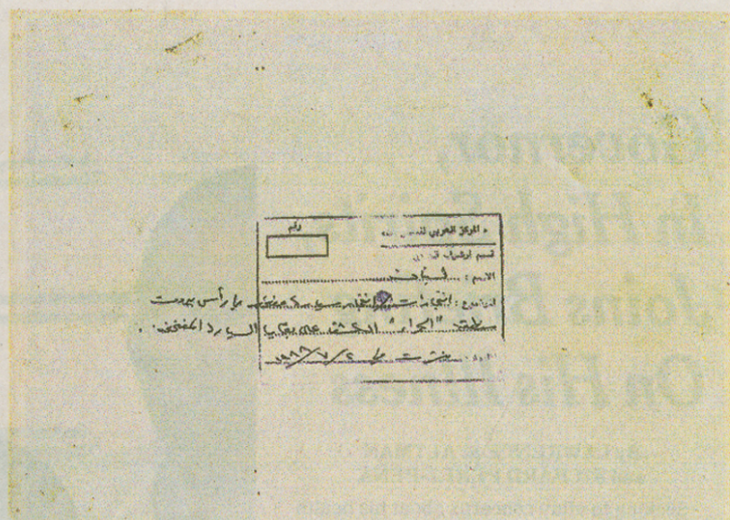


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Walid Raad/The Atlas Group

Walid Raad uses video, diagrams and photographs in his talks on political violence. This picture, from Lebanon, is from an exhibition of his work.

Putting Order to Acts That Defy Order

By KAREEM FAHIM

WALID RAAD, an artist who carries with him lessons from Lebanon, spoke about the shocks that radiate from a single explosion.

It was a car bomb in Beirut, in 1986.

"To be more precise, on 21 January at 11:22 in the morning," Mr. Raad said on Tuesday night during a lecture at the Kitchen, a performance space in Chelsea. This particular bomb, like most of the other 3,641 that exploded during 15 years of the Lebanese civil war, was placed in an area of high population density "in order to kill, destroy and terrorize as much as possible," he said.

But his lecture was not just about this bomb, this war.

His presentation, based in fact and dotted with fiction, is less a history of car bombs than it is lessons about cities under siege.

It is a lesson about Beirut, but also, he said, "about London, Madrid, Bagh-

dad, Tel Aviv, or even New York."

Mr. Raad, 38, who uses mixed media to explore political violence, is an associate professor of art at Cooper Union and splits his time between Beirut and New York. He has given similar talks before, and they seem to grow in relevance with each fresh look at conflict around the world. The pace of bombings in Baghdad, he said, appears to have matched the rate during the Lebanese civil war, which started in 1975.

He began his lecture Tuesday with small details and crisp diagrams that provided an ordered cartography of the destruction from the bomb. At least 22 people were killed, and scores were injured, he said. A paint store, a women's clothing shop and a general store were destroyed, along with 23 cars. He used symbols to explain the aftermath of the bombing, little icons for an army, a militia, a gun.

Mr. Raad delivers his presentation, titled "My Neck Is Thinner Than a

Hair" — a phrase he heard from a man he was interviewing once — while sitting calmly at a foldout table with a laptop in front of him. Using video, old photographs and his diagrams, Mr. Raad tries to put order to a civil war that defied order.

In cities under assault, Mr. Raad said, private lives become public. The contents of buildings, blown apart, are exposed. In Lebanon, residents learned to protect themselves and to mistrust the people next door. "You start asking your neighbors to reveal their secrets" even though they have committed no crime, he said.

Something similar was evident in New York, Mr. Raad said, after the July 7 bombing in the London Underground, when he saw people wearing backpacks made of clear plastic. "What they're saying is, 'My inside is public,'" he said.

Imagine the climate that more than 3,000 bombs create, he said.