

EXHIBITION

Alain Kantarjian

“ANTÉPÉNUULTIÈME (DAOURA)”

23 March – 4 May 2013

Counter Space is a new exhibition and project space in Zurich that presents art and cultural initiatives from different regions of the world. The first exhibition is dedicated to the work of the Paris-based Lebanese documentary filmmaker and photographer Alain Kantarjian (* 1970).

The installation showing in Zurich portrays the intermediate phase of Alain Kantarjian's film project titled ANTÉPÉNUULTIÈME (DAOURA). The project is devoted to the inhabitants of a harbour area in Beirut, which, although situated in the centre of the city, only recently came to the public's attention. The harbour inhabitants, made up of a heterogeneous, changing community of fishers, foreign workers, illegal immigrants, refugees, the have-nots and old people, have in recent times considered themselves exposed to the city's plans of urbanisation. They consider these plans an attempt to push their already marginal existence to the margins of society.

For the installation in Counter Space, Alain Kantarjian has selected some parts of his previous cinematic work that relates to the harbour area of Daoura. Alain Kantarjian's installation is a montage of various elements that points to the process of image conception in the sense of a three-dimensional screenplay: three loosely assembled sequences from an extensive film archive; a tent-like structure, which will reappear in a future film as the central stage of a festival on a garbage dump – recaptured by Nature after years - in Daoura; three panels with visual material that combines mythology, art history, historic or ecological aspects representative of Alain Kantarjian's research; as well as sketches, drawings and various objects.

The garbage dump, which is little known to the population of Beirut and towers over the sea horizon, is the spatial and narrative focal point of the (future) film about the diverse community of Daoura. Once merely a by-product of gradually piled industrial waste, this once barricaded zone is now an idyllic place due to new flora and fauna, even if only known to a few people. It remains, nevertheless, ambivalent because of the great environmental problems. It also identifies each stage in the emerging screenplay, where the documentary narrative of the film flows over to fiction: a young girl flees her family, which lives on the Lebanese Bekaa-plateau, and arrives at the harbour neighbourhood. She discovers there an unusual, violent environment but after some exploration, finds a fantastic world.

Like the title indicates ANTÉPÉNUULTIÈME (DAOURA) – loosely translated “antepenultimate time” –, the documentary narrative of the emerging film project, despite its socio-political embedding in today's Beirut, makes it difficult to exactly determine the film's historical period. “I perceive reality as fiction, and fiction is for me more real.” – Alain Kantarjian. Alain Kantarjian allows a gliding sphere between documentary and fiction, not only to examine the play of reality in the film but also to deal with the harsh merciless social conditions in today's Lebanon. He does this without attempting to make and deliver the persons concerned only as objects of a distant socio-political discourse.

In the exhibition, this gliding occurs as a play between the real and invented, between object and image such as the recurrence of the same motifs in different media for example illustrations, videos, or the real space. In this way, the motif of the tent, makeshift furniture or plant returns again here and there under different figures. Images materialize as things; freestanding objects are rediscovered in sketches. Ultimately, the exhibition in Counter

Space serves for Alain Kantarjian as an experimental showcase, in which the contemplated ideas simultaneously finds a place, and not as a formulated narrative action and socio-political intuitions. Like the Artist noted: “ the [film] project will change because reality will change; what is related to the people of Daoura will change; and this influences what the project is about; there is always something that is unknown.”

Artist: Alain Kantarjian (* 1970) lives and works in Beirut and Paris. He graduated from Paris VIII in 1996, and the École d'Arts et de Design in Amiens in 1998. Kantarjian uses a range of techniques, such as photography, video, documentary and sculpture. He is a founding member of Fanarprojects, a place for cultural events in Beirut (www.fanarprojects.org).

Press contact: Vicky Jimenze, vrodrigojimenez@counterspace.ch

Events: Two public lectures prepared in collaboration with the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) will accompany the exhibition.

23 March 2013, 5 pm: Simon Nehme

The social worker Simon Nehme (Lebanon) will focus on social relations, conventions and areas of freedom of the community in Daoura in the outskirts of Beirut. In particular and based upon own experiences, he will describe the transformative strength of that community, as well as the daily challenges that such groups face given the absence of social and legal protection. Nehme will also show extracts of the documentary *Sector Zero* (2011) by the Lebanese filmmaker Nadim Mishlawi.

13 April 2013, 5 pm: Hiba Abbani

Hiba Abbani is a feminist activist from Lebanon who fights, through several independent initiatives, for women's and other fundamental rights. In her presentation she will speak about the changes that mark her battle, such as the increasing role of NGOs. Moreover she will look at the relations between her different initiatives, especially their mutual imbrications and delimitations.

Counter Space: Counter Space strives to ask a range of questions: How do we imagine an art space that is close to artistic practice? How can we reduce the pressure to produce that characterizes the entertainment society? Hence: how to create new cultural and artistic connections and fields for experimentation? Our objective is to find criteria for the definition of an art space that is close to practice and to put them in to a current discourse.

Address: Counter Space, Kirchenweg 4, 8032 Zurich (im Zwischennutzungsprojekt Interim)

Opening hours: Thursday-Sunday, 3 pm to 10 pm

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