

MUDAM

Rayane Tabet. Trilogy

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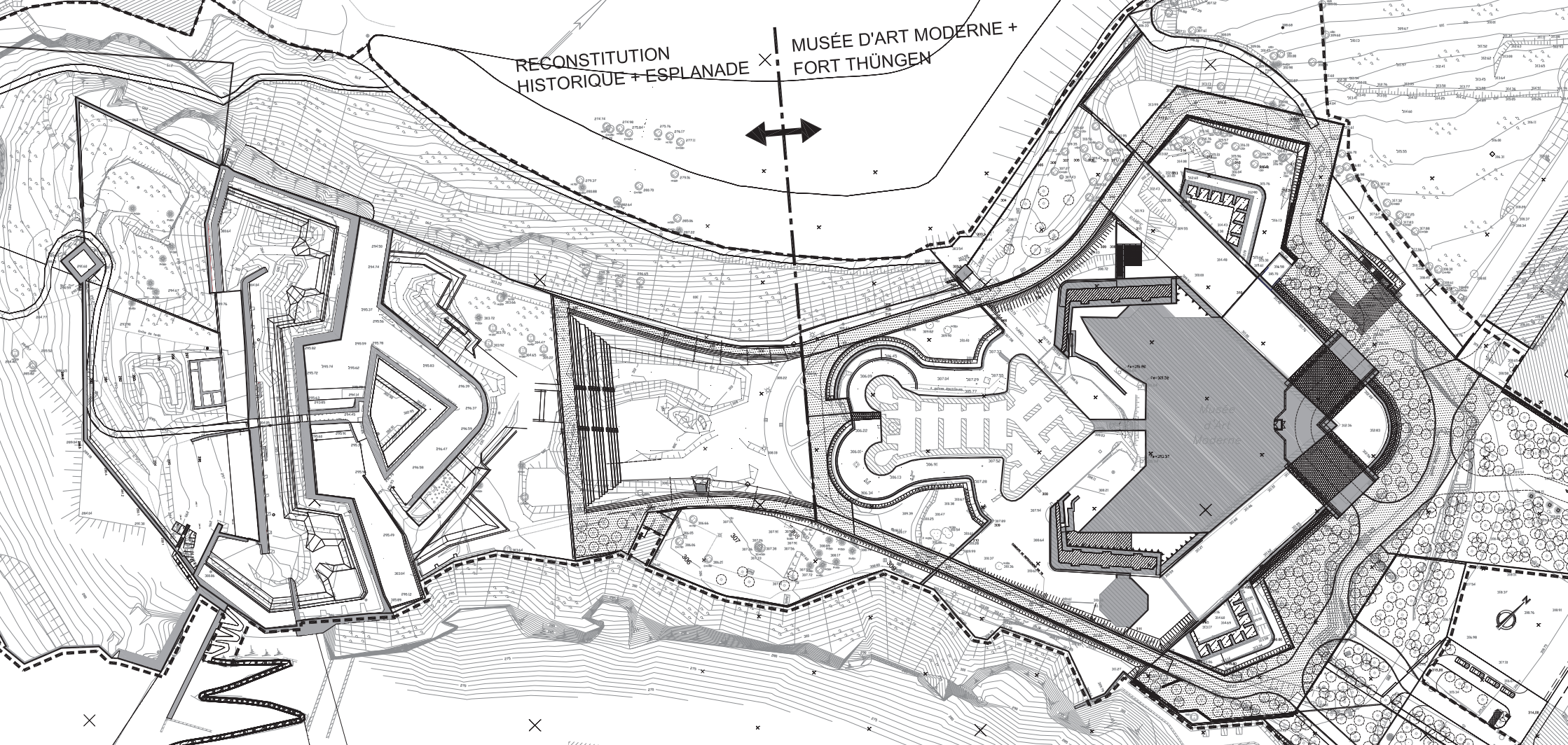


A Model: Prelude

01.12.2023 — 12.05.2024

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MUDAM



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Rayane Tabet. Trilogy

01.12.2023 — 12.05.2024

Curators:

Bettina Steinbrügge with
Sarah Beaumont, Clément Minighetti and Joel Valabrega

Level 0 and -1
Henry J. and Erna D. Leir Pavilion

1732–1870

In 1732, Fort Thüngen was erected.

