

Unplified

SOUND INSTALLATION BY TAREK ATOUI

Conceived and produced by MinRASY PROJECTS

Museum of Modern Art, Kuwait

Under the patronage of the National Council for Culture, Arts
and Letters, State of Kuwait

May 22 - June 11, 2012

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Unplified is a work commissioned for Kuwait. This project started in March 2011, inspired by Ghassan Kanafani's novella, *Men in The Sun*. The novella relates the story of three Palestinian men attempting to make an illegal immigration into Kuwait via Basra, by being smuggled through, inside an empty water tanker, in the late 1950s. This novella is part of Palestinian literature in Kuwaiti consciousness.

Atoui researched his work, in December 2011, by the same means that the men took. He boarded a water tanker in Kuwait and made the journey from Basra to Kuwait. Atoui's observations of the desert had been drastically different from Kanafani's description of 50 years ago. Signs of modernity had set in. Atoui's experience encompassed a desert inhabited by telecommunication antennas, factories and oil pumps, certainly more signs of life than men in the sun experienced. By closing his eyes, through sound, the desert manifested itself; an immense acoustic void where all sounds lose their spacial qualities, absorbed and not reflected. For Atoui Kanafani's characters' pleas, in the empty water tanker, would have been unplified; quietened and swallowed by the desert. Did the sound conditions in the vastness of the desert seal their fate?

Atoui builds a special audio feedback device for this work; a computer software for microphones to capture the ambient sound of a space and amplify its sonic and acoustic properties. Sounds then overlap producing distortion as though the space is playing and listening to itself at the same time.

The work is installed in two connected unairconditioned, blinding white rooms of a portacabin instated at the Museum of Modern Art, Kuwait. Room 1 is an audio and visual recording of the desert's sound amplified by Atoui's feedback system.

Room 2, which has the opposite sound qualities of the desert, the feedback system is installed, amplifying the listener's presence in this space. The listener is now navigating between the two radically different sonic experiences of room 1 and room 2; crossing the thin border that separates them from each other.

Atoui poses the question: Can human intervention amplify the desert and change its sonic quality? He parallels this with the paralysis of the Palestinian condition.

Tarek Atoui was born in Lebanon in 1980 and moved to France in 1998 where he studied sound art and electro-acoustic music. In 2006, he released his first solo album in the *Mort Aux Vaches* series for Staalplaat Records, and in 2008, he served as artistic director of the STEIM Studios in Amsterdam, a center for the research and development of new electronic musical instruments.

Atoui is a sound artist who initiates multidisciplinary interventions, events, concerts and workshops in Europe and the Middle East, and specializes in creating computer tools for interdisciplinary projects and youth education. He has presented work internationally including the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2010); the Ninth Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates (2009); La Maison Rouge, Paris (2010); the Mediacity Biennial, Seoul (2010), the Haus Der Kunst, Munich (2010) and Performa 11, NYC (2011).



