

Abounaddara:

The Cinema of Emergency for an Alternative Image of Syria

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This paper discusses the short films produced by Abounaddara, a group of anonymous Syrian filmmakers who approach the military conflict from a new perspective, converting documentary films into a living memory for Syria.

The media coverage of different forms of violence that have been perpetrated in Syria for years has minimal impact on viewers who are no longer affected by images of dead bodies and massive destruction. TV newsrooms only focus on “scoops,” competing in a wild race to dispatch unsettling images of violence. Victims, be they men or women, are emotionally and physically stripped to bring news-avid viewers a short-lived pleasure. Reports have made a “déjà-vu” event out of the Syrian war and have detached Syrians’ everyday lives from reality.

In order to stand against this alienating view of Syrians, the members of the Abounaddara collective have chosen to make short films in order to highlight the horrors of the war without directly showing them. Through their films, they tend to reflect their subjective point of view and produce images unlike those broadcasted by the news. As the representation of the Syrian war found in the mainstream media falls short of conveying the anonymous filmmakers’ voices, the Abounaddara collective resorts to emergency documentaries in order to get closer to reality whilst TV stations are losing touch with it. It aims at capturing life, and drawing attention to the reality that is unreachable by on-the-spot reports focusing on current developments rather than addressing issues at the core. Thanks to authentic testimonies given by men and women dealing with the inferno of war on a daily basis, Abounaddara has turned the norms of TV news upside down, showing that pointing the camera at a specific subject does not do enough to reflect reality.

War renders people short of words and restricts media’s access to conflict zones, limiting the scope for getting closer to reality. This being said, Abounaddara’s filmmakers have managed to turn the out-of-reach reality about the Syrian war into films, taking advantage of the cinema-offered opportunities. This paper looks at the content as well as the artistic beauty of the films produced by the Abounaddara collective. It mainly focuses on films featuring the daily life of Syrian women during

the war. The analysis of these films sheds light on how film can be converted into a historical, audio-visual document.

Introduction

Abounaddara¹ is a group consisting of Syrian female and male documentary filmmakers who work in the sphere of emergency cinema. Since April 2011, the filmmakers have been anonymously launching short films on the internet. Standing up to the stream of dreadful images of the Syrian war, the Abounaddara collective has made use of cinema to change the way people in Syria are seen. Thanks to their deep understanding of the society, their films manage to challenge the public to go beyond the images of Syrians as victims that appear in the news. The films are greatly inspired by the experiences of the “characters.” Viewed from this perspective, the stance of Abounaddara’s filmmakers proves to be complicated.² As much as they are involved in the event, the anonymous filmmakers remain at a distance, which allows them to merge two major types of documentary films: the observational and the reflexive. Their cinematographic experience eludes classification and aims at transgressing the barriers of war.



Abounaddara’s films denounce different forms of violence, whether they are generated by the war or by breaking news images that immediately fade away. War normalizes brutality and transforms violence on television into an entertaining, virtual spectacle. Abounaddara’s cinema falls short of meeting the expectations of exoticizing the armed conflict in Syria. It invites the public to adopt a new perspective, revealing the opposite side of the prevailing representations. Far from being gloomy, the films in question refuse to look at Syrians as victims. This alternative cinema strives to explore the creative potential of the cinematic image and offers audiences an opportunity to watch films that listen to people’s stories and respect their lives. It awakens the viewers interest and, at the same time, urges them to keep their distance. Contrary to the speed of information flow, Abounaddara films unfold at a slow pace; they feature people as human beings and invite the public to adopt a critical approach to the heartbreaking and sometimes unintelligible images of Syria’s civil war.

This paper defends the idea that Abounaddara's cinema provokes viewers to question war traumas without duplicating the media clichés or satisfying the public's keen interest in the daily tragedy of the Syrian people. It tackles the correlation between artistic beauty and activism in Abounaddara's cinema, whose objective is to alter the images of Syrians shown on the screen. In order to look into the innovative and revolutionary aspects of this cinema, the present paper is divided into five sections. In the first section, I show that the unique character of Abounaddara's script writing lies in the infringement of the prevailing representation codes: their short films are not voyeuristic, and they do not violate the subject, but they are still profound. Then, I discuss the *mise-en-scène* without the use of abused bodies. I also show that the films prioritize the rebellious women who stand up for themselves and struggle to enhance their capability to take action in a conflict-torn environment. The discovery of the self in moments of fear is also among the questions addressed. I conclude with an analysis of the metaphoric signification of lighting and its use to photograph anew the "portraits" of Syrian women.

