

## CONDO 2025

### SYLVIA KOUVALI X MARFA' PROJECTS

Caline Aoun, Vartan Avakian, Omar Fakhoury,  
Ahmad Ghossein, Lamia Joreige, Rania Stephan, Raed Yassin

18 January - 15 February 2025

For Condo London 2025, Marfa' is delighted to be hosted by Sylvia Kouvali and is presenting a group exhibition of works by Caline Aoun, Vartan Avakian, Ahmad Ghossein, Lamia Joreige, Rania Stephan and Raed Yassin.

Caline Aoun's works, collectively titled *Residual Entropy*, delve into the tension between obsolescence and transformation, exploring the hybridization of digital and analog processes in an era where traditional printing is in decline. Using an experimental digital transfer film designed to merge digital printing technology with darkroom techniques, Aoun acts as both artist and investigator, treating the material as a prototype to uncover its latent, unintended possibilities. The prints emerge through the continual feeding of this film into a printer worn down by relentless, exhaustive use. The process embraces the printer's malfunctions and "tiredness," turning these technological flaws into a language of expressive potential. The resulting works evoke a sense of nostalgia, their surfaces resembling the grainy interference of an old television screen or the fading textures of a bygone photograph.

In *Of All That is Seen and Unseen - Iconography*, Vartan Avakian examines printed books as sculptural objects of multiple layers of inscription. Books are symbols of history and are imbued with the weight of culture and authority. They are also a repository of sedimentations and traces, and are both unique and reproducible. Avakian devises a series of protocols, procedures and rituals to extract and bring to light latent layers of incidental inscriptions and markings that are reminiscent of palimpsests. In a series of different artifacts, some layers are made visible, while other layers are separated from the book object to be transferred and transcoded into new sculptural fossils.

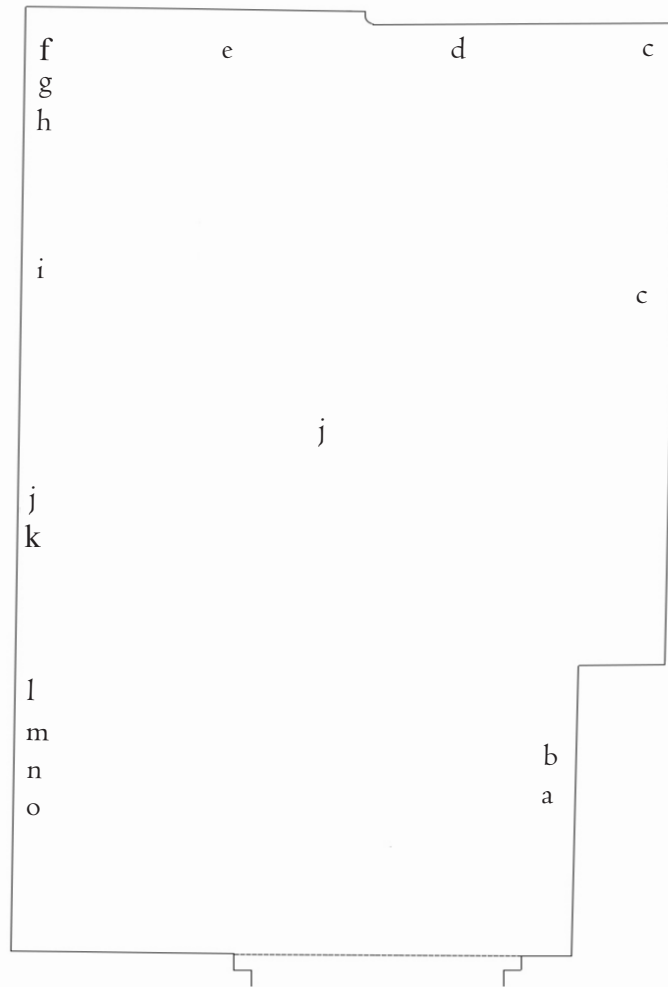
In *Camera Lucida* (1980), Roland Barthes wrote that every photograph evokes "the return of the dead." Since photographs capture moments past, each viewing prolongs the presence of those moments—even if the subjects are long gone—making photography both memorial and ghostly. Raed Yassin explores this duality in *The Company of Silver Spectres*, where haunting becomes a form of remembrance. Yassin collects discarded black-and-white photos from Lebanon and the Arab world. Unlike event-centric photography, these intimate family keepsakes capture lives now forgotten. Yassin's technique suspends time by spray-painting over the photos in monochrome hues. This act of erasure paradoxically preserves the images, summoning spectral traces beneath the paint. The vibrant colors contrast the grief of Barthes' "return of the dead," highlighting the elusiveness of ghosts and the impossibility of fully grasping absence. Growing up during Lebanon's Civil War (1975–1990), Yassin lost his own family photographs. In postwar Lebanon, where peace has not brought true reconciliation, personal archives represent belonging and aspiration while also inviting haunting memories. By transforming personal photographs into universal symbols of loss, *The Company of Silver Spectres* - Yassin's anti-archive, turns absence into presence, confronting loss and resisting forgetfulness.

