

Tate Modern

Living Cities

Blavatnik Building (South) Level 4

15:30-16:00

Laurence Shafe

Living Cities (Blavatnik Building, Level 4)

Introduction	3
Notes.....	4
All Artworks and Route	5
*Marwan Rechmaoui, Beirut Caoutchouc, 2004–8.....	6
*Nil Yalter, Temporary Dwellings, 1974–7	9
*Mark Bradford, 'Los Moscos' 2004	12
*Kader Attia, 'Untitled (Ghardaïa)' 2009	15
*Boris Mikhailov, Red, 1968–75, printed c.1999–2000.....	18
*Julie Mehretu, Mogamma, A Painting in Four Parts: Part 3, 2012	21
Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, 'Ragman's Horse and Cart by Union Road (Byker)' 1970 (removed July 2017).....	24
Visual Aids	27
Summary of 'Living Cities' (15:30-16:00), South Level 4	33

- This is based on the new hang in Blavatnik Building Level 4.
- Works marked with '*' are key works not to be missed and the others are optional.
- The talk is 30 minutes and each work takes about typically 3 to 5 minutes so 6 to 10 works can be covered. The 'Background Notes' are designed to answer any questions and the section 'Visual Aids' at the end contains additional images that may be used to illustrate related works or ideas.
- Notes and directions are in round brackets and optional sections that can be used with some groups are shown in square brackets. All quotations are in bold and names are underlined.
- In general, start with the title and the artist followed by a description of the work and end with a link to either the theme or the next work. Avoid dates, movements and 'isms' unless directly relevant. Only refer to other works or historic events if they help explain the work being presented.

Introduction

1. Welcome to Tate Modern. My name is Laurence and I am your guide for the next thirty minutes.
2. I have a hearing loop for anyone that requires it and if you need a seat there are folding stools available.
3. The Tate was named after Henry Tate, the founder of the sugar company Tate & Lyle. He was a wealthy nineteenth-century entrepreneur who made his fortune selling sugar cubes. In later life, he gave a lot to charity including several hospitals and libraries. He donated his collection of 65 paintings to the nation on the condition that they were displayed together but the National Gallery said they did not have the space. The Government were going to reject the offer until Henry Tate donated £150,000 to build what became Tate Britain to hold the collection he had donated. About 100 years later, this building was opened to hold the ever-expanding collection. This building is a converted power station, called Bankside, that was built in the 1950s and was due for demolition until it was converted by the Tate and opened in 2000. We are in the new Blavatnik Building, an extension that was opened in June 2016.
4. Tate Modern is one of the top international art galleries in the world and we have managed to keep our permanent collection free by charging for temporary exhibitions, and some Government funding. Please help us remain free by having lunch here, buying a book or giving a small donation.
5. There are eight free art tours every day in Tate Modern, seven days a week, given by volunteers like me. This is the last tour of the day.
6. This tour is around a gallery called 'Living Cities'. Why cities? By 2030 two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities. Cities are the infrastructure that best defines the modern world. In 1990, we spend about the same on defence worldwide as on infrastructure [\$2T]. In 2025, we will spend four and a half times more on infrastructure than on defence [\$9T compared with \$2T]. But how do we as human beings deal with the city? This gallery deals with issues of civil war, immigration and multi-culturalism in cities such as Beirut, Paris and Los Angeles. Broadly these issues are concerned with the relationship between the individual and society and the artworks range from panoramic overviews to close-up images recording the minutiae of daily life.
7. I am happy to take questions as we go around so let's get started. Please follow me into the centre of the main room.

Notes

- **The Founder.** Henry Tate (1819-1899) was the son of a clergyman and set up his own grocery shop when he was 20. He expanded this to a chain of six shops which he sold and became the owner of a sugar refinery in 1859. This was 26 years after slavery had been abolished in the British Empire (1833) and 52 years after Britain had abolished the slave trade (1807). In 1872, Tate bought a German patent for making sugar cubes from Eugen Langen and it was this that made his fortune. The same year he opened a refinery in Liverpool. Towards the end of his life he gave money to many colleges, hospitals and founded Streatham, Balham, South Lambeth and Brixton libraries. In 1897, he spent £150,000 (some say £80,000) on building the National Gallery of British Art ('Tate Gallery' in 1932), endowed it with his personal art collection of 65 contemporary paintings and gave it all to the nation. The famous portico was designed by the architect Sidney Smith. It was separated from the National Gallery in 1954. Tate Britain was extended twice by Joseph Duveen, an art dealer who also paid for an extension at the British Museum, and in 1987 Charles Clore funded the Turner wing.
- **Bankside power station** was designed by Giles Gilbert Scott (1880-1960) who designed Liverpool Cathedral and many of the red telephone boxes. He was the grandson of the prolific Victorian architect George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) who designed the Midland Hotel at St. Pancras and the Albert Memorial. The façade of the building is made from 4.2 million bricks. The chimney is 325 feet (99m) and was designed to be lower than St. Paul's Cathedral opposite (365 feet, 111m). At its peak, the power station generated 300 megawatts but it became uneconomic and too polluting and was closed in 1981. The turbine hall is 509 feet (155 m) long, 115 feet (35 m) wide and 85 feet (26 m) high. The conversion was carried out by Herzog & de Meuron at a cost of £134 million of which £50 million was from the Millennium Commission. Tate Modern opened in 2000 and had become one of the most visited museums of modern and contemporary art in the world.
- **Attendance.** According to Wikipedia and the Tate Annual Report 2014-15 the four Tate galleries received 7.9 million visitors and Tate Modern 5.7 million. The Louvre was number one with 9.7 million, number two was the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art with 6.1 million, the British Museum was number three with 5.6 million and Tate Modern was number four.
- **Extension.** Within four years of opening our success meant we started planning to expand the gallery. This new extension, again designed by Herzog & de Meuron, cost £260 million and opened on 17 June 2016. This ten-storey extension, now called the Blavatnik Building, increases the display space by 60%. Len Blavatnik is the UK's richest person and has been a UK citizen since 2010.
- **Gender balance.** Nearly 40% (38%) of the artists on display at Tate Modern are women and 50% of the monographic rooms are by women.
- **Management.** The Director of the Tate is Maria Balshaw who was previously Director of the Whitworth (University of Manchester) and Manchester City Galleries, and Director of Culture for Manchester City Council. The previous Director, since 1988, was Sir Nicholas Serota (b. 1946). The Director of Tate Modern is Frances Morris and of Tate Britain Alex Farquharson.

