

# Session 7: Artists and the disintegration of Iraq and Syria

How artists survive the destruction of their societies in Iraq and Syria, and their role in the diaspora. Cultural trends in both countries, effects of international intervention. New Islamist movements, globalization, jihadi culture, possible outcomes.



# PAIN/LOSS

Hena Mal Allah  
*Baghdad City Map*  
Mixed media on canvas  
180x180cm  
2007  
HMA007





Commemorating  
a rich past and a  
long, complex  
culture

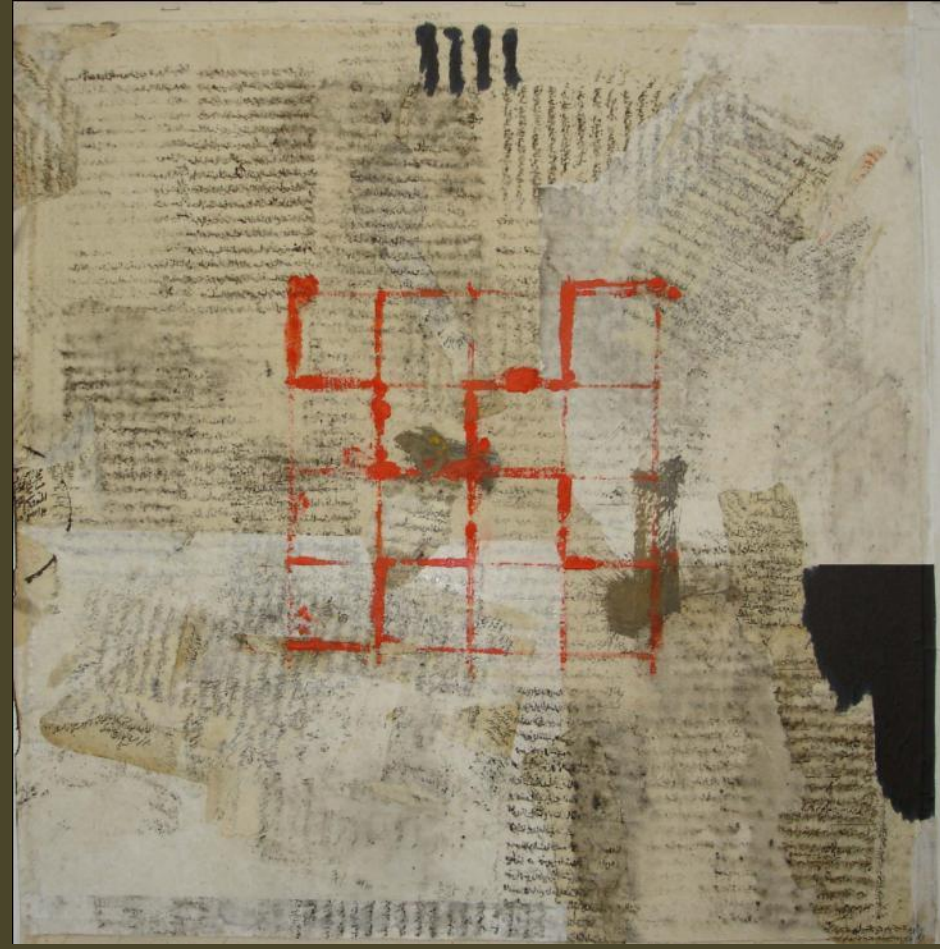
Hena Mal Allah  
*Royal Game of Ur*  
Mixed media on canvas  
and paper  
32x32cm  
2007  
HMA001





Hena Mal  
Allah  
*Conference of  
the Birds*  
Mixed media on  
paper  
37x30cm  
2007  
HMA003





The basis of much of Hana Mal Allah's work consists of maps, books and cloths that are torn, burnt, submerged in water and otherwise damaged, and then recomposed. The abstract figures she paints on them, based on numerology and other occult Arab sciences, attempt to express some kind of hidden order behind the destruction, to make sense of it.

