

Research/Practice 05
Roy Samaha
Revenant

Edited by
Anthony Downey



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BISAC 1: Art - Individual Artists - Essays

BISAC 2: Art - Film & Video

BISAC 3: Art - Middle Eastern

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Roy Samaha

Subtitle: Revenant

Series/Series #: Sternberg Press / Research/Practice, #5

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TARGET CONSUMER: Art scholars and artists (this series focuses on artistic process as much as it does the final artwork). Readers in the art world interested in the intersection of art and politics, art and film, and contemporary Middle Eastern art.

Artist Roy Samaha's examination of the uses of digital technology in the face of untimely disappearances and ghostly returns.

In June 2014, Roy Samaha embarked on a journey to the Aegean Sea that included a trip to Mytilene on the island of Lesbos. Scouting potential locations for a feature film, he encountered a folkloric tale about revenants and their perceived inability to travel across saltwater. A year later, having since returned to Beirut to continue work on his film, Samaha was confronted with images of refugees' capsized boats and the stories of them drowning in the Mediterranean. Recalling the earlier tale about the Lesbos's revenants, Samaha submerged the smartphone that he had used during his trip to Mytilene in saltwater for forty days. As a result, the pictures, videos and messages that were stored in its memory were destroyed. Just as saltwater discouraged the passage of revenants and refugees, it likewise denied access to the images and information previously contained on Samaha's smartphone.

Focusing on the research that emerged from Samaha's initial journey, this volume enquires into how we represent historical events through digital means, especially if those events concern untimely disappearances and ghostly returns. Can the digital as a conduit negotiate the ephemerality or ghostliness of present-day forms of transmigration? And what happens when the commodified context of a smartphone and the commodity value attached to images is deconstructed, leaving us with an object of commemoration that bespeaks not only of an absence of images but the perennial ineffectiveness of digital technologies in the face of profound loss?

- A look at a specific artwork that opens up universal themes: how hardware becomes a surrogate for the embodied memory of people, places and experiences that comprise a life.
- newly published drawings, film stills, shots of notebooks, schedules, and images of places visited, libraries, institutions, film rushes, places stayed, etc.

Series Overview: Research/Practice focuses on artistic research and how it contributes to the formation of experimental knowledge systems. Drawing on preliminary material such as diaries, notebooks, audiovisual content, digital and social media, informal communications, and abandoned drafts, the series examines the interdisciplinary research methods that artists employ in their practices.

Author Bio: Anthony Downey is an academic, editor, and writer. He is Professor of Visual Culture in the Middle East and North Africa (Birmingham City University).

Residence: Birmingham, UK **Author Site:** <http://www.anthonydowney.com>

Roy Samaha

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Author's Previous Titles (Sales Track)	ISBN	OS	Publisher	Price US/Can.	IN GR	LTD GR	LTD NT	LTD R	12m RM	POS
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