A Consumer Society³

From social networks to TV news and printed media, the flow of war images besieges us every single day, merely exerting a fast-fading impact on us. Being as brutal as the war itself, these "virtual"⁴ images incite no reaction in us. War has turned into a spectacle that we consume on a daily basis (Baudrillard 1970, p. 278). Glued to our television sets, we have settled into a new routine: the war. The excessive overflow of dreadful images is void of any meaning.⁵ On the contrary, we are becoming separated from one another.⁶ We are thus in the grip of the simulation of meaning and communication.

In television, an event is not covered unless it is representable. Images do not mirror reality; they represent it. This implies that reporters do not accurately reflect the reality of war; they convey its representation instead. Whatever the circumstances are, TV stations cover what is deemed striking or unprecedented.⁷ The war that erupted a couple of years ago in Syria is of considerable importance only when massacres are perpetrated and bodies are torn to pieces; if this were not the case, it would be deemed anecdotal. In their news stories, reporters show the representation of reality, not reality the way it is. Their reports reflect images taken in the conflict area and voice the comments of reporters who turn a blind eye to people's experiences. In fact, reporters seek to display images that confirm the prejudices they already bear in mind instead of exploring an unknown area and shooting what they see in an unbiased way. Because of the swift rhythm of television, they fall short of digging deeper into the covered events or conducting meaningful interviews. Henceforth, the news on television stations is dominated by stories that portray the miserable situation and the haunting images of victims. These images are propagated by TV stations all over the world and are used as commercial products.

TV news bulletins are crucial to the mass entertainment industry whose aim consists of fascinating and amusing the audience. War, an out-of-ordinary phenomenon, is no different than any other news item. The spectacle of mutilated bodies is a great success. Turning abused bodies into a media event depends on how they are seen. The history of this visual culture dates back to the end of the 18th century. According to Jean-

Jacques Courtine (2006):

In fact, at the dawn of 1880, the exhibition of abnormality reached its peak. It is the key element of measures that took the exposition of difference, including strange aspects, disabilities, mutilations, and/or monstrosities of the human body, as the main basis of spectacles that embodied the very first forms of the modern mass entertainment industry (p. 211).

A Reconsidered View

There are many different categories used to refer to the films produced by Abounaddara's filmmakers: engaged cinema, documentary cinema, militant cinema, and emergency cinema. Despite the numerous constraints filmmakers have probably faced, it is filmmaking that they chose as a means to resist war and its resulting visual flood. In their films, Abounaddara's filmmakers portray a mutilated life that war and media never cease to torment⁸ - this allows a large number of spectators to reconsider their perspective on the situation in Syria. Their films attempt to humanize not only the "characters" but also the viewers. The deep, real understanding of captured aspects of war rather than the distant interpretation of the status quo in Syria is the fundamental basis of these films. Contrary to reporters who only convey what is visible, tangible and striking, Abounaddara filmmakers invest their time in making the acquaintance of the witnesses they interview.

Abounaddara's cinema is based on collecting testimonies. The context of the war has shifted the filmmakers' interests toward narratives; yet, the focus on the visual image has remained untouched. Whereas in other war films⁹ the image is prioritized as the primary component of film, the emphasis in Abounaddara's films is placed on the reconstruction of a space, of a life, on the selection of interviewees, respecting their narratives and moments of silence. The filmmakers are concerned with the aspects of war that are neglected and considered uninteresting by mainstream media. This cinema revolves around the witnesses; the film writers are interested in the narratives and the memory of those who deal with the war in their day-to-day life, rather than by the truth of the war per se.

