

younes **baba-ali**
visual & sound artist

Younes Baba-Ali

(born in 1986 in Oujda, Morocco)

lives and works in Brussels (Be) and Casablanca (Ma)

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eng.

Younes Baba-Ali makes art that is unconventional, intelligent and critical, mostly in public space or places uncommon to art practice. He is a sharp observer and raises pertinent questions aimed at society, the institution and above all, his audience. As a free thinker he holds a mirror up to society and confronts it with its ingrained habits and dysfunctions. Baba-Ali's work often assumes the form of the readymade, but underneath its facade of simplicity there is a complex exercise in balance at work. As an artist-chemist he measures and mixes technology, objects, sound, video and photography with political, social and ecological issues. The resulting installations discreetly coerce the unsuspecting viewer into taking a stand. Baba-Ali shuns no controversy and often finds himself negotiating his art and its rationale with his environment. His works are context-specific and take their final form in dialogue with its spectators. This at times disruptive intervention art confronts the viewer in an ironical way with himself and his environment. Baba-Ali presents people dilemmas and taboos and challenges them to (re)act. In this way he makes them his accomplices in acts of artistic guerrilla that unite the establishment and the common man.

Born in 1986 in Oujda (Ma), Younes Baba-Ali lives and works in Brussels (Be) & Casablanca (Ma).

Graduating from l'Ecole Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg in 2008, and from l'Ecole Supérieure d'Art d'Aix-en-Provence in 2011, he was rewarded by the prize "Léopold Sédar Senghor", during the African Contemporary Art Biennial of Dakar (Sn) in 2012 and the prize "Boghossian", during the Belgian Art Prize "Art'Contest" in Brussels (Be) in 2014. He has participated in several international exhibitions and biennials among them "Digital Africa: The Future is Now", Southbank Centre, London (UK); "Strange Paradoxe", MuCEM, Marseille (Fr); "Nass Belgica", Botanique, Brussels (Be); "Where are we now?", 5th Marrakech Biennial, Marrakech (Ma); "L'MAR9A", Voice Gallery, Marrakech (Ma); "Travail, mode d'emploi", Centrale for Contemporary Art, Brussels (Be); "Transaction Complete", FaMa Gallery, Verona (It); "Dak'Art", 10th African Contemporary Art Biennial, Dakar (Sn); "Regionale 12", Haus für elektronische Künste, Basel (Ch); "Taverna Especial", Sketch Gallery, London (UK); "Brick & Mortar International Video Art Festival", Greenfield (USA); "Loop" Video Art Festival, Barcelona (Es); "No Signal Found", Arte Contemporanea Gallery, Brussels (Be); "Flowers, Animals, Urbans, Machines", Appartement 22, Rabat (Ma) and "Desencuentros", Sabrina Amrani Art Gallery, Madrid (Es).

fr.

Younes Baba-Ali pratique un art non-conventionnel, intelligent et critique. Il travaille de préférence dans l'espace public ou dans des lieux peu communs. Fin observateur, il pose des questions pertinentes à la société, à l'institution, mais aussi surtout à son public. C'est un libre penseur, qui tend à la société un miroir et lui renvoie ses réflexes conditionnés et ses dysfonctionnements. L'œuvre de Baba-Ali se présente souvent sous la forme de ready-made, mais cette apparente simplicité dissimule un délicat exercice d'équilibre. À la manière d'un alchimiste, l'artiste dose et combine les techniques, les objets du quotidien, les sons, la vidéo et la photographie et adresse des questions politiques, sociales et écologiques. Les installations qu'il en distille poussent le spectateur à prendre position malgré lui. Baba-Ali ne recule pas devant la controverse et est même souvent contraint à de subtiles négociations avec son environnement pour revendiquer sa pratique artistique et son droit à l'existence. Son art est toujours spécifique à un contexte et ne prend vraiment sa forme que dans le dialogue du public. C'est de l'art d'intervention dérangeant et qui adopte parfois un ton ironique pour confronter le public à lui-même et à son environnement. Baba-Ali soumet au spectateur des dilemmes et des tabous et le défie d'agir et de réagir. Il en fait ainsi son complice dans une guérilla artistique clandestine qui réunit l'establishment et l'homme commun.

Né en 1986 à Oujda (Ma), Younes Baba-Ali vit et travaille à Bruxelles (Be) et Casablanca (Ma).

Diplômé de l'Ecole Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg en 2008, et de l'Ecole Supérieure d'Art d'Aix-en-Provence en 2011, il a été récompensé par le prix "Léopold Sédar Senghor", lors de la Biennale d'Art Contemporain Africain de Dakar (Sn) en 2012 et du prix "Boghossian", lors du Concours d'Art Belge "Art'Contest" à Bruxelles (Be) en 2014. Il a participé à plusieurs expositions internationales et biennales, parmi lesquelles "Digital Africa: The Future is Now", Southbank Centre, Londres (UK); "Strange Paradoxe", MuCEM, Marseille (Fr); "Nass Belgica", Botanique, Bruxelles (Be); "Where are we now?", 5ème Biennale de Marrakech, Marrakech (Ma); "L'MAR9A", Voice Gallery, Marrakech (Ma); "Travail, mode d'emploi", Centrale for Contemporary Art, Bruxelles (Be); "Transaction Complete", FaMa Gallery, Verone (It); "Dak'Art", 10ème Biennale d'Art Contemporain Africain, Dakar (Sn); "Regionale 12", Haus für elektronische Künste, Bâle (Ch); "Taverna Especial", Sketch Gallery, Londres (UK); "Brick & Mortar International Video Art Festival", Greenfield (USA); "Loop" Festival d'Art Vidéo, Barcelone (Es); "No Signal Found", Arte Contemporanea Gallery, Bruxelles (Be); "Flowers, Animals, Urbans, Machines", Appartement 22, Rabat (Ma) and "Desencuentros", Sabrina Amrani Art Gallery, Madrid (Es).

