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IN THE EVENT OF FIRE: PRECARIOUS IMAGES, THE AESTHETICS OF CONFLICT, AND THE FUTURE OF AN ANACHRONISM

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> I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid flame. What's left us then?
>
> - James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1922

On a recent return flight from Beirut, I chanced upon a book in the airport bookshop that foregrounded, no doubt unintentionally, many of the problems associated with examining the physical and psychological aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). The book in question seemed particularly naïve in its approach to the antagonisms that continue to underwrite (if not undermine) urban development in the city of Beirut. The front cover of the book, titled *Beirut's Memory* and published in 2003, appeared relatively innocuous to begin with and used a visual design known as 'lenticular', a process whereby an image is refracted and appears to change or move when it is viewed from different angles. The front cover showed two images of Place de l'Etoile – also known as Nijmeh Square – in the heart of Beirut Central District (or BCD as it is known to its real estate developers). Depending on the angle of viewing, one image either showed the square as it was during the Civil War, its buildings shrapnel-blasted, broken, and pock-marked; or, at another angle, the square more or less as it is now, resurrected and unbroken, the buildings restored, smooth and sandblasted clean. In the former image, Beirut is a forbidding and forlorn site of conflict; in the latter, the square is made whole again, complete with strolling tourists taking photographs and ambling Beirutis enjoying the open, un-conflicted, largely pedestrianised space.[1]

This latter 'restored' photograph may be a composite image – made up of three images as far as I could ascertain – but it is nonetheless a beguiling one. Looking at it, you feel lulled into a degree of security, both psychological and physical. You could be looking at any safe and comfortable city in any part of the world. And that seems to be a source of both pride, for the developers, and condemnation for those who consider the development of Beirut's former souks both opportunistic and fundamentally flawed as an exercise in creating open, civic and accessible space. For many commentators, the project of reconstructing Beirut has failed to acknowledge the immanence of the past and the city's vexed history but it has also, in its failure to provide space for both critical and social engagement, denied spaces for social inclusion and thereafter laid

the ground for future conflict and sectarianism. You could indeed be anywhere but you are not: you are in downtown Beirut, not only the former hub of trade in the city, but also the area that witnessed the most ferocious gun battles and skirmishes of a bloody and internecine Civil War. This is an area where many thousands died and many more were wounded. This is an area where countless people were tortured and brutalised. Today, however, this is a place for wealthy patrons to invest in Beirut or shop for international designer brands. The sectarianism of commerce – separating those who have from those who have not – would appear to have replaced the sectarianism of civil war.

In a city where responses to the Civil War have ranged from collective amnesia to selective (and invariably sectarian) forms of commemoration, the subject of remembering and forgetting - particularly when it comes to the fabric of the city and its symbolic resonances - is not only still fraught with anxieties but the basis of an ongoing discussion concerning the city's future.[2] *Beirut's Memory* seems to unconsciously highlight those very anxieties and the concerns that continue to define not only discussions of the Civil War's legacy but the many far from resolved debates about the subsequent reconstruction of the city as a whole. Putting to one side the manner in which composite images have been used, not to mention the obvious conclusion that the 'present' of the images included in *Beirut's Memory* has been confected to make it more appealing (to investors and tourists alike), it is that which has been elided in the gap between past and present that interests me here – or, more accurately, what is being denied in a book that professes to depict the changes in the cityscape of Beirut during the period of 1991 to 2002 and beyond. The souks of downtown Beirut, formerly the location of some of the heaviest bombardments of the Civil War, have been not only sandblasted clean and rebuilt but, in the photographic process presented here, a form of disavowal has occurred: in representing the present through the lens of an untroubled and all-too-pacific prism, the suggestion here is that everyone is pleased with the redevelopment and the process itself was both untroubled by doubt and has since been an unproblematic success. The discombobulating elision of any discussion of the continued legacy of the Civil War and the many controversies surrounding the rebuilding of Beirut are not only missing from *Beirut's Memory* but the past is presented as another place – a place we do not need to consider any further because we are surrounded by a panoramic opportunity for investment. I use the word elision here to describe the photographic process behind *Beirut's Memory* and its omissions; however, the word that perhaps captures the process more fully is prolepsis: the anticipation of the future as if it is already done or existing. Latent Beirut, along with its troubled past, is subsumed in this book by an anachronistic, Utopian Beirut where the past is indeed another country. It comes as no surprise then that the motto for the marketing campaign carried out by Solidere, the company that oversaw the reconstruction of Beirut's downtown area, was 'Beirut: Ancient City of the Future'.