The films are short, lasting between one and three minutes. Shots with a fixed camera are used throughout the films: these long, static close-up shots are taken of the moving, expressive faces. Sometimes, the faces of witnesses are intentionally kept out of sight. The recorded narratives are what leads the editing process. No space is displayed; the witnesses create it. As long as they voice their feelings, the portrayed persons stand as a revealing element of the news. The sole objective of each film is to make ordinary people witnesses to history, to dig up the buried narratives¹⁰ of women and men, and to save them from the "depersonalization" (Audoine-Rouzeau, 2006, p. 309) that the media inflicts. In *No Exit* (2014), a man narrates his experience in prison and weeps over the inhumanity of some prisoners. In *Suffocation* (2014), a woman, whose face is covered, divulges her loneliness and woes after having been moved to an isolated place where she has difficulties surviving without her husband by her side. In *Inappropriate CV* (2014), a young man who has fled from Syria and who is looking for work fails to write a CV according to the standard criteria. He explains how he went through an intense experience between 2012 and 2014 when he immersed himself in the "Syrian revolution" - an experience that, for him, is unreasonable to omit. In

State of Siege (2014), a young lady, whose face is hidden, compares the conditions of Syrians who are living in the “occupied zone” of Syria to that of Palestinians who stayed in Israel after 1948. Although she fully assumes her responsibility for choosing not to leave Damascus, she admits how tough her day-to-day life is. In *Security* (2014), another woman narrates the abduction of her brother who was freed only after her dad paid a huge ransom. The ambivalence of the “Syrian revolution” is addressed in *I Will Betray My Revolution* (2013),¹¹ where a woman retells the story of a man who, having sneaked into the camps of Syrian rebels, brought death to nearly a hundred persons. Accused of treason, he was hanged by the rebels, an execution that, for the narrator, runs counter to the very principles of the revolution.

The films are punctuated by spontaneous and tactfully collected narratives. The camera accompanies the characters, catching their secrets. The interviewee is a woman, as can be inferred from the sound of her voice. Though she is not seen, her story pierces the privacy of witnesses, which reflects the fraternal, spatial closeness between the filmmakers and the characters. The camera captures the testimonies given with the least spectacular expressions. The filmmakers are devoted to persons whose personal fate reflects collective destinies.¹² The witnesses neither meet nor know each other: their ages, social, and cultural statuses separate them from one another.

The films aim at showing every aspect that can be captured within the camera’s scope. In order to transgress the tight frame imposed by the war, a crowd of men and women relate their different stories and dream together. Testimonies are heard one after the other: the stories, however different, overlap. The confrontation between divergent points of view elevates the interest in these films. The filmmakers neither interfere nor seek to explain: they only let people express themselves. The witnesses are survivors who have become accustomed to the war; who have “attenuated” its importance and have managed to get on “normally” with their lives. The films depict the anxiety of youth, the conflict between generations, and the dreams of women. An unspoken statement is noticed: impotence before the war machine, the abstract incarnation of an implacable power. The films consist not only of motionless shots and piercing remembrances of the painful present, but the expression of an expectation, that of death or deliverance. The witnesses narrate episodes of their lives. The films’ very meaning, however, resides in the view of the spectator whose sense of hearing is also aroused. The testimonies and scenes left with no comments incite us to unleash our imagination in order to trace the threads of these disparate stories, be they ordinary, extraordinary, exceptional, trivial or unusual. Already informed and shaped by the media, we are surprised to discover people who look like us; people who might be us. From this perspective, Abounaddara’s cinema stands as the cinema of privacy and loneliness - a kind of cinema that forces us to face ourselves.

The Mise-en-Scène of Meaning Without the Mediation of Abused Bodies

In the attempt to resurrect meaning, the Abounaddara filmmakers have opted for films in which witnesses, whether men or women, open up before the camera. The films are based on the singularity of individual fates. The camera, being vulnerable in a milieu hostile to the image, can solely look into the war through listening successively to witnesses who give their account of the experiences they have been

through. The filmmakers are invisible; their images are not. Never does the filmmakers' secrecy affect the quality of the image. This being said, the filmmakers are not neutral observers; despite them being invisible, they shoot from the inside and are at the central stage of the film.

