

Hello Guggenheim Film and Video Curated by Bidoun Projects

Hello Guggenheim is a four-week program of diverse films and videos that are united in their mistrust of inherited narratives about history and documentation, testimony and voice. By turns fantastical and irreverent, adversarial and contrived, the assembled works provide an unusual and uniquely compelling vantage onto the veracity politics of the moving image.

Deploying a wide range of narrative and cinematic techniques, many of the works in *Hello Guggenheim* evoke epochal historical events as both tragedy and farce. Parviz Kimiavi's cult masterpiece *O.K. Mister* (1978) reimagines British Oil exploitation in Iran as an absurd pop satire, while Wael Shawky's *Telematch Sadat* (2007) and Jumana Manna and Sille Storihe's *The Goodness Regime* (2013) use children to restage the assassination of the Egyptian president and the signing of the Oslo Accords, respectively. Jayce Salloum and Elia Suleiman's mass media montage epic *Introduction to the End of an Argument* (1990) chronologically reconstructs representations of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict using Hollywood film, network news, and cartoons.

Hassan Khan's *Bind Ambition* (2012) gives the impression of reality in the streets of Cairo, but constantly reminds us of its cinematic mediation by rebuffing ambient sound for studio voice recordings. In Neïl Beloufa's *Untitled* (2010), the artist probes a rumor about a house near Algiers. The set of the film is comprised of a series of full-scale inkjet prints, photographed and used to wallpaper a life-sized model of the house. In Mounira Al Solh's *Paris Without a Sea* (2007-8) the artist's voice is superimposed over those of her interviewees: a group of men who swim daily at the beaches of Beirut.

Hello Guggenheim closes with four screenings of Mohsen Makhmalbaf's *Salam Cinema* (1994) — the program's namesake — which explores the power dynamics between author and subject by chronicling auditions held after an open casting call. The director mercilessly taunts, bullies, and manipulates his would-be actors, pitting friends and relatives against one another ("The one that cries the fastest knows the most about love") and evading responsibility for his mind games ("It's the camera that's so cruel"). But subjects often resist; one brutalized teenage girl throws one of his testy questions back at him ("Would you rather be an artist or a humane person?"). Similarly, in *Cinema Fouad* (1994), Mohamed Soueid's never-before-screened-in-the-United-States *cinéma vérité* portrait of Khaled El Kurdi, a Syrian trans woman, his subject refuses Soueid's more goading questions ("what is your favorite part of your body?") with artful resistance: "my whole body." In Azin Feizabadi's quasi-autobiographical *Cryptomnesia* (2014), the memories and experiences of a narrator and his proxy fall in and out of alignment.

Participating artists: Azin Feizabadi, Hassan Khan, Iman Issa, Jayce Salloum and Elia Suleiman, Jumana Manna and Sille Storihe, Mohamed Soueid, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Mounira Al Solh, Neïl Beloufa, Parviz Kimiavi, Rokni Haerizadeh, Wael Shawky

Organized by Tiffany Malakooti for Bidoun Projects.

Hello Guggenheim takes place Fridays through Mondays, from May 6 through May 30, 2016 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, in connection with *But a Storm Is Blowing from Paradise: Contemporary Art of the Middle East and North Africa* on view in New York from April 29–October 5, 2016. Screenings are free with museum admission.

[Bidoun Projects](#) is a New York-based 501(c)(3) non-profit publishing and curatorial organization with a focus on arts and culture from, in, and around the Middle East.

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Friday, May 6, 2016
Sunday, May 8, 2016

Blind Ambition

Hassan Khan, 2012, 46 mins

Blind Ambition is a nine-part video shot on mobile phones over the course of a single day in the streets of Cairo. Fast talk is contrasted with slow shots; shouting voices with absolute silence; real-time reality with cinematic artificiality—the end result is that rare Cairene film that evokes noise and congestion without recourse to ambient sound. Disjunctively poetic, *Blind Ambition* is about the emotional condition that seethes beneath the surface of a collective.

Courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel



Saturday, May 7, 2016
Monday, May 9, 2016

Untitled

Neïl Beloufa, 2010, 15 mins

Untitled is an investigation into an anecdote the artist heard about a house near Algiers: that it was abandoned by its wealthy owners during the political unrest in the 1990s and occupied by a terrorist group. The idyllic landscape we are shown is in fact a series of full-scale inkjet prints, which the artist photographed and used to wallpaper a life-size model of the house for his film set. Actors playing the landlord of the house, the gardener and the neighbors give conflicting accounts of what the terrorists had done there, how they lived, how they ate. More importantly, they question why the group chose to live in a house with floor-to-ceiling glass windows on all sides. This re-imagined scene is typical of Beloufa's exploration of the hazy shades of narrative, make-believe and truth that underpin the representations of real-world events.



Muqaddimah Li-Nihayat Jidal (Introduction to the end of an argument)/Speaking for oneself... Speaking for others...

Jayce Salloum & Elia Suleiman, 1990, 40 mins

Introduction to the end of an argument is a highly kinetic tableaux of uprooted sights and sounds that works to expose the racial imaginary of mass media images. With snippets from feature films such as *Exodus*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Black Sunday*, and *The Little Drummer Girl*, as well as network news programs, the filmmakers have constructed an oddly wry narrative that mimes the history of Middle East politics. Twenty-six years and many media later, the film is simultaneously an artefact of 1980s-era critique and a refracted mirror on our current reality.



Friday, May 13, 2016
Sunday, May 15, 2016



Proposal for an Iraq War Memorial **Iman Issa, 2007, 5 mins**

Proposal for an Iraq War Memorial is composed of found images and footage of Baghdad, television coverage of the war, and clips from the film 1940 Hollywood film *The Thief of Baghdad*, along with a voiceover text written and performed by the artist. The video artfully subverts the position of the narrator, whose nonchalant response to horrifying images evokes the condition of the media consumer in an age of information overflow. Issa's indifferent yet implicated narrator serves to destabilize the authority of the voice.



Reign of Winter **Rokni Haerizadeh, 2013, 6 mins**

Reign of Winter is a stop-motion animation comprised of four thousand individual frames depicting the spectacular royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton through anthropomorphized forms. Haerizadeh's drawings and animations transform found material into timeless parables, taking images out of context and turning conventional moral codes upside down.

Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai



Telematch Sadat **Wael Shawky, 2007, 10 mins**

Telematch Sadat re-stages the 1981 military parade, assassination, and funeral of Egyptian President Anwar Al Sadat—the event which ushered in the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak—with a cast of Bedouin children. Donkeys and carts stand in for armored vehicles, while the desert substitutes for downtown Cairo.

Courtesy Sfeir-Semler Gallery



The Goodness Regime **Jumana Manna and Sille Storihele, 2013, 21 mins**

With the help of a cast of children, *The Goodness Regime* investigates the foundations of the ideology and self-image of modern Norway—from the Crusades (via the adventures of Fridtjof Nansen) to the trauma of Nazi occupation to the diplomatic theatre of the Oslo Peace Accords. Shot in Norway and Palestine, *The Goodness Regime* combines the children's performances with archival sound recordings and new footage filmed on location.

Saturday, May 14, 2016

Monday, May 16, 2016

Cryptomnesia

Azin Feizabadi, 2014, 73 mins

Alternating between autobiographical fact and fiction, *Cryptomnesia* narrates the author's childhood memories of his asylum-odyssey from Iran to France, Austria, Belgium, and finally the Federal Republic of Germany, through a proxy character named Reinoldus. Reinoldus's experiences in the industrial city of Dortmund—at a club, in the central train station, hanging out with friends at the lake—are match cut with flashbacks. The narrator's relationship to Reinoldus and the memories fluctuates constantly, on the verge of collapse: who is telling whose story?



Friday, May 20, 2016
Sunday, May 22, 2016

Paris Without a Sea **Mounira Al Solh, 2007-2008, 12 mins**

The artist's voice is superimposed over those of her interviewees: a group of men who swim daily at the beaches of Beirut. Through this and other editing techniques, Mounira Al Solh's *Paris Without a Sea* questions presuppositions about gender, subjectivity, and the interview format itself. In her voiceover, Al Solh affects the accents and manners of her subjects, performing an oral drag that subtly interrogates matters of masculinity, such as the fraternity of Beirut swimmers or the motley origins of names and nicknames as they relate to fathers and their sons.

