

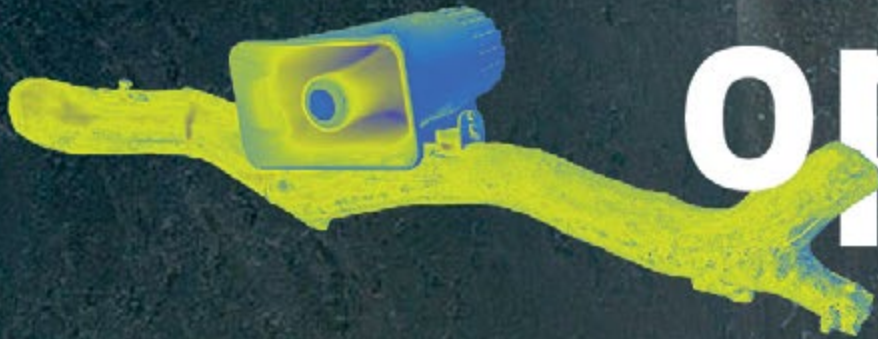


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محمود  
درويش

MAHMOUD  
DARWISH  
CHAIR

# IF THERE WERE A THERE, IT WOULD BE...

Curatorial statement by **Elia Suleiman**



# open call

for artists and scholars - 2021

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مؤسسة  
عبد المنعم  
القطان  
A M QATTAN  
FOUNDATION



CAMARGO  
FOUNDATION  
CASSIS, FRANCE

Mucem  
Musée des civilisations de l'Europe  
et de la Méditerranée

*I travel within myself  
Besieged by contradictions  
And life is worth the candle of its mystery  
And its prophetic birds*

Mahmoud Darwish

In the nineties, when I set out to make my first feature film, *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, I'd wanted to make a point. I wanted to show how the narrative of Palestine was non-linear; rather, that it was composed of multiple narratives, small fragments, and moments in the margins; that it dwelled in personal and everyday-life experiences, shared and lived. Palestine would thus become a microcosm of the world; its narrative, thanks to cinematic language, would become a universal one, and so change how the world looked at Palestine. It would put Palestine on the map, so to speak. Or so I told myself.

A few decades down the road, Palestine is no longer a microcosm of the world. The current warped sad state of the world has inverted the equation: it is now the world that's been rendered a microcosm of Palestine.

Citizens' anger directed against their governments and corrupt systems is being met with bullets and teargas. Many activists, artists, writers, poets, filmmakers, and intellectuals have been interrogated, ended up locked up themselves, or are tending to their wounds.

All the while, the concept and meaning of universality itself has been seriously challenged, viciously attacked, and gravely threatened by a globalization that has been creeping through, unannounced, for many decades, and is now bluntly championed for its vulgarity and speed of destruction.

Introspection spaces have also been minimized, blockaded. Once, the sky was the limit, and now the interior voyages of the soul have become limited to narrow, hostile corridors. We look an animal in the eye, with its silent melancholic expression, as if bidding farewell to the solitary expression of its world, and ours, headed for extinction.

The painful truth, indeed, is that we are passing through a historical period, where current and undercurrent menaces to justice, declared and undeclared wars that criminalize the innocent, are derailing the common sense that should rather guide us to understand our unravelling world. Faith in the truth at present is in the eye of a faceless storm, engineered by ignorant powers who thrive on half-truths.

Since over a year now, the catastrophic crescendo of the past decades has landed on us with a pandemic. Since then, the world has been silenced and paralyzed, rendered mute and immobile.

Not long before he passed away, during a chat over dinner with writer John Berger, who, incidentally, is probably the reason I make films, I asked him – in a moment of low self-esteem and low spirits I'd been living – how could you be so optimistic still, when you look at the ways of the world today? How can you have hope still? “We still do look at the world with hope, but we look at it with a scarred eye”, said he.

So, I keep on hanging on. I reignite my faith in poetic language whose immortal soul has been transgressing boundaries and checkpoints, in all their variants, including plagues and pandemics, since time immemorial. Poetics are immune to pandemics.

And truth is, when I pull myself together and place a cinematic image next to another, and a subliminal meaning unfolds, there is promise. That moment, such meaning is magnified, and becomes the potentiality of better things to come. So, I continue, oblivious of the state of affairs. Or in denial, momentarily.

*Rhythm does not come from the words  
But from the joining of two bodies in the long night...*

Mahmoud Darwish

When filming the first part of my latest film, *It Must Be Heaven*, my morale was again deteriorating by the day, this time, however, at the sight of what has become of my birthplace, Nazareth. There was a sense of desolation and despair in the town. A humorless ghetto. Grim sad faces, yellow smiles. Gangsters roaming mean streets in broad daylight and in white nights.