The building attests to centuries of existence (fifteenth-nineteenth century) of the fortress of the city of Luxembourg and testifies to the presence of European powers throughout its history.

Built in 1732 by the Austrians on the site of the park redoubt, a defensive work reinforced in 1688 by Louis XIV's military engineer-architect, Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (b. 1633, Saint-Léger-de-Foucheret, today Saint-Léger-Vauban, France – d. 1707, Paris).

In 1836, under Prussian authority, the fort was modified and three crenellated turrets, each topped with a stone acorn, were added.

Their designation in Luxembourgish: Dräi Eechelen (Three Acorns) gives its name to the current park.

In 1867, the second Treaty of London, which declared Luxembourg a neutral and independent country, required the dismantling of all of its fortifications.

The demolition of Fort Thüngen began in 1870.

Only the three towers and the first casemate escaped destruction while vegetation covered the Dräi Eechelen site, which was transformed into a pleasure park by the French landscape architect Édouard André (b. 1840, Bourges, France – d. 1911, La Croix-en-Touraine, France).

In 1996, the bill relating to the construction of the Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean on the remains of the site was passed.

1989–2006

On the night of November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell.

On November 10, 1989, the Grand-Duc Jean Foundation was created with the mission of building and operating a contemporary art center.

Shortly after, the government of Luxembourg invited Ioh Ming Pei (b. 1917, Guangzhou, China – d. 2019, New York), who had just completed the Louvre pyramid, to design a museum.

Several sites were proposed to the architect, who set his sights on the ruins of Fort Thüngen where, he said, he could create a connection between the past and the present.

The initial project imagined the construction of a building atop the fort's surrounding walls and recess with its three turrets.

The associations for the preservation of heritage and friends of the fortress decided otherwise and forced the architect to review his project and not to include the turrets and the casemate as those were to become the foundation of a future fortress museum.

At the same time, the name 'art center' was changed to 'Museum of Modern Art'.

In 1996, a bill authorised the construction of a new museum. The Fondation Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean was created by the law of April 28, 1998, and on January 22, 1999, the first stone of the future museum was laid.

The construction of the building was marred by controversies but on July 1, 2006, the museum which had since become Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean opened its doors.

The building bathed in light bears the signature of the architect; it is a glass architecture atop military remains.

Built on a site originally intended for soldiers, Mudam symbolised the erasure of military values in favour of those of art and culture.

A sign of its time, the genesis of its generous but vulnerable architecture coincided with the time where the West, once recovered from the surprise caused by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, falsely imagined a world seemingly reconciled and safer.

1929–1933

Alvar Aalto

Sanatorium Paimio (bedroom furniture), 1930–33

Clockwise:

Door with two sliding handles (and metal display stand), 1932

Wardrobe, 1931–32
Wardrobe with a rectangular frame with rounded edges, opening on one side to an interior arrangement of shelves
White lacquered bent laminated birch
Manufactured by Oy Huonekalu-ja Rakennustyötehdas Ab

Armchair 51/403, 1932
Birch and bent and lacquered plywood

Round outdoor room lamp, 1932
Nickel plated metal, glass

Bedside table, 1931–32
Lacquered laminated birch

Wall lamp, 1932
Enameled aluminum and brass, frosted glass, glass
Taito Oy

Bed, 1931–32
Green lacquered steel
Manufactured by Oy Huonekalu-ja Rakennustyötehdas Ab

Blanket
Wool

Manufactured by Oy Huonekalu-ja Rakennustyötehdas Ab

Side table, 1931–32
Steel and lacquered birch
Manufactured by Oy Huonekalu-ja Rakennustyötehdas Ab

Washbasin (and display stand), 1930–33
Porcelain, metal
Stamped Mod 280 ARABIA and impressed numbers

Shelf, 1933
Wired glass

Collection Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean
Acquisition 2000

In the late nineteenth century, the bacterium that causes the contagious disease tuberculosis (TB) was discovered.

It was only then that medical science learnt how to put an end to this devastating disease.

As tuberculosis primarily affects the lungs, it became quickly apparent that the patient's environment was crucial.

Consequently, special facilities were built throughout the world to provide rest and fresh air.

One of the best known of these tuberculosis sanatoriums was built between 1929 and 1933 in the Finnish city of Paimio and designed by architect Alvar Aalto (b. 1898, Kuortane, Finland – d. 1976, Helsinki) in close collaboration with his wife Aino Aalto (b. 1894 – d. 1949, Helsinki).