Beirut's Memory is a flawed and troubling book for sure; its very title belies the fact that it is not about memory as much as it is about erasure. The visual chronology and iconographic approach underwriting this narrative of reconstruction does not attempt to offer a full picture, despite the admittedly forensic approach to taking the 'before' and 'after' images.[3] There are other issues to be had with this book, but for now my interest in it is primarily with the way in which it leaves us with a series of fundamental questions about how visual culture engages with representing post-Civil War Beirut and the aftermath of conflict. What, for one, would be the most appropriate way – if, indeed, one exists – to represent (or remember) a cityscape such as Beirut in all its immediacy and the circumstances of its Civil War, not to mention the other more recent forms

of violence – be it destructive or reconstructive – visited upon it by both military incursions and multinational investment? How, that is to inevitably enquire, is the fabric of a city such as Beirut to be understood as an extant fact of the present and yet a testament to an all-too-recent past?[4]

To these already complex questions we must add another: what if the will to represent is, in the context of Beirut, consistently thwarted by that which refuses to be represented or that which will only give up an approximate outline? This may appear abstract to begin with but – and this is something that becomes all the more apparent when in the city itself – there is a consistent sense of latency in Beirut, an anticipation of something more residing in the fabric of the city, imbricated within its very walls; something that refuses to emerge in anything other than a crepuscular outline or a too-bright glare that nonetheless leaves us with the same thing: an outline of the past and nothing more. To give detail to such outlines, to overtly represent the city in all its cosmopolitan grandeur and partial ruin, can often result in mere spectacle – not to mention the sentimentality associated with bathos – or the fetishisation of post-conflict environments, as if the ruins of conflict say it all in the moment of being represented. Both spectacle and fetishisation can be seen, in these terms, to be strategies for paradoxically not representing the city and its troubled past, producing as they do a
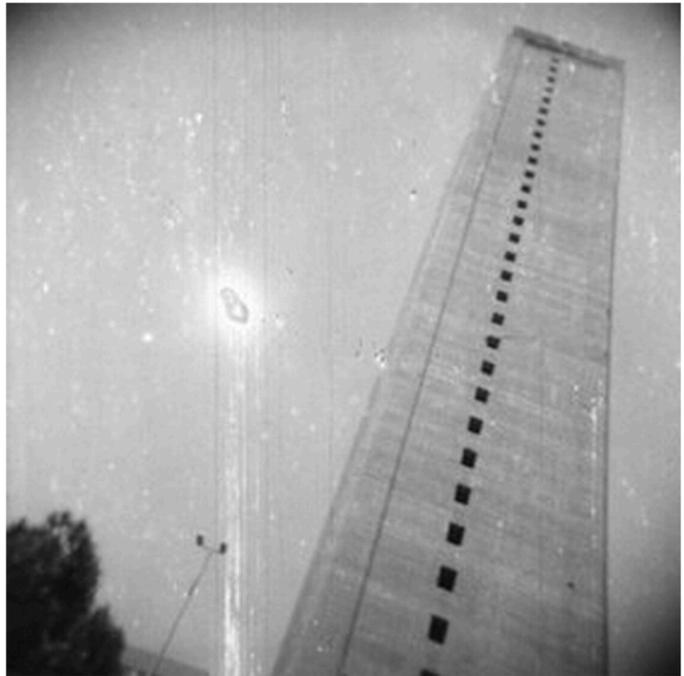
Murr Tower, Wadi Abu Jmil, built in 1973, 2009, from the project *Beirut Bereft,* a collaboration between writer Rasha Salti and photographer Ziad Antar. Courtesy of the artists.

reified form of conflict – giving, that is, a form of material existence to that which can only ever remain abstract – and thereafter proposing that we can somehow access meaning through representation.[5] But what if meaning, even for those who experienced the conflict of Lebanon's Civil War firsthand, remains elusive and disinclined to emerge in the form of images, be they spectacular, fetishised or otherwise?

