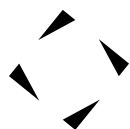


BEIRUT

THE CITY OF THE WORLD'S DESIRE

WADDAH FARIS' CHRONICLES

1960-1975



SALEH BARAKAT
GALLERY

[2]



Do Not Contemplate: Waddah Faris' Photographs

Text by Natasha Gasparian

The true image of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability and is never seen again ...For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image.

– Walter Benjamin, Theses on the Concept of History

Waddah Faris' photographs had been lying in boxes, collecting dust for nearly half a century. They had largely gone unseen. No seductive narrative can describe the sudden motivation Faris found to return to his archive of negatives and images; he was led to it by unremarkable occurrences. However, he began to find photographs he had never seen before – or ones he could not remember having seen – of moments he often could not remember having experienced. From the early 1960s up to the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, Faris snapped fleeting moments of the everyday. He observed his own extended circle of friends and comrades closely, and took portraits of them caught in action. There were artists mingling at exhibition openings in the Sursock Museum; dancers rehearsing for the Baalbek festival performances; poets and collectors taking long drags of their cigarettes at the *Horseshoe Café*; *Annahar* journalists speaking on the phone in their offices; large gatherings of friends eating and drinking at the Palmyra Hotel in the Bekaa valley; Stockhausen in the Jeita grotto; Max Ernst at the Basta market—the list goes on. Faris developed some of the film, but eventually stowed the photographs away, leaving them dispersed in the places he moved between. They would have likely gone unseen; they would have not even flitted by.

[3]

Image: Stockhausen Concert, Jeita, 1969

Waddah Faris is not a photographer *per se*. As an opposer to the professionalization of the sphere of art, he at times dabbled, and at others, plunged in an impressive range of activities. For the most part, he produced the graphic designs for books and journals, including the cover of Ghassan Kanafani's first book *موت سرير رقم ١٢* (A death in Bed No. 12). He had short stints at both *Annahar* and *Al-Hurriya* newspapers as a graphic designer, and regularly contributed drawings and designs to the reviews *Shi'r* and *Hiwar*. With César Nammour and Mireille Tabet as his partners, he founded *Contact* in 1972—an art gallery in Ras Beirut which hosted an erratic program of young, modern Arab artists at a time when commercial art galleries were preoccupied with European art. The gallery ran three zany issues of a review also titled *Contact*. Rather than a catalogue of objects for sale, it was intended as a directory of exhibitions and events happening elsewhere in the city, as well as a literary journal which published poetry, prose, and articles of criticism—often astringent—of the gallery's own exhibitions. In 1974, Faris alone began to set up *Al Riwaq*, an art gallery which failed to open to the public under the perilous conditions of the impending war. With the civil war erupting, Faris moved to Paris where he founded and ran *The Faris Gallery* (1979-1992). It was the third of his art galleries, and the most conventional. Faris continued to represent Arab artists, but he was now participating periodically in art fairs like the FIAC and Art Basel. Eventually, he came to settle in Barcelona.

In all of this, Faris' photographic practice was peripheral. Whether he took pictures for posterity is impertinent, for the pictures retroactively gain an urgency which exceeds his intentions. The photographs seize the past in the

form of an image, but this past is not a determinate object: it is not a fixed set of spatial or temporal coordinates, nor is it an archive from which historical material can be appropriated. What is known of the past does not exist apart from the present's relation to it. The past itself is subject to historical change. The two are dialectically intertwined. The past is a disruptive force actualized in the present—the former only comes into being when resurrected as the latter. To historicize the sixties as the era of failed struggles puts the past in the service of the needs of the present. However, the past cannot be assimilated within a definitive course of history. The past calls into question the necessity of the historical outcome in the present. Unlike the historicist's descriptive account, Faris' images have an actualizing agency. They are not to be contemplated. To intervene in the unfulfilled past of each present, the images are to be acted upon.

An exhibition such as this one should not be misunderstood as an attempt to represent the past 'as it really happened'. Rather, it is a venture into an unfulfilled past. To quote Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Concept of History* once more, "If one looks upon history as a text, then one can say of it...that the past has left in them images comparable to those registered by a light-sensitive plate." The light-sensitive plate is the negative—the undeveloped film. It registers the images of the past, but it is not readable or cognizable. It is no mishap that Faris had never developed, printed, scanned and displayed his photographs. The historical distance was a necessary one. Now printed and on display, the images are here to be read. And yet, it is in a potential future which we can aspire to descry the details.

A Conversation with the Wacky Waddah

Natasha Gasparian: For starters, could you tell me about your background: childhood, schooling, university?

Waddah Faris: I have a pretty mixed background: my father was a civil servant in the government and mother was a well-educated Syrian lady. There were three of us kids, and each one of us was born in a different place. My parents were married in Syria, I was born in Aleppo in 1940, the eldest. The second was born in Istanbul where my father was stationed, and the third one was

born in Baghdad where my father was moved for a short time. We all then moved back, first to Syria, and then back to Lebanon. My earliest schooling was in Aleppo in the Ibrahim Hanan school which I attended for kindergarten. Once in Beirut, we went to the *Ahliah* school which was run by the great personality who had founded it, Wadad Kortas. We were then moved to another ideal place in 1952, *The Lebanese College of Souk el Gharb*, which I was lucky biographically to have passed through, and to have gotten the attention of its president, Toufic Khabbaz, a frocked father, protestant, from Homs. He gave us the first real inklings of who we are – of our identity as Arabs. *Souk el Gharb* was the competitor of *Brummana*

[6]



2.
Portrait of WF's grandmother
Rue Commodore home, Beirut
1955



3.
Flower shop & Gilbert Becaud poster
Beirut
1970



4.
Max Ernst, Dorothea Tanning
& Georges Schehade, Beirut
1969



5.
Early imaging experiments on
photogravure camera
United printers, Beirut, 1965



6.
Aref Rayess
Rue Commodore, Beirut
1969



7.
The Rue du Caire suite
One of 18 installation images
Hamra, Beirut, 1971

[7]

[8]



BACCHUS ON A NIGHT IN AUGUST

8.
66x78 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
Baalbek, 1974

[9]



A REHEARSAL MOMENT

9.
66x76 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
Masrah Beirut, 1974

High School at the time, but *Brummana*, english-speaking as it was, was more easily identifiable with Western culture. *Souk el Charb* emphasized the Arab identity, and this is something that has stayed with us till now. This is why when I read the short biography written for this catalogue, I joked about being a “Trans-Arab”. Later, I went for a spell at the *American University of Beirut*, did my freshman year there at the faculty of Arts and Sciences from 1958-1959, in preparation to go and study art in Spain. However, my father, God bless his soul, refused to have a son of his become a cabaret singer, as he put it. He stomped his foot in the ground and urged me to take on a degree in mechanical engineering. He even promised to

open a workshop for me in Baghdad. My mother interfered and created the compromise which was a degree in architecture. So it was agreed that I study architecture.