Manual search engine machine for missing Iraqis (Iraqi Qooqle)



## IRONY

Mahmood Obaidi (1966, Baghdad; lives and works in Amman)

Iraqi Qooqle: Manual Search Engine for Missing Iraqis 2010. 47x49x64 cm



**Mr. Obaidi and the Fair Skies Corporation.** The artist was once assaulted by security guards in Houston airport because of racial profiling. This led him to develop a kit to become pale and blond with blue eyes.

Installation with vending machines, video, plaster figures, prints on glass etc. 2009-2010 (here seen at Art Dubai/Agial Gallery)



## The Legacy of Modernism?



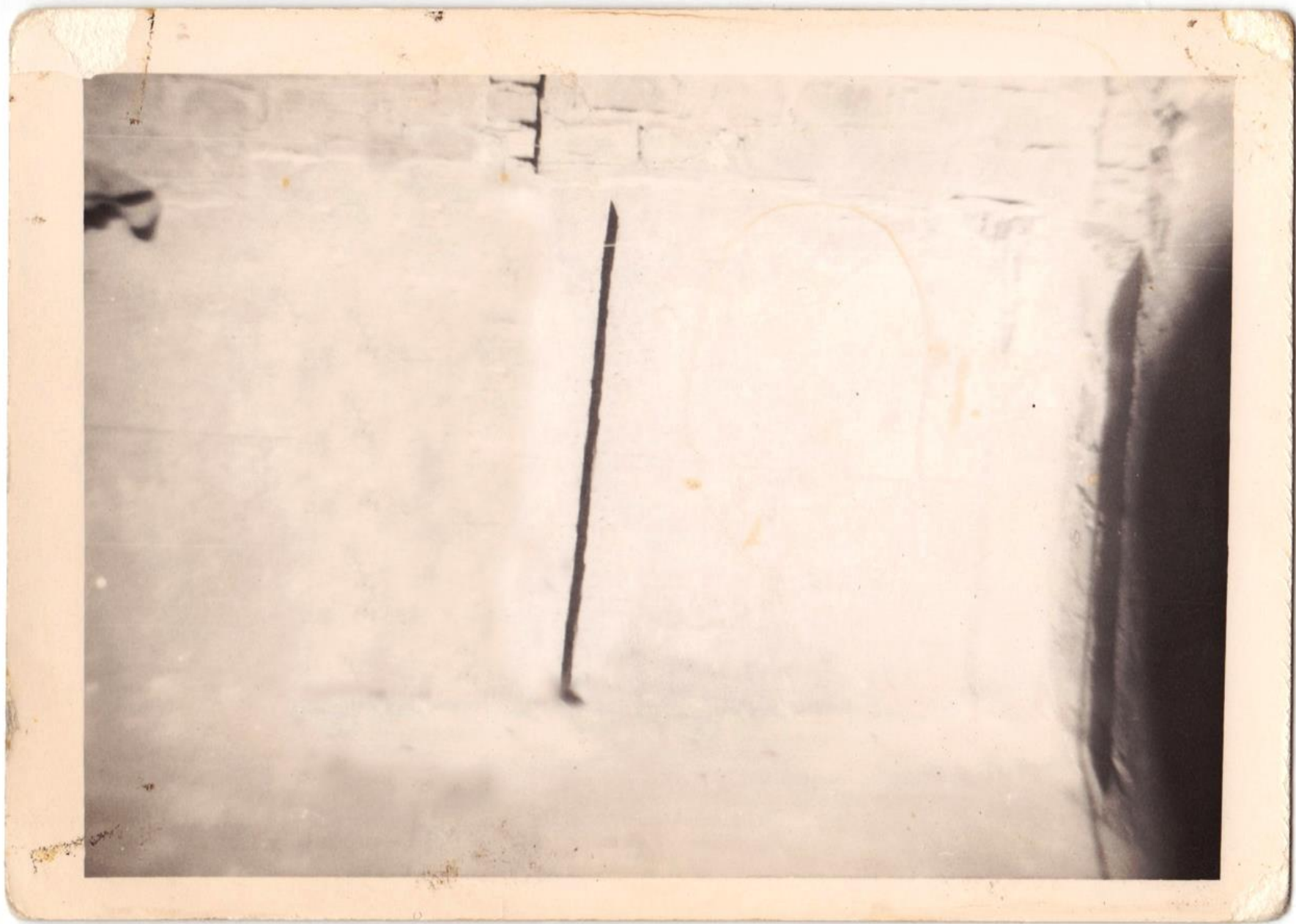
**Mahmood Obaidi:**  
**Left: Modernism and Iraq, 2008**  
**Above: 5 gigabytes of my memory, 2011**