Younes Baba-Ali maakt kunst die onconventioneel, intelligent en kritisch is, meestal in de openbare ruimte of op niet voor de hand liggende plaatsen. Hij is een scherp observator en stelt pertinente vragen aan de maatschappij, het instituut, maar ook en vooral aan zijn publiek. Als een vrijdenker houdt hij de samenleving een spiegel voor en legt zo haar vastgeroeste gewoontes en dysfuncties bloot. Baba-Ali's werk presenteert zich vaak als readymade, maar onder deze ogenschijnlijke eenvoud schuilt een complexe evenwichtsoefening. Als een kunstenaar-alchemist doseert en combineert hij techniek, gebruiksvoorwerpen, geluid, video en fotografie met politieke, sociale en ecologische vraagstukken. De resulterende installaties bewegen de nietsvermoedende toeschouwer tot stellingname. Baba-Ali schuwt de controversie niet en wordt daardoor vaak gedwongen om zijn kunst en haar bestaansrecht subtiel te onderhandelen met zijn omgeving. Ze is steeds context-specifiek en krijgt pas haar echte vorm in dialoog met het publiek. Het is ontregelende interventiekunst, die op een soms ironische wijze de toeschouwer met zichzelf en zijn omgeving confronteert. Baba-Ali schotelt mensen dilemma's en taboes voor en daagt hen uit tot (re)actie. Zo maakt hij hen tot zijn medeplichtigen in een verdoken artistieke guerrilla die zowel het establishment als de gewone man in de straat verenigt.

Younes Baba-Ali, geboren in 1986 in Oujda (Ma), leeft en werkt in Brussel (Be) & Casablanca (Ma).

Afgestudeerd van de Ecole Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg (Fr) in 2008, en van de Ecole Supérieure d'Art d'Aix-en-Provence (Fr) in 2011, krijgt Younes Baba-Ali de prijs "Léopold Sédar Senghor" ter gelegenheid van de Afrikaanse Hedendaagse Kunst Biënnale van Dakar (Sn) in 2012 en de prijs "Boghossian" in het kader van de Belgische Kunstprijs "Art'Contest" in Brussel (Be) in 2014. Hij neemt deel aan verschillende internationale tentoonstellingen en biënnales waaronder "Digital Africa : The Future is Now", Southbank Centre, London (UK); "Strange Paradoxe", MuCEM, Marseille (Fr); "Nass Belgica", Botanique, Brussel (Be); "Where are we now?", 5de Marrakech Biennale, Marrakech (Ma); "L'MAR9A", Voice Gallery, Marrakech (Ma); "Travail, mode d'emploi", Centrale voor Hedendaagse Kunst, Brussel (Be); "Transaction Complete", FaMa Gallery, Verona (It); "Dak'Art", 10de Afrikaanse Hedendaagse Kunst Biënnale van Dakar (Sn); "Regionale 12", Haus für elektronische Künste, Basel (Ch); "Taverna Especial", Sketch Gallery, London (UK); "Brick & Mortar International Video Art Festival", Greenfield (USA); "Loop" Video Art Festival, Barcelona (Es); "No Signal Found", Arte Contemporanea Gallery, Brussel (Be); "Flowers, Animals, Urbans, Machines", Appartement 22, Rabat (Ma) en "Desencuentros", Sabrina Amrani Art Gallery, Madrid (Es).

younes baba-ali: south is the new north

by sara raza, 2015

Younes Baba-Ali's artistic concerns are defined by a process of experimentation, in which he traces routes and patterns of migration and teases out covert systems of knowledge and meaning.

Through the employment of diverse visual tools such as installation, photography, new media, technologies, interventions and sound, he straddles a hybrid studio practice between Europe and his native Morocco. Working across diverse spaces that intersect culturally, historically and economically, Baba-Ali's art readily explores the antagonist relationship that exists between former colonised spaces and their transcultural diasporas. His practice exposes the gaps and ruptures that exist within spaces of geopolitical transition, realities which postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha describes as «living on the borderlines of the 'present.'»¹

A central focus for Baba-Ali is the convoluted and urgent topic of migration, a subject that is also currently at the forefront of European parliamentary debates following the civilian crisis in Syria and Iraq, which is at breaking point. The artist has explored this topic through a reassessment of both real and imaginary borders where his artworks convene these liminal spaces by asking questions about the ways in which human geography and its diverse attitudes are surveyed and controlled, and their subsequent local and global impacts. He touches upon themes of place, smuggling and reverse migrations in order to locate the movements of people and ideas.

In *Parabole* (2011) Baba-Ali explores the physical and metaphorical relationship between migrants and their host communities. Within the white space of the gallery, he installs the popular cultural trope of the satellite dish, an object that adorns the exterior facades of migrant housing complexes in Europe as a means of connecting with 'home', through televised images and sound. By reversing the location of the dish from outside to inside Baba-Ali troubles its ability to obtain a signal and it is forced to move from side to side in a futile attempt to properly preform its function. Through this subversive act of manipulation, Baba-Ali attempts to raise awareness of the impossibility of locating 'home', a situation that many migrants find themselves in, where they exist within a state of limbo between two zones, with a weakened connection to 'home' akin to the defunct operation of the satellite dish. By re-imagining this scenario, Baba-Ali highlights how migrant culture has mutated and been assimilated, sometimes involuntarily, and is no longer able to connect properly through typical channels of communication.

Correspondingly, another work, *Untitled Landscape* (2010), further probes the subject of spatial negotiations where the artist has created an installation using branches of a tree that are decorated with opaque black plastic bags, hanging off the branches like fruit. Several wind

machines fixed in the wall are triggered by sensory devices and cause the bags to flap in the air, yet their contents remain concealed from outside view. The piece explores the juxtaposition between nature and nurture and offers a commentary on environmental issues pertaining to waste and the growing problem of unemployment in Morocco, which is widening the economic and class gap. Conversely, the work also alludes to the concept of smuggling of possibly secretive counterfeit goods that have somehow border crossed to the other side or are in the current process of doing so. Here the theme of smuggling becomes an important metaphor for ideas and changes that are brewing under the surface or operating as part of an already existing underground movement that is not yet visible to the naked eye. By introducing this concept, Baba-Ali bypasses the purely negative association of smuggling as an illegal practice by introducing what art historian and theorist Simon Harvey argues to be an important component of visual culture asserting that 'terms like 'hidden,' 'shadow' and 'unrecorded,' have currency.'² Here the currency that Baba-Ali raises claim to exist between the reversed exchange of 'cultural' contraband and the trade routes that exist between the local and the global that facilitate both licit and illicit transaction of knowledge and power between first and secondhand and first, second and third worlds.

Further subverting common cultural relations, Baba-Ali continues with his critical program of commercial and neocolonial exploitation by focussing on the rise of the global south debate. The global south is a term that has been bouncing around academic circles to describe the economic rise and autonomy of Africa, Asia and Latin America that has recently being explored within the realm of visual culture as a paradigm shift that acknowledges the detachment and independence of the South from the centre of the North.

