

The word 'MRO' is rendered in a thick, purple, hand-drawn outline style. The letters are set against a background of a fine, light gray dot grid. The 'M' is on the left, the 'R' is in the middle, and the 'O' is on the right. The outlines are slightly irregular, giving it a sketchy, artistic feel.

MRO

Meeting Points

Contemporary Art Festival from the Arab World
Locus Agonistes: Practices and Logics of the Civic

Curated by Okwui Enwezor

Meeting Points 6

The Revolutionary Present: Art, Culture, and Civic Imagination

The OCC-Athens welcomes Meeting Points 6, a multidisciplinary festival in collaboration with the Young Arab Theatre Fund. Athens is the fourth and final stop for this transnational multidisciplinary festival designed to tour several historical cities in the Arab World after its launch in Beirut in April 2011. Other European cities that hosted the festival were Brussels and Berlin.

The festival lands in Athens at a key moment in the history of the Arab World, where the struggle of civic forces has recently reached a critical point.

Through its exhibitionary, performative and discursive aspects, MP6 explores aesthetic strategies and ways that contemporary representations advance concepts of civic imagination and struggle.

The current events of the Arab Spring have thrown a fresh light on the renewal of the aspirations of Arab societies as historical subjects.

The collapse of the regimes in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia and the tottering regime in Syria has further exposed the urgent civic demands of diverse populations across the entire Middle East and North Africa. While the events of change, transformation, and renewal move beyond the frontiers of reform, future new horizons are already being imagined and constructed.

As Okwui Enwezor stated: "Today the situation of the struggle between civic forces cannot be localized in one particular part of the world. Nor can the effects of popular disenchantment be confined within specific contemporary practice".

Therefore, Meeting Points is not simply limited to the presentation of Arab artists but also takes their contemporary practices as its starting point.

These contemporary art practices, politics and transformation respond as much to the resistance movements in the Arab World, as they engage with other diverse global antagonisms, including the rise against the far right in Europe and other emancipatory logics that construct today's societies.

.....Locus Agonistes: Practices and Logics of the Civic

Statement for Meeting Points 6 (Beirut, Amman, Damascus, Cairo, Tunis, Brussels, Berlin, Athens) © Okwui Enwezor

If the given social situations of the last decade have been marked by an increasing antagonism between economic spheres (globalization and anti-globalization), political subjectivities (insurgency and counter-insurgency), and aesthetic strategies (activism and formalism) in what ways are modes of contemporary representation advancing concepts of artistic and civic reflection that address the present interregnum?

To be sure, the current forces of antagonism are not novel. Throughout the history of modernity such forces have been the sine qua non of modern reformist politics, and in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been the common grammar of oppositional cultural production. Today the situation of struggle between civic forces cannot be localized in one particular part of the world. Nor can the effects of popular disenchantment be confined within specific domains of contemporary practice. In fact, the proliferation of activist practices, which initially waned in the last decade of economic expansion, is slowly registering again as a fundamental cultural principle peculiar to this period of transition between modes of global sovereignty and resistant social processes. In this transition, since the events of September 11, 2001 and the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, and the broad scale of global insurgencies, from Iran to Indonesia, Somalia to Yemen, Russia to Chechnya, and intra-national resistant movements in Iran, Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, India, Pakistan, China, and the rise of the extreme right in Europe, old forms of power have been effectively rendered obsolete through the recasting of the philosophical architecture of contemporary politics and the transformation of the emancipatory Logics of resistance that respond to and engage with them.

The responses to these political challenges which have distinct cultural dimensions are not from artists alone. They cover a broad spectrum of activities, practices, positions, institutions, and social forms that can be felt in diverse pressure points. These points, at once local and national, global and transnational, civic and ideological, secular and theological, regional and geo-political constantly induce fresh demands for emancipatory Logics and civic techniques that advocate the obviation of the simplistic dichotomy between progressivist assumptions of political forums and the

seemingly conservative fundamentalist cultures that are perceived to be anathema to their powers conversion. A case in point is the Free Gaza Movement which is firmly established as a trans-national forum of engaged activists from diverse political beliefs and disciplinary spaces in solidarity with the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza.