**Exile: feeling uprooted, missing...**

Nedim Kufi: *Absence*, 2011



Nedim Kufi: Absence, 2011



# Exile: Adaptation

The booklet deals with the notion of one-night stands during wintertime in Finland, which demands many layers of clothes. I put together illustrated instructions for both women and men to help them take off their heavy clothes in a shorter time.



Adel Abidin: *Helping the Finns*, 2006



**Exile: building bridges, interpreting**

*Adel Abidin: Jihad, 2006*



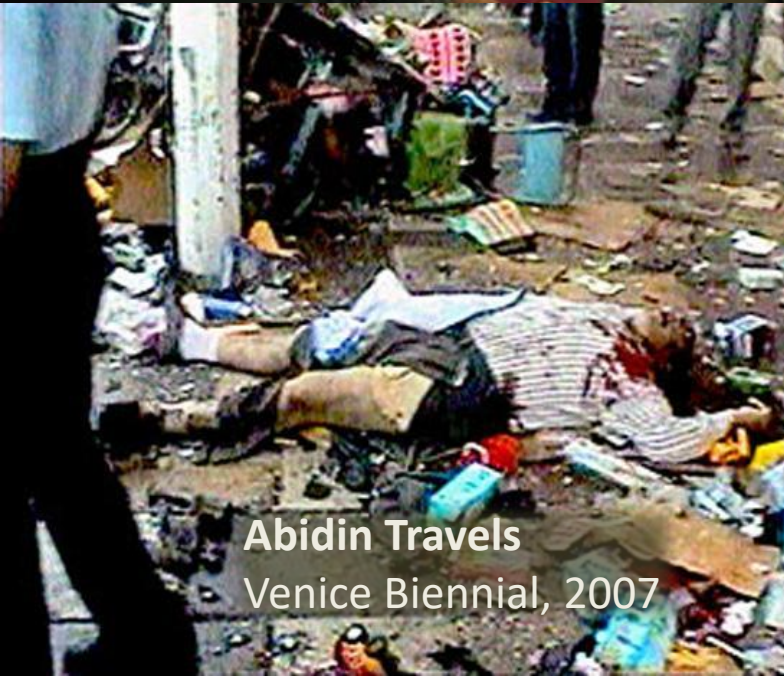
# BOOK YOUR TICKET

www.abidintravels.com

## Trying to inform



### Welcome to Baghdad



Abidin Travels  
Venice Biennial, 2007



### Travel info

Dear Tourist!

When visiting Baghdad, please remember the following safety instructions:

Traveling by airplane: **(NOT RECOMMENDED)**

- 1- There are direct flights to Baghdad only from Jordan or Syria.
- 2- Flights are expensive.
- 3- Some residue of atomic radiation might still be a problem in the area around the Baghdad airport, but only if you are susceptible to various kinds of cancer.
- 4- All aircrafts flying over the airports are targeted either by Fundamentalist Muslims or the National Forces. Or both.
- 5- The road from the airport to the centre of Baghdad is heavily mined.

Traveling by taxi:

- 1- You should be prepared to spend at least a day at the Iraqi border. It is recommended that you bring a blanket and a pillow. Nights in the desert are cold.
- 2- Once you have cleared the border and are on your way to Baghdad, you had better hide your cash. You are sure to be stopped by robbers. **(DO NOT TRY TO BE SMART, THEY MIGHT KILL YOU)**
- 3- At the checkpoint be prepared to queue for an hour or more because of an explosion or because the Americans or the National Forces are passing by. Your blanket and pillow will again come in handy here.