Through the installation *Ending your life under the sun* (2012), Baba-Ali has created a ready-made sculpture of a wooden coffin in which he has installed a popular sun bed device found in solarium tanning salons across Europe and North America. The work is a humorous take on the shift in migration from North to South undertaken by wealthy Europeans who relocate to the warm tropical climates of North Africa and Latin America after retirement. By exploring reversed migratory patterns, the artist investigates ironic and binary footprints in global migration that are determined by wealth and power laying bare the stark contrast with the plight of stateless refugees who migrate from South to North due to financial instability and conflicts.

Baba-Ali's critical yet satirical practice draws out some of the imperial tendencies that inherently reside in global culture and economics. By unpacking current realities of migrations he unveils a cross-circulating programme of transitory ideas that are currently under negotiation.

1 Bhabha Homi, 'The Location of Culture,' Routledge, London (1994) p. 1.

2 Harvey Simon 'Smuggling the State into Transgression' in The London Consortium Static, Issue 2, Trafficking March 2006, p. 6

younes baba-ali - art on the edge

by kathleen weyts, 2014

"My art finds its rationale in the society it emerges from. That's its ground and its subject. I function as a mediator, as a philosopher who shares a form of awareness with others. I measure the temperature of society and contribute to its interpretation and development."

Visual artist Younes Baba-Ali summarizes his artistic démarche in a nice way. He makes art that is unconventional, intelligent and critical, often in public space or places uncommon to art practice. He is a sharp observer and raises pertinent questions aimed at society, the institution and above all, his audience. As a free thinker he holds a mirror up to society and confronts it with its ingrained habits and dysfunctions. His art originates rarely in the atelier. It is context-specific and takes its final shape in dialogue with its spectators.

Context

Some of Baba-Ali's works function almost exclusively in a specific environment. *Moroccan Anthem* for example, a video in which a donkey driver clucks out the Moroccan national anthem using the sound he normally makes to command his animal. Other installations get their meaning in relation to the place where they are shown. Like *Ending your life under the sun*, a coffin with a tanning bed inside it. The idea for this work emerged during his stay on the Erasmus exchange program in Poland, where people frequently visit tanning salons. Presenting the work at the 4th Marrakesh Biennial – where visitors were primarily Western – the installation was perceived as dealing with North-South migration; when it was exhibited in Europe however, the interpretation shifted more toward the idea of eternal beauty."

Art as intervention

Ambiguity and humor are recurring elements in the work of this young artist. *"I don't want people to stay indifferent. I want to confront them and at the same time I want them to participate. I want to dispose art of its elitist and sacral status and to accomplish that I use certain strategies."* As an artist-chemist he measures and mixes technology, objects, sound, video and photography with political, social and cultural issues. The resulting installations discreetly coerce the unsuspecting viewer into taking a stand. His work is constantly on the verge: it's provocative, but never insulting or cheap, always inviting. It is the starting point for a conversation, a polemic, a thinking process, a (re)action. In a subtle way the artist plays the conventional social codes and at the same time the codes of art itself. Baba-Ali's work often assumes the form of the readymade. He uses common objects

and phenomena and introduces them in an artistic environment. But he prefers the public space to spaces intended for art. Making art accessible is almost a given in his oeuvre. In reaction to the extreme theorizing of art – where the audience is as it were assessed on its insider knowledge – and to the art institute that in the way it presents the artwork raises obstacles rather than remove them, he ingeniously intervenes in everyday life with his work. *Carroussa Sonore* is a beautiful example of this. A caroussa is a stroller with a sound system built on top, used for selling CD's with Quranic recitals. A very common view in urban Maghreb streets, this object is a simple but extremely intelligent piece of technology. Baba-Ali uses it for his own purposes: *"With Caroussa Sonore I bring sound pieces to people in a democratic way. It is both a creation and a medium I use as an art curator, since I invited other international artists to distribute their pieces via this module. It circles in the city, we built several interventions around it. In this way it becomes part of public life."* This intervention also denounces pertinent fallacies that circulate in the art world, such as the conviction that the Moroccan – and in extension Maghrebi – art scene limits itself to marketable objects. Baba-Ali proves the opposite by creating a platform for artists that are definitely active, but have difficulty in accessing the established European art scene - not in the least due to strict visa regulations. But as Baba-Ali puts it: *"sound doesn't need a visa, only a medium"*. And rather than presenting his work to the establishment, he brings it to the people. This attitude is an implicit critique of both the art world and its critics. Baba-Ali addresses not just the art loving elite, but the people in the street. With this attitude he shows great affinity with artists such as Hassan Darsi and Francis Alÿs. Like them he makes disruptive intervention art that confronts the viewer – whether or not ironically – with himself and his environment. Baba-Ali presents people dilemmas and taboos and challenges them to (re)act. In this way he makes them his accomplices in a disguised artistic guerrilla that unites the establishment and the common man.

Brussels

Younes Baba-Ali was born in Oudja, Morocco but grew up and studied in France. Since 2011 he lives and works in Brussels. This double cultural background marks his life, his points of view and obviously his art. His affinity with both European and Maghrebi culture grants him the freedom to critically assess both worlds and to process this in his art practice. *"As an artist I can afford to be critical. It's my nature above all. Critique is a language that I learned to use. I raise questions and I want to involve the public. When observing Belgian society I notice that Moroccan immigration in France presents itself differently from that in Belgium. France is Morocco's 'big brother', the ideal that Moroccan society and its elite try to attain. I observe the consequences of these phenomena and translate my findings into critical interventions."* An example of this is the installation *Untitled (Speedbump)* that he made for a group exhibition organised in a luxurious villa in the diplomatic district of Rabat. In that area – as in comparable wealthy areas in Morocco – huge speed bumps are installed. *"To me this manipulation of urban space is very bourgeois and on top of that it's immediately related to power. People in these quarters permit themselves to plump down speed bumps that are totally out of proportion. And so I decided to introduce these objects in their own*

living space, the bourgeois villa." Baba-Ali does this fully aware that the audience that will visit the exhibition are the same people responsible for this phenomenon. By confronting them with it in the form of a work of art he also lends it a social dimension: *"My interventions are to me also social, even political interventions that are coloured by their local context."* In the exhibition he developed for MAAC, Baba-Ali takes his personal relation to Brussels as a starting point. He confesses he has a love-hate relationship with this city, which he perceives as very complex. Brussels proves to be an ideal laboratory for the artist to develop his oeuvre. He presents works that are on the one hand representative of how he experiences the city as a French-Moroccan immigrant, and on the other provide an insight in how the artist experiences living with the many residing nationalities there. *"Brussels is a city that is distinctly multicultural – ranging from the European community to all the other immigrated nationalities – and at the same time marked by community issues."* Baba-Ali is constantly surprised by the resulting linguistic melting pot en the ongoing intercultural 'negotiation' that so clearly marks the Brussels public space. Since he came to Brussels he has been living in Molenbeek, a district he calls a 'border zone'. The invisible but very distinct borders in Brussels and the way they divide the communities, are shocking to the artist. This observation leads to an artistic mental process: *"my work originates in my head, not in my studio."* That process eventually comes into shape in the interaction with the audience. *"I hope that people feel concerned with what I do. Positively or negatively – as long as it gets to them. I need the audience. Without it my work doesn't function."*

