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**STAGING  
●ONE.**

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**“LOVE LETTER  
TO MARS”**

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**A Project by Lara Khaldi and Yazan Khalili**

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**Nov.–Dec.  
2014**

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## Staging One. "Love Letter to Mars"

Lecture Performance and  
Opening Reception:  
**Wednesday, 12 November 2014**

Staging Dates:  
**Thursday, 13 November–  
Sunday, 21 December 2014**

Opening Hours:  
**Wednesdays and Fridays  
from 12–4pm; Thursdays,  
Saturdays and Sundays  
from 12–6pm**

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**Office for Contemporary Art Norway** is a non-profit foundation created by the Norwegian Ministries of Culture and of Foreign Affairs in autumn 2001 with the aim of developing collaboration projects in the cultural field between Norway and the international arts scene. OCA has been responsible for a programme of exhibitions, conferences, lectures and seminars both in Norway and abroad, involving artists, curators, philosophers and art and cultural theorists. Also since 2001, OCA has been responsible for Norway's representation in the Visual Art sector of the Venice Biennale. The foundation aims to become one of the main organs in the contemporary arts debate through initiatives such as exhibitions, seminars, publications, as well as by providing support to Norwegian artists for their activities on the international art arena.

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**Love Letter to Mars is a project by artists Lara Khaldi and Yazan Khalili, whose starting point is an unfinished lecture performance that unfolds formally into various exhibition fragments. The performance is based on an exchange of letters between two earthly lovers and a fictional character named Waad, who left for Mars in the year 2024 and now plans to reside there for the rest of her life.**

**Modern man has plundered Earth at a pace that has outstripped the planet's capacity to support human life. In order to survive, Earth's population begins to move to other planets in the third decade of the century.**

**Love Letter to Mars encompasses text, voice, video, photography and sound to present a constellation of aesthetic fragments from Earth, the desert, the Gulf, Palestine, outer space and the red plane. Khaldi and Khalili work with fictitious yet plausible documentation of life and its 'urban environment' that might have existed once, or will do in the future, on Mars. The letters give rise to conflicting opinions regarding their friend's decision to leave which creates an unsurpassable rift: should they stay and be dedicated to the transformation of planet Earth or, in despair, should they look to shape other communities and colonies elsewhere?**

**With this project the artists continue their research in revitalising the epistolary genre, developed in the last years with *All the Other Lovers*, 2012 and *Love Letters to a Union*, 2013. Moreover, and aside from its planetary considerations, the current work also narrates a very personal story of exile, exploitation and failure in an apparently post- apocalyptic setting.**

**While questioning humanity's self-destructive ambitions, Khaldi and Khalili present so called 'scientific evidence' and reports from outer space. Several video and sound artists have been involved in these 'research findings', through specific works activated in parallel to the material Khalili and Khaldi use in their lecture performance rendition: Maha Maamoun's new life exploration, Dirar Kalash's sonic resonance of the Earth from Mars, Gerard Ortin's spaceless and timeless caves, and Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries' poetic capture of Waad's response to her friends on Earth. These works, a constituent part of the lecture performance, are subsequently rearranged in staging fragments.**

**"Love Letter to Mars" is the first performative moment in the programme 'Of Love, Departures and Countering Defeats in Choleric Times. Three Stagings', a project that evolves through three individual, yet interconnected stagings involving lecture performances, talks, unfinished moments and exhibition fragments, all of which contribute to speculations around the choleric moment we are experiencing globally.**

— Katya García-Antón  
Director, Office for Contemporary Art Norway



Dear Waad,

We have been talking about writing this letter together for a long time now. It is difficult to write, impossible to even get started. We have been reading books, watching films, travelling... trying to find a situation, fiction or fact, similar to yours. We visited deserts, places where the sun rose for the very first time this summer, where it is so oppressively hot that one cannot think; we have thought of you on the bicycle, on the airplane, on the ferry, every time a car passes by... and most of all we think of how to send this letter to you. We write it knowing the impossibility of its delivery, by email or post. We read it out loud in the hope that it will endure through vocal transmission.