All Artworks and Route

- *Marwan Rechmaoui, 'Beirut Caoutchouc' 2004–8
- *Nil Yalter, 'Temporary Dwellings' 1974–7
- *Mark Bradford, 'Los Moscos' 2004
- *Kader Attia, 'Untitled (Ghardaïa)' 2009
- *Boris Mikhailov, 'Red' 1968–75, printed c.1999–2000
- *Julie Mehretu, 'Mogamma, A Painting in Four Parts: Part 3' 2012
- *Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen,
 - Byker Byte Pool Room (Byker), 1981, printed 2014
 - 'John Hindmarsh & Son, Funeral Directors', Raby Street (Byker)' 1974, printed 2014
 - 'Dogs Hairdressing, Shields Road (Byker)' 1981, printed 2014
 - 'Old Kitt, St Peter's Allotments (Byker)' 1973, printed 2014
 - 'Gordon Road (Byker)' 1971, printed 2012
 - 'Byker Park Dominoes Club (Byker)' 1974, printed 2012
 - 'Living Room Wall of Sidney Aubrey (Byker)' 1975, printed 2014
 - 'Jimmy Dodds (Byker)' 1980, printed 2012
 - 'W.H. Douglas - Gents Hairdresser (Byker)' 1974, printed 2012
 - *'Ragman's Horse and Cart by Union Road (Byker)' 1970, printed 2012
 - 'Jean Barron with Parents (Byker)' 1980, printed 2012
 - 'Isaac in Front of his Raby Swap Shop (Byker)' 1974, printed 2012
 - 'Heather Playing a Piano in a Derelict House (Byker)' 1971, printed 2012
 - 'Jimmy Dodds, Albion Row Allotments (Byker)' 1980, printed 2014
 - 'Lady with the Beehive (Byker)' 1971, printed 2012
 - 'William Neilson (Byker)' 1971, printed 2012
 - 'Young Couple in a Backyard (Byker)' 1975, printed 2012

* covered during the tour.

*Marwan Rechmaoui, *Beirut Caoutchouc*, 2004–8



- *Beirut Caoutchouc* (pronounced 'kay-oo-chew', French for rubber) is a rubber map of Beirut by Marwan Rechmaoui. The rubber is embossed with the roads and divided into 60 pieces representing the districts. Beirut is a fiercely divided city that suffered devastating damage during the fifteen-year civil war (1975-1990) yet the rubber mat shows no political or religious divisions. The rubber represents the city's resilience and its durable surface enables visitors to walk over the surface providing a personal encounter with the city. It is as if the walking across the city brings together the various religious divisions, Shia, Sunni, Druze, Maronite Christians, Greek Orthodox and Melkite.
- The area above the top and to the left of the map is the sea. The plain triangular area at the bottom is a park and the triangular area above it is Beirut's horse racing track. There is another work by Marwan Rechmaoui on Level 2 in the Boiler House, called 'Monument for the Living', of the Burk El Murr tower which is near the top of the map, below the curved Zaitunay Bay. This is in downtown Beirut near the hotel district and was the centre of the fighting during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-90). Rechmaoui has intentionally not shown what became known as the 'green line', a zone that separated the Christians in the East and the Muslims in the West [later the Sunni from the Shia]. It ran down from the harbour and then diagonally across to the east end of the horse track. Traditionally all Lebanese presidents have been Maronite Christian, Prime Ministers Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the National Assembly Shia Muslim.
- Marwan Rechmaoui knows Beirut well. He was born there in 1964 and although he trained in Boston and New York he returned to Beirut in 1993 following the end of the Civil War and has lived and worked there ever since. He sees the divisions and conflicts in Beirut as representing the tensions within all large cities around the world. He said, '**... Beirut is important. It's the future. Populations are moving wholesale into cities, and bringing with them their issues, their problems, which puts pressure on the city as a space ... All these issues about security and terrorism mean that Western societies, which believe they are free, are starting to lose the benefits of being free.**' Rechmaoui remains positive, he said '**We are all strangers in the city,**' he says. '**That affects people's behaviour; they become more tolerant, more accepting of new ideas.**'
- Rechmaoui's confronts us with an unannotated object that forces us to interpret the work. Many of his contemporaries use photography, video and text to generate a documentary record and to see this technique let us turn next to our next artist, Nil Yalter.