Kathleen Weyts, was for ten years the Head of Communications and Mediation in M HKA, Museum for Contemporary Art Antwerp. In this position she worked with several international acclaimed artists and art institutions. In 2013 she started PANACHE, an independent agency for visual artists, specializing in strategic advice, communication tactics and art management. She was responsible for the international PR of the 5th Moscow Biennial, curated the exhibition *Trenches in Africa 1914-1918* and contributed to several art publications. She is board member of SIC, a workspace for professional audiovisual artists, *Theater aan Zee*, the annual theatre festival in Ostend and *The University for the Common Good*.

younes baba-ali, everyday activist

by alya sebti, 2012

Defined as what is “happening or used daily”¹, the everyday shapes of Younes Baba Ali’s work imply he uses and diverts everyday objects but he also stands up against an elitist art, hence his artworks target the everyday man (der Jedermann). He undertakes to democratize the access to art through his unwavering smirk : definitely, irony is his favorite weapon to reinvent the practice of everyday life in order “to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use”². Younes Baba Ali uses this language as a tactic to divert imposed space and to disrupt our relation to the everyday. Irony, which aim is to address a wider audience, was born in the XVI century literature in the northern countries, tallying with modern democratic aspiration. Through this everyday language, YBA manages to reintegrate art into the everyday use.

Swaying hairdryer, uninterrupted horns orchestra or parabola abutting against two walls: YBA tinkers and invents a new rhythmic of gestures and sounds that inhabit the object. Newly freed from his everyday use they become a quasi-human subject, almost neurotic. Decontextualized, these everyday objects become autonomous therefore unusable by the incredulous spectator who is then aware of the entities with which he coexists. By creating a disturbance, the spectator transforms him/herself as an active witness involved in the underlying discourse of YBA’s artwork, a denunciation of the fragility of our system.

When irony is able to generate a new equilibrium, it can “trigger a new positive relationship in the world”³. This artist, everyday activist creates twice : first by diverting the object from its original function, he manages to get rid of the submission subject/spectator. Second by desecrating the artwork, which is now “reduced” as an autonomous object, he frees the spectator from the submitted relationship to the artwork.

To divert the everyday, his favorite procedure is the game that he often recalls as “attentat artistique”. He interferes with the flaws in our system to expose the fragilities of the world to the spectator who becomes a willing hostage and witness. As Michel de Certeau asserts, the game as a “disjunctive operation (producing events that differentiate)”⁴ is a popular tactic to overcome the imposed everyday codes.

Besides a reflection on the object nature and status, his work questions the relationship between art, audience and institution. YBA is indeed driven by the desire to democratize access to art. He uses the means in hand to make art accessible at two levels : Through

irony, he involves the spectator as witness of these diverted objects to expose flaws of our everyday. In desecrating the artwork, he manages to abolish the submission relationship between the spectator and the artwork and reminds us that one does not exist without the other. YBA instills his artwork and subverts the system from within the base through the art, a serious game that diverts objects and codes, reclaims space and use their own way. As an everyday activist, he proposes a form of moral and political resistance through the mechanisms by which individuals become autonomous subjects. An everyday, which according to the words of Certau, “invents itself with thousand ways to poach”.

1 - Oxford Dictionary

2 - Wittgenstein “On Metaphysical/Everyday use”

3 - Nietzsche

4 - Michel de Certeau “The practice of Everyday”

Alya Sebti, independent curator, artistic director of the Marrakech Biennale V, she is co-curator of Mons 2015, european capital of culture. She curated several exhibitions in North Africa and Europe amongst them the Moroccan pavilion at the Photography Biennale Grid (Amsterdam 2012), “Of other spaces” Casablanca 2013, “Floating equilibrium”, Berlin 2014. Since 2012, she initiated and co-curates the Arte East cycle of online exhibitions on Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Her latest publications include : Pas de Deux, Villa Romana (February 2014); POSITION Social changes through Art in the Arab World, (2014). She is board member of the International Biennale Association and is a consultant on visual art and cultural initiatives in North Africa.

younes baba-ali artworks



Untitled (Material Insanity), 2019

© Aude Tournaye

Site specific intervention
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

Untitled (Material Insanity) consists of a collection of balloons that fill up the elevator of the museum: a space of passage, of intimacy in a public museum, of circulation. By entering into the elevator, the public becomes an actor in the evolution of the piece, as the balloons get displaced, deflate and migrate to other spaces in the exhibition. The contemporary and highly accessible material of the balloons become a sort of 3D painting in space, created through the passage of time and visitors. In contrast to action painting, where the artist becomes the object of genius and creation, this role is now displaced to the public and the elements. Whereas Harold Rosenberg (1) described abstract expressionism in the 1950's as an act and the painting itself as a moment - for him the painting was inseparable from the life of the artist - the balloons now testify to the moment or life cycle of the exhibition.

(1) Meyer, James, *Minimalism, art and polemics of the sixties*, Yale U P, 2001, p. 142. Text by @aude.tournaye



Everything is a border, 2018

© Tobias Wootton

Site specific installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Everything Is a Border establishes a fenced-off space in the exhibition that is hyper-present, yet inaccessible. The installation was initially created at the ZKM in consultation with a South African security contractor who is monitoring the installation remotely and intervenes via audio announcements. Characteristic of Johannesburg's high-security cityscape, it is at odds with the semi-public space of the museum. The fence acts as a caricature of the tapelines that commonly separate museum visitors from artworks, making visitors even more aware of their behavior within the institutionalized space with its prescribed codes of behavior and sacredness. At the same time, the buzzing and clicking sounds coming from the electrical wiring and megaphone convey a sonorous aesthetic of security and surveillance, containing a certain tension much in the spirit of the panopticon. Deflecting the Western gaze, the installation confronts us with the embodied affects of digitally enhanced border regimes. Interrogating the role of digital technologies in the making of property, institutional and state borders is to disrupt imaginaries that equate the digital with unbounded virtual data flows.



