

# I'VE HEARD STORIES

FILM PROGRAM CURATED BY AZAR MAHMOUDIAN

Wednesday, May 28, 2014

7:00 – 9:00 pm

City of Toronto Archives, 255 Spadina Road  
Toronto, ON

Curator will be present  
FREE and open to the public

Presented by the Blackwood Gallery in partnership with the City of Toronto Archives and SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) in conjunction with the exhibition *Incident Light*, curated by Leila Pourtavaf and on view at the Blackwood Gallery from May 25 – July 27, 2014.

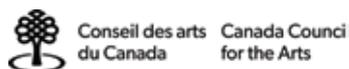
Taking its title from the lead film by Marwa Arsanios, *I've Heard Stories* is a film program exploring the intersection of art and documentary practices. The selected works reveal a variety of narratives on location, landscape, and territory built on archival materials as well as fictional anecdotes. The works are set in various spaces and buildings, and bring together conflictual statements about spaces in transition. The films reenact events, reproduce stories, or play narratives against images to create a spatial disorientation. Collectively, these films investigate the relationship between the personal and the historical in order to blur conceived boundaries between documentation and fiction.

*I've Heard Stories* is presented by the Blackwood Gallery in partnership with the City of Toronto Archives with community support from SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre). The Blackwood Gallery gratefully acknowledges support from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Cover image: Shirin Sabahi, *Swede Home*, Iran/Sweden, 1966/1973/1975/2009, 14:15 min.

Brochure design by Aliya Pabani

Copyediting by Megan Watcher



Blackwood Gallery | 905.828.3789 | [www.blackwoodgallery.ca](http://www.blackwoodgallery.ca)

## I'VE HEARD STORIES I

Marwa Arsanios | Lebanon, 2008 | 4:42 min

Rumours surrounding unreported murders in the mythical Hotel Carlton in Beirut are pieced together in an animation blending drawings and video, gossip and facts in an effort to give the crime a place in the history of the city. Against current images of the deserted hotel, situations are sketched that evoke the rumours that once circulated around the place and the people who inhabited it.

MARWA ARSANIOS (born 1978, Washington DC; lives and works in Beirut) received her MFA from the University of the Arts, London (2007). Through archival installations, texts, films, and performances, her work examines historic traces relating to the modernization of Arab states in the 1960s.

## SWEDE HOME

Shirin Sabahi | Iran/Sweden, 1966/1973/1975/2009 | 14:15 min

Footage from three reels of 8-mm film taken by Jan Edman is supplemented by a commentary Edman provides thirty years later. The Swedish engineer travelled to Iran fifteen times between 1966 and 1980 for the purpose of realizing industrial projects that were commissioned by various Iranian state-owned and private industries during the heyday of the country's modernization. Among these undertakings was a slaughterhouse, located in a southern suburb of Tehran, which was repurposed as a cultural centre during the process of gentrification in the 1990s. Oblivious to the faith of his projects, Edman's voice vacillates between disinterest and abrupt enthusiasm as he recounts a life spent travelling.

SHIRIN SABAHİ (born 1984, Tehran; lives in Berlin) received her MFA from Malmö Art Academy. Sabahi works with residues of developments in architecture, cinema, and science, and the function of objects and their projected value within these disciplines.

## SANS TITRE (UNTITLED)

Neil Beloufa | Algeria/France, 2010 | 14:00 min

A cardboard decor and photographs reconstitute a luxury California-type villa in Algeria. Its inhabitants, neighbours, and other protagonists imagine themselves explaining why and how the villa became occupied by terrorists as a hiding place despite being made entirely of glass.

NEIL BELOUFA (born 1985, Paris) studied at the École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (ENSAD) in Paris, Cooper Union in New York, and Le Fresnoy - in Tourcoing, France, among other institutions. Beloufa's work operates between cinema and installation. He often relies on the interview format to make works that are a disquieting mixture of fact and fiction, utopia and dystopia.

## EVERYWHERE WAS THE SAME

Basma Al Sharif | United States, 2007 | 11:38 min

In an empty room, a slideshow projection of abandoned places plays alongside the narrative of two girls who find themselves on the shores of a pre-apocalyptic paradise. Factual texts drawn from the Madrid Peace Accords and the CIA World Factbook are woven into a fictional narrative that unfolds the story of a massacre.

BASMA ALSHARIF (born 1983, Kuwait; based in Paris) has developed her practice nomadically since receiving an MFA in 2007 from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She works with moving and still images, sound and language, to explore visual communication at an intuitive level.

## WHY COLONEL BUNNY WAS KILLED

Miranda Pennell | UK, 2010 | 28:00 min

Medical missionary Theodore Leighton Pennell's 1908 memoirs, *Among the Wild Tribes of the Afghan Frontier*, provide the narrative for a film constructed of still photographs from the period. Searching for clues to the realities behind images framed during a time of colonial conflict, the photographs are forensically examined and probed to reveal the beauty and charm of Army life on the North West frontier of British India. Meanwhile, the Afghans who occupy the shadowy nitrate background observe yet another colonial misadventure.

MIRANDA PENNELL (born 1963, London) originally trained in contemporary dance and later studied visual anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her current practice reworks colonial photographic archives as a material for film.

AZAR MAHMOUDIAN (born 1981, lives in Tehran) is an independent curator and researcher. She received an MA in Contemporary Art Theory from Goldsmiths, University of London in 2009. Her research focuses on issues of archival and historical modes of cultural representation.