Notes on Marwan Rechmaoui, *Beirut Caoutchouc*, 2004–8

- Marwan Rechmaoui (b. 1964) was born in Lebanon and trained in Boston and New York. He returned to Beirut after the Civil War where he now lives and works. He began his career as a painter, exploring social realism and then abstract expressionism. But after his return to Beirut in 1993 Rechmaoui developed an interest in architecturally-informed sculpture and wall-based work. Unlike his contemporaries in Beirut who use mostly photography and video, he confronts the viewer using only form, volume and space. His work has a tactile, material presence addressing perceptions of architecture and the urban environment across time.
- He lives in Beirut and is annoyed by the sudden gentrification of the area he lives in. He spends his time observing the complex social and political dynamics of Lebanon and what they reveal in a country where propaganda and censorship are typical. Following the end of the war, he and other artists wanted to change society but by the end of the 1990s they had become disillusioned. Rechmaoui began to make semi-abstract works in which the shapes were ordered according to random rules, mirroring the chaos in society. He chose cement, tar and rubber; the materials of a country under reconstruction. Slowly his paintings became structures.
- “In the context of Beirut’s contemporary art scene, Rechmaoui is something of an aberration. He began his career as a painter, mining abstract expressionist and social realist motifs. Then he started making wooden panels covered with materials such as concrete, tar, iron, and glass. In the late 1990s, he abandoned two-dimensional works altogether and “got off the wall.” All of his works since then have been either sculptural or architectural. He has a deep and long-standing commitment to the spatial configurations that are created by placing three-dimensional objects in a room. He sees the hanging of two-dimensional works on the wall as a significantly less interesting proposition”. (Bidoun)
- Druze believe a mixture of Islam, Judaism and Christianity and a belief in reincarnation and spiritual progress. Maronites are the main Christian group and traditionally all Lebanese presidents have been Maronites, Prime Ministers Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the National Assembly Shia Muslim.
- The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) resulted in an estimated 250,000 casualties and an exodus of almost one million people from Lebanon. The ‘Green Line’ was a no-man’s land between the factions and was so called because the empty street and damaged buildings became overgrown with trees and bushes. It is now a vibrant thoroughfare packed with cars, shops and people.

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- <http://bidoun.org/articles/marwan-rechmaoui>
- Video: <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/marwan-rechmaoui-i-was-always-interested-urban-phenomenon-tateshots>

*Nil Yalter, *Temporary Dwellings*, 1974–7



- This work is called *Temporary Dwellings* and consist of seven panels that record the lives of immigrant communities around the world. The panels are separated by six videos showing documentary interviews of the inhabitants. The artist Nil Yalter is a Turkish contemporary feminist artist work who made the work over a three-year period from 1974 to 1977.
- Two of the panels are for Paris, two for Istanbul and three for New York and the immigrant communities are Turkish, Kurdish and Puerto Rican. Each cardboard sheet has a grid of five rows of information featuring diary-like entries written in block capital letters, Polaroids, drawings and artefacts found on-site. At the top, the date and location are hand drawn like sign painting. All the text is French as Yalter moved from Turkey to France in 1965 and now lives in France. Beneath the script are four alternating rows, two of Polaroid photographs and two of collaged items. The photographs show interiors, exteriors and architectural details. The found objects are fragments of building material, a crushed Coca-Cola can, part of a broken record and so on. There are also technically precise drawings and all the items have handwritten captions. The black and white videos document their lives in a documentary style but the collaged panels are more poetic—from the worn bed clothing to the blank television screen that Yalter captures both in drawing and on Polaroid.
- Yalter was one of the first artists to examine the living and working conditions of these communities. Although we have heard a lot about Turkish immigrants in France recently, forty years ago it was a problem that was largely ignored. To show what life was like for the immigrants she worked closely and unobtrusively within the communities to draw attention to their situation and their lives. The title of this piece, *Temporary Dwellings*, reflects the type of accommodation in which she found they were living. She has studied her subject like an ethnographer but presents it in the style of a school project.
- If we look at one sheet, the second from the left, dated Wednesday 7 July 1975, it documents a temporary Algerian settlement in the Paris suburb Nanterre, where Yalter collects a piece of “TOLE ROUILLE” (‘tolla roy-ee’, rusted metal) which is attached to the cardboard. In the centre is a gift from Ali (UN CADEAU D’ALI). She draws the blue shade of a kitchen wall and notes “ILS ONT ECRIT LEURS NOMS SUR PAPIER” (they wrote their names on paper) under the signed scraps of paper, also stuck on the board. Underneath she notes the colour of the kitchen wall (LA COULEUR DU MUR DE LA CUISINE), the bottom of the mattress (LE DESSOUS DU MATELAS) and the television in the street Jeanne D’Arc (LA TELEVISION DANS LA RUE JEANNE D’ARC). Yalter gives the workers and their temporary dwellings the permanency of a museum collection.

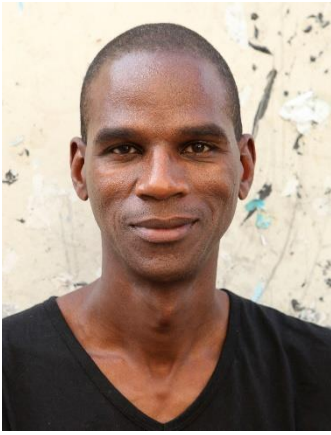
Notes on Nil Yalter, 'Temporary Dwellings' 1974–7

- Nil Yalter is a Turkish contemporary feminist artist. She attended Robert College in Istanbul, Turkey and currently lives and works in Paris.
- Translations «morceau du grillage et des clous» means “Piece of wire mesh and nails”, «tôle rouillée» means “rusty sheet”.

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- <http://www.nilyalter.com/texts/12/n-l-yalter-fragments-of-memory-by-derya.html>
- <https://frieze.com/article/nil-yalter>

*Mark Bradford, 'Los Moscos' 2004



Mark Bradford (b. 1961), 'Los Moscos' 2004

- This work is made from hundreds of pieces of torn printed paper – posters, flyers, packaging – found by the artist, Mark Bradford, in the streets around his studio in South Central Los Angeles. The words and phrases that appear scattered across the surface refer to the diversity of the area's ethnic culture. Bradford believes the scraps of paper, **'act as memory of things pasted and things past. You can peel away the layers of papers and it's like reading the streets through the signs.'** He adds materials and then repeatedly sands them down and then adds more until the surface reflects the deep memories of his local community. He said in an interview that for him the electric sander is like a paintbrush.
- The title is *Los Moscos*, a derogatory Spanish term which means 'the flies' and is applied to migrant labourers in the San Francisco Bay area, reflecting the artist's long-standing interest in immigration and the sub-cultures of the inner city.
- Mark Bradford is an African-American artist who was born and still lives in Los Angeles in South Central district. He worked as a hairdresser until he was 30 in his mother's beauty salon. He then studied art and started producing grid paintings. He is known for the enormous scale of some of his work. It includes a 70-foot ark inspired by Hurricane Katrina and a 397-foot mural. These large areas suggest the energy of mass consumption and, perhaps more importantly, the mass generation of waste.
- Overall, the work looks like some sort of street map of Los Angeles created from litter but there is an abstraction in the picture that mirrors, as Bradford said, the **'abstraction that happens in the city... a dislocation of reality when you have the Mexican taqueria next to the black wig shop across the street from the Korean nail shop'**.
- Bradford chooses objects that reflect the local area. As he said, **"I want it to actually have the memories—the cultural and personal memories that are lodged in the object."** Another artist for whom culture and personal memories are important is Kader Attia and his couscous city.

