The exhibition projectSentences on the banks and other activities is conceived as an arena for research activities, a project experimenting with display formats and ideal narratives of artworks and their histories. The main room acts as a headquarters, connecting the roads and passages built between the artists’ studios and the surrounding urban mountains.

Today the exhibition space is for the curator what the studio is for the artist: a nomadic mental space, more an imprecise field for ideas than a factoring for objects. The main role of an exhibition is to share artistic production in the ‘CRM’. An exhibition is a space of freedom where a diversity of artworks coexists like words in a poem. This exhibition acts as a hub for collaborative operations, provoking statements or dialogue with other fields and disciplines. The action of production and the space of visibility are intertwined.

Among the ideas behind the exhibition in Amman is the importance of building bridges between different areas and mountains, and connecting the local art scene to other arenas. The artworks in the exhibition appear at the same time as the activities initiated in different parts of the city by its activists and citizens. Artworks do for the city what the word does for the novel, what the flower does for the forest, or what the stone rose does for the desert; it creates an exceptional moment for thinking or contemplating. In a time where cultural production is instrumentalised by touristic projects and financial gains, the challenge is to retain the soul of the artworks by underscoring the strength of their meaning while ensuring that they are connected to the urban environment and produced to be shared in a situation where culture is not the priority.

Amman is a city of passage, with a significant number of exiles arriving from surrounding countries plagued by war or endemic conflicts. A constellation of relevant notions is contained in the artworks such as fear, desire, belief, displacement, and social ecology.

The project deals with establishing links between edges as well as looking at fixed passages and limits between spaces, disciplines, and conventions. It is important that cultural production makes sense of the here/now. Creating an exhibition means building a space that gives sense to the multiple expressions contained within artworks and this project hopes to create freedom in a place where people are confined at different levels (religion, politics, land divisions…).

The format of the exhibition is fused with the idea of ‘publishing’; as Amman has known public reading since antiquity, from The Suspended Odes (al-muallaqat), which date to before the time of Ishmael, to Mahmoud Darwish and the songs repeated in coffee shops and on the terraces of mosques. The first publication (Volume 1) acts as a space for listening, it is an invitation to address specific issues. Art can be used as a tool for changing society or as a current as a tool for changing society. Volume 1 is an instrument of correspondence between the artist and curators as actors and the audience as associates in the formulation of ideas that construct the exhibition space as a place for dialogue.

Cultural production, art spaces, theatres, and universities are an important part of society but can only be active when their production is shared within a larger context. The breath of cultural bodies can provoke “practive” dialogues when they connect to other spheres. Any individual or collective activity can have an exponential effect on the rest of society. No renaissance can be valid if the dream is not continuously charged.

When an expression, be it an art project, a film, a book, a performance, or even an exhibition, creates a passage between the proposition of the creator and the user, the context is activated. In architecture, foundations and walls are not eternal and precarious structures can be more solid than bunkers.

How can we make an exhibition project the centre of the world when we only believe in a fragmented universe? This project integrates production across disciplines and social practices, associating the exhibition space with public and social ecology.

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How can we make an exhibition project the centre of the world when we only believe in a fragmented universe? This project integrates production across disciplines and social practices, associating the exhibition space with public and private spheres, and cultural sites around the city. It deals with the city as a shared space. The politics of the use of public space interacts with ways of living in private places. The project is launched with an invitation for people to join a collective space for thinking, where they are encouraged to express ideas of realities and imagination. It is not about making sentences but rather about making sense.

The curatorial enunciation suggests the simultaneous appearance, in time and space, of art production, post-production and encounters; it experiments with the idea of the emergence of artistic expression as part of the formulation process. The urgent nature of this idea of sharing while creating interrogates the speed of this day and age, and the unaccounted distance between real facts and history, documentary and fiction.

Sentences on the banks and other activities is a project that speaks to the “here and now,” proposing an open perspective and imagining a possible correspondence between the inside and outside of the art fields.