The Abounaddara filmmakers seek not to capture the event as it occurs, the way a pioneer of documentary cinema, Vertov,¹³ would. The plot seemingly disappears, since the essence of the cinematic narrative is based upon discovery by means of a participating camera rather than a forward-moving narrative. The Abounaddara collective takes a stance different than that adopted by war reporters; it refuses to capture death. Blood, corpses, raped women, devastated landscapes and damaged buildings are either censored or represented in an unexpected, unconventional manner. In *Anatomy of a Rape* (2012), it is a man, not a woman, who narrates his being raped several times at a younger age. When in prison, he went through the same experience. He compares his situation to that of all Syrians. People are therefore humanized, and the audience's eyes are open to a critical, unconventional approach to war images. The films are made out of visualizing narratives, without the use of abused bodies. The Abounaddara filmmakers pay no heed to the visual severity of war; they address the viewer who is able to read the image as a symbolic text. In this sense, cinema is a means to disclose aspects to which the media turn a blind eye and to defy the "voyeurism of the mass" (Courtine, 2006, p. 228).

We are invited to listen to the testimonies of Syrians wholly plunged in war and to unleash our imagination in such a way as to weave a coherent story. Watching these films stands as a militant act. Assaults, oppression, rape, power relationships, and humiliation are all forms of violence that Abounaddara responds to through the violence of interpretation and meaning evoked by the viewer as they try to weave together a coherent narrative.

A Different Form of Violence

War changes habits, modifies day-to-day life, and ruins the pace of life to the core. When weapons, capable of tearing bodies into pieces, do not kill people, they change them, imposing on them new ways of conduct. War results in a complicated set of unprecedented social constraints that are faced by a new type of liberation claim, the refusal of other forms of violence that were unspoken, unconscious, and illegible before the outset of the Syrian civil war.

Abounaddara films also focus on women, and manage to shift the attention from the images of Syrian women as only victims of killing, rape, and forced migration. Instead, the films present Syrian women as powerful, rising against all types of violence. They feature women who live alone because of the death of parents or husbands, the imprisonment of a relative, migration, or because of political affiliation. Women are keen-witted and fluent narrators whose testimonies converge and diverge. They are ordinary persons freely expressing their problems and dreams. They are warm-hearted, capricious, and overwhelmed by the hideous war machine, yet not submissive to the mechanisms imposed by this new society of war. These women sustain their injuries not only in the battlefields but also in the intimacy of their private lives.

In *I am What I will Be* (2014), a young woman with short hair talks about her

difficult relationship with her parents. Rasha says that, when living with her parents, she was never beaten; yet, she did not have a right to voice her opinions or to plan for future projects. She draws a distinction between two forms of violence: the first is the psychological violence from which she had so deeply suffered and because of which she left her family home to settle alone in Lebanon. The second one is the physical violence that affects a considerable share of the Syrian population. The three-part film *Marcell* (2014) narrates the story of a young woman, self-declared as “the revolution girl” who lives alone in a “liberated zone” after losing her mother. *Marcell* claims her freedom as a kind of liberty from all forms of power. As she says, the experiences she has gone through since the start of the “revolution” have changed her. A feeling fills her: the feeling that she has become a wise, mature person who is only committed to observing the laws she deems compatible with her freedom. In the two-part film *Confession of a Woman* (2014), a woman lives alone in an apartment that friends rent for her. She confesses that she is extremely delighted despite the confusing conditions in which she lives. She freely speaks about her love for life that has deepened since the start of the “revolution” and explains how she has freed herself from the external pressures exerted on her before the war. She adds that she is in love and has learned to improve her feminine qualities, the core of her identity, namely gentleness, sensuality, and sensitivity. The film *The Lady of Syria* (2014) narrates the story of a woman living in a small Syrian village where she gives courses related to daily life such as hairdressing and first aid, among others. According to this woman, Syrians will never be freed as long as they are overwhelmed by the burden of traditions. In *The Woman in Trousers* (2013), a veiled young woman waves a cardboard placard that reads slogans against the Islamic State. This former instructor, who has been suspended from work for a couple of years for reasons that the film does not disclose, lives along with her family in a zone under the control of the Islamic State. She criticizes other residents who do not find enough courage to face the Islamic group consisting, according to her, of uneducated children and teenagers. In a film entitled *In the Name of the Father* (2013), a gorgeous young lady speaks about her stormy relationship with her father. She claims that she is ready to break the bond between both of them if he does not respect her desire to be free. For her, Bashar al-Assad is a metaphoric father figure whom she no longer wants. The film entitled *From One Revolution to Another* (2012) is a dark scene enlightened by the voice of a woman for whom the authentic Syrian revolution is conducted by women.