WE WISH YOU A SAFE & ENJOYABLE VISIT.  
LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU SOON.

### Sightseeing

- 1- All the beautiful places that you might have read about have either been destroyed or looted. There really are no sights left.
- 2- **DO NOT** walk on sidewalks, they are filled with mines. **MIND THE TANKS**
- 3- **DO NOT** imagine that you are in Europe, you cannot go jogging in the morning. That is the most dangerous time in Baghdad, since that's when the suicide bombers are most active.

Extra tip:

The suicide bombers believe that practicing Jihad in the morning means they can eat breakfast with the prophet Mohammed.

If there is an explosion in your vicinity, **DO NOT** remain an onlooker. Above all, **DO NOT** run or you will be targeted as a terrorist. It is suggested that you hurt yourself in some way so that you will look like a victim and be taken to hospital.

### Where to eat

- 1- If you want to go for breakfast somewhere, try to **AVOID** popular or crowded places. Go to the hidden cafes. We believe the best place to have breakfast is in your hotel room.
- 2- At lunchtime, **AVOID** the famous restaurants such as: Qasim Abu-AL-Qas Al-Reif. All good-quality restaurants are targeted. Again, go for the low-quality, hidden restaurants.
- 3- If you visit Baghdad during Ramadan: Never eat in public, it may be your last meal.

**AVOID** discussing religion in any form. **DO NOT** entertain the thought of visiting a Mosque; you might be considered a spy for the opposing religious group.

### Religion





Adel Abidin: *Symphony*, 2013  
Aka the Baghdad Emo massacre

Chronicling the forgotten  
aspects of war





**Educating**



**An explosion**

# Abstraction



*Adel Abidin: Ping Pong, 2009*



## Strategies of resistance: exploring narratives



*Michael Rakowitz: The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist, 2007*











# The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist (Aj Ibur Shapu)





**THE WORST CONDITION IS TO PASS UNDER A  
SWORD WHICH IS NOT ONE'S OWN, 2009**









As the American troops  
did Uday expect a  
the situation, like in 4  
years earlier?



The full Iraqi screening of Star Wars most likely took place in March of 1980, nearly three years  
after its original US release, at a private event attended by Saddam Hussein and his fifteen-  
year-old son Uday in the auditorium of Ba'ath Party Headquarters in Baghdad, six months  
before the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War.







General Adnan too adopted many persons over the years. In the late 1950s organization recruited Adnan Alkaisy, a successful Baghdad's wrestler, for a scholarship at the University of Houston. In Texas Adnan wrestled without only to learn that matches were fixed and better storylines meant better. Told he looked Native American, he became Chief Billy White Wolf. 1960s in London he was reinvented as The Sheikh, an eccentric, Arabian oil tycoon, complete with an entourage of belly dancers.

# STRIKE THE EMPIRE BACK



COMING SOON  
**EPISODE VI:  
THE MOON,  
THE STARS,  
THE SUN**







Constructing Counter-narratives



1963

Boxes Available





**BABYLON**

**Dates Of Iraq**

تمور بابل  
العراقية

**BABYLON**

**DATES OF IRAQ**





*Michael Rakowitz: RETURN project, 2004 ongoing*





Jannane Al Ani: *Shadow Sites*. Video, 2009





Ammar Abd Rabbo (Syria): *Ali Abdullah Saleh*, 2006





Courtesy of the artist and Green Art Gallery Dubai

Jaber Al Azmeh: *Wounds*, 2013



Tammam Azzam

**The Dance**, from the  
Syrian Museum  
Series.

Digital Print, 2012









Humam Alsalim and Rami Bakhos, from the series  
'Cultural Beheading'



# Culture of the Islamic State



Culture is seen as an accretion, over the ages, of layers of filth over the true message of Islam – not any specific culture, but culture ***generally***