Untitled (Kanal), 2018

© Aude Tournaye

In situ installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Untitled (Kanal) is a site specific work that was first conceived in Kanal – Centre Pompidou's factory building. Utilizing its former locker room, the artist reanimates its infrastructure by bringing its lockers to live. The lockers, collectively reminding us of the building's history as a factory, appear to remain inert. However, their passivity appears to be nothing but a facade when some doors start to open ever so slowly until suddenly the subtle shifting of the doors is disturbed by the gunmetal thump of slamming lockers. The visitor, used to their inertia, is then forced to re-evaluate their purpose, now situated in between the building's history as a collective working space and it's future as a museum, a mausoleum where objects are condemned to neutralisation. By revolting, the lockers redeem their intrinsic value as hosts to intimate memories, guardians of workers' identity and sites of metamorphosis, from the anonymity of the worker to the exclusivity of the individual.



Daily Wrestling, 2018

© Younes Baba-Ali

Installation including video and photographs
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Stitched into Senegal's social fabric, wrestling bares witness to a distinct form of modernity. The magic and beliefs surrounding wrestling still remain intact from the origins of the sport, with marabouts preparing different charms, potions and spells to bless the fighter. As the nation's economy has plunged, laamb's appeal has skyrocketed. As the sport entered the realm of corporate sponsorship, the traditional and spiritual nature of the sport has become imbued by the phenomena of materialisation, mondialisation and wild capitalism. Distilling wrestling's underlying ties to global capitalism, social struggle and political symbolism, Baba-Ali eliminates the opponent and replaces him with objects taken from wrestler's daily lives. Invigorated by the sound of the drums and rowdy crowd, the wrestlers thus battle it out against the struggles of their daily existence. Humanising issues too often spoken of in terms of economy and politics.



Without Negotiation, 2018

© Younes Baba-Ali

Installation including video and photographs

Variable dimension

Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

The bustling, kaleidoscopic streets of the Senegalese capital are the daily arena of thousands of ambulant vendors; a group made up of a myriad of nationalities and social backgrounds, where students, bachelors and unemployed graduates intermingle with illiterates and refugees. Circulating through the city by taxi while accepting any offer made to him when stopped at red lights, Baba-Ali aims to disrupt, map and document a system where negotiation is the lingua franca and only the most hardened bargainers thrive. Confined to grubby roadsides, to the periphery of the official market, these vendors' usual habitat seems a far cry from the carefully curated art venues in the same city. By redistributing cultural funds in Dakar's shadow economy, however, Baba-Ali blurs the two seemingly contrasting worlds and hints at the tension and parallels between them. By displacing and exposing the accumulated objects on a pedestal, carefully placed in exhibit cases as if displaced from a natural history museum, Baba-Ali, as an artist-turned-anthropologist, reveals how value is created through exchange, display, circulation and consumption of both objects and artworks, in a game where worth has no meaning in and of itself.



Paraboles, 2016

© Jasper Flikschuh

Installation in public space

Variable dimension

Courtesy of the artist

[> see more](#)

On the Galerie Ravenstein façade (Bozar, Brussels) *Paraboles* consists on an sculpture of satellite dishes – so banal and yet so typical within the street scenery of Brussels. They are here, but are searching for something else, far away, in direction to Mecca. They seem undecided, moving incessantly as in a mechanical ballet.



Vu'Cumprà, 2016

© Ewa Wicka

Urban intervention
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Inspired by the street sellers in Italy, this performance, entitled *Vu'Cumprà* (in Neapolitan significant: «do you want to buy?»), proposes a wandering of an inflatable buoys seller. The presence of the seller, transposed from the original context to the artistic context, creates a situation at the same time hyper realistic and absurd, which questions the relation of the art to the market at a metaphoric level.



Italianisation, 2016

© Younes Baba-Ali

Serie of 4 photographs
Digital print on Baryta paper
150x150 cm
Courtesy of the artist

[> see more](#)

In *Italianisation*, a series of photographic portraits, the gaze of the artist urges us to observe the phenomenon of migrants who wear clothes bearing the Italia inscription or Italian flag as a form of the unconscious or conscious desire to integrate with the local culture.



Pulizia, 2016

© Younes Baba-Ali

Installation, video documentation, photographs

Variable dimension

Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

The logo of Italian police “Polizia” shifts into the visual identity of an invented illegal cleaning enterprise, called “Pulizia” (literally in Italian “cleaning”). *Pulizia* becomes a new brand printed on white uniforms, to be worn by immigrants based in Italy who would clean public and private spaces. This linguistic manipulation metaphorically problematizes Italian migration politics, questioning who has to clean and what has to be cleaned.



