

# Bar Laika presents: Walid Raad, Selections from The Atlas Group



Bar Laika is pleased to present a screening of video selections from *The Atlas Group* (1989-2004), a project by Walid Raad about the contemporary history of Lebanon.

***Hostage: The Bachar Tapes (English version) (2001, 16:17 minutes)***

Attributed to Souheil Bachar, *Hostage: The Bachar Tapes* is about the abduction and detention in Lebanon in the 1980s and early 1990s of Western men like Terry Anderson and Terry Waite by 'Islamic militants.' This episode directly and indirectly consumed Lebanese, US, French, German and British political and public life, and precipitated a number of high profile political scandals like the Iran-Contra Affair in the US.

In *Hostage* this crisis is examined through the testimony of Souheil Bachar who was held hostage in Lebanon between 1983 and 1993. What is remarkable about Souheil's captivity is that he was the only Arab to have been detained with the Western hostages kidnapped in Beirut in the 1980's. In fact, Souheil was held for three months in 1985 in the same cell as five American men: Terry Anderson, Thomas Sutherland, Benjamin Weir, Marting Jenco, and David Jacobsen. In 1999, Bachar collaborated with The Atlas Group (a non-profit cultural research foundation based in Lebanon) to produce 53 videotapes about his captivity. Tapes #17 and #31 are the only two tapes Bachar makes available outside of Lebanon. In the tapes, Bachar addresses the cultural, textual, and sexual aspects of his detention with the Americans.

***I only wish that I could weep (2002, 5 minutes)***

This found document is attributed to Operator #17, a Lebanese Army intelligence officer who was assigned to monitor the Corniche, a seaside boardwalk in Beirut. From 1997 on, the officer decided to videotape the sunset instead of his assigned target. This videotape recounts the operator's story and concentrates on the footage he was permitted to keep after his dismissal.

***Miraculous Beginnings and No, Illness Is Neither Here Nor There (1993, 1:43 minutes)***

Until his death in 1993, Dr. Fadl Fakhouri was the foremost historian of the Lebanese wars. From 1975 until 1991, Dr. Fadl Fakhouri was in the habit of carrying two 8mm film cameras with him wherever he went. With one camera he exposed a frame of film every time he thought the wars had come to an end. With the other camera he exposed a frame of film every time he came across the sign of a doctor's or dentist's office. Dr. Fakhouri titled the two rolls of film *Miraculous Beginnings* and *No, Illness Is Neither Here Nor There*, which he bequeathed, along with 226 notebooks, to The Atlas Group at the time of his death for analysis, preservation, and exhibition.

**Walid Raad** is an artist and a Professor of Art in (the still-charging-tuition) Cooper Union (New York, USA). In addition to *The Atlas Group*, Raad's works include the ongoing projects *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow* and *Sweet Talk: Commissions (Beirut)*.

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