Notes on Mark Bradford, 'Los Moscos' 2004

- Mark Bradford (b. 1961) is an Afro-American artist who lives and works in South Los Angeles. He worked as a hairdresser in his mother's beauty salon and did not begin his art studies until he was 30. He obtained an MFA in 1997. Bradford is known for grid-like abstract paintings combining collage and décollage, layered with paint. His first solo exhibition was in 1998 when he was 37. This year he is exhibiting in the US Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.
- In 2015 Bradford's mixed-media collage abstract "Constitution IV" (2013) was sold for \$5.8 million at Phillips. Although now wealthy he still lives and works in the same area of LA in which he grew up.

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*Kader Attia, 'Untitled (Ghardaïa)' 2009



- This is a scale model of the ancient city of Ghardaïa (pronounced 'garday-a') in Algeria. It is moulded in mixture of 350 kilos (770 pounds) of cooked couscous, wallpaper paste and salt and is intended as a satirical dinner for the West. The photographs behind are of the Swiss architect Le Corbusier and the French architect Fernand Pouillon (pronounced 'poo-yon'). Le Corbusier visited Ghardaïa in the 1930s and was captivated by the minimalism. He and Pouillon applied the ideas they found to the apartment blocks they later built in France. The work was produced by Kader Attia, a French artist of Algerian origin. In this work, he has symbolically cooked a dinner for the architects; a meal that criticizes them for appropriating North African aesthetics without acknowledgement. Attia was born in the Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis and spent his childhood between France and Algeria. He spent his childhood living in buildings in Paris designed by Pouillon.
- He selected couscous as it looks like sand and has been a staple part of the diet in Muslim and North African Jewish homes for more than a thousand years old. He says he was, "**educated in couscous**" by his mother cooking. She was a Berber and cooked it every day when he was growing up in Algeria and Paris.
- The couscous is unstable and slowly collapses, an attribute that attracts Attia. He expects this work to slowly decay and, for him, "**it's very important that the piece crumbles**". When it was shown at the Guggenheim in New York he asked the conservators not to rebuild it when it fell apart. Cracks do not bother him, since they mimic what happens to the adobe houses. Several big ones had already opened on the couscous façades, including in the centrepiece minaret. "**These cracks are the wrinkles,**" he said, likening the art work to the human body. "**This is nature. You have to learn to live with your injuries. Injuries are you.**"
- Much of his research has been centred repair, which he regards as a human constant that is seen in opposing ways by Western modernists and Eastern traditionalists. Attia thinks we do not invent objects, environments, or situations but simply repair—or adapt—existing models. Modern society believes you can return to perfection by simply replacing goods. Traditional society accepts damage as a normal part of life and repair becomes the expression of the injury and it is incorporated in the object. Attia has studied terrible facial war injuries and has produced portraits based on them.
- This work is part of a larger project called *Signs of Reappropriation* which explores the valley in which Ghardaïa is situated. He is interested in how architecture exerts an authority by excluding certain elements and extolling others. But this makes it vulnerable and art can reveal what architecture seeks to hide.

Notes on Kader Attia, 'Untitled (Ghardaïa)' 2009

- Kader Attia (pronounced 'kadia atia', b. 1970, France), grew up in both Algeria and the suburbs of Paris, and uses this experience of living as a part of two cultures as a starting point to develop a dynamic practice that reflects on aesthetics and ethics of different cultures. The work concerns the ruthless exploitation and appropriation of North African art during the colonial period.
- There are 770 pounds of couscous mixed with salt. He is, he says, "educated in couscous." His mother, a Berber, cooked it daily when he was growing up in Algeria and Paris. Her preferred method was to steam it in a pan on top of a pot of sauce until it was smooth and light, not crumbly or al dente. It was mixed with wallpaper paste and packed into 34 greased metal moulds made by Attia.
- Ghardaïa is in the Sahara Desert about 600km south of Algiers. It has a population of about 90,000. It is a hilltop city built almost 1,000 years ago. The houses are made of sand, clay and gypsum and Simone de Beauvoir described the city as '**a Cubist painting beautifully constructed**'. The building on top of the hill is a mosque. The city has no begging or theft as all citizens are looked after by the community from birth.

References

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*Boris Mikhailov, *Red*, 1968–75, printed c.1999–2000