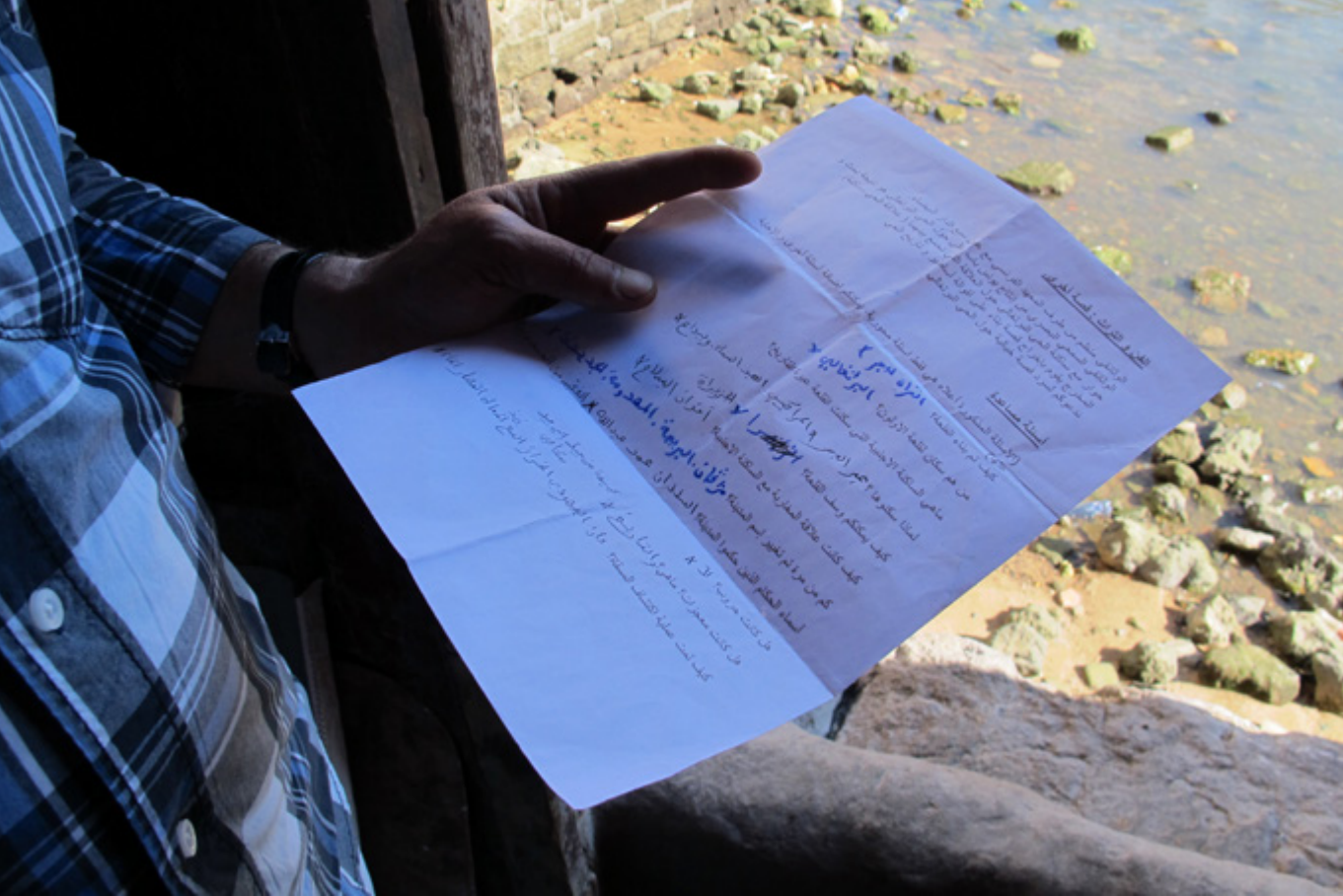
Social Paintings, 2016

© Ewa Wicka

Installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see more](#)

Social Paintings starts from illegal stands made by immigrants in Italy, which have a particular way of exposing to sell their merchandises. Those stands made mainly by cardboard box, are built to be easily set up and ready to close quickly to escape the police. Those needs makes the stand an ingenious object, a metaphor of their illegal situation, which becomes a symbol of “aesthetic of precariousness”. From the streets grounds to the art venues walls, the result is a ready made in which the status of this object is switching : a survival and illegal object, within its socio-political problematics, would become an art object proposing a specific aesthetic.



Story Dealers, 2015

© Said Rais

In-Situ multi-channel sound installation

34'05" (in loop)

Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Story dealers, a multichannel sound installation in the old Portuguese cistern of El Jadida, is the result of a process of research and inquiry into the relationship of the inhabitants of the city with their patrimony. Starting from their testimonies, the artist extracts and recomposes a choir of histories around the site. Memories, projections, anecdotes, myths and legends,... thus reactivate the silence of the cistern and transport the inhabitants of El Jadida back to the place they deserted. Inspired by the figures of the storyteller and the tourist guide, the artist aims to re-write the history of the place, between historical facts and fictional accounts.



MORO©©©, 2015

© Simon Blu

Installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

MORO©©© is a project questioning the copyright or the right to copy in today's globalised economy as it seems to be practised in contemporary Morocco. In this project the artist will reflect on the legal concept of copyright as it is enacted by most governments granting the owner or creator of an original work exclusive rights to its use and distribution by questioning the lack of right to copy. Younes Baba-Ali will visibly assemble symbols capitalist economy in a country (and a whole continent) struggling with under-development. Being at the same time excluded from affluence and included in the global market (logos), Moroccan people typically experience a condition of psychological instability and structural precariousness which is aptly embodied by the fragile and rudimentary products of its essentially manual and artisanal economy. He will transform logos quite common within the country's economic and social landscape - totter on their unstable base, crippled and patched, suggesting a feeling of uneasiness, although of a reflexive, rather than polemic, kind.



Kit mains Libres, 2014

© Younes Baba-Ali

Serie of 4 photographs
Digital print on Baryta paper
100 x 100 cm
Courtesy of the artist

[> see more](#)

Kit mains Libres (Hands-free kit) is a series of photographic portraits of Moroccan women incorporating their mobile phones between the ear and the scarf. A gesture both common and ingenious in which religion, fashion, function and need meet.



Être et ne pas avoir, 2014

© Younes Baba-Ali

HD Video 16/9
Lenght : 5'54"
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Être et ne pas avoir (*To be and not to have*) is a video in which a Belgian resident explains the different possibilities of access and strategies linked to local social welfare. This work refers to the flaws of a social system and the ratio of profit it can generate, as well as the phenomenon of a new form of immigration familiarly called "social tourism". The title of this project refers to how these individuals advertise to society as people in need.



Multiculturalism / Multicommunitarism, 2014

© Luc Schrobiltgen

LED illuminated sign
200 x 20 cm
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

The work *Multiculturalism / Multicommunitarism* is a LED illuminated sign that alternates these two words, with a rhythm and an aspect marking a dysfunction. In this intervention, the artist re-uses a common object of the urban landscape, the panels of neighborhood stores (call shops, night shops, butchers, etc.). He also incorporates the advertising function of this object to lift, by challenging the passer-by, questions about the consequences of a multicultural society.



Zinneke, 2014

© Luc Schrobiltgen

In-situ installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see more](#)

The installation *Zinneke* consists of nests of parakeets recreated and integrated into the rear space of the MAAC with audio recordings of their calls in the city. These exotic birds fairly present in parks and green spaces in Brussels, are a domesticated species and released initially by the Heysel Zoo in 1974, as well as by individuals. Due to the global climate crisis, they thrive in the "new" climate of Brussels. Thus, the *Zinneke* installation is a metaphor for migration experienced by the city, the relationship between migrants and their new environment and their relationship with the local population.



Everyone is called Mohamed, 2014

© Younes Baba-Ali

Sound creation
Lenght : 26'40'' (in loop)
Courtesy of the artist

Everyone is called Mohamed is an interactive sound creation aired in public space or an inside space and composed of a speaker hanging. The artist calls directly to each of Brussels (inhabitant and / or visitor) who identifies himself with Mohamed, as the name designated in the Maghreb culture to challenge any male person whose identity is not known. Declined to the local context, Baba-Ali starts also on the observation that the first name Mohamed is one of the most frequently given in Brussels. Here he shows his desire to invite and interact with a lambda public.



