



## Program May – August 2016

### *Para/Fictions*

Oscar Santillan, Lucy Skaer

22 April – 2 October 2016

GROUND FLOOR

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### *WDW25+*

*WERE IT AS IF*

Bik Van der Pol

27 May – 21 August 2016

SECOND FLOOR

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### *WDW25+*

*What Representations?*

Marwa Arsanios

*I want to possess in this world that  
which brings joy to the eyes...*

Ahmed Bouanani

27 May – 21 August 2016

THIRD FLOOR

## Director's Welcome

In an age of constant reformations, be they aesthetic, political, ecological, or even spiritual, what is the responsibility of art institutions? Can artists become active co-creators of institutions, their politics, and representations in such a dynamic? This is a question both artists and institutions must continuously ask themselves.

As Witte de With sets its collection of traces – the archive – in motion, we commissioned a series of artistic and curatorial approaches to not only engage with canonical moments in our own history but also to provide a platform for previously unacknowledged cultural histories and figures whose presentation loops back into and supplements Witte de With's archive.

Who better to join forces with than artists Bik Van der Pol, working with us to highlight what might otherwise become lost both in the history of Witte de With, as well as the history of art in the city of Rotterdam? Paying close attention to the socio-economic and political context in which the institution was created in 1990, the artists employ a treatment that responds to the current momentum set into play by the branding of Rotterdam as “destination city” for art and architecture, thereby opening up a space for us to reflect upon issues at stake in the 1990s versus now.

Marwa Arsanios, on the other hand, plunges more specifically into *Contemporary Arab Representations*, a platform former Director Catherine David initiated at Witte de With for

the presentation of the actors and cultural activities taking place across the Arab world. Arsanios critically looks at how the canon has been formed when it comes to the reading of art production in the Middle East, complemented with a vision of Beirut today.

Defying the typical treatment of contemporary art as traced back to its *Ursprung* in 1989, we work with curators Omar Berrada and Touda Bouanani to embrace what was never presented to the public and to look at the so far unformalized archive of late writer and filmmaker Ahmed Bouanani (1938 - 2011), who was active from the 1960s onwards in Morocco as a key arbiter of a new language in cinema and literature in the post-colonial era.

Uniting the three commissions is a consideration of “archive” as a productive space, each proactively opening up routes through which to reflect upon the role cultural institutions such as ours occupy today. The commissions also stand as a reminder that artists are the ultimate envisioners of (art) histories, as well as of their immediate social, political and cultural contexts.

Last but not least, please visit our newly launched website at [www.wdw.nl](http://www.wdw.nl), now including archival features, and the articles that are continuously published on our online *WdW Review* at [wdwreview.org](http://wdwreview.org).

Defne Ayas

## Para/Fictions

### GROUND FLOOR

If both art and literature constitute forms of thought, what is generated or lost in slippages, translations, and activations between the two? Are their dividing lines arbitrary or highly dissoluble? How do both forms enfold and unfold across the exhibition space? What relates making to writing, viewing to reading?

In January this year Witte de With launched *Para/Fictions*, a cycle of sustained investigations on its ground floor, which take these questions as their focus through the practice of six artists; Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff, Mark Geffriaud, Laure Prouvost, Oscar Santillan, and Lucy Skaer. Each project on display presents a different artistic methodology that traces each artist's visual interests and literary underpinnings to seek the viability of re-positioning 'reference' as 'form', 'translation' as 'co-authorship'.

The *Para/Fictions* series has been provoked by the particular correspondences between literature and visual arts in contemporary culture; a landscape made up of disparate yet relatable topographies of influence branching into fiction as a research methodology and theoretical discourse around the fictional nature of the contemporary itself.

Oscar Santillan  
*Zaratán*

22 April - 3 July 2016

*Zaratán* by artist Oscar Santillan is fed by converging threads of research and literary reference, including the short stories and life of writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899 - 1986), travellers' tales of imaginary islands from the era of colonial exploration, cosmological maps, and a score composed from an unfinished movie titled *The Messenger* whose filming was tragically cut short.

