

Walid Raad: Preface to the First Edition at Louvre's Salle de la Maquette (19 January-8 April)

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Guest blogger Saranna Biel-Cohen reviews Lebanese artist Walid Raad's contemporary installation at the Louvre



Walid Raad: Preface to the First Edition", Louvre's Salle de la

Maquette (Installation view)

Paris: Contemporary media artist Walid Raad is currently showing a work at the Louvre in conjunction with the opening of the new [Islamic galleries in the museum](#). Raad, born in Lebanon, now based in New York City, was trained in photography and video art, and has exhibited worldwide in major expositions including documenta 11 and the Venice and the Whitney Biennales amongst others. He is best known for his work, [Atlas Group](#), which deals with the contemporary history of Lebanon with particular emphasis on the wars in the country between 1975 to 1991. Another project, *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow. A History of Art in the Arab World*, begun in 2007, critically examined the heritage of the Middle East and the geopolitical issues that have come to define the region in contemporary society and media.

To mark the opening of the [Islamic Galleries](#), the Louvre invited Raad to take part in a collaborative project which will span three consecutive years. The first part of this project is currently on view until April 8, 2013 in an exhibition called "[Preface to the First Edition](#)" which includes a video, a sculptural installation and a publication.

In the basement of the museum, visitors can see the foundation of the Louvre, originally built as a fortress in the 12th Century. Raad's installation is in a pocket just off these foundation walls. Neon vertical lights are unexpected in that setting and they invite visitors to experience a contemporary conversation about the museum's newest gallery. Metal stencils hang from the ceiling and bright white lights are projected onto them, creating linear shadows on the walls, resembling doorways or corridors. Raad's use of light and shadow shape the four walls of the space, on one wall, a video of blurred images and objects is periodically projected. His work discusses trauma of the region, displacement of objects and globalization of Arab art, themes that he has explored in previous projects.



Walid Raad: "Preface to the First Edition", Louvre's Salle de la Maquette (Installation view)

The Raad and Louvre collaboration is another example of heightened interest in both the ancient and contemporary art of the Islamic world from museums around the world. "Over the past few years, I have been fascinated by the emergence of new art museums, galleries, schools and cultural foundations in cities such as Abu Dhabi, Beirut, Cairo, Doha, Istanbul, Ramallah and Sharjah, among others. I am intrigued by the

increased visibility of the makers, sponsors, consumers and histories of "Arab art," and more so by the acceleration in the development of new infrastructures for the visual arts in the Arabian Gulf." – Walid Raad on his work at dOCUMENTA 13.

The Louvre's new and extensive Islamic galleries really define it as a global museum, and with its new location opening in Abu Dhabi, a deeper connection to the Arab world is solidified.

Read more about Raad's work in this Art Newspaper [interview with the artist](#).

Guest contributor Saranna Biel-Cohen lives and works in London. She holds a Master's Degree in History of Art from University College London with a focus on Modern Indian Art.