To this day, Sanatorium Paimio is considered among the most significant functionalist buildings of the twentieth century and one of Aalto's most important works.

Each part of the building and its interiors had to contribute to the well-being and recovery of patients affected by tuberculosis.

The rooms needed to be easily aired and the colours soothing; ornaments and superfluous shelves had to be avoided as they could gather dust.

Because of the risk of infection, all surfaces had to have a smooth finish and be easy to clean, which led to the selection of materials such as linoleum, ceramic and smooth lacquered timber.

Mudam Collection traces back to the first acquisitions for the museum in the

mid-1990s, preceding the creation of the Fondation Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean in 1998 in the perspective of the opening of the museum in 2006.

While the decade of the 1960s serves as an historic point of reference for contemporary art, the majority of works in the collection date from 1989 to the present.

One of the few exceptions to this historical span is the ensemble of furniture for the Paimio Sanatorium acquired in 2000.

1950

My grandparents were married in Beirut on January 12, 1950.

At the time they could not afford their own place so they moved in with my grandfather's family.

As a result, they did not have to buy anything new.

Nevertheless, my grandmother wanted something to commemorate the marriage and she decided to order new curtains to replace the thick dark velvet and embroidered ones that had been there since the 1920s.

This was the time of clean air and sunshine so a series of off-white sheer curtains were produced in a newly commercially available material called Tergal.

Tergal, recently introduced to the market as a cheap alternative to silk, is a lightweight fabric made from a variety of synthetic filament yarns like polyester, nylon and rayon.

During the First World War, rayon was used as a substitute for cotton gauze in the battlefield and during the Second World War, Nazi Germany used political prisoners and forced labour to produce the material across occupied Europe.

One of the main components of Tergal is Carbon Disulfide, an extremely toxic material that harms the health of workers overseeing the weaving process and contaminates the soil.

Sheer Curtains, 1950–2023
13 original sheer curtains from Rayyane Tabet's grandparents' apartment in Beirut, hardware

Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg

05/06/1967
10/06/1967

Six Nights, 2023

Coloured vinyl on glass, six metal structures each engraved with a specific date and time of the night from June 5 to 10, 1967, modified car headlights, blue enamel paint

Courtesy of the artist and
Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg

In June 1967, a war that lasted six days took place.

At the time, curfews were imposed all over the Arab World in fear of imminent bombing.

The curfew required that everyone shelter in place and that all sources of light be turned off since it was harder for planes to target premises in the dark.

In order to circumvent the curfew, people began painting their apartment windows and their car headlights blue since blue light was less visible from bomber planes.

This is how, over the course of six nights, the entire Arab World fell into a deep blue darkness.

04/08/2020

18:07:43

18:08:18

From Window to Jug, 2020–23
200 drinking jugs made out of recycled
glass from the 2020 Beirut port explosion,
custom made shelving unit

Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler
Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg

On August 4, 2020, at 18:07, 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate improperly stored for six years in a warehouse in the Beirut port exploded causing 230 deaths, 7,000 injuries and tens of billions of dollars in damages.

One of the most powerful non-nuclear explosions in history was the latest result of decades of corruption and mismanagement at the hand of successive governments that have ruled over Lebanon by reinforcing its sectarian and political divisions.

The explosion shattered, among other things, 25,000 tons of windowpanes in and out of the city.

In the aftermath, Ziad Abi Chaker an industrial engineer and environmental activist began collecting this glass and sending it to factories in Tripoli, in the north of Lebanon, to be melted down and recycled into jugs traditionally used for water.

The idea was to provide free raw materials for struggling glass-making factories.

They soon realised that only the glass that had fallen inside people's homes was usable since the glass that went out in the streets had mixed with sand and debris and could not go into the ovens at the factory.

Nevertheless, Abi Chaker, alongside a group of volunteers, was able to save more than 100 tons of shards destined to landfills sites in Lebanon, a country facing an ongoing rubbish disposal crisis besides major economic hardships.

August 2023 marked the three-year anniversary of the Beirut Port explosion.

To this day, not a single person has been held accountable for the blast and the investigation has so far been curtailed by political interventions in the judiciary system.