The photographic series *64 Dusks* formed part of Rania Stephan's investigation of Soad Hosni's life and death. A major star of Egyptian cinema who acted in 82 feature films between 1959 and 1991, Hosni mysteriously fell from the balcony of the seventh story of Stuart Towers, London one evening in June 2001. Stephan returned repeatedly to the scene of her suicide in the summer of 2010 during a residency at the Serpentine Gallery, filming a circumambulation around the site. Concurrently, regardless of where she was in the city, Stephan would take a photograph at the time of Hosni's death, hoping, perhaps, to capture her last light. In a dialectical relationship between the still and moving image, the snapshot conjures the movement of a momentary gesture. Through this repetitious act, the irretrievability of any clues about her passing becomes more palpable, and weighs against the insistent gaze of the artist.

Since 2021, Lamia Joreige has been developing a feature film and video installation, *Jerusalem, the Diary of Ihsan Turjman*, inspired by the diary of an Ottoman soldier from 1915– 1916. Turjman's writings capture personal reflections, fears, and political insights during the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the partitioning of Palestine by colonial powers. His intimate account connects past upheavals to the enduring colonialism in Palestine today, reflecting a century of persistent uncertainty. Joreige's *Background for a Script* (2024), part of her *Uncertain Times* series begun in 2017, presents 15 paintings based on her extensive historical research. Excluding human figures, the artworks depict landscapes and objects imagined for a future film. Turjman's portrait is the only human representation, while script fragments accompany the paintings, evoking his social and mental world.

Omar Fakhoury's series of flower portraits are titled in colloquial names "Cow Tits" "Mules' Thistle" "Jackal's Cucumber" that were born over time and have been present in Lebanese villages for generations. They are playful, rich, and complex, telling the intricate story of a collective imagination that gave a name to a form.

Two works from Ahmad Ghossein's latest project *Serotonin, Benzine and a Renegade body* are presented in this exhibition. *Filming Him, Filming Me I*, Ghossein takes a photo of the obsolete camcorder used by an intelligence officer during the 2019 Beirut protests. The artist studies the specs of this camera pointed incessantly for hours on end at the faces of the protesters. From 2019 onward, since the onset of the ongoing financial collapse, Ghossein spent hours examining his bank account in Lebanese Pounds, calculating its dwindling value day by day. The artist sliced bills of 1000, 5000, 10000 and 20000 Lebanese bills which have now become useless, towering next to his framed bank statement is the works *How to Make my Money Sell*. "The sum of these worthless bills would amount to the money the bank has stolen from me. This artwork is dedicated to my friend whose lifespan was practically halved by his banker."



- a. Raed Yassin, *The Company Of Silver Spectres / The Return Of the Dead 3*, Sprayed Acrylic on Vintage Photographs, 50 x 40 cm (framed), 2024
- b. Raed Yassin, *The Company Of Silver Spectres / The Return Of the Dead 2*, Sprayed Acrylic on Vintage Photographs, 50 x 40 cm (framed), 2024
- c. Lamia Joreige, *Uncertain Times, Background for a Script 1-15*, Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 26 cm each, 2024
- d. Caline Aoun, *Untitled Meters*, Unique inkjet print on permajet transfer film, 130 x 60 cm, 2020
- e. Caline Aoun, *Residual Entropy 1*, Unique inkjet print on permajet transfer film, 150 x 110 cm, 2021
- f. Omar Fakhoury, *Chandelier*, Acrylic on linen, 65 x 55 cm, 2024
- g. Omar Fakhoury, *Pine of the Earth*, Acrylic on linen, 65 x 55 cm, 2024
- h. Omar Fakhoury, *Lying Sage*, Acrylic on linen, 65 x 55 cm, 2024
- i. Rania Stephan, *64 Dusks #26,27,33,40,51,62*, C print on lustre paper, 25 x 20 cm each, 2016
- j. Ahmad Ghossein, *How to make your money sell*, Lebanese Pounds cutout on wooden beams, original bank statement for savings account, variable dimensions, 2023
- k. Ahmad Ghossein, *Filming Him Filming Me 1*, Mixed media on paper, 35 x 35 cm, 2023
- l. Vartan Avakian, *An Icon of Minimalists (a)*, Silver, salts and light on fine art paper, 39 x 45 cm, 2018
- m. Vartan Avakian, *An Icon Of Fragments of Existential Mathematics (b)*, Silver, salts and light on fine art paper, 39 x 45 cm, 2018
- n. Vartan Avakian, *An Icon of Weird Tales and Bizarre Myths (b)*, Silver, salts and light on fine art paper, 39 x 45 cm, 2018
- o. Vartan Avakian, *An Icon of Petit Dictionnaire Français-Arabe (a)*, Silver, salts and light on fine art paper, 39 x 45 cm, 2018