In what follows, I want to explore two interrelated issues: firstly, how can artistic practices avoid eliding, fetishising, and rendering as spectacle, images of Beirut and the visible aftermath of Civil War? Or, more broadly, how can artists and their work interrogatively negotiate not only the problematic of representing Beirut, but the aesthetic problems inherent in representing post-conflict environments *per se*? Secondly, and in a more propositional vein, I want to propose here that the strategies discussed below not only engage these problems but advance ways of negotiating spectacle, fetishisation and elision in the context of latency and anachronism. This is not so much to announce the defeat of representation in the face of conflict or the

legacy of warfare, as it is to observe the way in which representation itself strategises and comes to determine new modes of engagement that do not conform to any simplistic ideal of spectacle or, indeed, verifiable presence.

Precarious Images and the Future of an Anachronism

In 2009, another book about Beirut's contemporary cityscape was published, this time in conjunction with the 9th Sharjah Biennial. *Beirut Bereft*, with photographs by Ziad Antar and a text by Rasha Salti, is different in many ways to *Beirut's Memory*, containing as it does no 'before' and 'after' images of the city's seemingly Phoenix-like rise from the ashes of civil war, and could be seen to be a riposte of sorts to the conceits of the former. In *Beirut Bereft*, Antar chose to focus on the half-built and shrapnel-pocked buildings that still populate the city's urban landscape. The infamously disemboweled Murr Tower looms obdurately in some of these images as does the equally eviscerated Holiday Inn in the Minet el Hosn district, not far from where the former Prime Minister of Lebanon Rafiq Hariri was assassinated on the 14th of February, 2005. Originally intended to be Beirut's Trade Centre, the Murr Tower was never completed and was destined to become a prized spot for rival snipers and militia during the Civil War. It still appears indomitable on the Beirut skyline and for some an eyesore, its ownership currently subject to debate. The Holiday Inn, with the same sense of optimism, was built between 1970 and 1973 and suffered more or less the same fate with militia using its copious spaces to rain down bullets on one another. It is now, as I recently noted from the window of my room in the Hotel Phoenicia (which gave out incongruously onto the Holiday Inn's pocked and ruined façade), a favoured spot for courting pigeons.

All of which leads us to a question: What do images such as those by Antar do to our understanding of the city when the danger of fetishisation – and the attendant deferral of engagement with the source of trauma implied by the fetish itself – and over-aestheticisation, if not sensationalism, are ever-present pitfalls in the moment of representing this avidly re-presentable (but far from representative) city? There are too many examples of Beirut as fetish object and the over-aestheticised imaginings of artists and photographers alike to recount here; nevertheless, I would note that Antar's images in part avoid such pitfalls through a number of carefully, and at times haphazardly, applied strategies. First, the images have a neutrality to them, a resistance to staged shots that produce the vertigo of grandeur or the more simplistic glorification of ruins. [6]There is also an element of emotional detachment in Antar's images, which tends to give the buildings depicted more of a factual, quotidian quality. This was no doubt down to the fact that the images were sometimes taken in a rush so as to avoid too many questions or the inquisitiveness of locals who do not regard intrusions lightly. In the rush to airbrush buildings that do not fit the master-plan of Beirut's developers, these images are also both matter-of-fact and coextensive statements of fact: this is Beirut as it exists today in all its un-airbrushed reality. There is also an argument to be had that these images are ultimately concerned with the modernist aspirations, if not hubris, of such architecture rather than, strictly speaking, the aftermath of conflict. This is not to discount the history of these buildings – some bombed by combatants during the Civil War, some abandoned by property developers – but it is to note how an artist such as Antar negotiates the aesthetic pitfalls – fetishisation and sensationalism – and the over-politicised resonances that can attend images of Beirut and render it symptomatic of tragedy and thereafter interchangeable with other cities that have also been subjected to civil wars.