Locus Agonistes is a cultural project conceived as a response to the scenarios of rupture between antagonistic political camps, and civic critical cultures. At a basic level it is a project shaped to organize a series of forums in the spirit of the ancient Greek agora, as a marketplace of ideas, actions, interactions, aesthetic proposals, performances, and public responses that endeavor to create locations of reasoned dissent and reflection. In fact, we imagine the entire sequence of activities connected to this project as designating locations of struggle, as spaces of becoming. However, such locations are neither invested in utopian progressivist ideals of reformist modernity nor are they inured to the seeming conservatism of fundamentalist cultural politics. Rather, in today's geo-political entanglements, one could well imagine such locations, and the adjacent spaces and spheres of cultural and artistic practice proposed by Locus Agonistes as representing possible Flash Points for reasoned dissent, as sites of immense possibility for civic production.

As the core concept of Meeting Point 6, a transnational multidisciplinary cultural event centered around several historic cities of the Middle East and North Africa, Locus Agonistes is inspired by the momentous historical forces and the emancipatory Logics that are currently reshaping debates on civic identities, political subjectivities, cultural strategies, and artistic practices in contemporary Arab societies and localities adjacent to them for example in Europe. Conceived as three distinct constellations or Flash Points (Middle East and Levant, North Africa, and Western Europe) Locus Agonistes is deliberately located in the multiple fault lines of the present interregnum.

Neither purely an artistic and performance event, nor an academic and theoretical forum, Locus Agonistes is an invitation to cultural producers and thinkers across all strategies of cultural, conceptual, theoretical, and epistemological importance to artists, choreographers, filmmakers, performers, writers, and thinkers working in the

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region and to think beyond the dichotomies that are often features of such kinds of antagonism based on secular and religious difference, whether based on the strictures surrounding the body or architectures separating civic relationships. By initiating a series of discursive and perceptual systems in which fresh hypotheses of emancipatory Logics can be articulated, presented, and debated, Locus Agonistes aims to participate in the dynamic, lively, and complex debates of contemporary critical culture in Arab societies.

Organized over a lengthy period of reflection, the project will unfold over a period of nearly 18 months beginning in November 2010 with a series of small scale conversations, research projects, and commissions. Projects and conversations produced over the year-long reflection will be presented in a sequence of Flash Points in exhibition and performance formats open to the diverse publics in the host cities. Such presentations and representations will reflect a series of synthetic and cohesive, medium scale programs running between Spring 2011 to Spring 2012.

Because past Meeting Point projects were generally focused on performance (dance, theater, music), the basic premise, and the stagecraft of Locus Agonistes is to develop projects and programs that will rely less on staging and theatricality. Because these two tendencies often delineate a division between the space of the performer and that of the spectator as two separate spheres of encounter and interaction, the premise of this project is to work in the opposite mode by directing attention

at the inconclusive relationship between spectacle and spectatorship, between mediation and immediacy, between performance and conversation, intimacy and distance. Rather than emphasize separation or rely on highly theatrical strategies, the formal premise of Locus Agonistes will be based on provisional structures and quotidian gestures such as workshops, rehearsals, auditions, and readings as primary presentational devices for the projects. Rather than theaters and museums the prevalent spaces of the presentations will be studios, rehearsal spaces, and where possible unprogrammed street performances, lectures, and debates.

In order to explore the richness of emerging individual voices in contemporary theater, dance, or performance, a core part of the project will involve both an open call for proposals and the commissioning of solos and monologues, that will require novel interfaces of presentation and delivery. However, the project will also work collaboratively with theaters and art spaces to elaborate a program of performances and theatre projects. The point is to find a way to address the space of the performer and the viewer, to interrogate the dichotomy between official and non-official spaces in a continuous elaboration of the tension between the two, but neither as authoritative producer of culture nor passive receiver of ideas. This searching reflection represents an allegory of the mechanics and performative nature of power which lies at the heart of explorations for emergent emancipatory Logics that presently suffuse the practices of art, culture, and ideas.

Program

Wednesday March 7, 2012

Opening of the exhibition, video documentation
Foyer 17:30-20:30

Mona Hatoum | **"Roadworks", "Variation on Discord and Divisions",
"Don't smile, you're on camera!", "The Negotiating Table"**

Performance (reenactment)
Lecture and Exhibition Space 17:30-20:30

Mona Hatoum | **"The Negotiating Table"**

Theatre
Main Hall 20:30

Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi | **"Amnesia"**

Thursday March 8, 2012

Exhibition, Video documentation
Foyer 12:00-21:00

Mona Hatoum | **"Roadworks", "Variation on Discord and Divisions",
"Don't smile, you're on camera!", "The Negotiating Table"**

Theatre, after performance talk with
Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi
Main Hall 20:30

Jalila Baccar and Fadhel Jaïbi | **"Amnesia"**

Program

Friday March 9, 2012

Exhibition, Video documentation
Foyer 12:00-21:00

Mona Hatoum | **"Roadworks", "Variation on Discord and Divisions",
"Don't smile, you're on camera!", "The Negotiating Table"**

Conversations: Revolution of the Present
Upper Stage 18:00-19:00

"Civitas, Citizenship, Civility. Art and the Civic imagination" | A lecture by Okwui Enwezor, curator of Meeting Points 6, chaired by the art curator Christos Ioakimidis.