NG: At AUB?

WF: No, in England, but I was just passing through interests. In my freshman year at AUB, to give you an example, I was more interested in my hobbies: the dark room, politics, and so on. I was an average student, C and sometimes minus. In England, I really just passed through school of architecture and stopped midway in 1961. I spent most of my time just discovering myself, and painting. I came back

[10]



10.
The Stockhausen Concert
Jeita
1969



11.
Hostess to the Stockhausen visit
Beiteddine
1969



12.
Max Ernst
Beiteddine
1969



13.
Françoise Hardy
Beiteddine
1969



14.
Max Ernst taking belly dance lessons
The Fontana Cabaret, Beirut
1969

[11]

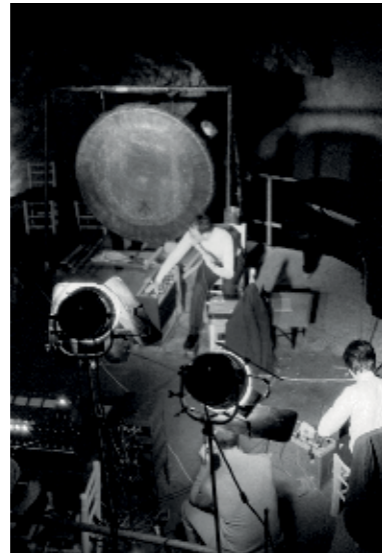
to Beirut on vacation alone – my parents were not here – and ran into the president of my school in Souk el Gharb who was a bit surprised to see that I had returned. I had no plans, so when he offered me to teach at the school in the summer, I accepted without hesitation. I taught mathematics, first second and third secondary. Started in the summer, he renewed me for the year after.

NG: And then?

WF: And then I opened my very first studio in the Azarieh building, and soon after moved with a childhood friend, César Nammour, to the Yassin building on Rue Phoenicia.

It was the building where an old friend, Issam Charabaty, worked, as well as Toufic Sayegh, the editor of *Hiwar*. That got me into Toufic Sayegh's publication [*Hiwar*], and I began to work on graphics for him. From there on, I started plunging more deeply into design. I worked for publishing houses to supply book covers for literary works. This was after the first book cover I had done for Ghassan Kanafani in 1962. I had come back from England and was already working for *al-Huriyya* newspaper as their graphic designer. When working on Ghassan's book, I knew nothing about how to prepare it physically, but I plunged anyway. It was published in collaboration with Mounir Mneimne, an old comrade of

[12]

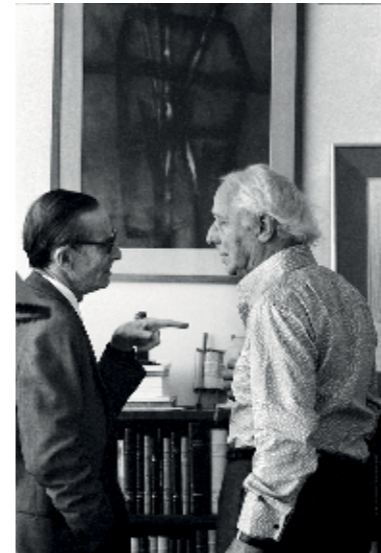


15.
Stockhausen (foreground)
rehearsing in Jeita
1969

16.
Stockhausen
rehearsing in Jeita
1969

17.
Stockhausen (foreground)
rehearsing in Jeita
1969

[13]



18.
George Schehade & Max Ernst
At the Schehade home, Beirut
1969

19.
The Beiteddine visit
Beiteddine
1969

20.
André Masson
Beiteddine
1969

the militant days who had a bookstore/stationary shop on Rue Ma'rad. He introduced us to a lady who knew more about printing than we did, Madame Mantoura, in the Capitol building. Mrs. Mantoura seemed to have highly appreciated my design. I didn't know whether it was commercial praise, or perhaps real praise, but it gave me a lot of confidence. From then on, I went on to produce many book covers for *Dar al-Tali'ah*, the *Franklin Institute*, as well as other independent artists and writers like Samira Azzam and Riad Rayess. I really started canalizing to illustration and graphic design with the *Hiwar* review. Later, I took a job doing layout work for *Annahar*, sometime in the early 1970s. Annahar brought me into more

contact with the active Arabic Beirut literary world, including Ounsi el Hajj, Issam Mahfouz, and others. Annahar was a generator of activity in Beirut: in publishing, in attitudes towards the youth, and so on. Ghassan Tueni was, although I am aware of the differences in politics, a man exuding charm and magnetism, and he was always a friend and patron. So, when he fell for the Lebanese weakness for official status and ran for deputyship in the parliament as the candidate for Aley, and despite our political differences, we volunteered with a new idea for his campaign. I had already opened my first gallery in Beirut in 1972, and during the elections of 1973, the idea was to take some

[14]



21.
Brigitte Schehade & the Ernsts
Basta antique shops, Beirut
1969



22.
May Khouri & Françoise Hardy
Yarze reception
1969



23.
Max Ernst & Brigitte Schehade
Old vegetable souk, Beirut
1969



24.
Max Ernst & Dorothea Tanning
End of visit at Beirut airport
1969

[15]