We heard somewhere that sound does not disappear, that it remains as a wavelength in space and can be traced back after many years. Isn't this the essence of the letter format? Words that disappear to be found at another time and place. So we read aloud this letter to you. A letter that is constantly delayed, its arrival indefinitely postponed...

While trying to write to you we leafed through the published letter exchange between two poets, Mahmoud Darwish and Samih Al Qassim: in it they write about tricking the format by writing knowingly; they decide to write to each other in the letter format knowing that it's going to be published and read. They are conscious of the disclosure it entails... conscious of its posthumous persistence, where unfinished thoughts, marginalia, and fractures that could not sit within a literary work find a place.

We do not know yet how to tell you about all the things we've been learning regarding your trip, and wonder whether you are aware of them, Waad. We will try again tomorrow.

xxx

L. & Y.

Dearest Waad,

We miss you.

It has been almost a year since we first met you, the one who will never return, the forever absentee. We are unable to recollect where and how we first met, but are sure that we met you in our thoughts, our dreams, in books, online, in conversations with friends, and in endless films about Mars and outer space.

You might find it strange that you are receiving a letter from people you hardly know, and will probably never meet again, but who consider you a friend, our companion of the future. We are writing this letter now, in the present, so that you will receive it one day when you really exist, and will really need the intimacy of receiving letters... when you are 54 million kilometres away from home. You are not a creation of our imagination; you do exist – though perhaps not yet! You might be among those two hundred thousand applicants who signed up to go on this crazy one-way trip to Mars in 2024.

We are trying to remember how we came across the Mission One website, but we can't; it's as if we have always known this from a bedtime story told to us by our mothers a long time ago. Everything is believable now, dear Waad – even bedtime stories, even writing a letter to someone who lives on Mars. Can YOU believe it?

Do you believe that in 2024 you will be one of four astronauts, embarking on a one-way trip to Mars? That you will be settling forever on a planet that has no oxygen, no water, no atmosphere, nothing but red dust blowing on a dry plain of arid land uninhabitable for Earthlings like you and us; inhabiting nothing but a corporate compound planted there prior to your arrival by robots sent from earth. You will become an Earthling, because you're called after the place you come from only after you've left it. Do you believe you've left Earth? Have you ever thought of yourself as an Earthling outside sci-fi? This is no longer sci-fi; it is now sci-fa! This is what they will probably call the reality TV show that you and your colleagues will be paraded on once you land on Mars.

Love from the billowing clouds of Amsterdam,

L.&Y.



Dear Waad,

The weather is changing, and we sleep a lot these days. It's very difficult to wake up, but we have to... Sometimes we envy you, and all the down time you have on your trip, seven months of reading, watching the stars and sleeping...

But speaking of sleeping and dreaming, Waad, the corporation has dream-like plans for you, for us, a neo-liberal life of exact solitude, where global warming becomes terra-forming or planetary engineering, as Mars becomes the ruin in retrograde for planet Earth, the perfect place for its corporations. Just like colonists of old who would start building roads, schools and churches in the name of progress. We have read that on Mars the plan is to use global warming to reverse the environment of that planet so that it becomes habitable – is that true Waad? Scientists say that four billion years ago Mars lost its atmosphere, and along with it the liquid water it had; it became simultaneously too hot and too cold. But by intensively polluting Mars, and extensively planting genetically modified plants, a biosphere similar to Earth's might be produced after hundreds or thousands of years. Then Martian colonists would be able to walk freely, maskless, on its green red surface – breathing in pollution-produced oxygen! Dry rivers will flow, a sea will rise, rain will fall, bringing alien life from Earth to Mars.