Conversations: Revolution of the Present
Upper Stage 19:00-20:00

"The Art of the Civic" | Mona Hatoum speaks with Okwui Enwezor about the relationship between art and the civic society.

Conversations: Revolution of the Present
Upper Stage 20:30-22:00

"Common Grounds and Belongings: A critical look at the Civic" | The writers Adhaf Soueif and Adania Shibli in conversation with the President of the National Commission for Human Rights, Kostis Papaioannou.

Screening
Upper Stage 22:30-01:00

Omar Amiralay | **"Civic Imagination"**
Retrospective, with screening of his films: **"Film-Essai on the Euphrates Dam"** (1970), 20 min | **"Everyday Life in a Syrian Village"** (1974), 80 min | **"A Flood in Baath Country"** (2003), 50 min
Films in Arabic with subtitles in English.

Program

Saturday March 10, 2012

Exhibition, Video documentation
Foyer 12:00-21:00

Mona Hatoum | **"Roadworks"**, **"Variation on Discord and Divisions"**,
"Don't smile, you're on camera!", **"The Negotiating Table"**

Performance (reenactment)
Lecture and Exhibition Space 17:30 – 20:30

Mona Hatoum | **"The Negotiating Table"**

Marathon of Solos and Performances
Upper Stage 18:00-19:00

Omar Abusaada | **"Look at the streets...this is how hope looks like"**
(2011), 60 min | Reading | Arabic with surtitles in Greek | Performance
Director: Omar Abusaada | Playwright: Mohammad Al Attar | Performer:
Reem Ali

Marathon of Solos and Performances
Upper Stage 19:00-20:00

Mohammad Al Attar | **"Can you please look at the camera?"** (2011), 45
min | Reading | Arabic with surtitles in Greek | Text: Mohammad Al Attar
| Director: Omar Abusaada | Performers: Lama Hakin, Fatina Laila, Jamal
Chkair, Wessam Talhouq

Marathon of Solos and Performances
Upper Stage 20:30-21:30

Khalil Joreige and Joana Hadjithomas | **"Aida, Save Me"** (2009), 50 min |
Lecture Performance | French with surtitles in Greek

Marathon of Solos and Performances
Upper Stage 22:00-22:45

Tarek Atoui | **"Infinite Time Zero"** (2010-12), 45 min | Sound Performance

Program

Sunday March 11, 2012

Exhibition, Video documentation
Foyer 12:00-21:00

Mona Hatoum | **"Roadworks", "Variation on Discord and Divisions",
"Don't smile, you're on camera!", "The Negotiating Table"**

Marathon of Solos and Performances
Upper Stage 18:00-19:00

Samah Hijawi | **"The Sexual Physiology of Hermaphrodites"** (2011), 60 min | Lecture Performance | English with simultaneous translation into Greek

Marathon of Solos and Performances
Main Entrance 19:00-19:15

Hafiz Dhaou and Aicha M'Barek | **"Do you believe me"** (2011), 15 min | Dance Performance

Marathon of Solos and Performances
Upper Stage 20:00-20:45

Selma and Sofiane Ouissi , in collaboration with Yacine Sebti (Tunis / Paris) | **"Here(s)"** (2011), 45 min | Online Dance-Performance (via skype)

Marathon of Solos and Performances
Upper Stage 21:00-21:45

Tony Chakar | **"One Hundred Thousand Solitudes"** (2011), 45 min | Lecture Performance | English with simultaneous translation into Greek

Marathon of Solos and Performances
Upper Stage 22:30-23:30

Laila Soliman | **"No Time for Art"**, 60 min | Performance

Workshop:
Documenting the Civic: Society in the Barricades
Dance Room

Omar Abusaada and Mohammad Al Attar

The team

A project presented by Young Arab Theatre Fund (YATF) AND Onassis Cultural Centre-Athens (OCC)

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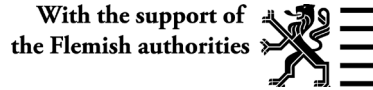
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