In *Beirut Bereft*, there are two images in particular that seem out of place with the others. They are both black and white and, for many, would appear to be 'poor' quality images, blurred as they are and full of imperfections. These images were taken using a Holga camera, the latter being renowned for the way it distorts and blurs film via light leaks and other inherent defects in this mass-produced piece of equipment.[7] One of these images images is of the St. George Hotel and the other is of the Murr Tower mentioned above. The St. George, an elegant and somewhat incongruous (today at least) tableau of late-colonial architecture, was built in 1932 and largely gutted during the Civil War. From October 1975 until March 1976, a full-scale battle took place in and around the St. George in the Minet el Hosn hotel district of downtown Beirut, which would late become known as 'The Battle of the Hotels'. The building now stands forlorn-looking in the heart of Beirut's Corniche, which makes it a prime piece of property and therefore ripe for redevelopment. [8]

The Saint Georges Hotel, Ain el-Mseiseh, built in 1950, 2009, from the project *Beirut Bereft,* a collaboration between writer Rasha Salti and photographer Ziad Antar. Courtesy of the artists.

Judging from the quality of these two images, it is notable that Antar is not interested in the final 'quality' of the photograph, but is instead preoccupied with the exigencies and formal demands of image production and the everyday contexts out of which photographs emerge and circulate as artefacts. There is something precarious about these images, inasmuch as the camera, due to its deficiencies, may not have captured the image in the first place and the film, which is out of date and therefore unreliable, is just as liable to not produce an image as it is to produce one. It is precisely this degree of precariousness that interests me here: the sense of uncertainty in the image that speaks to the troubled past of these buildings and yet to a sense of expectation that anticipates how images and places become literally consumed and archived after they are produced. Defying the technological advances of digital photography, Antar enages with, to use his words, 'how images get eaten', or come to pass into archival contexts.[9] In both of these images, there is a sense of foreboding that speaks to the past, present and, I want to suggest here, the uncertain future of these buildings, some of which will be leveled to accommodate future development, whilst some will remain as testament to the arbitrariness of warfare and the all-too-considered and yet ill-advised bluster of property development.

I made reference earlier to the notion of prolepsis, a flashing forward, so to speak, whereby chronological time is usurped in favour of presenting something that has yet to be as if it was already present. The

opposite term is analepsis, a flash back to a time that existed before the chronological events as they have been already recounted. Both prolepsis and analepsis are anachronisms – discrepancies in the order in which events are told or reiterated. We can further understand these terms as being 'out-of-time' or out of synchrony with a given chronology. Antar's images of the Murr Tower and the St. George Hotel perform something similar to this temporal discombobulation: they are images taken in the 'present' which, in their aesthetic precariousness and the hazards that attend their shooting (they were often shot from passing cars or in hastily conceived scenarios), speak to a past and yet, in their anticipation of the future consumption of these images, speak to an archival impulse that will one day 'order' – or attempt to give order – to them. They are both precarious – no image might
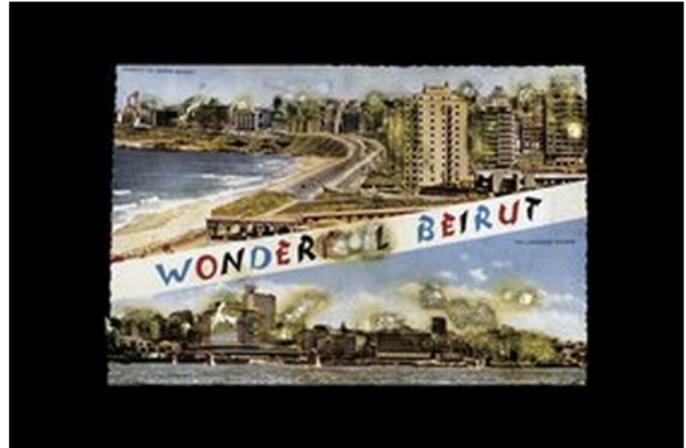

Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, *Wonder Beirut (History of a Pyromaniac Photographer)*, 1999-2006, lambda print mounted on aluminum. Courtesy of the artists.

exist after the event of shooting or indeed during the event – and anachronistic at the same time: they look to both a past and a future that seem independent of the present and outside of its chronological imperatives.

