

AGENDA

LEBANON

FILM

**'Aferim!'**  
*Metropolis Empire, Sofil*  
Jan. 29, 8 p.m.  
01-332-661  
Set in early 19th-century Romania Radu Jude's Silver Bear-winning feature tells the story of a runaway gypsy slave who is being tracked by a constable and his son. It is an "exceptional, deeply intelligent gaze into a key historical period, done with wit as well as anger."

MUSIC

**'Simone Vebber'**  
*Notre Dame de Louaize Convent, Zouk Mosbeh*  
Jan. 31, 8 p.m.  
Italian organist Simone Vebber will kick off Lebanese Pipe Organ Week this Sunday. An award-winning musician, Vebber is renowned for his classical pieces.

**'Al Bustan Festival'**  
*Emile Bustani Auditorium, Beit Mery*  
Feb. 6 until March 20  
The Al Bustan festival returns this year, with several concerts and performances by local and international artists. The theme of this year's festival is the works of English playwright William Shakespeare.

PHOTOGRAPHY

**'Méditerranée'**  
*Byblos Bank Headquarters, Surscock Street*  
Jan. 22 until Feb. 10  
01-335-200 ext. 0314  
Held in conjunction with the Beirut iteration of PhotoMed, this show of work by French photographer Edouard Boubat will feature 48 photographs reflecting Boubat's scintillating vision of the Mediterranean basin.

ART

**'Obey'**  
*Geek Express, Mkhallassieh St., Saifi Village*  
Through Jan. 31  
01-972-370  
This show features work by U.S. street artist, activist and illustrator Frank Shepard Fairy. Famous for his contribution to modern street art and creator of the "HOPE" campaign poster, used during U.S. President Barack Obama's first term election.

**'Connect'**  
*ARTLAB, 1804 Gouraud St., Gemmayzeh*  
Feb. 4-20  
Photographer Dmitri Hadad will show his new series "Connect: The Virtual Family Album." The exhibition is a meditation on how we communicate with friends and family in the digital age, and asks if this is an authentic connection.

PERFORMANCE

**'Blackmail: Cine-concert'**  
*Metropolis Empire, Sofil*  
Feb. 1, 8 p.m.  
Avant-garde Beirut DJ Radiokvm will play his own score during a screening of Alfred Hitchcock's film "Blackmail." This event comprises part of the European Film Festival.

JUST A THOUGHT

I have learned throughout my life as a composer chiefly through my mistakes and pursuits of false assumptions, not by my exposure to founts of wisdom and knowledge.

*Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)*  
Russian composer, pianist, conductor

REVIEW

# Making something new from mobility

The BAC's emerging artists exhibition explores how art enters our world

By Jim Quilty  
The Daily Star

**B**EIRUT: The seventh edition of "Exposure," the Beirut Art Center's emerging artists exhibition, has become a yearly fixture in the city's art scene. "Mobility," the event's seventh edition, features new work by five artists – Yasmin Hage-Meany, Sandra Iché, Eshan Rafi, Mahmoud Safadi and Merve Ünsal.

The five are among a number who submitted project proposals to BAC in an open call and were vetted by a selection committee comprised of artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan, academic Stefanie Baumann, artist and architect Tony Chakar and curator Andrea Thal.

Since its sixth edition in 2014, and curator Marie Muracciole's assuming the BAC's director's chair, "Exposure" has been a curated show.

"Naming this year's edition of Exposure "Mobility" points to the possibility of movement, to displacement, and to processes of transformation," Muracciole writes in the exhibition's catalogue essay.

The jury has "selected artists whose work deals with the instability and breaking-down of shapes, and who are ... involved in the evolution of definitions and categories. In their practice[s], the body is a condition and a site for activating artistic purpose, and for carrying out some transformations in symbolic orders and social life.

"Mobility" seeks to explore ... how art can cross into our world, and produce unexpected occurrences in our lives. The aim of this program is to question the collective experience of 'present time' and to bring forth different approaches toward recent history, through distinct voices."

The work in "Mobility" is heavily weighted toward the image.

"Merve Ünsal and Eshan Rafi," Muracciole notes, "treat the exhibition as a medium and an instance of 'being present.' In their pieces, as well as in those of Sandra Iché, Yasmin Hage-Meany and Mahmoud Safadi, different media – image, gesture, text, and sound – interact and produce meaning."

Guatemala-born Yasmin Hage-Meany (b. 1976) presents a multimedia series entitled "Drifts."