Lucy Skaer  
*Two Stories*

15 July - 2 October 2016

*The Waves* (1931), by Virginia Woolf, trembles on the borderline of 'failing' as a novel, whilst simultaneously obstinately insisting on its own textuality. In his 1931 review of *The Waves* one critic notes of Woolf, "In creating new forms, she has found new materials to fit them." Skaer follows this thread in sculptural terms, using the *carte blanche* of fiction. Inlaid antique furniture, customised modernist tables and woven Berber carpets form a scene which is also a blockade or refusal of the exhibition space.

UPCOMING

Mark Geffriaud

14 October 2016 - 15 January 2017

Laure Prouvost

27 January - 9 April 2017

## WDW25+

### SECOND FLOOR AND THIRD FLOOR

Organized with the particular question "What happens to art after an artist and an institution come into contact?", *WDW25+* sets a growing, living collection in motion; tracing contemporary artistic practice through never before gathered in-house materials and their extended networks at and around Witte de With. Building on its rich exhibition history, extended slowly through material contributions, the collection-in-the-making includes primary source material, such as sketches and drawings, from artists and in-house team members, curatorial correspondence, artists' documents, as well as audio and video recordings of artist talks, lectures, and symposia.

As Witte de With confronts its collection of traces from past decades of exhibition-making, the center hosts a series of artistic and curatorial approaches to source materials from institutional and personal archives. The first commissions in the series variously deconstruct and engage with canonical moments in our own history, and provide a platform for previously unacknowledged cultural histories and figures whose presentation will loop back into and supplement Witte de With's archive.

# WERE IT AS IF

## Bik Van der Pol

### SECOND FLOOR

“All these remains of exhibitions. Where did that basketball go?! A basketball signed by Guillaume Bijl, a bit shriveled up by now, but it's been hanging there for 25 years. We kept a lot, especially from those days. We also threw out a lot, but that happens even more so now. Many people have a clean desk policy.”

“The whole building is covered in scars caused by artworks and by people, all those ghosts still float around and enter into conversations with all the other works which came after. I know exactly where to find these scars. On the second floor it starts as soon as you enter: the floor squeaks and cracks, like you're walking on ice. That's the result of the installation process of Guillaume Bijl, which took place as we were still laying the floor. Since then the floor has always been a mess.”

“The archive, in a way, imposes an extra new public responsibility.”

“The connection with the city, the actual outreach... More so in the beginning than later on... That has a lot to do with the times, and the curators at the time. When we were working a lot around the city, the city was complete chaos and the policy makers were winging it, trying out different strategies. To figure out where the city had to go, how to shape the city, how to bring it all together... *AS LONG AS IT LASTS* was a perfect example of all this.”

“It's impossible to stick to just one anecdote. They just keep coming, all registers are opened. What was going on at the time in Rotterdam, politically, for example, also played a part in the exhibitions. The economy of the times is tangible in the archive when you see artists couldn't come to Rotterdam because the flight was too expensive because of the high oil price that year. As such, the economic reality directly impacts what was shown or who was there.”

“There is often a very direct connection to Rotterdam, the Maasvlakte, junkies, street walking, these problems locally targeted and solved. But of course they are also worldly, global matters. The projects are often a lens to look at these issues. You see how the city is changing. In the 90s there was absolutely nothing here, which is one of the reasons this location was chosen, to connect. It worked, so it was a good idea. That was city development.”

For *WERE IT AS IF*, artists Bik Van der Pol gather source material from the Witte de With archive. Equating leftovers, support structures, plans, notes, stories, and witness reports to the level of artworks, the artists explore the viability of approaching 'archival document' as 'art,' and 'art' as 'source material'. In doing so, the work of artists such as John Ahearn, Ken Lum, Antoni Muntadas, Eugenio Dittborn, Eleanor Bond, John Knight, and Allan Sekula is (re)contextualized.

Paying close attention to the socio-economic and political context in which the institution was created, and departing from the belief that cultural institutions and their legacies are as much made up of stories, ephemeral objects, and subtle traces, Bik Van der Pol's process can be likened to a long term forensic investigation that examines, tests and actively exposes that which lies concealed in the folds of history.