We find this sense of precariousness and anachronism in a series of works by the Beirut-based artists Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, who recount the following story in their project *Wonder Beirut (History of a Pyromaniac Photographer),* 1999-2006. In 1968, Abdallah Farah published a series of postcards of Beirut. The wondrous St. George is there, as are the Phoenicia Hotel and Place de l'Etoile, and the Minet el Hosn hotel district looms large as does the rest of the skyline of Beirut in all its splendour. In 1975, according to the artists, Farah began mutilating the negatives of these images and printing them so that they simultaneously mirrored the destruction he was witnessing around him. In 1997, Hadjithomas and Joreige began working on a project with Abdallah Farah, whom they had met at the beginning of the 1990s. The fact that Farah's postcard images were still available in bookshops, as noted by the artists, and although the scenes they depict – including buildings and monuments – had long been destroyed, their continued presence led them to consider a number of issues, not least the difficulties associated with representing history and conflict.

Wonder Beirut: The Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer evolved into three separate parts, with the first, the so-called 'historic process', engaging with a selection of Farah's published images that show in graphic, twisted detail the damage that had been visited upon the negatives. Again, we have a sense here of precariousness – that which can be subjected to the vagaries of history – and anachronism, a time past that reemerges within and alongside the present. This anachronistic, proleptic sense of time is all the more evident in the second phase of the project, where Farah added other ignominies to the negatives that were not directly related or attributable to bombings or destruction. This phase was termed the 'plastic process' by the artists and seemed to predict future disasters to be visited on Beirut's buildings. In the third phase,

Hadjithomas and Joreige explored what they termed 'latent images', whereby Farah took photographs but refused to have them published, choosing instead to leave his images unpublished but meticulously detailed in notebooks along with an explanation of what each negative purportedly depicted. These 'invisible' images reflect, so to speak, a concern on Hadjithomas and Joreige's behalf with enquiring into how images can be reproduced and, post-publication, what economies of meaning they enter into and how they circulate thereafter. 'We are attempting to find new ways to create images through evocation, absence, latency', the artists have written, before noting that the 'latent image is the invisible, yet-to-be developed image on an exposed surface'.[10] This latency, however, is also a premonition of what can happen to such images, how they are

Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, *Wonder Beirut (History of a Pyromaniac Photographer),* 1999-2006, lambda print mounted on aluminum. Courtesy of the artists.

used and how artists/image producers contribute to the future circulation of images through their respective practices. *Wonder Beirut* is a complex project that dissuades conceptual abbreviation; nevertheless, there are two elements that further add to our discussion concerning the inherent difficulties of representing Beirut: the latency of certain images – their state of being unexposed to the daylight of viewing or withdrawn from view – and the future of anachronistic images that defy any easy forms of spectacle.

The repressed, in all its latent immediacy, tends to re-emerge when we least expect it. It re-emerges in forms and formats that we find hard to reconcile to our conscious, ego-driven selves. A latent, unseen image, in its refusal to reconcile or represent anything and yet still exist as an image, remains in the realm of imagining. It is an image, in its yet-to-be exposed state, that seems to defer confrontation with an originary and ongoing violence and yet, in that moment of deferral, it also attempts to negotiate the process of withdrawal – the turning away from that which remains raw, too immediate and unreconciled. There is, in the work of Walid Raad and the Atlas Group, an element of this investigation that needs to be observed here. Raad's project is largely concerned with an immaterial force: historical trauma and its discursive production and transmutation within a given social, aesthetic and political order. Influenced by the work of Jalal Toufic (specifically the latter's writings on the idea of the 'withdrawal of tradition' during a time of conflict), Raad's *oeuvre* calls on the past, present and future of cultural knowledge and modes of representation to form a timeline of sorts that accommodates representational ambiguities and, to a certain extent, vertiginous anachronism. Toufic's thesis in *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (2009) provides a pertinent point of departure and return for Raad who works from, specifically, the suggestion that certain wars and conflicts not only affect a culture on a material level (the destruction of museums, artworks, books and so on) but also on an immaterial level whereby an artwork and the ideas behind it become unavailable to vision and thereafter 'withdrawn' – that is, remote and not readily understood or legible in the present or indeed future.[11] To this

end, Raad examines that which has been withdrawn in cultural knowledge, that which remains liminal even to those who know where to look.[12]