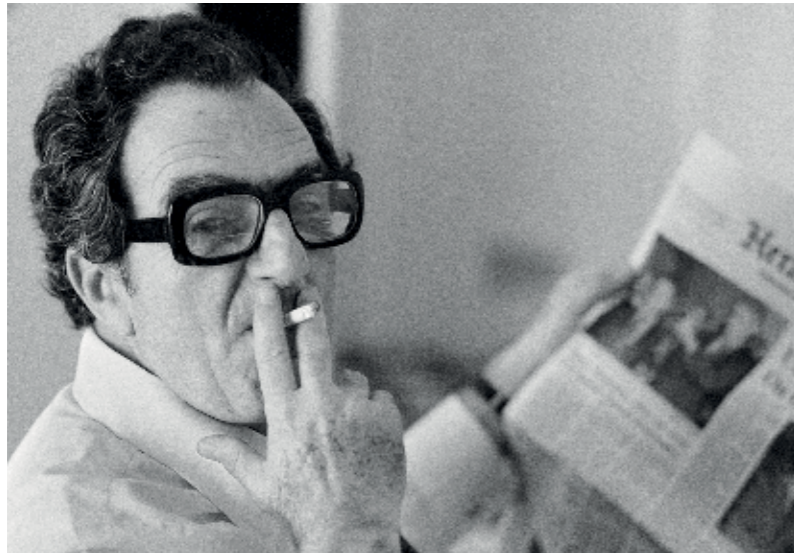
poster boards, distribute them to artists, and ask them to project on them in any way that the can – total freedom – We mounted a campaign, where Lebanese and resident artists participated and it was a huge success. The exhibition took place for one night only, it wasn't a formal affair, but for that one night it was sold out many times over. People really wanted to patronize this candidate.

NG: What is your relationship to each of the media that you worked in - drawing, painting, photography, graphic design?

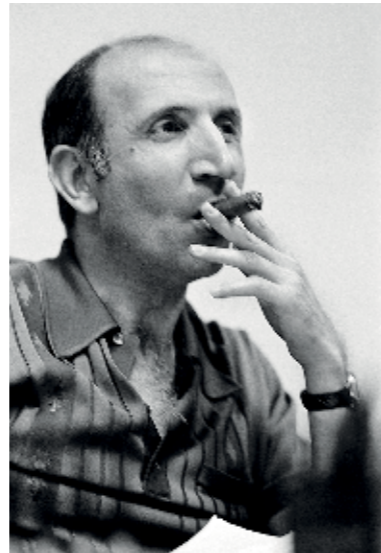
WF: There is no relationship; there is a lot of accident and

there is a lot of ready-to-try and plunging. It happened with theater for me as well. I wasn't prepared for it. First play, I was asked by Nidal Achkar to participate and really enjoyed it. I took a series of photographs of that play. Then another time, Gerard Avidissian and Claude Eddé asked if I would do an Arabic translation of *Ubu Roi*. I didn't know who Alfred Jarry was, I had never heard of *Ubu Roi*, I was – am – not a francophone, but I said yes, partly because it was for a play in *Dar al-Fan*. It was a really exhilarating period of my life. I fell in love two or three times while working on the play. Then we did a play with Michel Nab'aa and Rida Kabrit which was another totally different experience. Even in graphics, I had a sense for it when

[16]



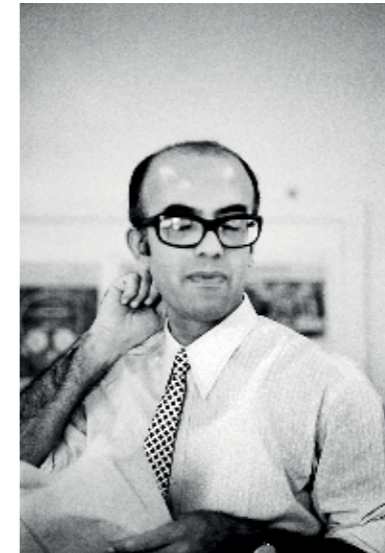
25.
Ghassan Tueni
Annahar Publisher
Beirut, 1972



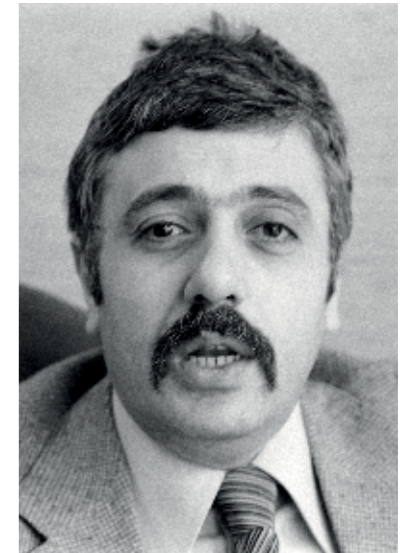
26.
François Akl
Annahar executive editor
Beirut, 1973



27.
Ounsi el-Hajj
Poet & *Annahar* al-Mulhaq editor
Beirut, 1973



28.
Chawqi Abou Chaqra
Poet & *Annahar* al-Mulhaq editor
Beirut, 1973



29.
Issam Mahfouth
Playwright & Literary critic
Beirut, 1973

[17]

[18]



THE DARK ROOM

30.
66x78 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
1974

[19]



BAALBEK BEDOUIN STREET DANCER

31.
66x78 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
1974

when I was in Berlin at the Academy, but it was not a formal education. I don't consider that I received a formal education in architecture either, because I never completed the degree. So it's a matter of walking through things, touching them, and deciding whether you want to stay for dinner or continue to the next discovery.

NG: With photography you stayed for dessert?