Maroc de demain, 2014

© S. Mellon

HD video 16/9
Lenght : 3'56" in loop
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Maroc de demain (Tomorrow's Morocco) is a video based on a series of billboards simulating one of the biggest on-going estate projects in the context of Casablanca's general urban restructuring plan. A long traveling of images - simulacrum reflects a Western style of life in proposing an immersion in the phenomena of wild capitalism spreading in the country. In between fiction and documentation, the artist's point of view suggests an imminent archive of the sociopolitical context in which a new perspective of Morocco is shaping.



Untitled (megaphones), 2014

© Younes Baba-Ali

Sound installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

A series of megaphones installed on the ground sonically reproduces the universe of bargaining and street trading, evoking Dakar markets' soundscapes. Each megaphone diffuses a recorded voice, the one of a local peddler selling his or her product. The artist decontextualizes these voices in recreating a sonic atmosphere in where the megaphone itself remains central. This Chinese electronic object, almost intrusive and omni-oppressive, testifies here the traces of the migratory flow of the Chinese population installed in Senegal.



Moroccan Anthem, 2013

© Younes Baba-Ali

HD video 16/9
Lenght : 2'11" in loop
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Moroccan Anthem proposes an alternative national anthem with a video-portrait of a donkey-driver sitting on his cart, driven by the animal. Referring to the very popular and common job in Moroccan merchandise's transport, here the protagonist reproduces the melody of local anthem with a particular sound, the one he usually uses to guide his donkey.



Shalom Aleikoum, 2013

© Younes Baba-Ali

Printed doormat
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see more](#)

Shalom Aleikoum (literally «peace upon you») is a form of bilingualism, mixing the common origins of the Arabic and the Hebrew greetings. The proposition, beyond the orthographic differences or the antagonistic relationship between both cultures, becomes a peace message written on a doormat at the entry of the exhibition space. This choice also questions the physical relation towards the art object itself and the moral position towards the sacred aspect of those two languages.



Barriers, 2013

© Younes Baba-Ali

Installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see more](#)

Barriers is an installation of barriers (transenna) hand-made in Morocco, a visibly counterfeit assemblage of symbols of interdiction and capitalist economic pervasiveness in a country (and a whole continent) struggling with underdevelopment. Simultaneous being excluded from affluence and included in the global market (the Mc Donald label), Moroccan people typically experience a condition of psychological instability and structural precariousness which is aptly embodied by the fragile and rudimentary products of its essentially manual and artisanal economy. The 'transenna' - recycled objects quite common within the country's material and social landscape - totter on their unstable base, are crippled and patched, suggesting a feeling of uneasiness, although of a reflexive - rather than polemic - kind.



Kamikaze, 2013

© Younes Baba-Ali

Installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see more](#)

Ready-made objects are de-contextualized and de-constructed, so that a hand-cart overloaded with old and deteriorated gas bottles as shown by *Kamikaze* becomes a metaphor for multiple meanings and/or reflections : from the questioning of a presumption of safeness which patently clashes with human negligence in handling dangerous wastes from everyday life; to an ironic look on the permanent paranoia of the Islamic terrorist threat affecting some western countries. A daily object turns into an alien one, thus evoking unexpected reflections, on the local as well as global context.



Jouteya, 2012

© Gianpaolo Laurretta

Multi channel video Installation

Variable dimension

Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

A series of videos of DIY chains are simultaneously presented in a dark room, showing tools, products, work accessories, which can be described as frankly superfluous. The superposing of these videos creates a continuous hubbub evoking the souks of several Maghrebians' urban scape (Jouteya). A parallelism between these two different contexts opens a space of criticism toward overconsumption dogmas, which lead people to buy more and more, regardless the objects' usefulness.



Mécénat Alternatif, 2012

© Dario Lasagni

Wall Painting
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

Mécénat Alternatif is a wall painting in the finest tradition of Italian fresco, but instead of colorful representation, it shows the artist's bank detail. In so doing, the artist invites the public to interact with the proposal and to support him by making a money transfer to his bank account, offering to them at the same time the possibility to access to the prestigious status of patron of art. This intervention resonates with the precarious economic situation, which leads artists to explore alternative ways to finance and realize their projects.



Televendita, 2012

© Younes Baba-Ali

HD video 16/9
Length : 29'25"
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Televendita is the result of an interesting – though quite unusual – performative collaboration between the artist and Alessandro Orlando, one of the most popular Italian TV salesmen. The video consists in a TV sale simulation of some of Baba-Ali's works introduced in a commercial purpose by Alessandro Orlando. The language used is that typical of television, but a sort of discrepancy is obtained in the very moment in which it becomes a work of art. The artist's idea is not that to criticize TV sales, but to play on the art discourse and language and to analyze the process of standardization of the interpretation and presentation of artworks in order to adapt them to a TV commercial format that can be broadcasted and received by the spectator.



Carroussa Sonore, 2012

© Younes Baba-Ali

Sound installation
Project of broadcasting sound art in public space
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Initially, the carroussa is a precarious module of street trading in the Moroccan urban landscape with a precise function: to sell and spread Coranic cd's by diffusing them in the streets. This module is composed by a cart made of recyclable materials, provided by a battery for supplying an audio player, an amplifier and two speakers. In *Carroussa Sonore*, the object retains its appearance and function of sound diffusion in urban space, but in this proposal it presents an overview of the contemporary radio and audio creations (soundscapes, musical compositions, sound poetries, documentaries, interactive pieces...) and implicitly becomes a tool of awareness to listening.



Untitled (Speed bump), 2012

© Younes Baba-Ali

Installation In-Situ
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

In Morocco's upscale neighborhoods local inhabitants are building non standard speed bumps and the object itself becomes in the artist's view a sort of social barrier. By recreating a giant speed bump at the entrance of an exhibition space, the artist recuperates the object and gives it a new conceptual frame in challenging the public to trample the artwork in order to gain access to it. In this intervention, the object becomes a ready-made which questions the notion of accessibility to art.



Ending your life under the sun, 2012

© Younes Baba-Ali

Installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Ending your life under the sun is an installation/sculpture, made up of a wooden coffin into which a solarium system has been integrated. This work questions migratory fluxes: if the immigration from the South to the North is often stigmatized, sometimes fatal and always spectacular in Western media's universe, the inverted one is quite ignored. In this proposal the artist problematizes and opens a reflection on the North to South migration by questioning its traces and signs.



Untitled (Social Landscape), 2012

© Younes Baba-Ali

Installation In-Situ
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

This installation is formed by a series of plastic birds, spinning repeatedly and frantically over the heads of the viewers. These objects, made in China, metaphorically lead to the notion of migratory fluxes of goods and people. In the art work, the absence and the void that come out of these birds induce in a latent manner the geographical comings and goings among communities from the South to the West.