Courtesy Sfeir-Semler Gallery



Cinema Fouad **Mohamed Soueid, 1993, 41 mins**

Cinema Fouad is a documentary portrait of Khaled El Kurdi, a Syrian trans woman living in Beirut where she earns a living as a domestic worker and belly dancer. Soueid shows us scenes of El Kurdi's domestic world: eating, applying make-up, dancing in her bedroom, all while reflecting on her life and experiences. She often alludes to the aggressions she faces outside of the home—in the street—and through her adept defiance in the face of some of Soueid's more goading questions, we recognize the echoing of these aggressions in his role as interviewer.



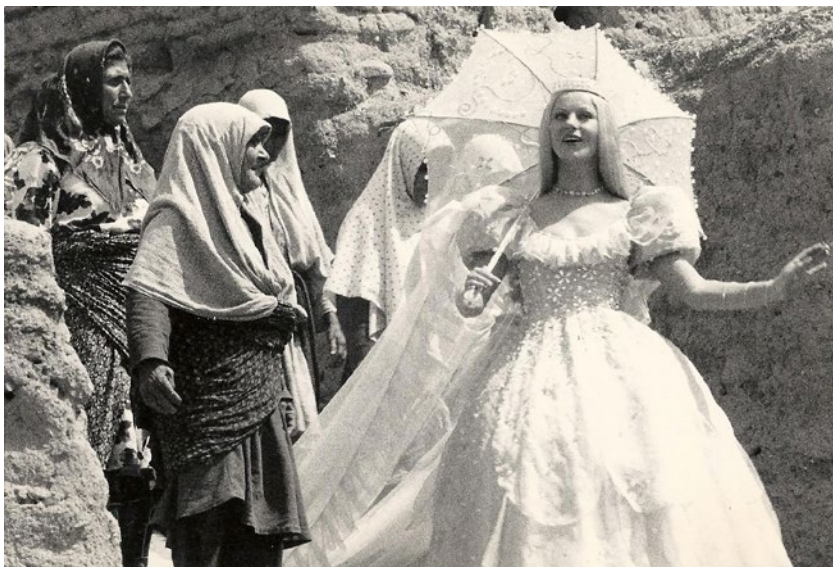
Saturday, May 21, 2016

Monday, May 23, 2016

O.K. Mister

Parviz Kimiavi, 1978, 75 mins

Once upon a time in a remote village near Persepolis, the first director of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (now British Petroleum), one William Knox D'Arcy, mysteriously resurfaces. He hires Cinderella to bewitch the villagers and exploit the oil field under their feet. *O.K. Mister* is an astonishing social satire, mixing pop art with ethnography. Kimiavi's fantastic allegory of cultural imperialism and the potential of peasant resistance anticipated the 1979 Revolution, which took place only a few months after the film was made.



Friday, May 27, 2016
Saturday, May 28, 2016
Sunday, May 29, 2016
Monday, May 30, 2016

Salam Cinema

Mohsen Makhmalbaf, 1994, 75 mins

As an indication of Makhmalbaf's popularity in Iran by the early 1990s, his open casting call for *Salam Cinema* yielded several thousand applicants, a virtual riot that we see at the beginning of the film — a non-narrative documentary chronicling some of these auditions. Here, Makhmalbaf's role as provocateur is only incidentally aimed at the audience; it's mainly directed at the hapless applicants whom he mercilessly bullies, taunts, and plays with. Makhmalbaf's sadistic and authoritarian mind games — such as pitting friends and relatives against one another ("The one that cries the fastest knows the most about love") — carry a clear message about the social power of cinema and the problematic nature of authorship. But whether it's a useful lesson or a callous excuse for exploitation is a question he seems to leave deliberately open. When one brutalized teenage girl throws one of his testy questions back at him ("Would you rather be an artist or a humane person?") he refuses to answer. "It's the camera that's so cruel," he later claims... without much conviction. *Salam Cinema* is a raw antagonization of truth and power.

