

# Time Out

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### ART

#### Walid Raad, "The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs: Documents from The Atlas Group Archive"

The Kitchen, through Mar 11 (see Chelsea).

The facts of Lebanon's recent history read like surreal details from the pages of a book by Kafka or Borges. In the 1960s, Beirut was a glamorous resort, favored by celebrities like Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton; by 1975, the city had collapsed into civil war. Artist Walid Raad's ongoing project, "The Atlas Group," chronicles Lebanese events from 1975 to 1991, adopting a classic Conceptual art strategy of documentation and classification.

One group of monochrome photos accompanied by text recounts the discovery of a cache of pictures showing people who drowned—or were found dead—in the Mediterranean Sea. Another section catalogs the make, model and color of cars used in car bombings

between 1975 and 1991. A third follows Dr. Fakhouri, a scholar of Lebanese military conflict, while a fourth details the penchant for gambling among Lebanese historians. Three films, screened in the rear gallery, include a montage of sunsets filmed by a Lebanese intelligence officer while he was supposed to be filming surveillance targets, and an erotically charged account of an Arab man held hostage in the mid-80s with Americans Terry Anderson and Thomas Sutherland.

While Lebanon's violent history is the ostensible text here, it is submerged in stories, poetic images and strange anecdotes. Questions arise about whether fiction is woven through

the facts. Like Borges's labyrinthine library filled with texts—some real, some imaginary—Raad's documents challenge the ability of any narrative to accurately convey truth, a reminder that, as Borges quipped, sometimes "the original is not faithful to the translation."—*Martha Schwendener*



Installation view,  
Walid Raad