- These 84 photographs were taken around Kharov in the Ukraine by Boris Mikhailov. Every picture contains the colour red, which is the name of the series. In some there are large red flags and in other tiny touches of red in a lapel badge or a painted toenail. In some the colour is modified to a pink flower or an orange swimming costume and in other sunburn or a red spot.
- The colour red has formed an important part of the Russian psyche for many years, from the Red Army to the red communist flag. Red embodies Soviet propaganda and Mikhailov draws attention to the Soviet presence in the Ukraine. In Russian the noun *krasnoe* (Красный, pronounced 'kras-nee) meaning 'red' is etymologically linked to *krasivoe* (красивая, Pronounced 'krasiva') meaning 'beautiful', linking the two words. Red has complex and sometimes conflicting associations. It is associated with **courage** and in western countries, it is a symbol of martyrs and sacrifice but it is also the colour associated with **love** and it is the symbolic colour of the heart and the red rose, is closely associated with romantic love and Saint Valentine's Day. Red is the colour associated with **joy** and well-being and of celebration and ceremony. A red carpet is often used to welcome distinguished guests. In China, it is considered the colour of **good fortune and prosperity**, and it is the colour traditionally worn by brides. While red is the colour most associated with love, it also the colour most frequently associated with **hatred, anger, aggression and war**. People who are angry are said to 'see red'. Red is the traditional colour of **warning and danger**. Red is the colour that most **attracts attention**. Surveys show it is the colour most frequently associated with visibility, proximity, and extroverts. It is also the colour most associated with **dynamism and activity**. Red by a large margin is the colour most commonly associated with **seduction, sexuality, eroticism and immorality**, possibly because of its close connection with passion and with danger, so we have the 'Red Light District' in Amsterdam.
- The images are presented in an intentionally fragmented many, scattered on the wall and around the gallery. This is to prevent it being seen as a documentary record rather than a series of fragmentary images of everyday life that are to be seen as a whole.
- In the late 1960s unofficial photography was an unusual activity and Mikhailov often had to take pictures secretly. The use of colour photographic film was also unusual as it was expensive. His pictures hover between an official documentary record and an unofficial and subversive social criticism. The photographs are not overtly subversive as they document the banal events of everyday life in the Soviet Union under communist rule. He did not want to show particular events but to record everyday life. He said, '**the more we can exclude the event from representation, the closer we can approach the most important thing-being**'.

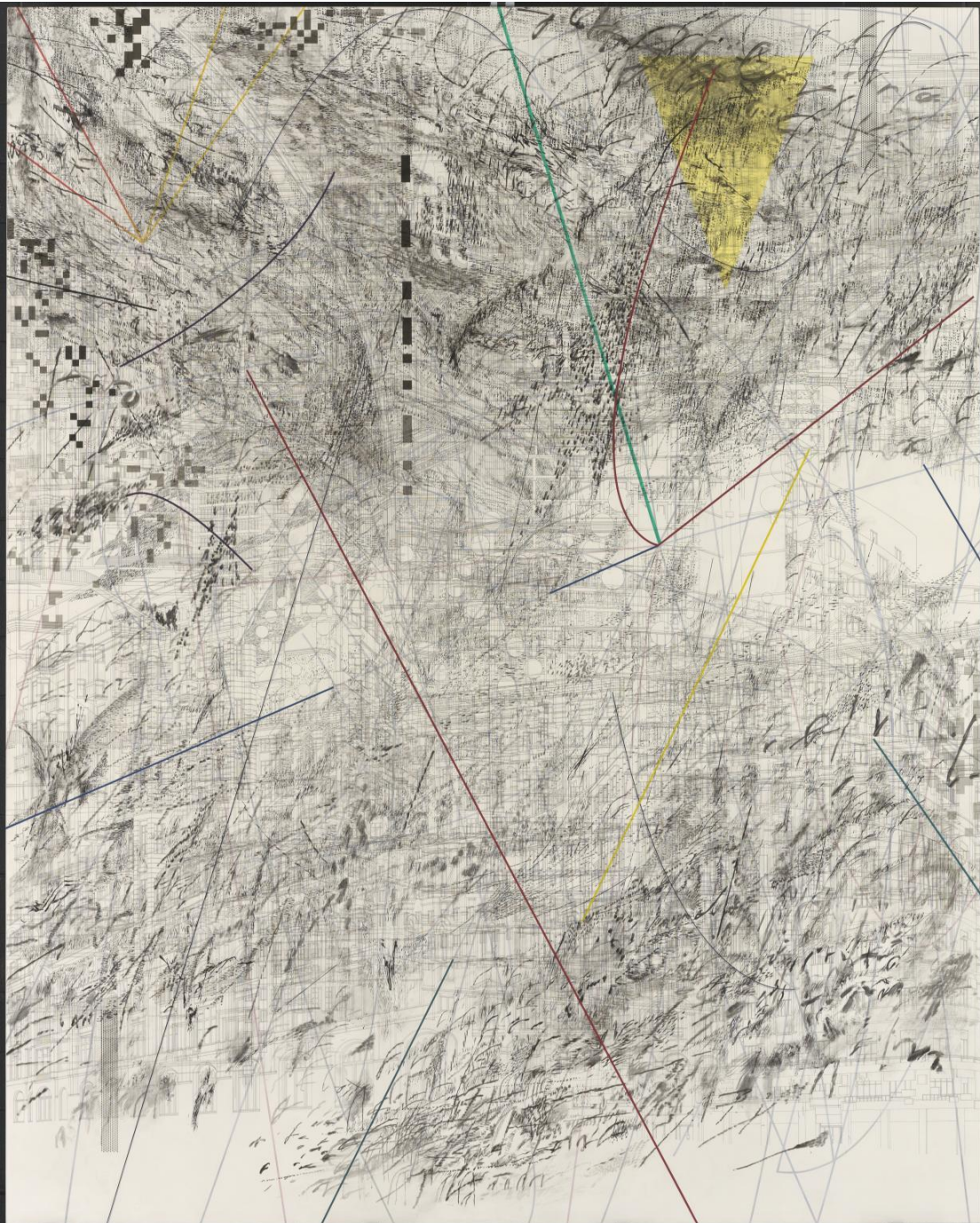
Notes on Boris Mikhailov, *Red*, 1968–75, printed c.1999–2000

- Borys Andriyovych Mykhailov (b. 1938, pronounced MICK-hail-off) is a photographer who has been described as "one of the most important artists to have emerged from the former USSR."
- *Red* is a group of eighty-four colour photographs taken between 1968 and 1975 in Mikhailov's home town of Kharov in the north-east of present day Ukraine. The scenes include official military parades and political rallies, views of the city, and private encounters between family and friends. Every one of the images contains the colour red. Kharov (or Kharkov or Kharkiv) is the second largest city in the Ukraine and is in the north-east.
- In the 20th century, red was the colour of **revolution**; it was the colour of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and of the Chinese Revolution of 1949, and later of the Cultural Revolution. With the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Revolution of 1917, the **red flag**, with a hammer to symbolize the workers and sickle to symbolize peasants, became the official flag of Russia, and, in 1923, of the Soviet Union until its break up in 1991.