Notes:
1. The city of Amman expands across mountains (originally seven) and thus consists of areas defined more by geography than by cultural or ethnic divisions.
2. “Practive” means the process of discourse and its active practice.
EXHIBITION AT DARAT AL FUNUN

Hamdi Attia, Archipelago - A World Map II, 2009 - 2010, installation in situ (painted, joint, panel). Courtesy of the artist. Hamdi Attia’s experimental approach explores associations and misrepresentations, and calls critical attention to the artist’s role within society. In the collaborative and multisite project ‘World Map’, developed since 2004, Hamdi Attia analyzes the contours of geopolitical processes that come across as a projection of other possibilities. In Archipelago, a World Map, the visual elements are inspired by the fluidity of transitional geopolitical realities that are simultaneously ultra-controlled. In the first version of the work, installed at the Hordaland Art Centre in 2010, the artist created a paradox by producing a seemingly free world map without grids, presenting it in the form of self-enclosed masses that float as disconnected islands.

Yto Barrada, Beau Geste, 2009, 16mm film transferred to DVD, 3’. English with Arabic subtitles. Courtesy of the artist. Co-production of L’Appartement 22 and the artist, with the support of the Goethe Institute, Morocco. Yto Barrada has developed a visual language that relies on photography, publications, film, and interventions in urban and exhibition spaces and that is embedded with deep political commitment. Barrada often uses Tangier and the Straits of Gibraltar as the sites of her inquiring which is both artistic and documentary. Cinema and graphics augment the artist’s activist approach that navigates between investigating historical reality and generating ecological commentary. Beau Geste documents an “action” in a vacant lot, inspired by the Diggers Movement. The owner of this vacant lot has made a fatally deep notch into a palm tree, a PHoeNIX CANArIeNSIS, and is waiting for it to fall. The owner of this vacant lot has made a fatally deep notch into a palm tree, a PHoeNIX CANArIeNSIS, and is waiting for it to fall. Once this occurs, the owner can build on his lot. The “action” sets out to interrupt or delay this process.

Ninar Esber, The 2 Ladders, 2009, photograph of an installation, 40 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist and L’Appartement 22. Ninar Esber builds monumental structures, and her performances, photographs, and videos rely on the centrality of the body, often situated within these architectural spaces. Her work is consistently imbued with a performative air by her use of real-time filming and deliberate artifice. The 2 Ladders is a massive site-specific installation in two parts, produced at the Lot 219 Workshop of L’Appartement 22 in Fez, creating an imagined link between the Lot 219 and the top of the mountain north of Fez. The artist also used this structure in a performance, thus continuing a series of works where she stands on extant buildings to create visibility for the body within space.

Mohamed El-Baz, (MAGNUSKI), 2010, installation (Foamer). Courtesy of the artist. Mohamed El-Baz has been working on his extensive project entitled Bricoler l’inconscable since 1993, drawing on a visual lexicon of elements – photographs, objects, symbols, and words – that he creates, collects, and reuses differently each time he installs his work. Born in Morocco, and having immigrated to France at a very young age, the artist is highly influenced by “images” (in the sense of the imagined) of the political, social and “poetic” situation of Morocco, a context he encountered only years later as an artist. In his art, El-Baz showcases objects according to established codes of representation, constructing a situation of tension that interrogates the concepts of alienation and empowerment. For this exhibition project, the artist has created a new text-based work. The text “imaginos...” was written by El-Baz while in Sicily as a possible “form” for a public building in Amman, and later this text “imposed itself” onto the structure. In fact, the text “les fleuves brûlent...” (rivers are burning...) was engraved in the artist’s memory since 2007, during his stay in Bamako, from then on has changed, travelling from one form to another, like the ensemble of elements that the artist has long explored.

Mona Hatoum, Medal of dishonour, 2008, bronze, 9 x 65 mm diameter. Courtesy of The Khalid Shoman Private Collection, Amman. Mona Hatoum, Witness, 2008, ceramic, stone, 84 x 57 x 35 cm. Courtesy of the artist. British–Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum uses traditional media to connect with her audience and engender a sense of family, or the insignia of empire, and ‘sculpture’ into the uncanny. Witness, a miniaturized replica of the statue in Martyrs’ Square in Beirut, is a witness of history, acts and facts. Medal of dishonour, on the other hand, offers itself as a “prize” and takes on the role of judging. Medal of dishonour is a small bronze medal in which the globe is portrayed in the shape of a hand–grenade. “Made in the United States,” usually imprinted on the back of manufactured products, is inscribed on the medal’s surface in Arabic. The piece makes satirical reference to America’s global ambitions and accompanying political failures which have consequently resulted in the loss of life and in millions of stateless refugees.

