistakes like renderings set in vague "Middle Eastern"-type cities, as well as uncanny, site-specific details. Having been occupied for the past 5,000 years by a succession of Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, Ottomans, and French before independent rule, any new development in Beirut risks the discovery of an ancient ruin; and to a certain extent, the renderings acknowledge this, emphasizing stone arches and archaic forms alongside architecture seemingly self-lit by its own potential.

Abu-Shaheen does more than beg the question of who the beneficiaries are of putting what-has-yet-to-come in direct succession to "the past"—the answer is as obvious as it is predictable: companies, capital that sometimes leans local but tends global, the powers that be. "Colony" comes to us from the turning and tilling of soil for resettlement, and which version of colonialism has avoided rapacious exploitation? If chaos is a necessary byproduct of colonialism, confusion is its best tool, and pretensions of fluidity its only alibi. Rather, other latent questions of Abu-Shaheen's work are: which Beirut is being resettled? And what is being turned away from in literally covering over the present and immediate past?

The formal disordering created by the work suggests other, more human-scaled shifts, emotional, practical, and perceptual. The world of images Abu-Shaheen documents is never presented alone, but always with the context of lived experience. Behind the building-sized billboards, there are gunshot pocks and dwellers' laundry; garbage and rubble swells; people walk about and often around these intrusions. The present tense does not speak as loudly as the clamoring which produced it or which it may become, and this murmur nestles most intimately with the different, cacophonous demands of each day to buy groceries and find a place to sleep and work, sweat, love, fear, repress, become one self or another, internalize, hurry and get bored, declare truths and lies.

Still: the work also seems to ask for more space for the difficult work of actually processing history. By pointing out just how ubiquitously capital is transforming parts of the city, fast—and against the reality of a country where various groups have been (and are) silenced and persecuted both in-and externally—Abu-Shaheen's art makes a case for the importance of different visions which attempt to account for competing histories in varied ways. In a studio visit, Abu-Shaheen mentioned that *Johnnie Walker Post-War Advertisement. After 2006 Conflict. Beirut, Lebanon*, the first image in this series, was an advertisement made by Lebanese graphic designers immediately after the war between Hezbollah and the Israel Defense Force. Part of the power of the image was to acknowledge the many bridges that had been destroyed during the conflict; even as the poster sold liquor, it also spoke directly to a community about a shared experience of war. It is not a perfect gesture, but it contains the possibility of communication based on both the experience of the recent past and the reality of economic systems and conditions. Abu-Shaheen presents these gestures and the spaces around them so we can see what they are, before time and ideation shield them from view.

Oscar Rene Cornejo

25-21 14th St 2nd Fl Astoria, NY 11102

703-909-3579/renecornejo@gmail.com

<http://oscarrene-cornejo.squarespace.com/>

EDUCATION

2014 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Skowhegan, ME.

2011 M.F.A., Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT

2005 B.F.A., The Cooper Union, New York, NY

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES

2015 – 2019 Fresco Instructor. The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine.

2018 Teaching Artist. Recess: Assembly. Brooklyn, NY.

2015 – 2018 Program Coordinator. The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Maine.

2016 – 2019 Adjunct Professor. The Cooper Union, NYC.

2015 – 2017 Substitute Professor. Queens College, Queens, NY.

2015 – 2018 Summer Program Coordinator / Fresco Teacher. Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, ME.

2015 – 2019 Museum Educator. Studio Museum of Harlem, Harlem, NY.

2014 – 2015 Artist Advisory Board. Diverseworks, Houston, TX.

2014 – 2015 Tour Programs Coordinator. Contemporary Arts Museum of Houston, Houston, TX.

2012 Assistant to the Chair of Admissions Committee. Cooper Union School of Art, NYC.

2009 – 2011 Teaching Assistant, Lithography I. Yale University, New Haven, CT.

2007 – 2008 Educator. Fulbright Student Scholar Program. El Salvador.

2004 – 2010 Organizer, Director, Facilities Coordinator, Educator, Bilingual Translator.
Latin American Community Art Project (LACAP), El Salvador and Mexico.