The sound piece heard throughout the exhibition is the result of conversations with a group of people, ranging from current and former Witte de With staff members, to artists, graphic designers and cultural agents from Rotterdam. To reflect the multiplicity of voices that together narrate the history of the institution, the recordings of these conversations have been cut and edited in such a way that it is no longer clear who is speaking or what precisely the voices are talking about.

The soundscape is generated from interviews with Dennis Adams, Anke Bangma, Paul van Gennip, Ronald Glasbergen, Gerard Hadders, Arthur Herrman, Barbera van Kooij, Ed de Meijer, Kristin Metho, Jack van Mildert, Antoni Muntadas, Jozef van Rossum, Arnold Schalks, Emma Thomas, and the Witte de With staff.

The title *WERE IT AS IF* stems from a poem by French writer Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance, 1897).

This experimental and fragmented poem tests the boundaries of meaning and the limits of coherence. The use of blank space in the original lay-out of the text suggests the non-spoken is also constituent to the spoken. Similar to how Bik Van der Pol quote the poem, the exhibition can be read as a series of quotes from the Witte de With archive and its living history.

### EXHIBITION READINGS

For the duration of the exhibition *WERE IT AS IF*, 'guest readers' are invited to interpret, critique, analyze, translate or disrupt the very choices and methodologies artists Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol deployed. Each invited 'reader' responds to the exhibition drawing from their own background and interests, opening up the documents and works on view to unexpected interpretations and complementary perspectives.

Samira Ben Laloua (Founder of *Extra Extra Nouveau Magazine Erotique*)  
Thursday 9 June 2016

Lex ter Braak (Director Jan Van Eyck Academie)  
Thursday 30 June 2016

Maziar Afrassiabi (Founder & Artistic director Rib Art Space)  
Thursday 21 July 2016

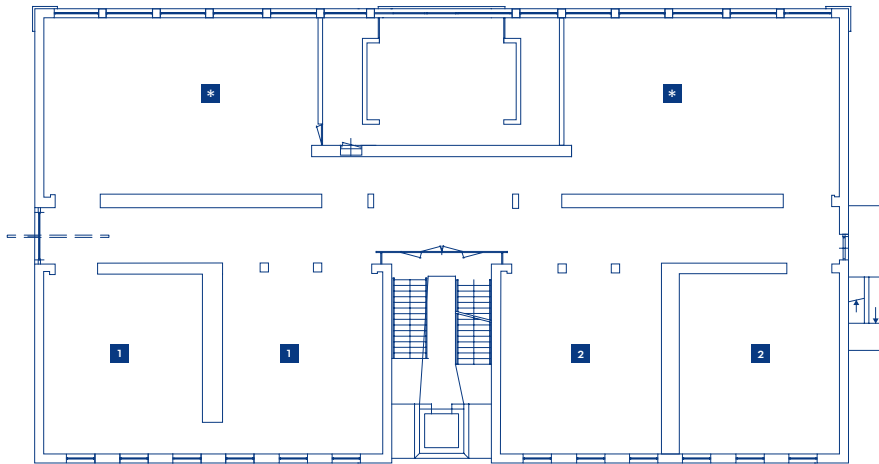
Wouter Davidts (Art historian)  
Friday 5 August 2016

All readings are planned to take place at 6pm. However, please keep an eye on our website for up to date times.

Limited attendance, reservation required:  
reservations@wdw.nl

# Exhibition Floor Plan

THIRD FLOOR



- 1 Marwa Arsanios, *What Representations?*
- 2 Ahmed Bouanani, *I want to possess in this world that which brings joy to the eyes...*
- \* Witte de With Archive / Workspace

## What Representations? Marwa Arsanios

*What Representations?* sees Beirut-based artist Marwa Arsanios critically engage with *Contemporary Arab Representations*, a project series initiated by former Director Catherine David at Witte de With from 2001 onwards to explore and present the activities of cultural and intellectual actors across the Arab world.