Samah Hijawi, This work does not mean anything to me: Musings around art and art-discourse, 2010, an intervention with art and sound at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts. Courtesy of the artist. Part of an ongoing investigation around visual practices in Jordan, Samah Hijawi has developed a multi-layered collaborative and documentation project that questions the position of art and it’s reception in Jordan. The artist uses physical works from two institutions that play a role in the education of the public on visual art in Jordan; The Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts and the University of Jordan. While they have different functions, both play a passive or active role in defining an aesthetic language and an understanding of ‘fine arts’. The interrogation brings forward questions on formal and informal art education in relation to the status of these principle institutions; the work thus inquires into the projected ‘role of art in a society’, and the part played by the institution in creating definitions for the arts.

Mokhsin Harrafi, two sides of one piece, 2008, video, 1’11”. Courtesy of the artist. Mokhsin Harrafi is a multi-disciplinary artist whose practice interrogates cultural conventions and post-colonial consequences. His work focuses on deconstructing collective memory through objects and knowledge. His film two sides of one piece makes direct reference to the relation between the image, politics and money. It features imagery of a spinning coin and the sound of the coin’s movement across the surface, its rapid movement transforming it into a foreign, aesthetically pleasing object. Harrafi recently graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Dijon, and is developing a project that draws on books used in several countries by massive educational systems.

Faouzi Laatiris, Vis-à-vis, 2010, mirrors, wood, two elements of 150 x 100 x 2.6 cm each. Courtesy of the artist. Using raw material as well as recycled popular imagery, Faouzi Laatiris re-constructs the idea of ‘sculpture’ as a tool for shaping art that is self–critical and that can present critical views on ‘contemporary’ Morocco. Vis-à-vis is a work composed of two almost-identical “mirrors”, representing an oversized size taken from the ornamental patterning employed to decorate ceramic tiles in classical Islamic architecture, developed in specific from a mosaic found in a Moroccan palace. Installed in a symmetrical manner, the two mirrors face each other, with one facing forward and the other, part amputated, turned to reveal its back side. The work literally reflects the environment of the exhibition site and can be seen both as a ‘reflection’ of the exhibition space and an instigation of our consciousness of our position in the world. The double motif becomes more than a sculpture, changing when we move between its two parts, and when the work itself is moved from one site to another.
EXHIBITION AT DARAT AL FUNUN

Antoni Muntadas, On Translation: Medio-raig, 2007–2010, video, prints, and text on wall. Courtesy of the artist. Muntadas’s work explores questions of politics, communication, and the relation between private and public space. Muntadas began his project On Translation in 1995 and has explored issues of interpretation and translation internationally since then in more than thirty works. On Translation: Medio-raig was filmed between Tarifa and Tangier in 2007 and focuses on the border between Spain and Morocco. While the work draws on some found images and texts, it is primarily based on interviews conducted by the artist with the inhabitants of both sides of the Straits of Gibraltar about the concept of fear. Muntadas’s solo and collaborative works have been exhibited widely throughout the world, both in public spaces, such as television, billboards, and the internet, and in exhibitions. He is currently a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Octobong Nkanga, Contained Measures Series, 2008, acrlyic on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm. Courtesy of the artist. Octobong Nkanga is both a performer and visual artist working with installation, photography, drawing and sculpture. In her work, humans and alternately imposing and claustrophobic environments seem fragile; yet, for all of the fear or foreboding, there remain notes of hope. Nkanga’s work often addresses political realities and considers changing economies, mobility, and displacement, especially in her home country of Nigeria. In her work Contained Measures Series, Nkanga presents painted drawings that set up connections between bodies, man-made structures and mountainous terrains, reflective of the delicate relationship between man and his environment and in line with the ambitions of the exhibition project as a whole.