In this instant, representation in the present addresses not so much the events of the past but how they will be observed and circulated in the future: what will happen to images – be they precarious or indeed anachronistic – of Beirut in the future and how will they come to determine (in both their presence and absence) the realities of that city? It is here that we can observe how the aesthetic – as employed in the works discussed here – formulates a strategy that comes to determine new modes of engagement with the traumatic aftermath of conflict and new ways of negotiating the insidious naiveties of spectacle. To this we need to add that trauma is both the event of violence and its afterlife or legacy. Which brings us to a conundrum of sorts: where can we locate the violence or the 'real' of trauma? Where does it reside? Is it in the event, which we defer and repress; or in its representation or simulation? This is not, moreover, an attempt on my behalf to rehearse the all-too-weary defeatism of a Baudrillardian-inspired belief in the conceptual bankruptcy and devolved authority of reality (violence and conflict) in the face of a simulated reality (the representation of violence and conflict); nor is it the scenario whereby representations or re-enactments of the real become the 'reality' for many. The city of Beirut and the violence visited upon it were real, it happened and continues to happen, and yet the representation of such events is fraught with either maudlin contradiction or sensationalised whimsy. So, to return us to the observations above, it increasingly seems that one way of representing Beirut, in its past, present and potential futures, is through latent and yet anachronistic images – images that have yet to emerge and, when they do emerge asynchronistically, do so only in half-light or, as we shall see, into a light so bright they are annihilated.

This is the first part of an essay that will be concluded in September 2012. In the second part of this essay, I will look at another phenomenon: the aesthetic denial of the gaze itself and the withdrawal of the city of Beirut from the imperatives of both spectacle and reified immanence.

[1] At the heart of the square, the Al Abed clock-tower has been restored to its original site - it had been removed in the 1960s to accommodate the viewing of some Roman ruins - and an exhibition of photographs has been staged for the benefit of passers-by. The history of the clock-tower could be seen to metonymically represent not only the history of the square but the priorities of urban planners for the last five decades.

[2] The opposite term of amnesia is anamnesis: the complete history of a subject, illness, or symptom as recalled and recounted by a patient. Anamnesis invariably involves a retelling, a recounting or narrativisation of an event.

[3] The author of this volume is Ayman Trawi, the one-time personal photographer to Rafiq Hariri, Prime Minister of Lebanon from 1992 to 1998, and again from 2000 until his resignation in 2004. Trawi's achievement in *Beirut's Memory* should not be underestimated and he has been assiduous in repositioning his camera to great effect. In image after image, we see the ruin of space that was Beirut during the Civil War and, in the image on the opposite page, its uncanny resurrection.

[4] This question, in turn, is inflected by other more metaphysical elements: when is the past past, so to speak, and what exactly constitutes the present? These questions implicate the fact of the future and how our anticipation of it not only determines our relationship to the present but, of course, the past. These issues and their ramifications were outlined by Henri Bergson, who was in turn a singular influence on Gilles Deleuze's work on time and duration, in his 1896 volume *Matter and Memory* (*Matière et Mémoire)*, where he noted that 'what I call "my present" has one foot in the past and another in my future … The psychical state, then, that I call "my present," must be both a perception of the immediate past and a determination of the immediate future'. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* Zone Books: New York, 1988; orig. 1896, p.138.