Arsanios specifically addresses *Contemporary Arab Representations Beirut/Lebanon* (2002), an exhibition that contributed to the formation of a 'canon' of art with a focus on practitioners emerging post-war, whose work typified David's characterization of Beirut as the archetypal post-modern city. The exhibition included artists Tony Chakar, Rabih Mroué, Walid Raad, Jalal Toufic, Paula Yacoub, and Akram Zaatari amongst others. That this 'group' has gone on to become synonymous with art from Lebanon, could be seen to testify to the power of the representational strategies David employed to ensure their distribution through various networks. As with any canon there is scope for revision, disruption and a reappraisal of institutional memory.

*What Representations?* critically rethinks the *Beirut/Lebanon* program. Firstly, by staging a round-table conversation with academics, artists and writers, a broader picture is created of the political and social context from which the Beirut show emerged.

Secondly, Arsanios takes a cue from scripts of performances – a pre-eminent medium in the region at the time – found in the archive to create a theatrical set from which to 're-script' the exhibition. This show within a show enacts the self-reflexivity of institutional archives. Lina Majdalanie's performance *Biokhraphia*, in which she dialogues with herself in a mediation on interiority, is especially influential.

### EVENT

*What Representations?*

Roundtable discussion

Thursday 26 May 2016, 3-5pm

Participants: Marwa Arsanios, (Artist, LB/US)  
Hisham Ashkar (Academic, LB), Tony Chakar (Architect/Writer, LB), Ghalya Saadawi (Writer/Academic, LB), Hanan Toukan (Academic, LB)

Through a conversation with academics, writers, and fellow artists, Arsanios approaches questions regarding the twin flows of money and knowledge exchange in relation to the past and present of Beirut and its artistic communities. Speakers variously draw out connections with real estate, and the affective relationship we have to memory.

# *I want to possess in this world that which brings joy to the eyes...*

## Ahmed Bouanani

After the collective trauma of the colonial occupation of Morocco, a vanguard of artists forged cultural practices that sought to establish a new vision of the country, appealing to its ancient traditions passed down through oral culture. Filmmaker, poet, and writer Ahmed Bouanani (1938–2011) was a towering presence in this landscape, pioneering a cinematic and poetic language that influenced a generation to come.

Bouanani's daughter, artist Touda Bouanani, and curator Omar Berrada work together to stage presentations drawing from his extensive archive. Here, the platform Witte de With provides is used to enable the translation and subtitling of his short films into English for the first time, providing a stepping stone to the wider distribution of Bouanani's work and an accompanying recognition of the value and power of avant-garde film making in Morocco and the Maghreb.

Operating between the censoring hand of the monarchy and its organs, and an absence of native filmic tradition, Bouanani was keenly aware of the vital need to use cinema to protect and revive the fragile memories that linked Morocco to its pre-colonial past. In this, his training and talent as a film editor were key. The archive is an explicit presence in his films and poetry. *Tarfaya* (1966) was made whilst working at the Moroccan Cinema Center through the permissible format of the regional documentary; *Mémoire 14* (1971) consists of re-cut films shot by the French during the conquest and so-called pacification of Morocco.

Both explicitly make use of archival footage to address the ethnographic distancing typical to the colonial cinematic vision, and to strive towards a more nuanced self-image. With sad irony Bouanani's legacy itself was threatened with erasure by a house fire devastating a portion of his collection, and his withdrawal from the public sphere and subsequent neglect as a figure. This presentation acts against erasure, activating networks of distribution through translation, and presenting archival documents to paint a picture of his formidable life-long output.

*Halakat Nord-Africaines* (2014) by Moroccan artist Ali Essafi is a video installation based on research around the practice of three radical North African filmmakers, Azzedine Meddour, Ahmed Bennys, and Ahmed Bouanani, each active from the 1960's onwards, whose films Essafi has restored and resurrected. Halaqat refers to the circle of people gathering around a storyteller in North Africa's public squares. This traditional oral form inspired the region's cinema at its origins, as well as other modern narrative genres, and intersects in their work with archival footage assembled to represent contemporary history and engender new cultural forms of post-colonialisation.