Catherine Ponce, Vertiges, 2006, color print mounted on diasec. Courtesy of galerie Les filles du calvaire, Paris. Catherine Ponce appropriates and re-photographs images from personal collections, flea markets, and found archives. It is a process that often leads to intimate conversations and collaborations with the owners of the photographers who choose to share their images and memories with the artist. In Vertiges, she juxtaposes the cliff landscape of a river as it crosses the Algerian city of Constantine with pictures of fragments of bodies she has photographed from private albums. Ponce recently travelled to Petra and is developing a project related to this visit. The series Vertiges has been selected for the exhibition project because of the similarity in the nature of the landscape it captures and that of the city of Amman.

Larbi Rahali, Omri (My Life), 1984 – 2009, series of drawings on paper boxes, various dimensions. Courtesy of the artist and Espace 150 x 295 cm, Larbi. Omri means ”my life” in Arabic. Oum Kalthoum’s famous 1964 song Enta Omri (You are my life) made the meaning of this word more connected to passion than to any other in the Arabic language. Larbi Rahali is an amateur fisherman and his passion is fishing in large seas. Omri presents extracts of the artist’s ”life” who considers his jacket pockets as his studio, the matchbox as his canvas, his hand as his easel, and the world as his model. Rahali’s matchboxes hold his observations, dreams and meaningful keepsakes. From daily life scenes and reproductions of classics to expressions and intimate notes, the artist has created within these boxes a collection of interior and exterior views. Rahali sails the Straits of Gibraltar, the closest passage between Europe and Africa, where ancient legend has it that Heracles separated the two and where modern day legends tell of the many African children who are tempted to cross. The artist–fisherman is ”witness” to the stories he illustrates in his miniatures.

James Webb, There is a light that never goes out, 2010, neon, 364 x 80 cm. Courtesy of the artist. James Webb has worked on both large-scale installations in galleries and museums as well as unannounced interventions in public spaces since 2001. His work explores the nature of belief and dynamics of language in the contemporary world, often using exoticism, displacement and humour as its vehicle. There is A Light That Never Goes Out appropriates the title of the 1986 hit song by the seminal British band, The Smiths. Translated into Arabic, and manifested in white neon that is illuminated at night, the anemic lyrics are removed from their parochial origins, and acquire site-specific associations. The work’s placement within its surroundings establishes it as part of the landscape, formulating it as a new geographical point in the city as well as a non-commercial, publicly-accessible text that is open to personal interpretation.
PROJECTS WITHIN THE CITY OF AMMAN

From Jabal Qala to Jabal Luweibdeh
Invitation for a tour in the city
Organized with Hamzet Wasel
Tuesday 09 November 2010 at 4:30 pm
From the future site of the Jabal Qala community Park, a journey takes off to rediscover informal routes that lead to “Imaginons...”, a monumental work by Mohamed El-Baz at Al Fuheis Complex in Jabal Luweibdeh. The inhabitants, children, activists, and experts exchange ideas on ways to create shared spaces such as the park project within the city.

Hani Alqam, Painting on Jabal Nasr’s Stone Mine
Paintings inspired by a childhood memory in the city of Amman
Hani Alqam’s project serves as an imagined souvenir from the artist’s memory relating to a particular place, Jabal Nasr. Visiting this place twenty years later, the artist reflects on the feeling and perception of time and its passing. The paintings are imagined in dialogue with the inhabitants of the area based on their recollections of Hajjah Sabha. Hani Alqam works in places around Amman, both anonymous and well-known, adopting them as the main subject of his artistic production. This stone mine is among many others that have become empty places, in opposition to the phenomenon of urbanisation that uses their stones to build the city.

‘Exciting Project’ at the Studio - Jabal Amman
From 08 October to 06 November 2010
A series of meetings with Abdul Hay Mosallam that begin with Periodic meetings, first meeting on Wednesday 10 November 2010 at 6:00 pm
Open Doors at Abdul Hay Mosallam’s Workshop - Jabal Qusur
Periodic meetings, first meeting on Wednesday 10 November 2010 at 6:00 pm
A series of meetings with Abdul Hay Mosallam that begin with a visit to his studio. Mosallam is a self-taught artist who has meticulously worked on archiving the recent histories of the Palestinian people. Using available material, he recreates scenes from daily life in his lost Palestinian home that have remained vivid in his mind since his expulsion from the village of Dawainm in 1948. Mosallam has also produced extensive documentation of the recent Palestinian struggle and liberation movements in the form of painted reliefs. This “painted archive” corpus is valid as a first representation of a community writing its own history and not just as a collection of images.