KHILAFAH WILL  
TRANSFORM  
THE WORLD

ANONGHOST

Linux Worm



CYBERCALIPHATE

Je suis IS



TV5MONDE   
Réseau de télévision

 Regarder la vidéo

 J'aime ▾

 Message

\*\*\*

Journal

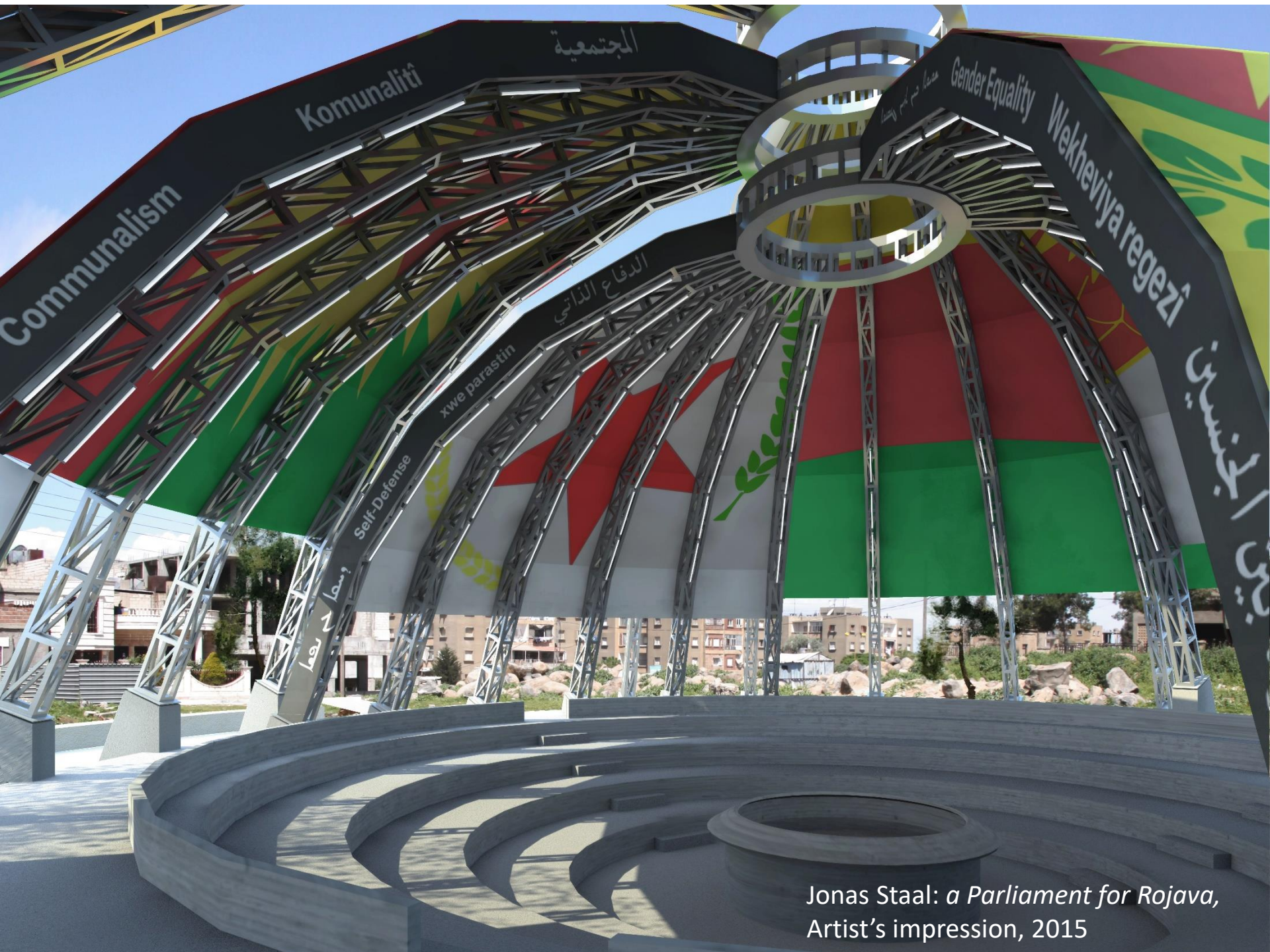
À propos

Photos

TV5MONDE+

Plus ▾





Jonas Staal: *a Parliament for Rojava*,  
Artist's impression, 2015