

## Shattered: Beirut 6.07 and Those Still Standing: Shorts by Carol Mansour

Stephanie Nasr

To cite this article: Nasr, S. (2022). Shattered: Beirut 6.07 and Those Still Standing, a film by Carol Mansour. *Al-Raida*, 46(2), 123-125. DOI: 10.32380/alrj.v46i2.2531

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.32380/alrj.v46i2.2531>

© 2022 The Author(s)

Corresponding author: Stephanie Nasr

Author contact: [stephanie.nasr@lau.edu](mailto:stephanie.nasr@lau.edu)

Article type: Article

Published online: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022

Publisher: Arab Institute for Women

Publication support provided by: Escienta

Journal ISSN: 0259-9953

Copyright: This is an Open Access article, free of all copyright, and may be freely reproduced, distributed, transmitted, modified, built upon, or otherwise used by anyone for any lawful purpose. The work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license.

## Shattered: Beirut 6.07 and Those Still Standing: Shorts by Carol Mansour

Stephanie Nasr

“It’s not the first time that everything ended.”

*Shattered: Beirut 6.07* is a short documentary by Carol Mansour produced in October 2020. Just two months after the Beirut Blast.

The documentary is based on citizen testimonies and footage of Beirut at the time of the blast and immediately afterward. Portrayed through the testimonies are feelings of anger, confusion, and helplessness about the city, the country, the political class, and the population.

The subject of the explosion has been a continuous source of trauma for everyone who shares a connection to the land or Lebanon, or its people whether they are living in the country or the diaspora. International news was full of reports about the third biggest explosion in human history that had just happened in a nation already coping with an ongoing revolt against the corrupt political ruling class, a dire economic crisis, and of course, COVID-19.

Interestingly enough, the memories of the explosion that are included in Mansour’s film, and each person’s individual struggle, are never the same, therefore making each one’s connection to Mansour’s work a unique experience altogether.

The documentary starts off with the sound and sight of shattered glass. The first testimony of the film links the Beirut Blast to memories of the Lebanese Civil War: explosions, assassinations, car bombs, kidnappings, checkpoints, snipers, and air raids. A current state of uncertainty links back to the years lived through the civil war and the 2006 invasion.

The most unexpected moment of the film was the complete silence that was filled with images from different perspectives of the moment of the blast, which was followed by a black screen that only included the voices and sounds from those moments. Raw footage embedded with various testimonies creates an emotional link between the viewer and the storyline of the film. The overlay of different testimonies and recordings is meant to build tension in the various

narratives. Mansour uses this clash of sounds to jolt the viewer, with the aim to represent the collective trauma of the Beirut Blast through this stimulation of the senses.

The raw recordings of what it was like directly on the ground after the explosion represent the reality of the circumstances, and the emotions felt: confusion, helplessness, and anger. Anger was evident in many of the recordings: an emotion continuously experienced in Lebanon. Once again, the traces of anger across the different recordings help the viewers to (re)create, the sense of collective trauma in the aftermath of the explosion. The testimonies show how feelings like anger might be shared by many but are expressed in drastically different ways. Each testimonial allows the viewer to enter a vulnerable location within the person's personal psyche and memory. The various words and expressions used to explain their anger and confusion allow the viewer to put themselves, almost literally, in that person's shoes.

If you were asked to be part of the documentary, what would you have said? The beauty of the testimonies is that they were unscripted. Additionally, the lack of visual identity for the speakers adds to that beauty—no specific name, age, or religion could ever be detected. Rather, what was shown was primarily emotional documentation. In many ways, such emotional documentation is *more* than a person's individual identity: it speaks to the collective. The documentary intends for the viewers to feel the exact emotions of those who were impacted by the explosion, which is precisely what Mansour succeeded in doing. Political failure is witnessed and felt. Death and bloodshed are witnessed and felt. Betrayal is witnessed and felt. And just as it started, the film ends with the sound and sight of shattered glass.

\*

One year after the Beirut Blast, Carol Mansour produced another short film in July 2021 titled *Those Still Standing*. The footage is five minutes of imagery focused on the remains of the Beirut port, particularly the remains of the wheat silos. It is a more simplified and calming view of the port and the chaos than what the viewer experiences in *Shattered: Beirut 6.07*. It seems as if there has been an attempt to heal. But the main story is in the continued or updated testimonies: Testimonies that were once anonymous and represented a group identity have now been given their own names. To name a few: Mishka, Thuraya, Sahar, and Nabil. They have all taken their own identities. The testimonies no longer focus on what happened at the moment of

the explosion but rather about what did not happen after it: no justice, no safety, no comfort. After one year, where have the emotions gone? After one year, how have those emotions developed?

Mansour also includes herself in *Those Still Standing*. Nothing is explicitly mentioned as to how she has been coping and how she has been feeling throughout the entire year. However, she is presenting the updates of testimonies with a tone and language that embodies sadness, as if it is her mother tongue. There is no sense of hope to take from the film nor from the testimonies. However, that may be a form of reminder to the viewers, particularly to those in Lebanon and those who survived, that we are still all connected even through the different forms of emotional evolution through one year.