References

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*Julie Mehretu, *Mogamma, A Painting in Four Parts: Part 3*, 2012



Julie Mehretu (b. 1970), *Mogamma, A Painting in Four Parts: Part 3*, 2012

- This large ink and acrylic work is called *Mogamma, A Painting in Four Parts* and this is *Part 3*. The painting is one of a cycle of four paintings and the other three are now spread across museums in Houston, Atlanta and Abu Dhabi.
- If we look closely we can see faint drawings of buildings in the background overlaid with scratches, scrawls and marks that obliterate the detailed images. The central building is the **Mogamma**, a government building in **Tahrir Square** in Cairo and it was the backdrop to protests that took place against Hosni Mubarak's regime in early 2011 [the Egyptian revolution of 2011]. The picture of the building has been overlaid with other locations associated with public unrest, including **Addis Ababa's Meskel Square** and **New York's Zuccotti Park**, the site of the 'occupy' protests in 2011. The painting is a memorial to collective sites of communal resistance and, in particular, it is concerned with the implications of the Arab Spring—self-destruction as opposed to self-determination, oppression and liberation and migration and resistance. It is, therefore, a memorial to sites of state oppression and communal resistance. Her use of architecture reflects her belief that it reflects ideas of power and the machinations of politics not just the definition of space.
- The size of the painting is overpowering as it presents the force of the bloody violence during the bid for freedom from autocratic rule and its power emerges from what at first looks like a jumble of lines. As we make out structures and buildings we can almost see history unfolding. The Mogamma was prominent in the life of Cairo; in Arabic it means a place that houses a church, a mosque and a temple. It held 18,000 civil servants and was typically full of queues of people waiting for applications, passports, visas and driving licenses.
- Mehretu was born in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, and her family fled to America when she was seven, following the Ethiopian revolution of 1977. She grew up in Michigan and received her master's degree Rhode Island School of Design before moving to New York where she now lives and works.
- Mehretu used a team of assistants to research the images of the sites and the images are then projected onto the canvas and traced over by assistants. She then draws and paints over the image using dabs of paint and sweeping gestures that created a dynamic tension across the canvas. The coloured areas reflect modern abstraction but also refer to her memory of images of flags and banners held during the protests.

Notes on Julie Mehretu, *Mogamma, A Painting in Four Parts: Part 3*, 2012

- American painter Julie Mehretu (b. 1970, pronounced 'mera-two') was born in Ethiopia in 1970. She grew up in Michigan and also spent some time in Zimbabwe as a teenager. Mehretu is known for her large-scale works. Paintings composed of layers of architectural and geographical elements made with different media. She works with acrylic paint, marking pens, and ink in an effort to collapse space and time on her canvas. The American says each painting emerges from a particular idea.
- *Mogamma, A Painting in Four Parts: Part 2* is in Atlanta High Museum of Art. The other panels are in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Part 4); Tate Modern in London (Part 3); and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.
- The Mogamma was constructed in the 1940s and designed by the Egyptian architect Kamal Ismail; it was an administrative centre which became a symbol of the country's government bureaucracy. 'Mogamma' is the Arab word for 'collective' or 'the complex'.
- Hosni Mubarak (b. 1928) is a former Egyptian military and political leader who served as the fourth President of Egypt from 1981 to 2011. He stepped down as President in 2011, was found guilty of corruption but after several retrials and appeals he was released on 24 March 2017.
- Mehretu said, **"I don't think of architectural language as just a metaphor about space, but about spaces of power, about ideas of power."**
- Mehretu quotes the line **'the centre cannot hold'** from W. B. Yeats poem 'The Second Coming'. The complete line is 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold' and it is often quoted following political turmoil.
- Arab Spring refers to the democratic uprisings that arose independently and spread across the Arab world in 2011. The movement originated in Tunisia in December 2010 and quickly took hold in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan.
- Addis Ababa is the capital of Ethiopia and Meskel Square has been the centre of celebrations and the Meskel Festival for 1,600 years. Meskel means 'cross' and the festival celebrates the revealing of the crucifix to Empress Helena of Constantinople, the mother of Constantine the Great. The recent political protests did not take place until 2016.
- New York's Zuccotti Park (named after the chairman of the owners) was formerly Liberty Plaza Park and was heavily damaged in the September 11, 2001 attack. In 2011, it was taken over by the Occupy Wall Street movement. The Occupy London movement of late 2011 began in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mehretu-mogamma-a-painting-in-four-parts-part-3-t13997>
- <https://www.macfound.org/fellows/767/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZPYg7kRmxs> there are many videos of Mehretu on YouTube.
- <http://www.faithmcclure.com/q--a-julie-mehretu->

Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, 'Ragman's Horse and Cart by Union Road (Byker)'
1970 (removed July 2017)



Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen (b. 1948), 'Ragman's Horse and Cart by Union Road (Byker)' 1970, printed 2012

- These are 17 photographs taken by the Finnish-born, British artist Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen (b. 1948, pronounced 'shirka lisa KON-tin-en'). They were all taken between 1970 and 1981 in the town of Byker in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
- In this photograph was see a stretch of wasteland where buildings have been demolished. In the distance are rows of houses and industrial buildings while in the foreground a horse bends to eat the grass. The horse and cart belonged to a ragman who collected scraps and leftovers and salvaged any materials he could find.
- Konttinen came to England to study photography and after her studies she wanted to photograph working class life in a non-patronising way. She decided to go to Newcastle and she founded Amber Films, perhaps the most successful studio in British film history in terms of longevity, considering it was founded in 1968.
- Newcastle is unique for its friendliness she said she has never found that level of friendliness elsewhere. Byker was a rundown area with an ageing population and she fell in love with the place. She said that as a foreigner with a 'funny' accent she was not seen as a threat and was accepted by the community. When she arrived, the area was being demolished by the council as it judged the houses were unfit for human habitation. Many of these photographs record the local people and the old streets and houses before they were demolished.
- These photographs were reprinted between 2012 and 2014 and she does her own printing to control the quality of the final image as this is critical to her. She never does any 'jiggery-pokery' during printing but works to get the best out of each negative. She does not produce editions but signs and dates every print.

