

MAUREEN PALEY.

press release

LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN

28 April – 28 May 2017

private view: Friday 28 April 6:30 – 8:30pm

Maureen Paley is pleased to announce a new solo exhibition by Lawrence Abu Hamdan that follows on from the performance of his live audiovisual essay *Contra Diction: Speech Against Itself* at the gallery in 2016. His work *Saydnaya (the missing 19db)*, 2017 is currently included in the thirteenth Sharjah Biennial in the UAE and was awarded the 2016 International Nam June Paik Award as well as the 2017 Tiger Award for Short Films at the Rotterdam Film Festival for *Rubber Coated Steel*, 2016. Abu Hamdan recently performed his live audiovisual essay *Bird watching*, 2016 at documenta 14 in Athens, Greece.

Lawrence Abu Hamdan is an artist and 'private ear' whose projects have taken the form of installations, performances, photography, essays, lectures, videos and graphic works. This exhibition will feature two new works: *Saydnaya (ray traces)*, 2017 will be installed in the downstairs gallery, while *This whole time there were no land mines*, 2017 will be shown upstairs.

In 2016 Lawrence Abu Hamdan worked with Amnesty International and Forensic Architecture to produce an acoustic investigation into the Syrian regime prison of Saydnaya, 25km North of Damascus, where over 13,000 people have been executed since the protests in 2011 began. The prison is inaccessible to independent observers and monitors. The memory of those few who were released is the only resource available from which to learn of and document the violations taking place there. However, the capacity of detainees to see anything in Saydnaya was highly restricted as they were kept mostly in darkness, blindfolded or made to cover their eyes. As a result, the prisoners developed an acute sensitivity to sound. Abu Hamdan worked with survivors' earwitness testimonies to help reconstruct the prisons architecture and gain insight as to what happened inside. *Saydnaya (ray traces)* consists of a series of projected diagrams that illustrate the unseen architecture of the Saydnaya prison based on the accounts of some of its survivors.

This whole time there were no land mines, 2017 uses found mobile phone footage and audio recordings that were made in 2011 in The Golan Heights. This stretch of land was annexed from Syria by Israel after the 1967 ceasefire and hosts 'the shouting valley' — a place where the topography facilitates an acoustic leak across the border. Here separated families have regularly gathered on both sides of the divide to shout across to each other. On 15th May 2011 the shouting valley was host to a different act of transgression. Protesters from all over the country gathered on the Syrian side of the border for the anniversary of the Nakba. Unlike the usual gatherings in this valley the voice was not the only thing to cross the border as 150 Palestinian protesters from Syria unexpectedly broke into Israeli territory. For the first time since 1967 the border was breached. Four protesters were later killed by Israeli soldiers yet the majority managed to exercise, even if briefly, their right to return.

Lawrence Abu Hamdan was born in 1985 in Amman, Jordan. He currently lives and works in Beirut, Lebanon. Selected solo exhibitions include *Earshot*, Portikus, Frankfurt, 2016; *تقيية (taqiyya)*, Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen, 2015; *Tape Echo*, Beirut in Cairo and Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2013; *The Freedom Of Speech Itself*, The Showroom, London and *The Whole Truth*, Casco, Utrecht, 2012. Additionally his works have been exhibited and performed in Tamawuj, Sharjah Biennial 13, Sharjah, UAE and *Contour Biennale 8 Polyphonic Worlds: Justice as Medium* (curated by Natasha Ginwala), Kunstcentrum NONA, Mechelen, Belgium, 2017; *Gwangju Biennial*, curated by Maria Lind, South Korea; *9th Liverpool Biennial*, Liverpool, UK and *Nam June Paik award exhibition*, Museum Folkwang Essen, Germany, 2016; *The Shanghai Biennial*, Shanghai, China, 2014; *The Whitechapel Gallery*, London, UK, MACBA Barcelona; *Tate Modern London*; *M HKA Antwerp*; *The Beirut Art Center* and *The Taipei Biennial*, all 2012. Abu Hamdan's writing can be found in *Forensis* (Sternberg Press), *Manifesta Journal* and *Cabinet Magazine*.

A new monograph *[inaudible] a politics of listening in four acts* was published by Portikus and Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen in 2016 and comprises a series of transcripts of live speech from sermons, monologues, testimonies and interviews made during the course of the last five years.

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Gallery open: Wednesday - Sunday 11 am – 6 pm. Office hours: Monday - Friday 10 am – 6 pm