Mars as we humans perceive it now is ruin and catastrophe; and what we are producing is again ruin. All this, you see, is because one of the many justifications cosmologists give for the mission, especially NASA, is based on the theory that at some point in time, Mars was habitable, that its climatic conditions were similar to Earth's; therefore missions to Mars will include archaeological excavation in search for fossils evidencing life. We are already starting from the premise that Mars is a ruin, and that we will resuscitate this planet, but through catastrophic inducing activity. Perhaps it is also an attempt to find out what it was that brought to an end the habitable conditions on the planet. Or of course the aim may be to answer the perennial question: is there life out there? Except that it seems there has been a change in the desired answer! Perhaps we don't really want to find life per se any more, we want only to find dead life, still life, evidence that it did exist at a particular point in time. That would resolve the dilemma: we will neither feel we're alone in the universe, nor

have to share it with another life. We wait until it's too late,  
we arrive on purpose always too late... like this letter to you,  
Waad; perhaps it will arrive on a comet when you are yourself  
a fossil on Mars, or in some other far off galaxy.

Kisses from dusty, grey, hot, bustling Cairo,

L.&Y.

Dear Waad,

We had an argument this morning, it was stupid, and now Y. is smoking a cigarette on the balcony and I'm trying to write a letter to you on my own. I think we've been spending too much time together...

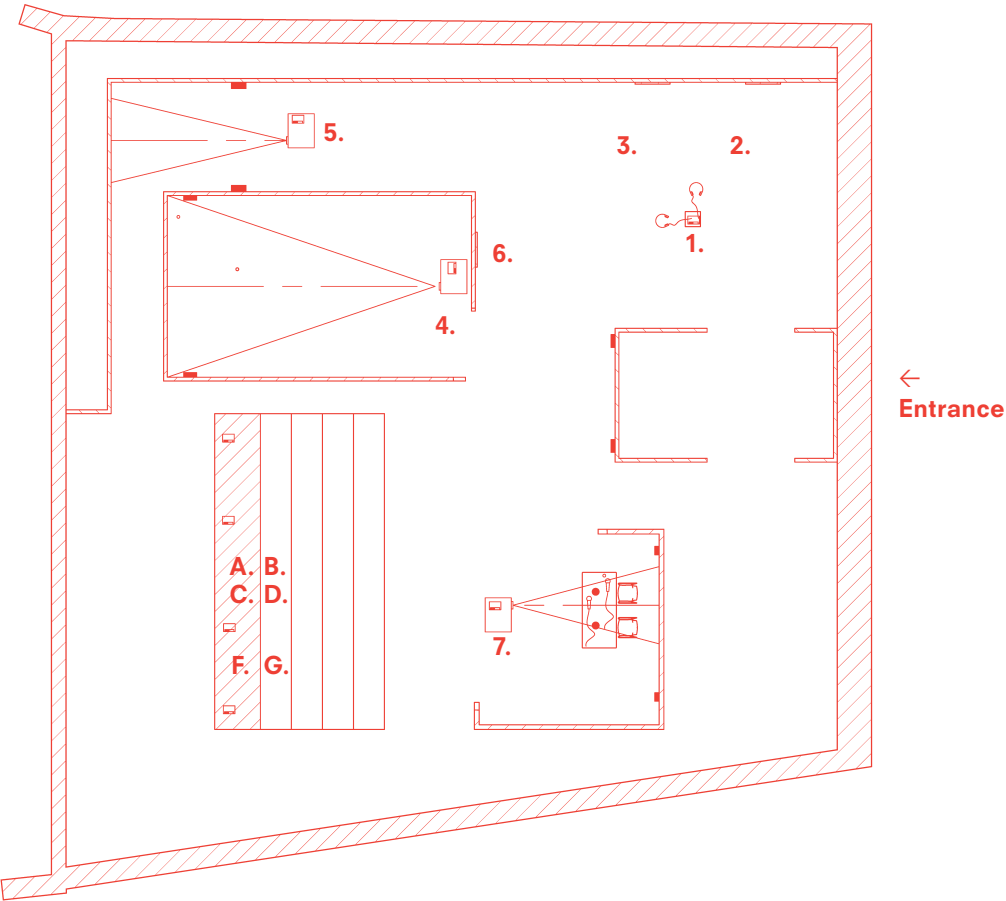
Which makes us wonder – what will the dynamics of the group be like? It must be strange that you all have to speak English to each other; we find this sufficiently difficult and annoying here. The idea of English becoming the language of Mars... Soon there will be a Martian accent, like the American accent, or the South African, or the Australian... all accents that embody a colonial history.

