

MAUREEN PALEY.

press release

LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN

14 April – 9 May 2021

Maureen Paley is pleased to present the second solo exhibition at the gallery by Lawrence Abu Hamdan. The exhibition will include a newly realised installation of the video work *Once Removed* (2019) which was first shown in Sharjah Biennial 14, UAE (2019) (commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation) and was also included in the Biennale of Sydney, Australia earlier this year. This is the first time it will be shown in the UK. As well, we will present pieces from his most recent project, *For the Otherwise Unaccounted* (2020) that consists of a series of thermographic prints which investigate the idea of birthmarks corresponding to reincarnation. This exhibition presents the first iterations of a new body of work he is developing that investigates reincarnation, not as a scientific fact, but as a medium for justice.

***Once Removed*, 2019** HD video, colour, sound, 28 minutes

This dual-channel video installation is a portrait of Bassel Abi Chahine, a 31-year-old writer and historian who has managed to obtain the most comprehensive inventory of extremely rare objects, photographs and interviews of the People Liberation Army (PLA) and Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) militia from the Lebanese civil war. His obsessive analysis, collection and unprecedented research into this one militia was done in pursuit of material to reconstitute flashbacks and unexplainable memories from a previous life. Through his research, Abi Chahine realised that his own lucid memories of a war he had not lived were because he was the reincarnation of a soldier Yousef Fouad Al Jawhary, who died aged 16 on February 26, 1984, in the town of Aley. The scenography of the film attempts to establish the conditions to listen to a new category of witness, one that is yet to be accepted into the production of history.

***For the Otherwise Unaccounted*, 2020** thermographic prints, text panels and wooden shelves

In 1997 the psychiatrist and professor at Virginia School of Medicine, Dr Ian Stevenson published his life work, "REINCARNATION AND BIOLOGY: The Etiology of Birthmarks". The book was the result of fieldwork in Asia, Turkey, Lebanon, across Africa and Alaska, in which he interviewed and investigated claims of reincarnation with particular attention to the correspondence of birthmarks on the reincarnated subject to the circumstances of their death in their previous lives. Stevenson's book is a strange and beautiful mix of narrative literature, forensic analysis, biological data, historiography, theology and conflicting scientific hypotheses. In focusing on the claim to reincarnation rather than the ethnography of a single people, Stevenson's monologue chronicles a collectivity of people who exist at the threshold of the law and for whom injustices and violence have otherwise escaped the historical record due to colonial subjugation, corruption, rural lawlessness and legal amnesty. The raised ink renderings of these birthmarks highlight the ways in which testimony is stored in the body. This work isolates the birthmarks from their bodies, and in this way archives the only surviving remnants of historical erasure, such as forced religious conversions, destruction of language and property, colonial occupation and territorial annexation.

Lawrence Abu Hamdan has a committed interest in sound and its intersection with politics. This originates from his background as a touring musician and his earlier work in DIY music production. His more recent audio investigations have been used (along with informing his art) as evidence at the UK Asylum and Immigration Tribunal and as advocacy for organisations such as Amnesty International and Defence for Children International together with fellow researchers from Forensic Architecture.

He completed his PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2017 and is currently a fellow at the Gray Centre for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago. In 2019, he formed a collective with fellow Turner Prize nominees Helen Cammock, Oscar Murillo and Tai Shani in order to be jointly granted this award. This is the first time such a gesture has occurred. His solo exhibition at Vienna Secession will open in November this year.

Lawrence Abu Hamdan has had solo exhibitions at Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai, UAE, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, St Louis, Missouri, USA and the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia, Witte De With, Rotterdam and Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, 2019; Tate Tanks at Tate Modern, London, UK, Chisenhale Gallery, London, UK and Hammer Museum (Vault Project), Los Angeles, USA, 2018, as well as daadgalerie, Berlin, Germany, 2018 following his participation in the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program in 2017. He has also had solo exhibitions at Portikus, Frankfurt, 2016; Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, Switzerland, 2015, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands, 2014 and The Showroom, London and Casco, Utrecht, Netherlands in 2012. He has also exhibited at the 58th Venice Biennale 'May You Live in Interesting Times' selected by Ralph Rugoff, the 11th Gwangju Biennale and the 13th and 14th Sharjah Biennial. This year, Abu Hamdan was awarded the 2022 Future Fields Commission in Time-Based Media, The Jean Vigo Award for Best Director, Punto de Vista 2020 and the German Federal Foreign Office Dialogue Award at the 33rd European Media Art Festival. His other awards include the 2019 Edvard Munch Art Award, the 2018 Baloise Art Prize, the 2017 Tiger short film award at the Rotterdam International Film festival and the 2016 Nam June Paik Award for new media. His works are part of collections at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands, Centre Pompidou, Paris, the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE, and Tate, London, UK.

A solo publication [*Inaudible*] – *A Politics of Listening in 4 Acts* was co-published by Portikus, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen and Sternberg Press in 2016. *Lawrence Abu Hamdan: The Voice Before the Law* was published in 2019 on the occasion of his exhibition at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin. This year, the Jameel Arts Centre produced the publication *Artist's Rooms: Lawrence Abu Hamdan* to accompany his solo exhibition.

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