

ART CITIES:Stockholm-Walid Raad

15/02/2020 [ART](#), [ART CITIES](#), [TRAVEL](#)





In photographs, videotapes, sculptures, texts and mixed media installations Walid Raad explores how violence affects bodies, minds, culture and traditions. Playfully, he creates artworks that are at once dizzying, imaginative and illuminating. Walid Raad's artworks concentrate on the Lebanese wars as well as the Middle East's rapidly burgeoning art world.

Walid Raad's **"Let's be honest, the weather helped"** at Moderna Museet is a retrospective (but not chronological) exhibition, where works from the projects *The Atlas Group*, *Sweet Talk: Commissions* and *Scratching on things I could disavow* are presented side by side in an unprecedented way. Walid Raad was born in 1967 in the village of Chbanieh in Lebanon. He grew up in Beirut and was eight when the civil war broke out, a conflict that claimed more than a hundred thousand lives, and lasted for fifteen years. In 1983, Walid Raad emigrated to the USA, where he now lives. In the late 1980s, Walid Raad's career took off with a major project that already has an established place in art history;

"The Atlas Group" is an unparalleled enactment of an archive, with documents and lectures on the Lebanese wars. His subsequent projects, **"Sweet talk commissions Beirut"** and **"Scratching on things I could disavow"**, also relate closely to the Middle East and how violence affects bodies, minds, art, culture and traditions. In **"The Atlas Group"** (1989-2004), Raad created stories and documents about the Lebanese wars of the past few decades. Borrowing from the genres of literary fiction and conceptual photography, Raad imagines documents, characters and events that could have existed in times of war. Taken as a whole, the material comprises an archive of sorts, one that holds significant meaning for Raad, who views his imaginary documents as potential artifacts for the writing of a new history. **"Sweet talk commissions Beirut"** (1987-) is composed of various photo assignments. Beginning in the late 1980s, Raad starting commissioning himself to document Beirut's changing urban landscape, its streets, buildings, and shopfronts. He concentrated on the neighborhoods where he lived, just on the margins of the urban battlegrounds. This project continued in the "post-war" as a grandiose new city center emerged. When asked about the project, Raad says, **"In 1987, I committed myself to producing photographs in Beirut. I titled this commitment Sweet talk, as a reference to the city's residents 'sweet-talking' themselves, by creating fascinating ways to live in a city that was under the constant threat of military assault, urban destruction and renewal"**. The theme of Raad's third project, **"Scratching on things I could disavow"** (2007-), engages with how violence affects tradition and art in material and non-material ways. His attention falls on the rise of new infrastructures for the arts in the Arab world, with particular emphasis on the Gulf states. On the one hand, Raad addresses the struggle for soft power and prestige in today's Arab world via the building of massive new museums such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi. On the other hand, he explores how Islamic, modern or contemporary "Arab" artworks resist, adapt, or cloak themselves as they enter these new spaces. Throughout the

exhibition period, Walid Raad will visit Moderna Museet several times to perform his work **"Kicking the Dead and/or Les Louvres"**, a 75-minute walkthrough performance at the intersection between lecture, guided tour and theatre. Thematically, Walid Raad focuses on the opening of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi. His research leads him to the First World War, art studies, insurance, perspiration and the history of tall buildings. In the performance, Raad also presents various people, including a Vietnam veteran/WW1 fanatic, carpet conservators, property moguls and various sheiks, emperors and emirs. The performance is part of the exhibition and will take place in the exhibition space on 23 occasions. Raad will also do five guided tours of the exhibition.