Women put their hands again on the internal violence perpetrated by society in order to question it and transgress it. They do not only seek to adapt themselves to a violent, day-to-day life, they also stand up against a massive process of amassing anxiety that they try to reduce. They voice their refusal of an old, repressive and symbolically violent system. War’s brutality has incited these women to question the standards society observes. The rotten-to-the-core system is brought into question. The revolution did not start with women: it is not theirs. This being said, they can encounter the prejudices aroused by a patriarchal, male-dominant society and rise up against the double “inferiority” of being women in the time of war.

Lighting to Represent What is Not Representable

The confrontation of memories results in subtle, complicated, enigmatic films that tell

little about the characters. They are so abundant in illusions that the audience finally believes that the images actually mirror reality. Life is not restricted to the evidence of sight and hearing. The Abounaddara filmmakers take advantage of other possibilities offered by the camera in order to explore human disarray in times of war.

The foremost theme of these films is the out-of-reach facet of the image as well as the desire to give shape to what is absent and to represent what is not representable.¹⁴ Death, the absolute consequence of war, stands as an impossible image, an anti-image or the reverse side of a painting. Abounaddara films suspend the real image of the featured persons for a while, depicting the struggle between two unequal forces: the struggle between war and the people who survive it. The cinematic context is characterized by numerous plastic qualities: it is a mirror, an anti-painting, and a masked self-portrait. Every film serves as a piece of an all-inclusive image. Finding the piece-combining technique and fostering the right correlations depend on the viewer. The films stand as series of paintings, a frame in which different pictures overlap. By combining the different levels of the image, the real story emerges. The suggested image reflects the absence of image.

The filmmakers refrain from bathing the sets with artificial light so as not to distort the natural shot, nor to exploit their symbolic significance. Their films are not a manipulation that threatens reality in its integrity; rather, they are another conception of it.

The filmmakers take advantage of the transformative power of light to shape the spaces anew.¹⁵ Light is a structuring means that can either build or redesign a place. Its importance is drawn from the objects that it lightens or keeps in the shadow. To lighten means to illuminate, to make something visible. However, the inside is always dim or poorly lit. The expressive spectrum of the language of shadows and light proves to be rich and intense. The collision of contrasts is used in Abounaddara's films to represent the mental space of each character. The creative mechanism of light is exploited to show the psychological environment. Lighting allows the filmmakers to play with emotions: they can unlock the doors of the invisible and can express what words cannot convey. Specific to a number of their films, the monotony of black and white symbolizes the witnesses' depths of despair and rays of hope. There are times when light is as formless, evanescent, and intangible as the soul of the featured person. Light casts doubts over the reality of what is perceived and reveals the filmmakers' method: power emanates from what is left unspoken. In these films where the landscapes are devastated, the tragedy of witnesses remains mysterious, raising many never-answered questions.

The Abounaddara filmmakers opt for gloomy lighting that permits the transfiguration of the day-to-day reality and the transformation of the real so as to either separate the characters from the space or to immerse them in it. Chiaroscuro lighting intensifies the sense of strangeness¹⁶ and contributes to the creation of a mysterious atmosphere that haunts the films. The characters seemingly float in a timeless space as the gloomy, woeful lighting awakens their anxiety. Obscurity holds many a signification; it designates tragedy, obsession or destiny. It also helps better understand the character-defining limits. The Abounaddara filmmakers resort to obscurity to mirror the woes of their films' "heroines" that are confined to a closed, oppressive space. Obscurity

thickens the space and conciliates opposites such as sleepiness, dreams and death among others. Dim light, stemming from merging light and obscurity, brings forth an atmosphere charged with anxiety and distress that also shapes the cinematographic experience of Abounaddara. Lighting draws shapes in the space, leaving large zones of shadows. It demarcates a blurred-contour space surrounded by a dark, unknown mass, the color and the substance of women's daily life.