Where are the younger crowds, the lively, the beautiful ones? Do they exist at all, to begin with? I asked desperately. "In Haifa", I was told. They migrated to Haifa. From Nazareth, but also from many other Palestinian towns and villages. "Everything takes place, happens there", I was told. I'd like to see, I said.

And I did. A whole new generation that I've missed out on.

Their resistance is a rhythmical anthem – festive, cultural, happily unideological, and non-nationalistic. Hence, their Palestinian identity is a concept, not rooted in geographic boundaries. Their identity is rather defined through their identification with just causes all over the world.

Throughout my upbringing, I strived to fulfil the premise of what Hugo of St. Victor described as the perfect stranger. All that I'd wanted to be and couldn't become, they became, I said to myself. This young generation accomplished their mission, organically, without the exilic experience and whatever benefits it may offer; they got there without nomadism.

They have managed instead to construct a poetic habitat, as if shaped like white clouds – an infinitely ever-changing homeland. And it's their source of inspiration and cultural resistance – where the personal and the political bond over a metaphysical interlocutor that recalls, speaks a familiar language, of ethics, aesthetics, moral boundaries, tenderness, and togetherness, of consolation, of the pleasures of being, and of pleasure, in and of itself.

So, how can tomorrow be saved?

"Where should the birds fly after the last sky?" reads a hymn from a poem by Mahmoud Darwish.

If there were a There, it would be where this generation of Palestinians are headed!

**Curatorial statement by Elia Suleiman, Film Director.**  
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# IF THERE WERE A THERE, IT WOULD BE...

Open call For artists & scholars – 2021

Deadline : June 13, 2021

**Mahmoud Darwish Chair, Bozar, A. M. Qattan Foundation, Camargo Foundation and Mucem join forces for the first open call which honors the legacy of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish.**

This open call encourages new, engaging narratives on the legacy of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and his influences on artistic and intellectual creation in the Arab, European, and Mediterranean contemporary world.

**This first open call is launched with a curatorial statement by Elia Suleiman.**

## ELIGIBILITY

- This call welcomes applications from all countries and nationalities that compose the MENA Region and its Diaspora. The proposals should be connected to the curatorial statement by Elia Suleiman (attached to this call).

Applicants can represent a broad range of creative thought and practice, and can be:

- **Artists**, in all disciplines and including poets and writers, who are primary creators of a new work/project. Multidisciplinary proposals are welcome. Applicants should have a track record of publications, performances, exhibitions, credits, awards, and/or grants. We are interested in artists who have a fully developed, mature artistic voice.
- **Scholars** in the fields of the Arts and Humanities, writing in Arabic, French or English. Applicants are expected to hold a PhD and a record of post-doctoral scholarship.

## THE RESIDENCY

- **4 grants** will be awarded to develop new work/projects;
- **4-week residency** in one of the 3 locations (Camargo/Mucem, A. M. Qattan Foundation, Bozar/Darwish Chair), taking place from July 2021 to July 2022;
- The program will provide **formal and informal conversation** on the development of the proposal, as well **as connections** with local professionals whose areas of expertise are relevant to the participants' work;
- **2 project discussions:** one open studio with a "guest curator" (an online meeting is possible if advisable for health concerns) and one public presentation (at the end of the residency period or later, according to the program partners' schedule).

## GRANT AND ACCOMMODATION

- A grant of 3000 euros for each selected participant for the development of the project;
- Additional travel grant to cover travel expenses;
- Accommodation, provided by the partner hosting the residency.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- The proposal must be achievable before July 2022;
- Production and post-production for feature films are not eligible;
- Producing, publishing and translating existing works are not eligible;
- Work developed during the residency may be in any language. In the interests of the Program's interdisciplinary, multicultural community, candidates must be able to communicate well in English. A basic knowledge of French is useful but not required.

## SELECTION PROCESS & CRITERIA

- A selection committee, consisting of three members representing each partner and two externals advisors.
- Selection criteria:
  - Consistency with the curatorial statement;
  - Practical feasibility of the proposal in the given framework and timeline;
  - Priority is given to multidisciplinary approaches.

## APPLICATIONS

- The deadline to submit applications is June 13, 2021 (midnight Brussels time)
- Applications must be submitted online at the following link: <<https://camargofoundation.submittable.com/submit>>;
- Proposals must be in Arabic, English, or French;
- Applications include the following:

CV + biography  
Contact (phone & mail address) + website  
Written proposal + visuals (min. 800 – max. 1500 words)  
Motivation letter (500 words)  
Portfolio or other work samples

- Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed;
- Applicants will be notified of the results in by start of July 2021. Please note that only accepted applicants will be contacted directly.

For further inquiries, please contact Mahmoud Darwish Coordinator: <[nedjma.hbenchelabi@bozar.be](mailto:nedjma.hbenchelabi@bozar.be)>.

