

Affective Archives: Art Between Memory and Future-Making

Hassan Alazzeah

Department of Art History, King's Academy

Abstract

The research aims to examine the ways in which contemporary artists create “affective archives” to challenge state memorials and Orientalist scripts, and to negotiate between a nostalgic past and claims on potential alternative futures. The study focuses on the period from the mid-twentieth century to the present with artists from Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt. It primarily interprets art both as a technology of memory and a laboratory for the communication and construction of politics. The study integrates visual analysis of painting, installation and street art through site readings, semi- structured artist interviews, existing scholarship in postcolonial, memory and affect studies and gives attention to institutions, foundations, and museums. It examines the material, media, methods and social practices involved, and how these techniques can contest official narratives of commemoration and externally imposed modes of Orientalism consumption. The work documents how themes of practice such as seriality, the use of calligraphy, material density, abstraction, anonymity and repetition enable the artist to preserve testimony, protect vulnerable subjects, and resist the demand that suffering become fully visible or easily consumable. The research demonstrates how artists stage nostalgia but do not sanctify it, transforming longing into civic responsibility, shared memory, and future-making.