## EVENT

*Le Mirage*

Screening and Talk

Saturday, 16 July 2016, 3–6pm

Participants: Omar Berrada,  
Touda Bouanani

Touda Bouanani, daughter of Ahmed, introduces a screening of his feature film *Le Mirage* (1979), followed by a talk by writer, translator, and curator Omar Berrada regarding the figure of the archive in Bouanani's work. *Le Mirage* played a pivotal role in bringing experimentation to Moroccan cinema. It follows a young peasant's attempt to change money he finds in a bag of flour, a journey that takes him through a city's dark layers and labyrinths. The film abounds with allusions to literature and cinema, Morocco's rich history and oral traditions, and the ever-present specter of colonialism.

# Biographies

## PARA | FICTIONS

**Oscar Santillan** (1980, EC) insinuates in his work the existence of a territory where the limits of what is possible can be trespassed. Santillan received a Sculpture MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University - VCU, US, and attended residencies at the Del na Foundation, UK, Jan van Eyck, NL, and Seven Below, US. His work has been shown at Centraal Museum, Utrecht; 'Carrillo Gil' Museum of Art, Mexico City; STUK, Leuven; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht; X Bial de Cuenca, Ecuador; and Bial de Arte Paiz, Guatemala, among other venues.

**Lucy Skaer's** (1975, UK) work often depicts relationships between abstraction and the direct material nature of objects. Many of her works refer to historic objects which are translated and re-contextualized in new mediums. Solo presentations include a mid-career retrospective at the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh; Murray Guy, New York; Tramway, Glasgow; Sculpture Center, New York; Tulips & Roses, Brussels; Chisenhale Gallery, London; and The Centre Pompidou, Paris. In 2003 Skaer was short-listed for the art prize Becks Futures and exhibited at the first Scottish presentation at the Venice Biennale, where she also presented in 2007. She was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2009.

## WDW25+

**Bik Van der Pol** (Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol, NL) work collectively since 1995. They live and work in Rotterdam. Through their practice they aim to articulate and understand how art can produce a public sphere, and to create space for speculation and imagination. Their mode of working consists of setting up

the conditions for encounter, where they develop a process of working that allows for continuous reconfigurations of places, histories and audiences. Recent shows and projects include The Power Plant, Toronto; PAMM (Perez Art Museum) Miami; Jakarta Biennale; Mauritius Pavilion, Venice Biennale; *Future Light*, Vienna Biennale, MAK; *Decolonized Skies*, ADNPlatform, Barcelona; Public art project, Ternitz (Austria); 31st São Paulo Biennale; *Museum of Arte Útil*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; *The Crime Was Almost Perfect and Moderation(s) - The Part In The Story*, both at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam.

**Marwa Arsanios** (1978, US) currently lives and works in Beirut. Her work has been exhibited internationally at amongst others the Venice Biennale, Future Generation Art Prize, Venice (2013); Home Works 5 and 6, Beirut, Lebanon (2013 and 2010); the Jerusalem Show, Jerusalem (2012); Art Dubai in the Bidoun Lounge Art Park, Dubai (2009); the Berlinale's Forum Expanded, Berlin, (2010); and at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Marwa Arsanios is a founding member of the artistic organization and project space 98weeks Research Project that focuses its research on a new topic every 98 weeks. She is one of the organizers of the travelling project *Platform Translation*. She won the Sharjah Art Foundation's Production Programme grant in 2014, and the Pinchuk Future Generation special prize in 2012. She has been granted several residencies, including the three months residency at the Jan Van Eyck Academie (Maastricht) in 2011.

Filmmaker, artist, and writer, **Ahmed Bouanani** (1938 - 2011, MA) studied at IDHEC and participated in the foundation of the collective

Sigma 3 (With Tazi and Hamid Benani). In the mid-sixties he made several short films including *Tarfaya*, *The March of a Poet* (1966), *6 ou 12* (1986), and *Memoir 14* (1971). From 1970 onwards he worked as an editor and writer on several Moroccan films, including the first feature of Benani, *Traces* (1970). His first feature film, *Le Mirage*, was released in 1979. He published several volumes of poetry and wrote the screenplays for the first two features of filmmaker Daoud Aoulad Syad, with whom he published a book of poems and photographs, *Territories de L'Instant* (2000). His novel *L'Hôpital* was published by Al Kalam, republished Verdier (FR, 2012), by DK Editions (2013), also in Arabic (2016) and soon to be translated into English by New Directions. Ahmed Bouanani died in 2011.