And Waad, how do you put up with living in seclusion with just three other people – the same three all the time? We have read that the longest experiment made with more than one individual living in seclusion was in Antarctica: a couple there lived together in seclusion for 15 months without killing each other! It was of course an experiment carried out as part of the Mars program. So, you could end up having cabin fever, a psychological state that people can get from being in an enclosed place with someone else for more than 500 days. How will you spend those seven months of the trip, knowing that there will be nobody waiting for you on Mars when you arrive, and you will have to live in the same small group for the coming two years until the next group of four joins you? How will you bear the red red skies? Will you be the one taking care of the inflatable greenhouses, Waad? Will you take short walks in them?

More soon, without the post-fight bleakness,

Xxx

L.&Y.



Main Space

**“LOVE LETTER TO MARS”**

1.

**DIRAR KALASH**

Love to Mars (2014)

**Digital Sound**

**27 minutes**

**Courtesy the Artist**

The work attempts to fabricate a sound environment on Mars when it is millions of sonic-years away, while Earth is but a wave fading out; on Earth love could no longer be expressed or shown, but Waad could still feel it: transmitted, whispered, modulated, transformed, echoed, delayed, distorted, crashed. She’s receiving it all at once, not as a failed technological transmission, but as one of the remaining signs of our time.

2, 3, 6.

**GERARD ORTIN**

Nueva Sonora (2014)

Digital Video on Three Monitors

18 minutes

Courtesy the Artist

In this video, caves are used as a subterfuge to raise questions about the construction of landscapes through images, their recognition and perception, and the notion of discovery or the mutability of nature. Through image-recognition exercises, nature is presented as an unstable object which we project and fix upon variable associations, in an effort to reassert its cultural character. Shot in a range of locations, and using maquettes as a resource, the video employs various strategies (stereoscopic animations, soundscapes, still images, voice recordings, etc.) to de-localise a landscape that thus loses specificity and emerges, fragmented, from the darkness.

4.

**YOUNG-HAE CHANG**

**HEAVY INDUSTRIES**

Waad (2014)

Digital Video

Flexible Dimensions, 19 minutes (loop)

Courtesy the Artists

The work is a series of six delayed dispatches sent from Waad on Mars to her two friends on Earth. Taking the form of digital animated poetry, the letters begin with a philosophical reflection on what it means to exist outside history, human time, and political struggle. With stylistic agility, Waad's communiques then turn to chronicling her life with three other astronauts on the red planet, where the Martians start forming a quite eventful history of their own.

**5.**  
**MAHA MAAMOUN**  
**Dear Animal (2014)**  
**Digital Video**  
**11 minutes**  
**Courtesy the Artist**

Is there life on Mars? This is one of the questions that Waad takes with her on her trip. As she searches for new life, walking, looking, pausing and inspecting, old life-forms reappear on the threshold. The passing of humans from childhood to adulthood, from one country to another, from Earth to Space, or through other movements in time and place, is a rite often witnessed or suffered by animals. This work channels some of the animals met on the way.

**7.**  
**LARA KHALDI & YAZAN KHALILI**  
**Recording of the Lecture Performance**  
**Love Letter to Mars (2014)**  
**Digital Audio Recording**  
**ca. 20 minutes**  
**Courtesy the Artists**

Love Letter to Mars is a lecture performance that takes the form of reading aloud a letter to Waad, a friend who left Earth on the first manned mission to Mars in 2024; the letter is to be sent in the hope that via that format, it might reach her, millions of miles away. In the letter the artists seek parallels in order to relate to Waad's new life on the ruined promise of the red planet, questioning the contemporaneity of her futuristic life and the geopolitics of present life on earth that led to such a mission, touching on the bleakest possible question: aren't we already living on Mars?

## Under the Stairs

### **'All the Other Lovers' Video Screening Programme**

The following video programme was presented in 2012 at NeMe, in Limassol, Cyprus under the title 'All the Other Lovers'. A lecture performance under the same title was also presented at the symposium 'Through the Roadblocks' and later developed into a longer version: 'Love Letters to a Union', presented at Homeworks 6, in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2013. Both the video programme and the lecture explore and redefine the notion of love as a political construct.