Seven charcoal- and silkscreen-on-paper sketches hang alone, in one case, or else in clusters of three. Each work is paired with a text in which the verb "drift" is represented by the "infinity" symbol (an "8," knocked over on its side).

Complementing the conventional media in most, but not all, these pieces are iron filings and magnets. These conspire to create woolly black clumps on the surface of each of the sketches, and thus lend an additional dimension to the works onto which they've been affixed.



Mahmoud Safadi, "Off the Coast," 2015.

In a couple of cases, the metal clumps stand alone, without figuration, lured to magnets embedded in the gallery wall. The effect is (probably inadvertently) reminiscent of chia – the weed that entered pop culture consciousness in the late 20th century via the "chia pet" craze.

It isn't always clear what role these magnet-induced iron clusters are playing in Hage-Meany's paper sketches – or in the pair of metallic pieces that complement them. They are by their nature at odds with the static figuration that characterizes the rest of the work, representing instead potential energy of gravity held suspended within magnetic fields.

In some cases the exact subject matter of the sketch, too, is unclear, though an Atlas motif in three of Hage-Meany's works suggest the filings may at times depict a colossal rock formation.

Hung in the midst of the magnetically enhanced works is a video loop of a car whose driver is negotiating a controlled drift in a parking lot.

Adjacent the hung works sits a table, atop which a pair of serving tray-like surfaces which – with clusters of iron filings (and magnets, presumably) – provide the media for two circular pieces.

One of these works is a piece of abstract figuration. The other is a circular-oblong juxtaposition of grey and white, with iron filings.

The Lahore-born, Toronto-based Eshan Rafi is exhibiting two works – a photo series and a floor installation called "Set."

The floor installation is laid out like a human-sized game board, complete with instructions on how observers can employ it. The

"board" is a grey painted rectangle, upon which various colors of tape have been laid.

In some cases they suggest figuration. In others the tapes provide a writing surface, providing participants with further instructions. Players are also encouraged to move tapes around and to augment the surface with additional tape.

While the paper was eyeballing "Mobility," some neighborhood elementary school students were visiting BAC. When they came upon "Set" they immediately transformed the work's potential meaning into a practical guide for movement, suggesting it's helpful to be uninhibited when dissolving the fixed relationship among "object" and "subject," "witnessing" and "performance."

"Footnotes for a Text Not Written," by Istanbul-based Merve Ünsal (b. 1985) also works with photography. The artist professes an interest in the cultural vision of contemporary Turkey's working class, especially its builders, and her photos feature a surfeit of interior and exterior shots of structures, structural elements and workers.

Prints of many of these photos have been laid out on the walls and on a pair of wooden panels.

The centerpiece of "Footnotes" is a photo book, which sits amidst the photos, atop a table, alongside translations of Ünsal's Turkish introductory essay and captions.

The layout of the book captures the recto and verso of the photos it reproduces. The recto of each leaf bears the face of a photographic print. The verso shows the backside of the photo in question, upon which has been written information

about location.

"Off the Coast," the contribution of Beirut-based Mahmoud Safadi (b. 1987) is comprised of a video and photo series. The five still photos are small format black-and-white shots of onshore waves.

The eight-minute video "Off the Coast" begins with footage of the seaside boulders that litter the coast of the Beirut area of Daliéh, shot from the sea.

At times the video's been reversed so that the water appears to be at once retreating from the shore and streaming up the rocks.

The main body of the work shows young men and women as they prepare to dive into the sea from the portrayed rocks.

After the divers launch themselves off the rocks, Safadi's framing is inverted to disorient the onlooker. In one instance, the diver appears to be defying gravity, soaring skyward rather than falling into the water.

French-born, Lebanon-based dancer and choreographer Sandra Iché's "Ellipses [with Omar Amiralay]" is a video deployed as a triptych – a 40-minute work centering on a French-language interview she conducted in 2010 with renowned Syrian documentarian Omar Amiralay (1944-2011).

In an interview with the paper, Iché said her conversation with Amiralay was one of several she did for another project, to which the filmmaker's contribution was not central. Her interview regime asked her subjects to speak about the present day (2010) as though looking back upon it from 2030.

Hers turned out to be the Amiralay's final interview. Since it was

completed just a few weeks before Syria's revolution commenced in 2011 – and since the filmmaker's positioning would have made him a protagonist in this struggle, had he not died – Iché felt compelled to make something new from the document.