[5] When I walk by buildings such as the Murr Tower and the Holiday Inn in downtown Beirut, it is difficult not to note how the the city is a gift to an aspiring photographer who wants to tackle 'big' subjects such as history, conflict and death, presenting as it does a ready-made landscape that is firmly imbricated with all three. Even the statues in Martyrs' Square, put there to commemorate the hanging of intellectuals and nationalists on the 6th of May 1916 by the then occupying Turks, are riddled with punitive and decidedly 'picturesque' bullet holes. Everywhere you look, a photograph is waiting to be taken, and the resulting image would be a 'good' one, an image that implicates history and implies an engagement with time and history itself. And that is very clearly part of the problem when it comes to the aesthetics and politics of remembering or engaging with a city such as Beirut through contemporary art practices: at best, the aesthetic 'value' attached to such images can often pass as a form of profound engagement with the legacy of conflict in the city, or indeed a form of engaged critique with history. At worst, it can become a form of sensationalism. I personally had to stop myself from taking photographs of interesting arrangements of bullet holes and walls damaged by shrapnel, just as I had to refrain, albeit unsuccessfully, from taking photographs from my hotel room of the adjacent Holiday Inn. The abandoned spaceship-like cinema to the south of Martyrs' Square, with its futuristic shape and all but ruined façade, proved too difficult to resist, the exposed and incontinent-looking concrete supports on which it rests now home to flitting bats and stagnant pools of chemical-tainted water.

[6] This sense of objectivity recalls a school of photography more associated with Bernd and Hilla Bechers' 'New Objectivity' (Neue Sachlichkeit), an ethos in representation that promoted objectivism and a documentary-like style which, in stark black and white images, seems both emotionless and forensic.

[7] The camera's low cost production and basic meniscus lens means that any film shot on it is subject to imperfections and vignetting. It was designed for the Chinese market as an inexpensive camera for a mass market.

[8] The building has had a 'Stop Solidere' poster flapping disconsolately against its façade for some years now. The poster went up in 2004 and has been there ever since, with intermittent absences, covering the eastern façade of this once landmark building. The banner is a direct reference to the Solidere corporation, one of the biggest in the region and the subject of controversy for its redevelopment of Beirut's central district. The name 'Solidere' stands for 'Société Libanaise pour le développement et la reconstruction de Beyrouth', or 'The Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut'. Solidere enjoys, by way of government decree, the position of a public-private venture charged with reconstructing the

downtown area of Beirut following the end of the Civil War in 1990. It was set up in 1994 by the then-Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, who also endowed it with the power of so-called 'eminent domain' (also known as 'compulsory purchase'), whereby the company could, and indeed did, seize property in the central district area of Beirut (the former downtown souks). There is much to be written on Solidere, a company whose supporters argue that the sectarian nature of the city necessitated the power of 'eminent domain', and had it not deployed such means, nothing would have changed in the war-devastated city. Solidere's detractors, however, argue that the company is effectively erasing the city's history in favour of real estate development and short-term profit. It is perhaps sufficient to note here that the shopkeepers and residents who managed to maintain and hold onto their properties throughout the horrors of the Civil War had their property rights as citizens of Lebanon abrogated under the law of 'eminent domain', one that seems to conflate the public good and civil space with the ownership of real estate and consumption of goods. The major shareholders in the company are Arab investors from the Gulf States and European and North American investment firms, but the fact that Rafiq Hariri was a shareholder in the company caused many to note a potent conflict of interest, to say the least. Hariri's statue, following his assassination near the St. George (in a blast that devastated the area and ripped off the southern façade of the hotel), now stands facing – in part defiant, in part accepting – the 'Stop Solidere' banner, their proximity to one another, in death and languishment respectively, giving some sense of the sinuous tensions and all-too-combustible antagonisms that still striate the political and social bedrock of Beirut's cityscape.

[9] For further discussion of this aspect of Antar's images, see 'An Aeshtetics of Expiration: Ziad Antar in conversation with Anthony Downey', downloadable at http://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/14.

[10] Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, 'Wonder Beirut', in *Out of Beirut*, ed. By Suzanne Cotter, Modern Art Oxford: Oxford, 2006, p. 77.

[11] I should note here that the word latent does not fully capture Toufic's thesis concerning anachronistic returns and conscious repressions. For further discussion, see Jalal Toufic, 'The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster', in *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow: A History of Modern and Contemporary Art in the Arab World / Part I_Volume 1_Chapter 1*(Beirut: 1992-2005), ed. Clara Kim, Los Angeles, California Institute of the Arts/REDCAT, 2009.

[12] In a recent essay, Ariella Azoulay has explored the 'inaccessible' or 'unshowable' photograph, a category of representation that lies between the untaken photograph and the photograph on display. See 'Different Ways Not to Say Deportation', in Fillip, issue 16, winter 2012.

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