## **A.**

### **BASMA ALSHARIF**

The Story of Milk and Honey (2011)

Digital Video

9 minutes

Produced with the support of the Fundación Marcelino Botín Grant for Visual Arts Fund

Courtesy the Artist

The Story of Milk and Honey is a short experimental video belonging to a larger project; it uses photographs, drawings and text in its narrative of an un-named individual's failure to write a love story. Through voiceover narration that weaves together images, letters, and songs, a story of defeat is transformed into a journey that explores how we collect and perceive information, facts, history, images and sound, and tackles the question of where the individual is to be found in the midst of all this material.



**B.**

**MONIRA AL QADIRI**

**Oh Torment (Wa Wailah) (2008)**

**Digital Video**

**10 minutes**

**Courtesy the Artist**

A series of repetitive choreographies are set to Abdul Wahab Al Rashid's woeful folk song of love and lament. Complete with over-the-top costumes, props and make-up, Wa Wailah is located somewhere between a Shakespearean play and an MTV music video as rich and colourful contemporary visuals are mixed with traditional attire.

Al Qadiri scrutinises gender roles and conventions (social, musical or cinematic) by switching the roles of the sexes: thus the filmmaker herself plays the role of the male singer, while all the female dancers are played by cross-dressing men. Eroticism and sensuality are played out through scripted moves as notions of the majlis, the harem and the convoy – among other social practices – are invoked.

**C.**

**JUMANA EMIL ABBOUD**

**The Diver (2004)**

**Digital video**

**4 minutes**

**Courtesy the Artist**

The Diver is a video narrative that tells the story of a Diver whose gender, name, and nationality are ambiguous, and who is on an endless search to find 'Heart'.

The places the diver visits are nameless, referred to only as 'earth, sea, sky, and snow.' They are unclaimed territories the diver passes through on his/her quest. Using the diving suit as the ultimate veil, disguise or defence mechanism, the diver's world (and identity) is unknown, unclaimed. On one level, the diver is an outcast: it is certain that he/she has a home but the viewer has no idea where it might be. The diver seeks the advice of others and wanders from one place to another, committed to the quest. At the same time, on another level of perception, the diver is portrayed as a unique kind of 'superhero: an independent traveller ready to venture into unknown places with relentless will and calm solitude.

**D.**

**ALAA ABU ASAD**

untitled: Extracts from **Harem** (1984)  
(2012)

**Digital video**

**12 minutes**

**Courtesy the Artist**

untitled is a video extracted from the eighties porn film **Harem**. In the story behind the movie, a French man roams the streets of Casablanca looking for a fast fix of exotic love. The video explores notions of colonial histories and historical bonds, intimacy as a field of power, and the exoticisation of an Arab city's image.

**E.**

**LARA KHALDI & YAZAN KHALILI**

Love Letter to Mars (2014)

**Ink on Paper**

**A4 format, Variable Elements**

**Courtesy the Artists**

**F, G.**

**LARA KHALDI & YAZAN KHALILI**

**A Growing Archive Around and About**

Love Letter to Mars (2014)

**Digital Channel**

**Variable Format and Duration**

**Courtesy the Artists**

Jumana Emil Abboud (b.1971) uses drawing, video, performance, objects and text to navigate themes of memory, loss and resilience. She poses questions related to memory as read through the body, through folklores and folktales, through home and homeland, and through cultural ritual or practice. How is history (personal and collective) told and retold, and how does it affect or impose itself on the present of our time and life? How do we remember? How does memory fragmentation leave its imprints? Abboud's interests lie in storytelling – folklore, myth, icons, archetypes, language – as a visual or textual tool, read and re-read. In this way, her work consistently reflects a Palestinian cultural landscape in which the struggle for continuity within the wider political context necessitates a constant process of metamorphosis and ingenuity.

Over the last decade Abboud has participated in numerous international group exhibitions including, among others, the Venice Biennale; the Istanbul Biennial; the Bahrain National Museum, Manama; L'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; The Jerusalem Show; Darat al Funun, Amman; and at the Carréd'Art, Nîmes. She lives and works in Jerusalem.