Notes on Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, 'Ragman's Horse and Cart by Union Road (Byker)' 1970, printed 2012

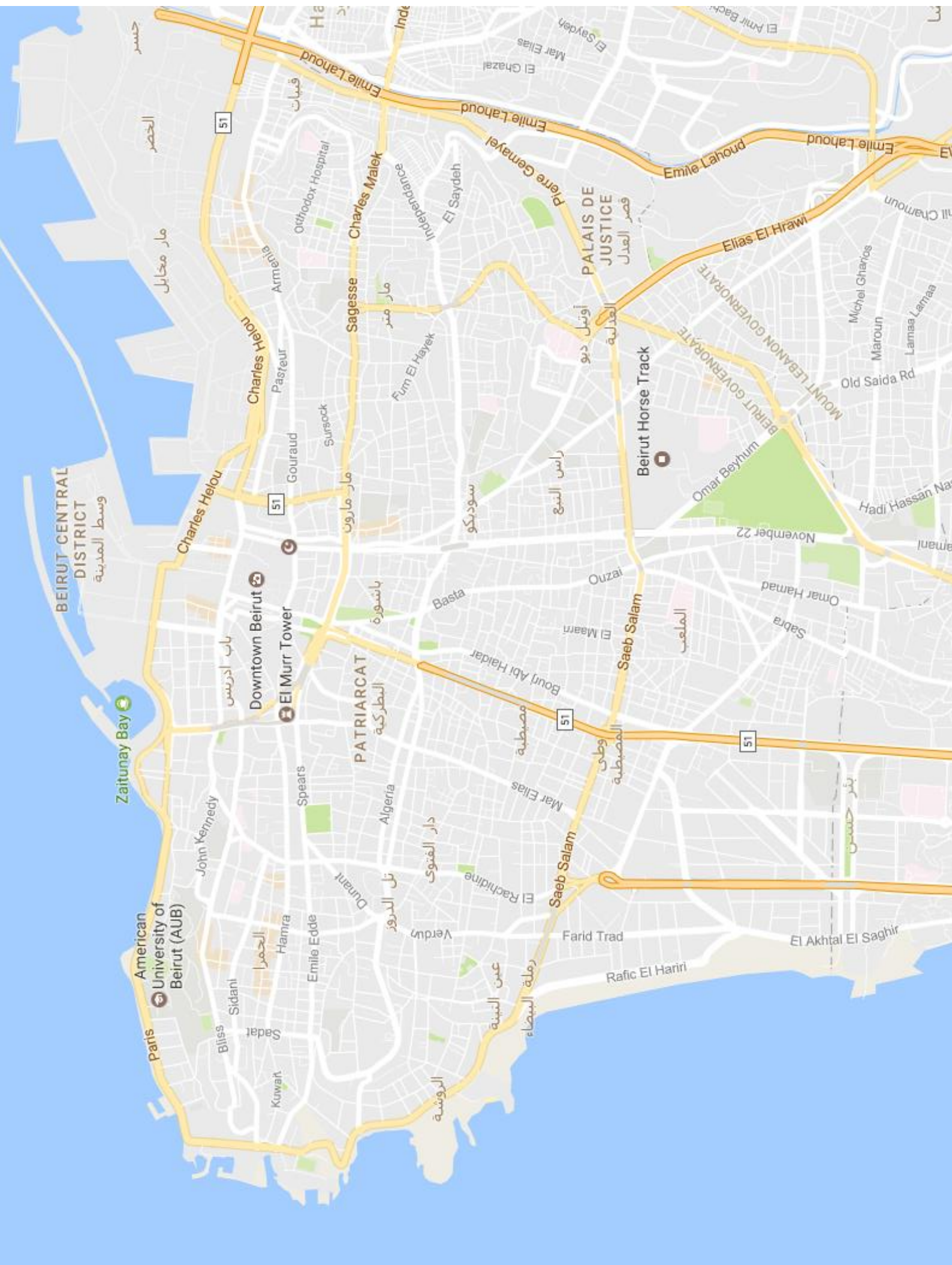
- Finnish photographer (born 27 March 1948), who has worked in Britain since the 1960s.
- Tate summary, "Byker was an estate of nineteenth-century terraced houses, located in Newcastle upon Tyne, in north east England. Finnish-born artist Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen arrived there in 1969 when the area was already destined for demolition to make way for a new purpose-built estate. Despite this, Konttinen was drawn to the humour, vibrancy and resilience of the residents and decided to make it her home, living in the area until her own house was demolished. The Byker series contains a variety of photographs taken over twelve years, from images captured spontaneously on the street, to intimate views into the homes of the people of Byker."
- Union Street leads into Shields Street (straight ahead in the Photo) and the Byker metro station is now to the left of the photo. Further to the left is the Grade II listed, Tom Collins House, a famous architectural landmark that was designed in 1969 in collaboration with the local residents. It was built in 1976-78.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/konttinen-ragmans-horse-and-cart-by-union-road-byker-p81257>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirkka-Liisa_Konttinen
- Video: <https://youtu.be/JlhAmLEENE>

Visual Aids

- Beirut, Google Maps
- 1992, 'Rodney King', South Central, Los Angeles, race riots
- The ancient city of Ghardaïa, Algeria
- Mogamma, Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt
- Tom Collins House, Byker, Newcastle