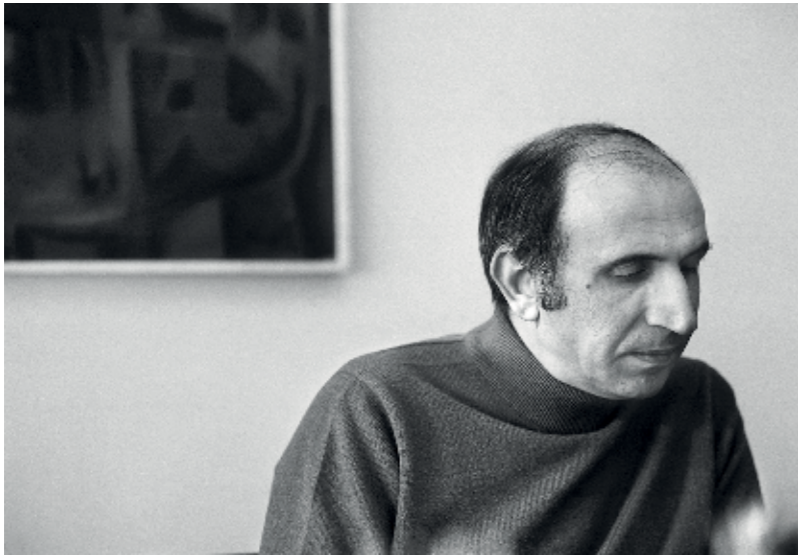
WF: With photography, I am still in the middle of dessert. It brings me great pleasure. Although I have been thinking that I would still like an in-depth experience of painting in

the time that is left me, but you have to dedicate yourself to it. The painting solely depends on you, whereas photography depends on the accident, time of day, location – it depends on external parameters, which I give into very readily.

NG: How do you look back on the drawings you contributed to *Shi'r* and *Hiwar*?

WF: There were some that I did like poems. Some because this is how it grows. Like when working on a painting, except that I was doing them to be printed – but they had some charge that made them look mine. I was

[20]



32.
François Akl
Annahar executive editor
Beirut, 1974



33.
Youssef al-Khal
Poet & *Shi'r* Review Publisher
Beirut, 1975



34.
Marwan Hemadeh
L'Orient le jour
Beirut, 1973



35.
Michel Abu Jaoudeh
Annahar chief columnist
Beirut, 1973

[21]

playing, experimenting. By 1969, I had arrived at total abstraction, but it wasn't intended. It was more about testing myself and whether I understood that language. Conventionally, when you learn painting, you start with figurative compositions, naturalism, and then you learn to defragment until you get to the intuitive detail.

NG: When did you set up your first gallery, *Contact*?

WF: In 1972, after returning from Kuwait and having come back from a financially rewarding project in the gulf.

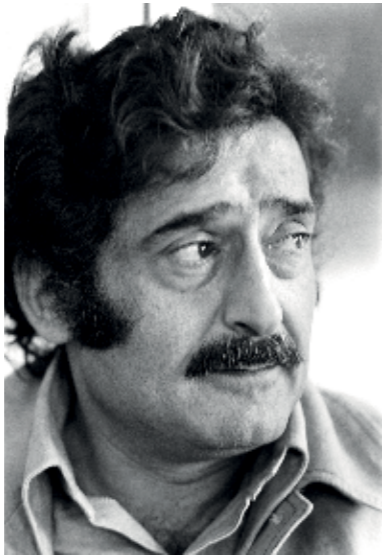
NG: What led you to it?

WF: When I came back from Kuwait, I was attending to some design work in Annahar. One late spring evening, I was walking back from *Annahar* to the *Horseshoe* which was our hangout, I ran into Dallal, the agent who had found me my studio before I left for Kuwait. He inquired if I was looking for something and, *comme ça*, I said yes back, and asked if there is something on the ground floor that I can use as a space for display, an office, but not right on the main street, in the Hamra area, somewhere tucked away. After I assured him I would cover the month's rent, as was our previous agreement, we crossed the street and

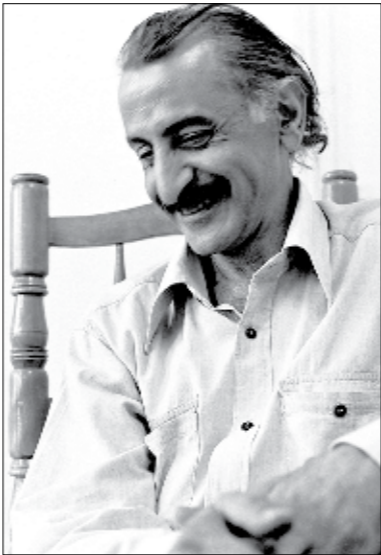
[22]



36.
Nadia Saikali among crowd
Sursock Museum
Beirut, 1970



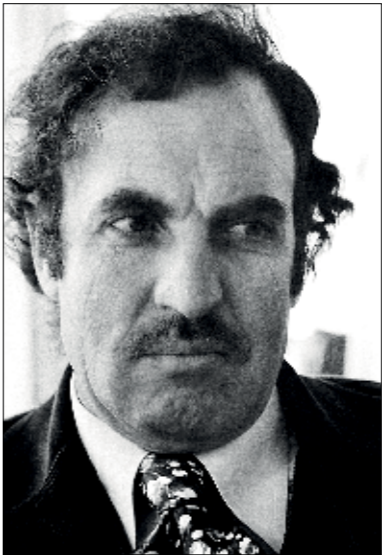
37.
Aref Rayyes
Militant artist
Beirut, 1972



38.
Shafic Abboud
Artist
Beirut, 1972



39.
Said Akl
Artist
Beirut, 1973



40.
Rafic Charaf
Artist
Beirut, 1972



41.
Amine El Bacha
Artist
Beirut, 1971

[23]

[24]



QUATUOR BORODINE IN THE TEMPLE OF BACCHUS

42.
66x78 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
1974

[25]



THE BAALBEK FESTIVAL IN ANOTHER TIME

43.
66x78 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
1974

stood exactly opposite the cul-de-sac that later had my gallery, *Contact*. We walked in and I saw that there was only one wall to tear down, and one window to fix, so we agreed on the price, signed the papers, and I called my friend César and shared my idea with him. César was a great enthusiast, always supportive of new ideas that I had despite coming from a line of business. He was excited by my idea, so we improvised the whole thing. The idea was to set up a small company for minimal capital, with César as the administrator and me as the merlin of the art scene and the one with the ideas. We still needed someone who can keep up with the daily life of the gallery, and it was a young lady called Mireille Tabet, who later

became César's wife. She gave us her time *gratis* for the whole year. The rest of the story is complicated, but in a nutshell: I ran the gallery on my own in the second year (1973) when César grew tired of my chaos. He had quit. It was a challenge, but in that period we did exhibitions for Wen-Ti Tsen and Aref Rayess...it was my best year. Then César who I was still on good terms with and who was following up, agreed to expand the gallery beyond its small setup. We offered a partnership to Mireille, but then they got married and became a majority which proved to be a problem because we still had differences in terms of the art that we defended. Our vision differed, we couldn't agree on what contemporaneity meant, even though we