Alaa Abu Asad (b.1989) studied at the Photography Department of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem. During this time he took part in several group exhibitions and events in Ramallah, Limassol, Beirut, Brussels and Cairo. He also worked as an assistant curator for the UNRWA audiovisual archive's exhibition in Jerusalem for the Palestine refugees: 'The Long Journey'. During January–June 2014 he lived and worked in Switzerland for the art residency of the Gästetelier Krone in Aarau, and staged his first solo exhibition, entitled 'image: imagination, resurrection'. Currently, Asad is spending two months in residency at the GAP – Global Art Programme – Artegiovine Cultural Foundation in Milan, Italy.

Basma Alsharif (b.1983) is a nomadic artist and filmmaker born in Kuwait to Palestinian parents. Raised in France, and the US. She has lived and worked nomadically since receiving her MFA in 2007 from the University of Illinois at Chicago, developing her practice in cities like Cairo, Beirut, Sharjah, Amman and, most recently, Paris.

Her works have shown in solo exhibitions, biennials, and film festivals internationally including YIDFF, the Jerusalem Show, TIFF, the Berlinale, Videobrasil and Manifesta 8. She was a recipient of a Jury Prize at the 9<sup>th</sup> Sharjah Biennial, of the Fundación Marcelino Botín Visual Arts Grant in 2009-10, and of the Marion McMahon Award at the Images Festival in Toronto. She was also a guest of the Flaherty Film Seminar in upstate New York. She will be a resident of the Pavillon at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris from November 2014 to June 2015.

Monira Al Qadiri (b.1983) is a Kuwaiti visual artist born in Senegal and educated in Japan. In 2010, she received a PhD in inter-media art from Tokyo University of the Arts, where her research was focused on the aesthetics of sadness in the Middle-East region, in relation to poetry, music, art and religious practices. Her work explores the relationship between narcissism and masculinity, as well as other dysfunctional gender roles, and is currently expanding towards more social and political subjects. She is also part of the artist collective GCC, which has recently held a solo exhibition at MoMA/PS1 in New York.

Formed in 1999, Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries ([yhchang.com](http://yhchang.com)) is a Seoul-based artist duo consisting of Marc Voge (USA) and Young-Hae Chang (Korea). YHCHI have presented their signature animated texts, set to their own music, in 21 languages, and shown many of them at some of the major art institutions in the world, including the Tate, London; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the New Museum, New York, USA. YHCHI was 2012–13 Rockefeller Creative Arts Fellow for the Foundation Bellagio Center.

Dirar Kalash (b.1982) works mainly with live performance, combining text, sound, image, video and movement. He regularly uses free and open-source software in the field of real-time audio and video and image processing. He is also a multi-instrumentalist, engaged in musical composition and free improvisation. Kalash graduated from the University of Haifa in 2006 with a BA in Fine Arts and Music. Some of his group participations include a live audio-video performance for the 2011 /si:n/ festival of video art and performance, Ramallah, and in the same year a video and sound installation for the 'Open Studio' exhibition at the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre, Ramallah, in 2011. Dirar was a recipient of the A.M Qattan Foundation's Young Artist Award. He has performed at Medrar, Cairo (2012), the ICA, London (2013), and in other venues in France, Germany and Belgium. Dirar is currently completing an MFA at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague.

Lara Khaldi (b.1982, Palestine) is an independent curator based between Ramallah, Palestine, and Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She recently completed the de Appel curatorial Programme, Amsterdam, while at the same time pursuing her MA degree at the European Graduate School. Khaldi was director of Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre, Ramallah (2012–13). She has co-curated a number of exhibitions, which include among others ‘Father, Can’t You See I’m Burning?’, at the de Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam (2014); ‘Gestures in Time’ (Show 6, Jerusalem, and the Riwaq Biennial 5, Ramallah, 2013); ‘Lonely Crowd’ within the /si:n/ festival of video art and performance, Ramallah and Brussels (2013–14); the 5th Jerusalem Show ‘On/Off Language’, Al Ma’mal Contemporary Art Foundation (2012); and film and video programmes in 2009 and 2011 as part of the Arab Shorts initiative by the Goethe Institute, Cairo. Khaldi held the position of Assistant Director for programmes at the Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah (2009–11), and co-edited *Provisions I&II* with Bidoun Magazine (Sharjah Biennial 9 catalogues, 2009). She often collaborates with Yazan Khalili on lecture performances such as: ‘All the Other Lovers’, as part of the NEME symposium ‘Through the Roadblocks’, Limassol, Cyprus (2012); and ‘Love Letters to a Union’ at Home Works 6, Beirut, Lebanon (2013).