Faint light creates an imaginary space. Through light manipulation, spaces are defined. Whilst the brightly lit space features women, the dimly lit space is elusive; it is the dark side of their stories. The anonymous filmmakers give chiaroscuro a new signification whereby the real, visible world fades away in favor of a timeless world. Indeed, space is represented as a construction reshaped by light and the sound of weapons¹⁷ rather than as a tangible, geometric reality. These women live in a space where time does not exist; they live a unique experience whose time and space are unlike any other. Terror never ceases to shape and reshape their reality: this world is distinct from the "real" world outside of Syria, and enjoys a certain kind of autonomy. Women find themselves captive to a space and time they did not choose: they live in a prison.

The light and the sound of weapons are the only points of reference available for the viewer. Chiaroscuro mirrors the precarious conditions of these women who, having lost their points of reference, are obliged to create a new set of reference points. The inside and outside boundaries both fade away as memories allow two distinct spaces to superimpose: the real space is drawn from the inner space. Architecture and psychology overlap and draw near to one another. Lighting has the power to convert a closed space into a living organism where women's fears reside. The space stands as a character that so greatly merges with other characters that it becomes their duplicate. Divided into brightly lit zones while others are kept in the shadow, space illustrates the duality of women. A fusion between space and women emerges with the former taking the shape of those who occupy it. The imagery of the space and the theme of terror metaphorically express women's anger towards the patriarchal and repressive system. Space is located between the inside that they could not cross and the outside that is under the control of men. While obscurity explores the mental space of women, chiaroscuro depicts absence and emptiness. Obscurity renders all the details of the war invisible and gives birth to a new place representing absence. It looks like fear. It is a cloud of air that wafts, wanders through space, lightly touches the walls and interferes with every single object. It is a cloud of dust that reaches every corner and reigns over the absolute reality. Obscurity draws the pattern of seclusion and enclosure and symbolizes the absence of a reassuring light and an uncertainty about the future. Women are confined to a closed universe. The films offer them the opportunity to deceptively transgress it.

Conclusion

Abounaddara films denounce the media's representation of Syrians' sufferings as a sensational spectacle. They bring forth a new perspective from which the war in Syria is seen, voicing an alternative opinion about the role of women in this war. The Abounaddara collective represents a work that is deeply connected to questions about

war, identity, and the relation of memory to representation. The struggle to define the self persists: it manifests in the search for the accurate words that both filmmakers and witnesses use. It is worth mentioning that Abounaddara films do not only tackle women's experiences: they prioritize them.

On-screen TV representations focus mainly on the role of men in armed conflicts and disregard women's involvement. Abounaddara films shed light on the activism of Syrian women who are besieged by a war that they have to endure by force not by choice. The Abounaddara filmmakers refrain from representing women as victims: rather, they emphasize their struggle in the Syrian war. They feature women who redefine the meaning of resilience and nationalism and prove to be creative in developing survival mechanisms. Driven by the war-imposed necessities, women assume totally new roles: they negotiate with patriarchal actors, namely the armed rebels, the Islamic State, and the Syrian government, on a daily basis. Women have a double-edged relationship with war: they are forced to live with a war that threatens their day-to-day life, and simultaneously endure traditionally sexist practices. The films show the tremendous courage of these women as well as their capability to innovate under difficult conditions. War amplifies violence against women and forces them to stand up to the masculine, military machine and to create their own space of struggle. Women redefine their status by refusing to surrender and be on the fringe of society.

Abounaddara films are structured as narratives collected from the fragmented testimonies of men and women. The films serve as an advocate of a cinematographic reality that will turn into a historical reality over time. They deeply touch the imagination and the memory of the viewers, hence their significant importance in the present and in the future. The Abounaddara collective produces a militant cinema that defies amnesia and the chaos and destruction of war through tailoring a collective memory out of individual ones.