[26]



44.
Saloua Raouda Choucair
Artist
Beirut, 1972



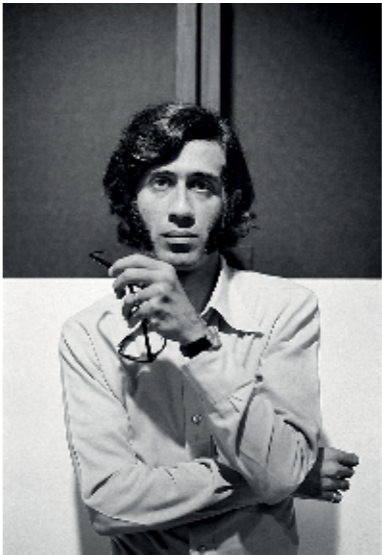
45.
Huguette Caland
Artist
Beirut, 1973



46.
Helen Khal
Artist & writer
Kaslik, 1973



47.
Seta Manoukian
Artist
Beirut, 1973



48.
Farid Haddad
Artist
Beirut, 1972



49.
Steleo Scamanga
Architect & artist
Beirut, 1971

[27]

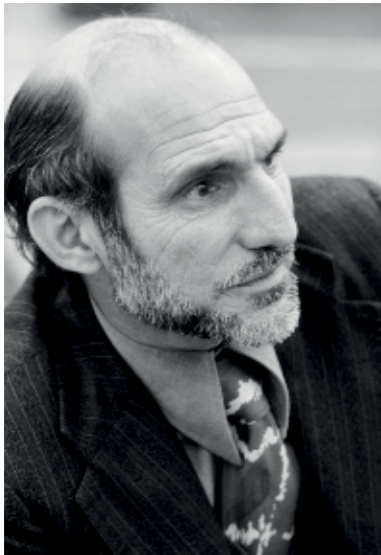
were all committed to representing contemporary Arab artists.
So I left the gallery, this time for good. I had good business in the gulf, in publishing. I was working with Riad Rayess, who had his future-oriented ambitions in journalism and publishing. I had no ambitions but I was always seeking good things as they came in the present. We decided to do a publishing unit on Contemporary Arab Art and start a small art gallery which we called *al-Riwaq*. A great gallery in Ramlet el Bayda, but one which never opened. I even designed a logo for it. We set it up, but the war interrupted our plans. I had already started booking air tickets to meet artists, and I was traveling to Morocco,

Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Jordan, Iraq, to Paris even - it was my first trip to Paris.

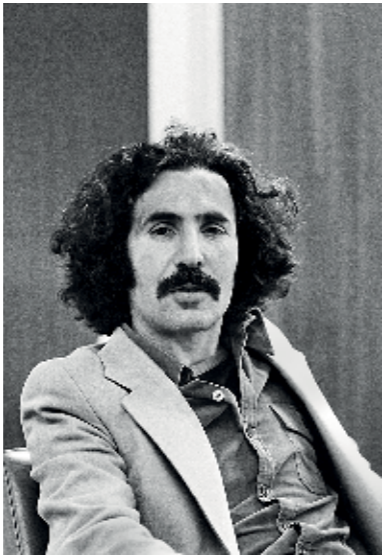
NG: You decided to start Contact in the spur of the moment?

WF: Yes absolutely! I was not thinking about opening a gallery on my walk from Annahar to Horseshoe. It came to me just as I was speaking to Dallal. It was an unusual gallery. We didn't know whether it was a business, an art space, or a honey trap...We did music, poetry recitals, anything that evoked or challenged us for a second. We plunged. We had no preconceived ideas,

[28]



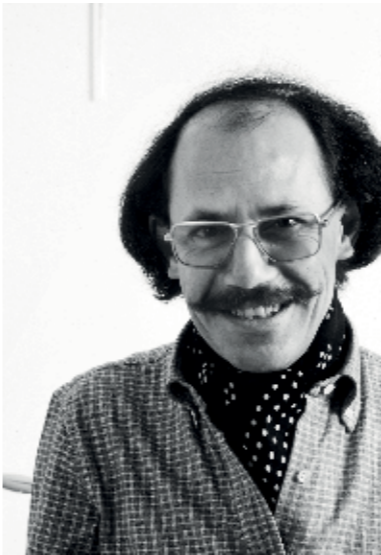
50.
Shaker Hassan Al Said
Artist
Baghdad, 1975



51.
Dia Azzawi
Artist
London, 1975



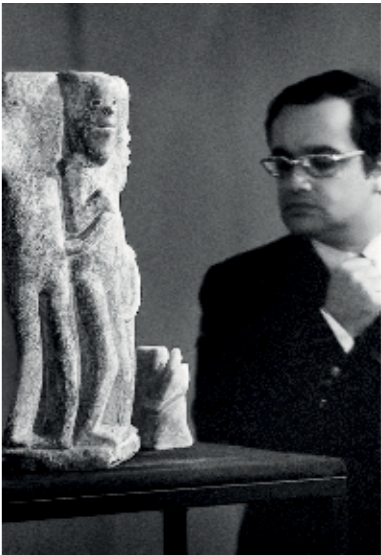
52.
Ismail Fattah
Artist & sculptor
Baghdad, 1973



53.
Giyath Akhras
Graphic artist
Paris, 1975



54.
Nazih Khater
Art critic
Beirut, 1973



55.
Joseph Tarrab
Art critic
Beirut, 1974

[29]

no plan to benefit from.

NG: Tell me about the exhibition for Aref Rayess. Was it from his *Mutanabbi street* series?