RESIDENCIES / SCHOLARSHIPS

2018 Recess: Assembly. Brooklyn, NY.

2017 Yvonne Residency. Guatemala City, Guatemala.

2016 – 2017 Lower Manhattan Cultural Center (LMCC). Workspace Participant. NYC.

2007 – 2008 Fulbright Student Scholar Program. El Salvador.

2010 Schoelkopf Travel Prize. Yale School of Art.

2009 – 2011 Full-Tuition Scholarship. Yale School of Art.

2003 Menschel Fellowship. The Cooper Union.

2001 Randolph Hearst Scholarship. The Cooper Union.

2000 – 2005 Full-Tuition Scholarship. The Cooper Union.

EXHIBITIONS

- Sept 2019 *To look at the sea is to become what is.* Radiator Gallery. Long Island City, NY.
- 2018 *Queens International 2018: Volumes.* Queens Museum. Queens, NY.
 State of Exception. Recess: Assembly. Brooklyn, NY.
- 2017 *White Flag.* Princeton University. Bernstein Gallery, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and
 International Affairs.
- 2016 *The Others.* Traveling Exhibition Series. Brooklyn, NY.
- 2015 *Collective Solid.* Deborah Colton Gallery. Houston, TX.
 Parliament of Owls. Diverseworks, Houston, TX.
- 2013 *Exile.* El Rincon Social. Houston, TX.
 Bringing it All Back Home. Art League Houston. Houston, TX.
- 2012 *Spectrum.* Bridge Gallery. New York, NY.
 Brucennial: Harderer. Betterer. Fasterer. Strongerer. New York, NY.
- 2011 *Fabric As Form.* Tilton Gallery, New York, NY.
- 2010 Yale University MFA 1st Year Thesis Show, New Haven, CT.
 Planet of Sums. Rutgers University. New Brunswick, NJ.
- 2008 *La Presencia de lo Ausente.* El Museo Nacional de Antropologia
 MUNA. San Salvador, El Salvador.
 Cuentos Polvosos. Casa Comunal. El Polvo, La Union, El Salvador.
- 2007 *Day of the Dead.* Renaissance Arts. New York, NY.
- 2006 *LACAP Group Exhibition.* Lunas Artes. San Salvador, El Salvador.
- 2005 *The Legend of the Siguanaba.* Theater for the New City. New York, NY.
 The Presence of Absence. The Cooper Union. New York, NY.

LECTURES/TALK/CRITIC

- 2016 Fulbright Project Presentation. The Cooper Union, NYC.
- 2016 Panel Discussion, Careers in the Arts Fair. The School of Visual Art (SVA), NYC.
- 2015 Artwork Presentation, Drawing and Advanced Drawing Class. The Cooper Union, NYC
- 2008 Visiting Artist Lecture. Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Richmond, VA.

Oscar Rene Cornejo is a New York based artist who was born in Houston, Texas. With a background in pedagogy and activism, Cornejo's socially engaged practice draws together histories of abstraction in the U.S. and Latin America with personal experiences of the construction site, family memory, and historical forgetting. In 2004, he cofounded the Latin American Community Art Project (LA CAPacidad), where for seven years he directed artist residencies to promote intercultural awareness through community art education. He is a founding member of *Junte Adjuntas*, an artist project based in Adjuntas, a town in the mountains of southern Puerto Rico. His work has been included in numerous exhibitions, including *White Flag*, at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs (2017), *Collective Solid*, Deborah Colton Gallery, Houston, TX (2015); and *Parliament of Owls*, Diverseworks, Houston, TX (2015). Cornejo has collaborated with Recess: Assembly's 2018 fall cycle via *States of Exception* in Brooklyn and presented work at the Queens Museum for the *Queens International 2018: Volumes*. He is a Fulbright alum (2007), Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture alum (2014), Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace residency alum (2016), attended Yvonne Residency in Guatemala (2017), holds a BFA from The Cooper Union School of Art, and an MFA from Yale University. Cornejo teaches Drawing and Experimental Printmaking at the Cooper Union and Hunter College of Art.

Press:

<https://www.queensmuseum.org/qi2018/artists/cornejo>

<https://whyy.org/articles/torn-between-two-worlds-no-place-is-home/>