Parabole, 2011

© Max Tomasinelli

Installation In-Situ
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Parabole is a parabolic antenna installed at a walls' juncture endlessly moving right and left looking for an unreachable signal and bumping in vain against the plasters. The parabolic dish, an everyday object for immigrant families, becomes a metaphor of their experience, the one of a people between two cultures, Western and Arabic. The dish located between two walls, triggered by a mechanism, evokes this delicate position between two cultures: the strained existential condition of Arab migrants confronting the appeals of their culture (conveyed by the parabola) and the one of Western society, each with its own charm, but which tends to propose often very different behaviours.



Call for Prayer - Morse, 2011

© Younes Baba-Ali

Sound installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Call for Prayer - Morse is a sound installation consisting of a megaphone broadcasting in Morse code the Muslim call to prayer, five times a day, according to the geographic location. The object problematizes here the close relationship between religious practice and the absence of spiritual experience. The Morse translation makes it an alert signal against the dangers of proselytizing.



Untitled (Landscape), 2010

© Younes Baba-Ali

Installation In-Situ
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Untitled (Landscape) is an installation made of black plastic bags hanging from orange branches and floating in a fascinating dance poisoning the nature. By approaching the work, the visitor triggers industrial fans, which are activated to move the bags on the tree's branches. This installation is a direct confrontation to the ecological situation in Morocco, while the opaque black plastic bags evoke the possibility to conceal what has been consumed in a country where social disparity is still significant. The work acts as a revealer that can directly link the development of industrialization and human behaviour to a faster growing consumption.



Tic Nerveux, 2009

© Carlos Castelleira

3 channel video installation

Variable dimension

Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

The row of three videos showing the nervous clicking of three pens produces sound and rhythms in a non-synchronised temporal sequence. The pen-clicking is a normal and common gesture, as the simple object itself, which the artist re-use to emphasise the general obsession and prevailing neurosis of contemporary everyday life. The work is a metaphor for a Western understanding of time, increasingly determined by haste and obsessively repeated processes. Careful observation reveals that, despite the simple realisation of the images, each one is slightly preceded by its acoustic effect, thus enabling the viewer to anticipate what is about to happen on screen. This amplifies the sense of danger and discomfort and gives the installation an extra dimension by directly communicating with and involving the public. Everything seems obsessive and repetitive in this work, which undoubtedly demonstrates a subtle irony in its intimations of a paradoxical and absurd mechanical sensuality.



Horn Orchestra, 2009

© Hassan Ouazzani

Sound installation
Variable dimension
Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)

Horn Orchestra is an installation of several car klaxons hanging within a closed space. Though looking silent and sculptural at first sight, the installation suddenly starts sounding as the visitor steps in, generating an overwhelmingly noisy environment. In so doing, the visitors are involved into an exploration of the power of sound and its physiologic and psychological effects.



Hairdryers (2009) - sound installation - Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)



Intrusion (2008) - video, 13' 51" - courtesy of the artist & Joël Curtz

[> see the video](#)



Sound Painting (2009) - sound installation - Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)



Untitled (Locker) (2010) - installation - Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)



Sound Fabric (2009) - interactive sound installation - Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)



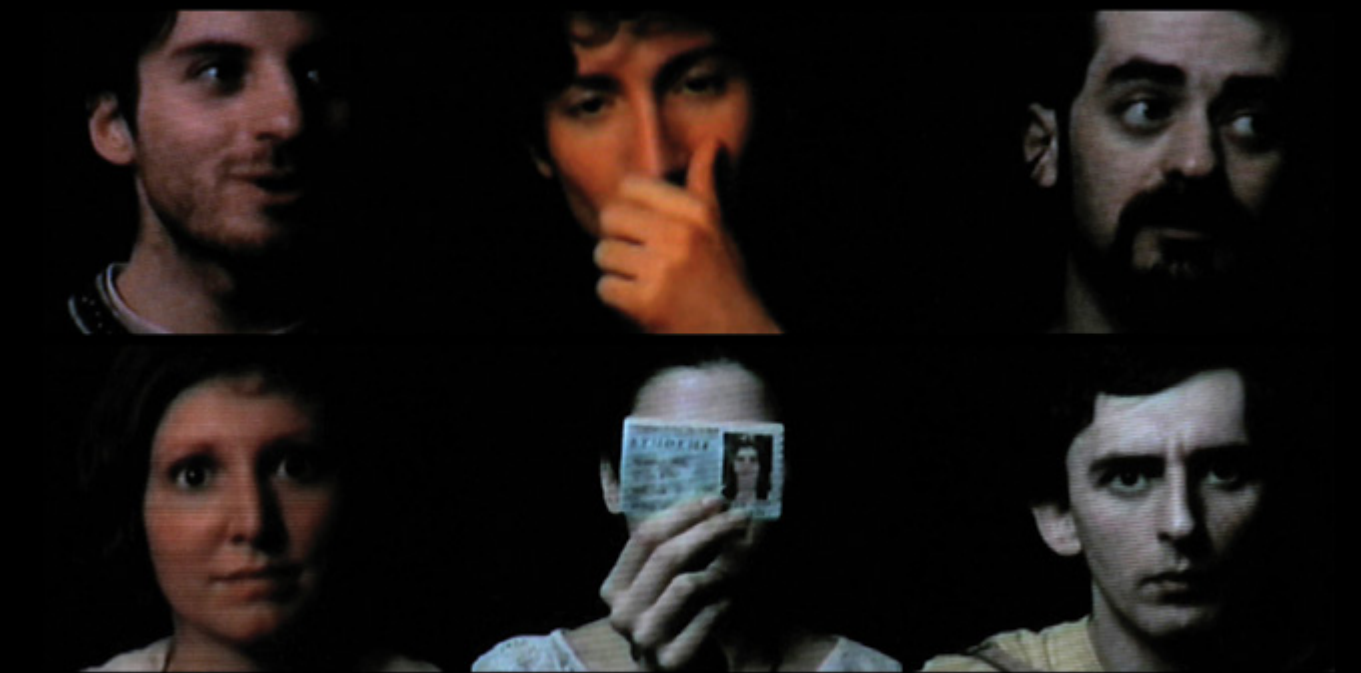
TV Beug (2009) - video installation - Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)



Sound Neon (2009) - interactive sound installation - Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)



Différence / Różnica (2009) - 6 channel video installation - Courtesy of the artist

[> see the video](#)