WF: Aref came to the gallery one day. We were good friends, I liked him very much and I know he did as well, but we had our differences. He viewed himself as a leftist revolutionary. I admire revolutionaries but I could not say that I was one. He viewed me as a liberal, and liberal at that time was identifiable with neo-colonialism and so on, but I really was not a liberal. I was still for revolution. *Alors*, our relationship was very active on every front

regardless. He came one day with a portfolio of his flowers in crayon pastels. If I would see them now for the first time I would consider them to be fantastic works, but then it was the least of my aspirations to show the *nature morte* of any artist. He wanted to show them because he knew they would sell and he needed the money. so I told him I'd have Youssef al-Khal arrange an exhibition for his flowers in *Gallery One*. Youssef trusted me and at the time he was not bound to a fixed plan or structure for his gallery, so he agreed. I also arranged for Dorothy Paramour, the art critic of the Daily Star to manage the exhibition. Meanwhile, I asked Aref to take me to his studio to see if I could show something else at *Contact* on

[30]



56.
Adel Saghir
Artist
Beirut, 1973



57.
Andre Berkoff
L'Orient le jour art critic
Beirut, 1972



58.
Ivan Contreras Brunet
Artist (Chile)
Faraya, 1974



59.
Nuhad Al Radi
Artist & ceramist (Iraq)
1974



60.
Rafa' Al Nassiri
Artist & engraver (Iraq)
1974



61.
Faeq Hassan
Arist (Iraq)
1972

[31]

[32]



THE ORONTES RIVER

62.
66x72 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
1974

[33]



سفينة حنان الى القمر
LAILA BAALBAKI

63.
66x78 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
1974

the same night as that at *Gallery One*. It was the first time such a thing happened in Beirut. Aref was still worried the brothel series wouldn't sell. I showed them to Joseph Tarrab, a trusted friend, who decided to write an article about it for *Al-Safa* newspaper, which was just coming out in French. He wrote a wonderful article, and I had to go to the editor of *Al-Safa* to ask him to put the poster of the exhibition alongside Joseph's text in the place of an advertisement. In the end, both exhibitions were great financial successes. We both sold out, but I can't remember what I did with the money...it could have vanished then!

NG: I am struck by how you managed to work with, and

even go as far as campaigning for, people you had such strong ideological differences with.

WF: Ideological! Now this is a word which you don't hear as much today. I think it was more of a natural attitude than a clearly rationalized one. If I could appreciate the intellect, humor, and charm of a colleague, it was enough for me to collaborate. In fact, we live in a small community here in Beirut, and even in Lebanon which at the time made of a couple and a half million people. I can quite understand ideological differences, especially because they mattered at that much more severely than they do now. But to go back to the Tueni campaign, we

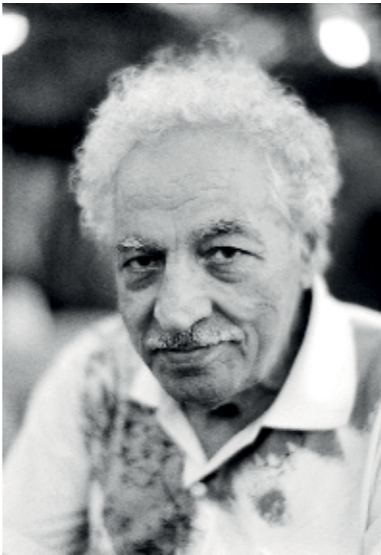
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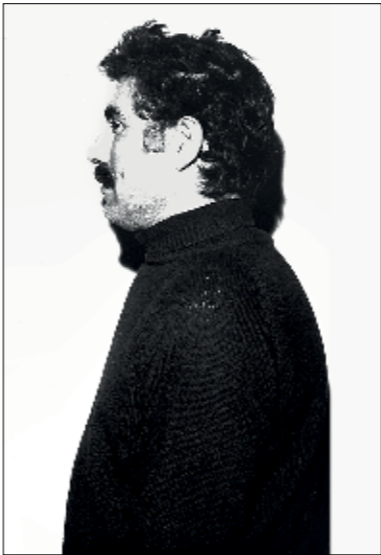
64.
Mona Hatoum
Artist (Palestine)
Baalbek, 1973



65.
Assadour Besdikian
Artist & engraver
Beirut, 2016



66.
Nouri Al Raoui
Artist (Iraq)
Beirut, 2006



67.
Paul Guiragossian
Artist
Beirut, 1970



68.
Paul Tannous
Artist (USA)
Beirut, 1973



69.
Mounir Najm
Arist
Beirut, 1973

[35]

we never thought about it. A campaign is an event which happens in time. If we look back at the result of that campaign, it was probably close to zero. But for us, it was an opportunity to bring a new idea through art – to defragment a structured habit, an image, of that candidate or any other. It so happened that that candidate was intellectually tolerant and accepted the range of artistic responses from the participants. In that period, the *Annahar* group had myriad political positions, nationalities, values, etc. It had pan-Arabists, Syrian nationalists, isolationists, even the Kataeb. It had everybody. That was the general atmosphere in Beirut.

NG: *Why do you think it was important for you to mention the ideological differences you had with Aref Rayess?*

WF: When we come to the case of Aref Rayess, it really illustrates clearly the process of our continued dialogue. A process of knowing the other. You have to know the other, to engage with them. Let people differ. I'm talking about the capacity to recognize the other's humanity and having your own recognized. People who didn't know someone like Aref Rayess or Ghassan Tueni are missing something in their memory of the period. What was important about these things we did, like the campaign

[36]



70.
Janine Rubeiz
Founder of Dar al-Fan
Kaslik, 1973



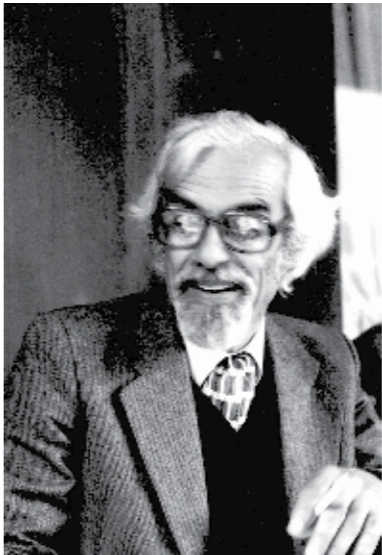
71.
Cesar Nammour
Co-founder of Contact Gallery
Beirut, 1972



72.
Mireille Tabet
Co-founder of Contact Gallery
Beirut, 1975



73.
Suad Al-Attar
Artist (Iraq)
Baalbek, 1974



74.
Alfred Basbous
Sculptor
Rome, 1975



75.
Mohammad Ghani Hikmat
Arist (Iraq)
Baghdad, 1972

[37]

[38]



CHARLIE MINGUS

76.
66x78 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
Bacchus temple, Baalbek, 1974

[39]



SILENT DIALOGUE

77.
66x92 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
Renée Deek at Horseshoe Café, 1974

campaign for Tueni, were the actual art events themselves. They were spontaneous ideas that materialized with the collaboration of others, and goddamn it, they were fantastic.