Artist **Touda Bouanani** (1966, MA) lives and works in Rabat. She works mainly in video but also in photography, installation, and works on paper. Bouanani graduated from the École des Beaux Arts in Bordeaux. Her work has been shown at the CAPC, Bordeaux, The Whitney Museum, and MoMA in New York, L'appartement 22 and Le Cube in Rabat, and the Halles de Schaerbeek in Brussels. She has participated in numerous publications, lectures, workshops and presentations about the work of her father, filmmaker, illustrator, novelist and poet Ahmed Bouanani, at Tate Modern, London; the Nejma Review, Tangier; DK Editions, Casablanca; Editions Verdier, Paris; MoMA, New York; Cinémathèque de Tanger, Tangiers; and Jeu de Paume, Paris. Bouanani is currently working on the creation of an Association for the preservation, conservation, and promotion of the works of her father Ahmed Bouanani.

**Omar Berrada** (MA) is a writer, translator, and curator. He directs Dar al-Ma'mûn, a library and artists residency located on the outskirts of Marrakech. Previously, he hosted public programs at the Centre Pompidou and radio shows on French national radio, curated the Tangier International Book Salon, and co-

directed Dubai's Global Art Forum. He recently co-curated the *Temporary Center for Translation* at The New Museum and lent his voice to Christian Dior's ghost in Frédéric Tcheng's *Dior and I*. In 2016, he has edited *The Africans*, and curated *Black Hands*, a solo show of M'barek Bouhchichi's work at Kulte Gallery in Rabat, exploring racial politics in Moroccan society. As part of the 2016 Marrakech Biennale he curated *Memory Games: Ahmed Bouanani Now*, a group show centering on the archive of Moroccan writer and filmmaker Ahmed Bouanani. Berrada is currently a visiting scholar at New York University.

**Ali Essafi** (1963, MA) studied psychology in France before entering the world of filmmaking. His works as a director include *General, Here We Are*, *The Silence of the Beet Fields*, *Ouarzazate Movie*, and *Shikhat's Blues*, which have been screened widely on the international circuit. Back in Morocco, he started a long period of research into North-African film & visual archives. These have been transformed into films and artworks such as *Wanted* and *Halaqat* which have been exhibited in various exhibitions and events worldwide. During the course of this research, he met the artist Ahmed Bouanani and began to restore works by Bouanani that had hitherto been forgotten. Selected this year for the DAAD residency in Berlin, he is currently finalizing a film shot with Ahmed Bouanani during the last years of his life.

## Colophon

### *Para/Fictions*

29 January 2016 – 9 April 2017

Team **Defne Ayas, Natasha Hoare, Samuel Saelemakers**

### *WDW25+*

27 May – 31 December 2016

Team **Defne Ayas, Natasha Hoare, Samuel Saelemakers** with **Marie Egger** (Curatorial Fellow), and **Marjolijn Kok** (Archaeologist)  
Design **Paul van Gennip**

### *WERE IT AS IF*

**Bik Van der Pol**  
27 May – 21 August 2016

Team **Defne Ayas, Samuel Saelemakers, Frederike Sperling** (Curatorial Assistant)  
Special thanks to Deputy Director **Paul van Gennip** as parrhesiast

### *What Representations?*

**Marwa Arsanios**  
27 May – 21 August 2016

### *I want to possess in this world that which brings joy to the eyes...*

**Ahmed Bouanani**  
27 May – 21 August 2016

Team **Defne Ayas, Natasha Hoare**

### Visitors Guide

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Cover photo **Bik Van der Pol**, floor plan draft for the exhibition *WERE IT AS IF*, 2016

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Oscar Santillan, Lucy Skaer

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