Yazan Khalili (b.1981) is an artist who lives and works in and out of Palestine. Through photography and the written word, he unpacks historically constructed landscapes. Borrowing from cinematic language, images become frames where the spectator embodies the progression of time and narratives. Khalili has woven together parallel stories over the years, forming both questions and paradoxes concerning scenery and the act of gazing, all of which are refracted through the prism of intimate politics and alienating poetics. Solo exhibitions include, among others, ‘Regarding Distance’ at E.O.A.Projects, London (2014), ‘On Love and other Landscapes’ at Imane Fares Gallery, Paris (2013); and ‘Landscape of Darkness’ at Transit Gallery, Mechelen (2011). Selected group exhibitions include ‘Future of a Promise Pavilion’, 54th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia (2011); ‘Re-emerge’, Sharjah Biennial 11, Sharjah (2013); and ‘Deep Into that Darkness Peering’, KSCC, Ramallah (2013). Khalili’s writings and photographs have been featured in several publications.

Maha Maamoun (b.1972) is an artist living and working in Cairo. Her work moves mainly between still and moving images. She also works collaboratively on independent publishing and curatorial projects. Her work has been shown in exhibitions and biennials including: 'Here and Elsewhere', New Museum, New York; 'Ten Thousand Wiles and a Hundred Thousand Tricks', Meeting Points 7, Moscow; 'Forum Expanded', 64<sup>th</sup> Berlinale, Berlin (all 2014); 'Objects in a Mirror are Closer than they Appear', Tate Modern, London (2012–13); 9<sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea (2012); Transmediale, Berlin; 'Mapping Subjectivity: Experimentation in Arab Cinema from the 1960s to Now, Part I', MoMA, New York (2010), and most recently a solo exhibition entitled 'The Night of Counting the Years' at the Fridericianum in Kassel. Maamoun is a founding board member of the Contemporary Image Collective (CiC), an independent non-profit space for art and culture founded in Cairo in 2004.

Gerard Ortín (b.1988) holds a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Barcelona and studied at the Aula de Música Modernai Jazz (Conservatori del Liceu), Barcelona. He currently lives in Amsterdam, where he is completing his MFA at the Sandberg Instituut. Drawing from this art and music background, he experiments with various media, including sound and performance. He has worked with the group Sons de Barcelona, MTG, Universitat Pompeu Fabra. In 2014 he presented the performance *Intravia* within the Irregular Section, Mercat de les Flors; it consisted of a series of night routes through the forest with different interventions. He has participated in the exhibitions, 'Viaggio al Centro della Terra' [Journey to the Center of the Earth] at Museo di Città, Sassari, Italy (2012); 'The Cosmic Space was there in two or three centimeters' at Galería Espacio Bacecos, Madrid/Vigo (2013); 'Biennal Leandre Cristòfol', in Lleida (2013); and Reykjavik International Film Festival '/// Hot Tub', Reykjavik (2014). During June 2014 he held a residency in Marfa, TX, USA, organised by TAAK, Amsterdam.





'Of Love, Departures and Countering Defeats in Choleric Times. Three Stagings' is a project that evolves through three individual, yet interconnected stagings involving lecture performances, talks, unfinished moments and exhibition fragments, that speculate around the choleric moment we are experiencing globally.