NG: What used to take you to Baalbek in that period?

WF: I had been invited by two friends, Oussama Kawoukji and Nada Fayyadh to join their budding graphic design office the *Artshop* in Hamra. Did I hesitate? Did I know what they were doing? Not at all. Yes, I joined them. The building is now gone but it was opposite to the present-day Gefinor hotel. It was the Asseily-Andraos

residence. It was beautiful, spacious. In that period, I would go to *Contact* in the morning, *Annahar* by noon, the *Artshop* in the afternoon, and I left my evenings free for theater or some other event happening in Beirut. Somebody at the *Artshop* lobbied for me to design the Baalbek festival catalogue...It must have been Nicole Andraos, so I decided to change the general image of Baalbek. The first thing I did was to get rid of the advertisements of Chevrolets and washing machines. I replaced products with images of artworks, and ran a proof I had printed on Rue Jean D'arc, where I would go for my posters. I circulated it to the list of advertisers and they loved it. This was 1973. By 1974, I decided to reduce

[40]



78.
Mireille Maalouf
Dhour el Choueir
1971



79.
Jalal Khouri
Horseshoe, Beirut
1972



80.
Nidal Achkar
Kaslik
1971



81.
Michel Naba'a
Horseshoe, Beirut
1973



82.
Gerard Avedissian (left)
Masrah Beirut
1974

[41]

the sponsors to a list, no logos, no advertisements. It was for the exhibition *100 years of Lebanese Painting*. I got my friend Wassim Tchorbaji who was well-equipped with large format photography – he had taught it to me – and we started collecting images and shooting them for the production.

NG: Was it the festival then that would take you to Baalbek?

WF: Baalbek was always the place that we went to for the nature, the beautiful people that we met there, the "hippie environment", the poetry and music.

NG: How did you meet Max Ernst?

WF: I had met Sami Karkabi many times, the first time being in 1968. He was an admirable personality. Great collector. He was a beacon, looking at new artists like Yvette Achkar, Saloua Raouda Choucair. He had a structured vision about them. You could have an intelligent conversation about a specific work and for a sustained period. He had been involved in Dar al-Handasah's remodeling of the passages inside the Jeita Grotto. Once it was finished and there was this main hall of a cathedral scale, he had suggested inviting an electronic musician to the patrons of tourism at the time

[42]



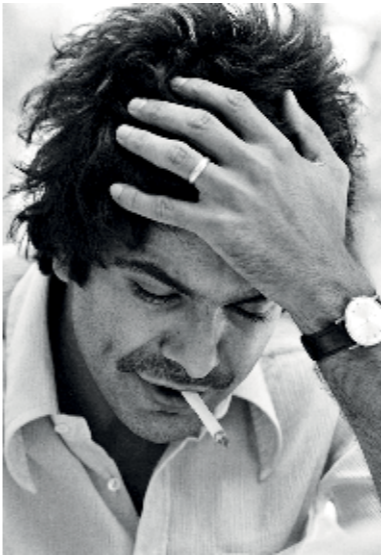
83.
Aleen Tabet
Masrah Beirut
Beirut, 1974



84.
Roger Assaf
Normandi Theatre
Beirut, 1971



85.
Ukht el-Rjal play
Masrah Beirut
Beirut, 1974



86.
Fouad Naim
Baalbek
1973



87.
Hanane Abboud
Bahrain Café
Beirut, 1975



88.
Maya Tabet
Ukht el-Rjal play
Masrah Beirut, 1974

[43]

who were sold on the idea. They invited François Bayle in February of 1969, and Sami commissioned me to make the poster. I made it in relief, using photographs by Manoug. By the summer of 1969, I hear from him that they are bringing Stockhausen. “What's Stockhausen?”, I asked him. I didn't know. I learn he is a composer, and as I start preparing for the catalogue, I peek at the guest list. The guests included André Masson, Max Ernst, the young Françoise Hardy, and others. They were all friends of Stockhausen. I figured if Max Ernst was coming to Beirut, I had to get my own camera. So, I bought my own camera, but not my first. A Nikon F2S. I hired a Lebanon Taxi guy to tail Max Ernst so that I get photos of him in

Beirut. Finally, one late afternoon I'm at the St. Georges, and Brigitte Schegade introduces me to Max Ernst. Like the young person I was I asked him how he was enjoying his stay in Beirut, and he confided that he and his wife were are tired of the excesses of cocktail parties. They were not seeing Lebanon, he claimed. So I told him to excuse himself from social functions, to say that he is indisposed. The Lebs enjoy being snubbed. I then offered to show them around. We started immediately. I took them to Souk el Khodra, the church in souk el Nourieh, to George Schegade's house in Byblos, to Beiteddine, to Basta. I showed them around until they left the country. After photographing Max Ernst in Beirut, photography

[44]



[45]

89.
Le Foux d'Elsa
Baalbek
1973

90.
Le Foux d'Elsa
Baalbek
1973

91.
Louise Allouf
Palmyra Hotel, Baalbek
1974

92.
Hala Haidar
Baalbek
1974

93.
Terrace of the Palmyra Hotel
Baalbek
1975

was just pleasure-clicking. I took photos of things I liked: family, girls I coveted, moments of friendship like when we were all at Tarid el Khalidi's home or at Annahar...it continued.

NG: Now that you're putting this exhibition together and going through your materials, photographs, etc., how do you look back on this period?