Tom Collins House, Byker

Summary of 'Living Cities' (15:30-16:00), South Level 4

Marwan Rechmaoui (b.1964), *Beirut Caoutchouc* (kay-oo-chew'), 2004–8. Shia (10-15%, son-in-law next leader), Sunni (85-90%, father Muhammad's wife next leader), Druze (Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Neoplatonism), Maronite Christians (an Eastern Catholic sect), Greek Orthodox and Melkite (Byzantine Christian). The Lebanese Civil War was 1975-1990. Traditionally all Lebanese presidents have been Maronite Christian, Prime Ministers Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the National Assembly Shia Muslim. He said, '... **Beirut is important. It's the future. Populations are moving wholesale into cities, and bringing with them their issues, their problems, which puts pressure on the city as a space ... All these issues about security and terrorism mean that Western societies, which believe they are free, are starting to lose the benefits of being free.**' Rechmaoui remains positive, he said '**We are all strangers in the city,**' he says. '**That affects people's behaviour; they become more tolerant, more accepting of new ideas.**' Rechmaoui was born in Beirut and trained in Boston and New York, returning in 1993 after the Civil War.

Nil Yalter (b. 1938), *Temporary Dwellings*, 1974–77. There are two displays for Paris and the Turkish immigrant community, two for Istanbul and the Kurdish community and three for New York and the Puerto Ricans. The 2nd from the left, dated Wednesday 7 July 1975, documents a temporary Turkish settlement in the Paris suburb Nanterre. 'TOLE ROUILLE' ('tolla roy-ee', rusted metal). In the centre is a gift from Ali (UN CADEAU D'ALI). She draws the blue shade of a kitchen wall and notes "ILS ONT ECRIT LEURS NOMS SUR PAPIER" (they wrote their names on paper). The colour of the kitchen wall (LA COULEUR DU MUR DE LA CUISINE), the bottom of the mattress (LE DESSOUS DU MATELAS) and the television in the street Jeanne D'Arc (LA TELEVISION DANS LA RUE JEANNE D'ARC). Yalter is a Turkish contemporary feminist artist. In this work, she gives the workers and their temporary dwellings the permanency of a museum collection.

Mark Bradford (b. 1961), *Los Moscos* 2004. *Los Moscos* translates as 'the flies', a derogatory term applied to migrant labourers in the San Francisco Bay area. Bradford worked as a hairdresser until he was 30 in South Central LA, the site of the 1992 Rodney King riots. He believes the scraps of paper, '**act as memory of things pasted and things past. You can peel away the layers of papers and it's like reading the streets through the signs.**' The '**abstraction that happens in the city... a dislocation of reality when you have the Mexican taqueria next to the black wig shop across the street from the Korean nail shop**'. He said, '**I want it to actually have the memories—the cultural and personal memories that are lodged in the object.**'

Kader Attia (b. 1970), *Untitled (Ghardaïa)*, 2009. Pronounced 'garday-a'. The photographs are the Swiss architect Le Corbusier and his follower the French architect Fernand Pouillon (pronounced 'poo-yon'). Attia was '**educated in couscous**'. He said, '**it's very important that the piece crumbles**'. '**These cracks are the wrinkles,**' he said, likening the art work to the human body. '**This is nature. You have to learn to live with your injuries. Injuries are you.**' Part of a larger project called *Signs of Reappropriation*. The work will be rebuilt in July 2017.

Boris Mikhailov (b. 1938), *Red*, 1968–75, printed c.1999–2000. The photos were taken in Kharov, north-east Ukraine during the period of the USSR. Every photo contains some red. Red symbolises courage, sacrifice, love, joy, good fortune, prosperity, but warning, danger, hatred, anger and war. It attracts attention, is associated with dynamism and seduction and eroticism. In Russian the noun krasnoe (Красный, pronounced 'kras-nee) meaning 'red' is etymologically linked to krasivoe (красивая, Pronounced 'krasiva') meaning 'beautiful', linking the two words. It is not a documentary but fragmented images of everyday life. Unofficial photography was unusual and many pictures were taken in secret. Colour film was very expensive. They are not overtly subversive. He said, '**the more we can exclude the event from representation, the closer we can approach the most important thing—being**'.

Julie Mehretu (b. 1970), *Mogamma, A Painting in Four Parts: Part 3*, 2012. Mogamma ('the complex'), a government building in **Tahrir Square, Cairo** was backdrop to protests against Hosni Mubarak in early 2011. The picture of the building is overlaid with other locations associated with public unrest, including **Addis Ababa's Meskel Square** and **New York's Zuccotti Park** (named after the chairman of the owners), the site of the 'Occupy Wall Street' protest in 2011. The Mogamma held 18,000 civil servants and was typically full of queues for passports, visas and driving licences. Mehretu said, "**I don't think of architectural language as just a metaphor about space, but about spaces of power, about ideas of power.**" Mehretu quotes the line '**the centre cannot hold**' from W. B. Yeats poem 'The Second Coming'. The complete line is 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold' and it is often quoted following political turmoil. Mehretu was born in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Her family fled to America when she was seven, following the Ethiopian revolution of 1977. Grew up in Michigan, received master's Rhode Island School of Design and moved to New York where she lives and works.

Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen (b. 1948), *Ragman's Horse and Cart by Union Road (Byker)*, 1970, printed 2012. Pronounced 'shirka lisa KON-tin-en'. All the photographs were taken in the town of Byker in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Newcastle is unique for its friendliness she said she has never found that level of friendliness elsewhere. Byker was a rundown area with an ageing population and she fell in love with the place. When she arrived, the town was being pulled down and redeveloped. She said that as a foreigner with a 'funny' accent she was not seen as a threat and was accepted by the community. She does all her own printing and never manipulates the image. She does not produce editions but signs and dates every print.