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ENDNOTES

1. Originally a film production company, Abounaddara was founded in 2010 in Damascus by Cherif Kiwane, Maya Alkhouri and Rime Khattab. For more than five years now, the company has been producing at least one short documentary per week, usually on Fridays. Documentaries are launched on its website, <http://www.abounaddara.com>, its Facebook page and on Vimeo.
2. In an article published in *Libération*, the Abounaddara collective states, "Quant à nous, cinéastes syriens de notre état, nous sommes totalement engagés dans le combat. Nous réalisons des films d'urgence pour donner à voir notre société en proie à la barbarie. Et de nombreux artistes ou citoyens syriens anonymes font comme nous en produisant des images alternatives qu'ils lancent sur la Toile, comme des bouteilles à la mer." ["According to us, Syrian filmmakers, we are completely engaged in the conflict. We produce emergency films to show how our society has fallen prey to barbarism. Many anonymous Syrian artists and citizens follow our example in producing alternative images that they launch on the internet like bottles thrown into the sea."]
3. A title greatly inspired by Baudrillard's book *La Société de Consommation* [The Consumer Society] (1970).
4. Baudrillard evokes the "murder of the real" in an interview published by *Telerama* on 7 March 2007.
5. "Nous sommes dans un univers où il y a de plus en plus d'information et de moins en moins de sens." ["We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning"] (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 119).
6. "Dans le spectacle, une partie du monde se représente devant le monde, et lui est supérieure. Le spectacle n'est que le langage commun de cette séparation. Ce qui relie les spectateurs n'est qu'un rapport irréversible au centre même qui maintient leur isolement. Le spectacle réunit le séparé, mais il le réunit en tant que séparé." ["The stage divides the world into two parts, one of which is held up as a self-representation to the world, and is superior to the world. The stage is simply the common language that bridges this division. Spectators are linked only by a one-way relationship to the very center that maintains their isolation from one another. The stage thus unites what is separate, but it unites it only in its separateness"] (Debord, 1992, p. 10).
7. According to Florence Aubenas, journalism is "un univers en soi, autonome, avec ses propres codes, ses images, son langage, ses vérités." ["an autonomous universe per se that has its own codes, images, language and truths"] (1999, p. 10).
8. *Media kill* (2012); *Wash your brain* (2014); and *Kill them* (2015) are the telling titles of some films where Abounaddara's filmmakers overtly show their "hostility" towards traditional media.
10. According to Belting, "les images du souvenir et de l'imagination naissent dans notre corps comme un médium vivant. On sait que cette expérience suscite le partage entre la mémoire, considérée comme une archive visuelle propre au corps, et le ressouvenir, en tant que production iconique endogène." ["images of memory and imagination are born in our body as a living medium. We know that this experience provokes the sharing between memory, considered as the visual archive of the body, and remembrance as an endogenous, iconic production"] (2014, p. 21).
11. This film was first launched in 2011. The Abounaddara collective then decided to censor it because of the narrative given by the narrator; the film was screened again in 2013.
12. In *La mémoire collective* [The Collective Memory], Halbwachs explains, "nos souvenirs demeurent collectifs, et ils nous sont rappelés par les autres, alors même qu'il s'agit d'événements auxquels nous seuls avons été mêlés, et d'objets que nous seuls avons vus. C'est qu'en réalité nous ne sommes jamais seuls. Il n'est pas nécessaire que d'autres hommes soient là, qui se distinguent matériellement de nous: car nous portons toujours avec nous et en nous une quantité de personnes qui ne se confondent pas." ["Our memories remain collective, however, and are recalled to us through others even though only we were participants in the events or saw the things concerned. In reality, we are never alone. Other men need not be physically present, since we always carry with us and in us a number of distinct persons"] (1950, p. 6).
13. Dziga Vertov is notably famous for his documentary film, *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929).
14. In his book *Des lumières et des ombres* [Lights and Shadows], Alekan (1991) studied the creative mechanism of light and its deep, emotional consequences on the human being.
15. According to Alekan, "la lumière est alors élément constructeur et perturbateur, elle rompt la monotonie d'une surface, souligne les centres d'intérêts préférentiels, elle divise, elle repartit, elle unit, elle rythme, elle est gamme plastique, physiquement et plastiquement." ["light is a constructive yet disruptive element. It interrupts the monotony of a surface, highlighting its preferred focal points. It divides, distributes, unites and punctuates. It is a plastic spectrum both physically and plastically"] (1991, p. 112).
16. According to Vax, "Le sentiment de l'étrange rend l'homme étranger à lui-même. Il l'"aliène" (...) L'étrangeté se présente donc comme une aliénation plus profonde et plus intime que l'aliénation sociale." ["The sense of strangeness renders the human being a stranger to himself or herself. It alienates him or her. (...) Strangeness is represented as a more intimate, profound alienation than social alienation is"] (1965, p. 13).
17. The sound of weapons is the background in a handful of films produced by Abounaddara.

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