WF: I hate to label myself as nostalgic, because you can't reach back anyway. But we need to understand the period, its mores. Some of the most important events of our modern history happened then. How we were defeated

There were ideals at that time. Central issues were taken seriously, by the people who believed in them. The numbers in human masses meant something. Now we have to get visas to move 200km, and we cannot send or receive our artworks. So, imagine you could trade across the geographic expanse you know well and that you've always dreamed of knowing better. I'm not speaking of a tight unity, but we are Orientals. Our orient should have facilities of communication and education. Only in the last ten years we must have lost millions of people. This period remains for this little country a possible starting point, a stepping stone, if we understand it well.

[46]



94.
Hamlet rehearsals
Baalbek
1974



95.
Tea at the Palmyra with Issam & Hassan,
Palmyra Hotel, Baalbek
1973



96.
Tea at the Palmyra with Balqis & Dorothy
Baalbek
1973



97.
The permanent resident
Baalbek
1975

[47]

[48]



LOST BEIRUT SEA FRONT

98.
66x78cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
1974

[49]



QUATUOR BORODINE IN THE TEMPLE OF BACCHUS

99.
66x76 cm
6 numbered editions + 2 AP
1974

The graphic works of Waddah Faris

[50]



100.
Illustratio for a poem
Ounsi el-Hajj
Contact Review, 1973

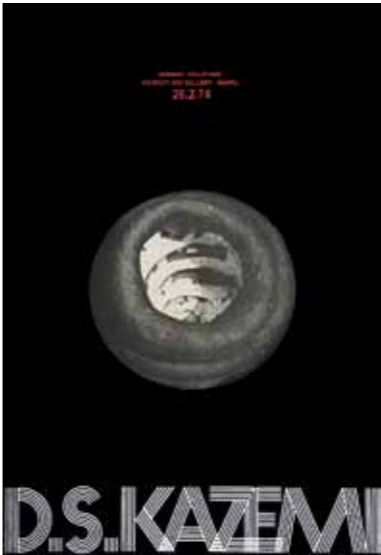


101.
Hiwar Cover
Dedicated to Bader Shaker al-Sayyab
Design, 1970



102.
Death of a Poet
Eulogy
Ink drawing, 1970

[51]



103.
Dorothy Kazemi exhibition
Poster
1974



104.
Nadia Saikali exhibition
Poster
1972



105.
Nadia Saikali exhibition
Poster
1973



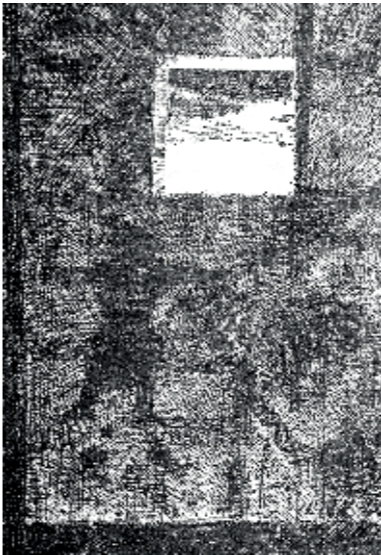
106.
Wen-ti Tsen exhibition poster
"Burry my heart at Wounded Knee"
1972



107.
Baalbek Festival
Catalogue cover
1974



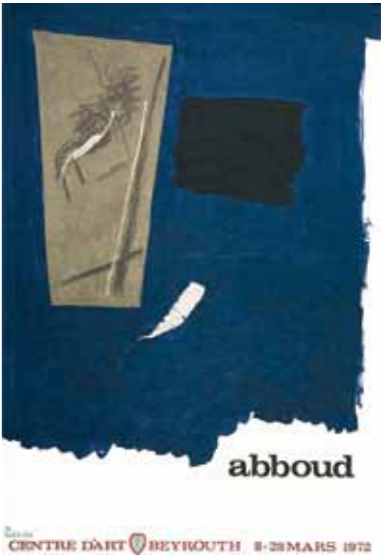
108.
Contact Gallery review
Issue no. 2
1972



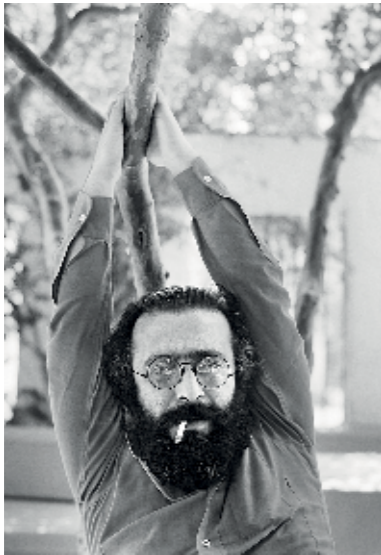
109.
Shi'r magazine
Ink drawing
1970



110.
Shi'r magazine
Ink drawing
1970



111.
Shafic Abboud poster
Centre d'Art Beyrouth
1972



ABOUT WADDAH FARIS

Waddah Faris is a Syrian-born, Iraqi artist from Beirut. A graphic designer by trade, Faris is also a photographer, a painter, and a former gallerist. With César Nammour and Mireille Tabet as his partners, he founded Contact (1972-1975), an art gallery in Ras Beirut dedicated to modern Arab artists. In 1972, Faris alone set up Al Riwaq, an art gallery which never opened to the public due the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war. Faris later moved to Paris where he ran a third gallery, The Faris Gallery (1979-1992). Faris now lives and works between Beirut and Barcelona.

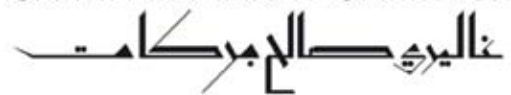
SPECIAL MENTION

Saleh Barakat Gallery and Waddah Faris would like to give a special thank you to EGM-Barcelona for embracing this exhibition with exemplary professionalism, quality and dedication, without which this event would have been impossible. (www.egm.es)



Monem Fourat sculpture, Iraqi Cultural Center, Beirut, 1974

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* The title of this exhibition was inspired by the title of Philip Mansel's book *Constantinople: The City of the World's Desire*.

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