Opening for Children – Darat al Funun, Jabal Luweibdeh
Thursday 11 November 2010 at 11:00 am
Darat al Funun’s Education Department is organising a special opening for children. The event takes the young crowd on a learning experience through the exhibited works, giving them the opportunity to meet the artists and curators.

Sentences on the Banks and Other Activities
Curated by: Abdullatt Kassum
for Darat al Funun - The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman
Thanks to the artists and contributors to the exhibition and projects in the city. Thanks also for the support of Gallerie Les filles du calvaire, Hamzet Wasel, Ruwwad, and The Studio.
Special thanks to the Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Jordan, and the Greater Amman Municipality.

Bernard Marcadé speaks to Faisal Darraj
12 November 2010 at 6:00 pm - Darat al Funun
A series of conversations held at Darat al Funun, led by thinker and literary critic Faisal Darraj, beginning with a dialogue with French art historian and curator Bernard Marcadé.
Bernard Marcadé is currently teaching Aesthetic and Art History at l’École Nationale Supérieure d’Arts de Paris-Cergy. Marcadé has published the comprehensive Marcel Duchamp, une vie à crédit (Flammarion, 2007) as well as most recently Fabrice Hyber (Flammarion, 2009). Marcadé has also curated numerous exhibitions such as L’excès & le retrait (São Paulo Art Biennial, 1991), Becoming (Gwangu Biennale, 1997), and On dirait le Sud, Cartographies sentimentales et documentaire (Centre régional d’art contemporain, Sète, 2007).

Intervention at Daraj Nadim al Mallah (Darat al Funun)
An intervention on the external walls of the new building of Darat al Funun as an act of extending the space of the live museum. This project is one of a series of interventions commissioned to a group of artists for different locations throughout the city. For this location, the participating artists explore the topic of “animals, plants, machines, and urbans”.

Mones Razzaz’s Novel ‘Jumaa Al-Qiffari’ in Urban Spaces
Thursday 11 November 2010 at 3:30 pm
Titled ‘Mones Road’, the first reading is led by Samar Dudin, starting point at 44 Nimer Al Edwan Street, Jabal Luweibdeh
Mones Razzaz’s novel ‘Jumaa Al-Qiffari’ is published throughout a neighbourhood in the city of Amman. Each station-chapter is conceived as a literary and visual experience, whereby the novel is discovered at the same time as the city by the viewer-reader. Every chapter is interpreted within the context of the city as correspondences between the life of the author and his writing and famous or anonymous places are mapped out. This original work, presented in the form of an experimental publication, straddles the literary and visual art. The urban space is used for reviving the narrative act, it is established as a place of encounters, emotions, exploration and discovery.
A workshop on creative writing and reading, using the novel as a point of departure, is organized at Darat al Funun, and a radio program is produced by R22 art radio.

‘Where to go?’ Mapping Project by Raed Ibrahim
04 October to 10 November 2010
Raed Ibrahim experiments with a new mapping project in the city of Amman. The Where to go? map reveals truths frequently obscured in cartographic history and results from a workshop held in Jabal Natheef involving 40 participants encountered in the city. Together, the artist and participants select personal and public spaces in Amman of significance to them, analysing the uses and specifics of each. Ibrahim then redraws a map parallel to the standard tourist map of the city using the selected sites. Ibrahim’s map serves as a manifestation of individual choices in its identification of Amman’s informal landmarks. Ibrahim thus engages the city’s inhabitants in a reflection on the routes and stations that they construct their lives around, revealing through the process the social, economic, political and religious dynamics of this young and growing urban area.

A tour of the locations of the interventions within the city, which begins in Jabal Amman and culminates at Darat al Funun in Jabal Luweibdeh, takes place on 12 November 2010 at 4:00 pm.