In 1986 the German sociologist Ulrich Beck published *Risk Society*, a book that looks at how the modernisation process has unleashed destructive forces where-as risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities introduced by modernisation itself. In advanced modernity the dangers of these forces have resulted in the abolishment, according to the author, of categories with which we have in the past been able to think and act – such as space and time, work and leisure time, factory and nation state, and borders between continents. The inequalities of class and strata position, concurrent with intrinsic paradigmatic inequalities, have commanded development in Western countries and brought with them ecological devaluation and expropriation. These in turn have undermined the order of national jurisdictions and endangered all forms of life on the planet. Modernity, according to Beck, is therefore 'self-reflexive'.

Moreover, contemporary historians are currently debating the degenerative roots and consequences of the uncertain and unstable conditions within which we currently exist, affecting socio-political, religious, environmental and financial terrains. In 'Of Love, Departures and Countering Defeats in Choleric Times. Three Stagings' artists and various cultural protagonists invite us to look at the possibility of riding on the back of this vertiginous descent of a modernity chasing its own tail, to counter the sense of frozen inaction these forces provoke. Furthermore, the project's three reflexive stagings, consider that the unraveling of

modernity, in its social and temporal instances of techno-scientifically produced risk has, and is, relying on an ongoing sense of mercurial experience. Within this context, the project shows the possibility to transform the degeneration of an open-ended state of affairs into a moment of intellectual and social strength, through experimental, flux-based and unconcluded artistic projects developed throughout autumn 2014 and spring 2015, at the Office for Contemporary Art Norway.

Collapsing defined parameters of past, present and future, 'Of Love, Departures and Countering Defeats in Choleric Times. Three Stagings' explores the new junctures between physical and imagined realities in the years to come, unveiling experiences which artistic practice embodies within itself as a promise. Lara Khaldi and Yazan Khalili's exchanges of love letters across the galactic separation between Mars and Earth formulate a potent analysis of terrestrial existence, and in so doing they activate what Alain Badiou would call the potential for love as a political act; Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri continue to explore how artistic processes and inquiries, whether historical or contemporary, may uncover different potentialities in understandings of political, social, and ecological impasses or struggles. Their recent inquiry has taken a turn toward a notion of a politics of departure; Ruanne Abou-Rahme and Basel Abbas salvage banditry across lands and histories, re-inventing their own position as artists within it. They propose conspiracy as a challenge to the subjugation of representation over determined life forms by ruling systems and contemporary media.

'Of Love, Departures and Countering Defeats in Choleric Times. Three Stagings' reflects therefore upon various thoughts. How can we recognise the events in past and recent history, and the destruction they have left behind, without

succumbing to their defeats? How can the past and future actively re-structure the present? How can a genealogy of history be reinvented in its own writing, perpetrating an experimental practice of piracy, appropriation, rejection and alteration to let new origins emerge which can threaten the history of an error called truth? How can one destabilise the very medium of analysis, and perform the moment of now, shaping time instead of being harnessed by it?

**Staging One.** “Love Letter to Mars” is the premiere of a new project by Lara Khaldi & Yazan Khalili, to whom we are grateful for their generous support in making this project possible in OCA. We also extend our warm thanks to the five artists also included in this staging: Maha Maamoun, Dirar Kalash, Gerard Ortin and Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, as well as to the artists contributing to the screening programme: Basma Alsharif, Monira Al Qadiri, Jumana Emil Abboud and Alaa Abu Asad.

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**The staging’s design was realised by TORSTEINSEN DESIGN. The current publication was designed by Hans Gremmen and proofread by Ben Bazalgette.**

# OF LOVE, DEPARTURES AND COUNTERING DEFEATS IN CHOLERIC TIMES.

## Upcoming within Programme

— **19 November 2014, 7pm**  
Divine Violence and the Ban of the Law  
**A Lecture by Sami Khatib**

— **26 November 2014, 7pm**  
Ethnography of the Self:  
The Status of Everyday Life  
**A conversation between Ayreen  
Anastas, Rene Gabri, Caterina  
Pasqualino and Arnd Schneider**

— **10 December 2014, 7pm**  
Pirates, Exiles, Runaway Youths,  
Merchants and Other Migrants in  
Ancient Italy and Plautus:  
The Comedy and Reality of a  
Borderless World  
**A Lecture by Elena Isayev**

## THREE STAGINGS