Given the gravitas inspired by the filmmaker's status as an artist and dissident, this conversation is surprising. While deeply rooted in his decades-long relationship with the society and politics of Lebanon and Syria – and the ironic perspective such intimacy can engender – Amiralay's fanciful imaginings of the subsequent two decades of Lebanese and Syrian history are utterly playful and self-deprecating, even somewhat self-effacing.

As a dancer, Iché edited her interview rushes with an eye to accentuating physicality and movement. With this in mind, she and her collaborators juxtaposed moments of Amiralay's fictive recollection with scenes from his films.

It's an amusing and unexpected performance. At one point, for instance, Iché asks whether Amiralay is preparing something now. He replies that he's presently gathering some writings for a book. When you read it, he says, you'll understand how I went mad.

When you're watching something, you can't resist, he explains, it can drive you crazy. Sometimes insanity too is a form of resistance. If I had a way to resist, I wouldn't be sitting in front of you today, speaking this foolishness.

For more information on "Mobility," see: <http://www.beirutartcenter.org/exhibitions.php?exhibit=555&statusid=1>

## Sundance films explore a journalist's on-air suicide

By Lindsey Bahr  
Associated Press

**PARK CITY, Utah:** When two movies are released at about the same time on the same subject, the topic is often something silly and big and spectacle-filled, like "Armageddon" and "Deep Impact" or "White House Down" and "Olympus Has Fallen."

This year at the Sundance Film Festival, audiences found themselves with an unusual double feature. The festival hosted the premieres of two films exploring the largely forgotten story of Christine Chubbuck, a 29-year-old on-air journalist in Sarasota, Florida, who shot and killed herself during a live broadcast on July 15, 1974.

One, "Christine," is a fictionalized, narrative depiction of her life before the suicide starring Rebecca Hall. The other is an experimental documentary about an actress, indie mainstay Kate Lyn Sheil, preparing to portray Chubbuck called "Kate Plays Christine."

"I was kind of shocked that there had never been a movie made about it," said "Kate Plays Christine" director Robert Greene. "It's the kind of story that makes you think about why you want to know about it. I still haven't answered that to this day."

The moments before Chubbuck shot herself have been cited as the inspiration for the 1976 Sidney Lumet film "Network" and Peter Finch's mad-as-hell anchor.

On the morning of July 15, a tape



A scene from Antonio Campos' "Christine," dealing with the 1974 on-air suicide of news anchor Christine Chubbuck.

from the scene of a local shooting from the night prior didn't roll. Sitting behind the anchor's desk, Chubbuck then said, "In keeping with Channel 40's policy of bringing you the latest in blood and guts and in living color, you are going to see another first – attempted suicide."

Then she took the gun out of her bag and pulling the trigger.

She'd left a written news item about her own suicide on the desk.

"Christine" director Antonio Campos learned about the story

when screenwriter Craig Shilowich approached him with a script.

"Craig dug very deep and tried to understand her," Campos said.

"For me, having learned about it through this script made it so much more human."

Actress Rebecca Hall questioned the utility of telling the story at all but the script convinced her otherwise.

"I do think there's something quite irresponsible about glorifying something as some sort of macabre act of heroism when actually it's a

tragedy and awful and she shouldn't have died," Hall said. "I read the script and thought, 'Oh, it doesn't do that. What it does is make a human case. It makes an audience understand mental illness and sympathize with it.'"

Both filmmakers and actresses had to deal with the fact that there is precious little information available about Chubbuck. They knew that she suffered from depression, that she had to go through a surgery to remove an ovary which would

jeopardize her ability to have children, and that she was a virgin. There aren't videos online readily available of Chubbuck, and the facts of the story, even in Sarasota, have blurred.

Hall had only one 20-minute taped interview to study, and even that brought up more questions than answers.

The interview is about the rezoning of a hospital.

Hall said it's terribly dry, but she took what she could get and used it as a jumping-off point to study Chubbuck's voice and mannerisms.

"There are a couple of heart-breaking indicators in it that were real prompters for me," Hall said. "There was this bit where she says something so impassioned and it's about something really banal."

"Kate Plays Christine" operates like a journalistic investigation into the story. They talk to co-workers, townspeople, and even visit the (now relocated) store where Chubbuck purchased the gun.

"The Christine Chubbuck story has always made me stop and take pause and made me think about pre-assumptions I have about women, about myself, about what makes a depressed person go that far," Greene said.

"It should make you really think about the people you know in your life and what they're going through and what you've gone through. If that's one result of these two films being made at the same time, that's just great."