

## **Migrating People and Migrating Art: How Artists' Migration Influences the Migration of their Work**

### **Abstract**

Who is Walid Raad and to which country does he belong? Born in Beirut, Raad left Lebanon during its civil war to study in the United States. Most of his adult, professional life has been spent there. Which country, then, wants and is allowed to claim his artistic star? For a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, he is described as a “leading contemporary artist Walid Raad (b. 1967, Lebanon)” and we are told that “his work is informed by his upbringing in Lebanon during the civil war (1975-91), and by the socioeconomic and military policies that have shaped the Middle East in the past few decades.” In her review of a show of his work at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York Times reporter Andrea Scott describes him as dividing his time between Beirut and Brooklyn. In fact, for an exhibition of his work at the Moderna Museet in Sweden, he wrote multiple auto-bios, including events like the 1915 locust attacks in Syria and Palestine which brought widespread famine to the Middle East and the 1930 publication of Walter Benjamin’s “On Some Motif’s in Baudelaire” which he later read in Beirut.

Raad is by no means the first artist to migrate to study or work abroad. In fact, in today’s world, it’s fair to say that any artist from the Global South needs to move at least for some period to get recognized in the global art world. Professor Peggy Levitt, Professor Kangsan Lee and Ms Chantal Valdivia look closely at the relationship between physical migration and artistic circulation. Drawing on data from a multi-country study of Lebanon, Argentina, and South Korea, they focus here on South Korea. They trace how artist’s migratory trajectories affect the circulation of their work. They also explore how the aesthetic and geographic labels that claim artists and that they are allowed to claim impact how and where their work travels.