2023–2024 A Model

For the past two years I have been immersing myself in the latest literature on the museum, its current challenges and possible futures. There is no shortage of interesting new publications on the subject, many of which are interviews with museum directors or architects. However, the arguments can quickly become repetitive, and many of the ideas are no longer new. They tend to be either progressive, conservative or driven by the art market, but they have one thing in common: unanimous commitment to change and a shared sense that the world is radically evolving.

Thinking about the new is inevitably slightly pathetic. Talking about the art world tends to be even more so. The word 'pathetic' came to my mind after reading *Pathetic Literature* by Eileen Myles. A friend gave me this book, which reminded me how pathetic we as people sometimes are. How can we avoid this? How can we talk seriously about what contemporary museums need? I am not trying to minimise the work of museum directors, who are intelligently and carefully coming up with ideas for the museum in a changing society; I am trying to do the same thing right here, right now.

When I read Myles's book, I was so overwhelmed by theory that I lost sight of what was really at stake. Buzzwords such as diversity, inclusion, sustainability or care haunted me day and night. While in this state of mind, I was pointed to a project from 1968, when Pontus Hultén invited the artist Palle Nielsen to turn Stockholm's Moderna Museet into a huge playground; I felt relieved to have found something simple and essential. The ingredients for the new museum are play, accessibility, curiosity and fun. I started to breathe again. And by working on the exhibition project *A Model*, I was able to unburden myself of this weight and return to the basics.

What should a museum be about? I would say: art, community, playfulness, fun, progressive thinking – and, above all, artists.

During my research, I came across a quote from James Baldwin: 'Artists are here to disturb the peace.' In an age of image and information overload, we need artists more than ever, to help distil ideas visually and conceptually, to disrupt conventional ways of looking at the world and to inspire fresh perspectives. I think it is the artists' responsibility to make work that questions and subverts received truths.

So why not ask artists to talk about their approach to museums? They do it already; art is always the starting point. If they turn to performance, for example, then eventually architects will build more space for performance. The traditional image of the museum as a static archive is changing in a context in which time-based, event-based and experimental artworks, exhibitions and experiences are becoming more prevalent.

This exhibition explores the possibilities that arise when museum collections are reimagined as active and performative environments, rather than timeless repositories of objects.

Contemporary art reflects the issues we face in our daily lives: how to act, how to think, what to believe in. Contemporary art can be entertaining, provocative – even irritating. Sometimes it is breathtaking, often it can be difficult, but it is always alive. That is why it makes us think, why it puzzles and fascinates us: it reflects our world. It is perhaps the best place to make sense of being human in a world that seems to be changing so inexorably. A key tenet of my museum practice is that the art world needs to see its work not merely as an abstract space of representation, but also as a space in which material realities are constructed and sustained, in which narratives draw us into alternative worlds, for better or worse.

This is how *A Model* came to be.

Bettina Steinbrügge

The exhibition

Introducing *A Model*, Rayyane Tabet (b. 1983, Ashqout, Lebanon) was invited to conceive a site-specific project for the Henry J. and Erna D. Leir Pavilion. An architect by training, the artist attaches great importance to the context in which his projects are embedded. His installations consider the historical framework of the architecture of the museum, revealing its particularities alongside its contradictions.

Tabet's body of work builds upon the analysis of sociocultural contexts, combining historical and subjective memory to offer an alternative reading to the official narrative of his object of study and open it up to new meanings. For the pavilion, the artist devised *Trilogy*, an installation that unfolds around pivotal moments of contemporary and Luxembourg history in dialogue with his personal memory.

This installation includes *Sanatorium Paimio (bedroom furniture)*, a central work of the Mudam Collection conceived by architect Alvar Aalto between 1930 and 1933. Emblematic of functionalist research and humanist thinking, Aalto designed the bedroom furniture to contribute to well-being and recovery.

Transforming the pavilion's walkway, Tabet installs translucent curtains originating from his grandparents' 1950s apartment in Beirut. The artist highlights the signature architectural style of its architect Ieoh Ming Pei, characterised by glass-paned surfaces, as symbolic of openness and an era marked by progress and prosperity by inserting personal memory into Mudam's building. In contrast, the pavilion's glass roof panels are covered with a blue film in reference to the camouflage techniques used by residents of Beirut during the 1967 Six-Day War. Rendering Mudam's

interior invisible from above, the artist sets *Sanatorium Paimio (bedroom furniture)* in an infinite twilight.

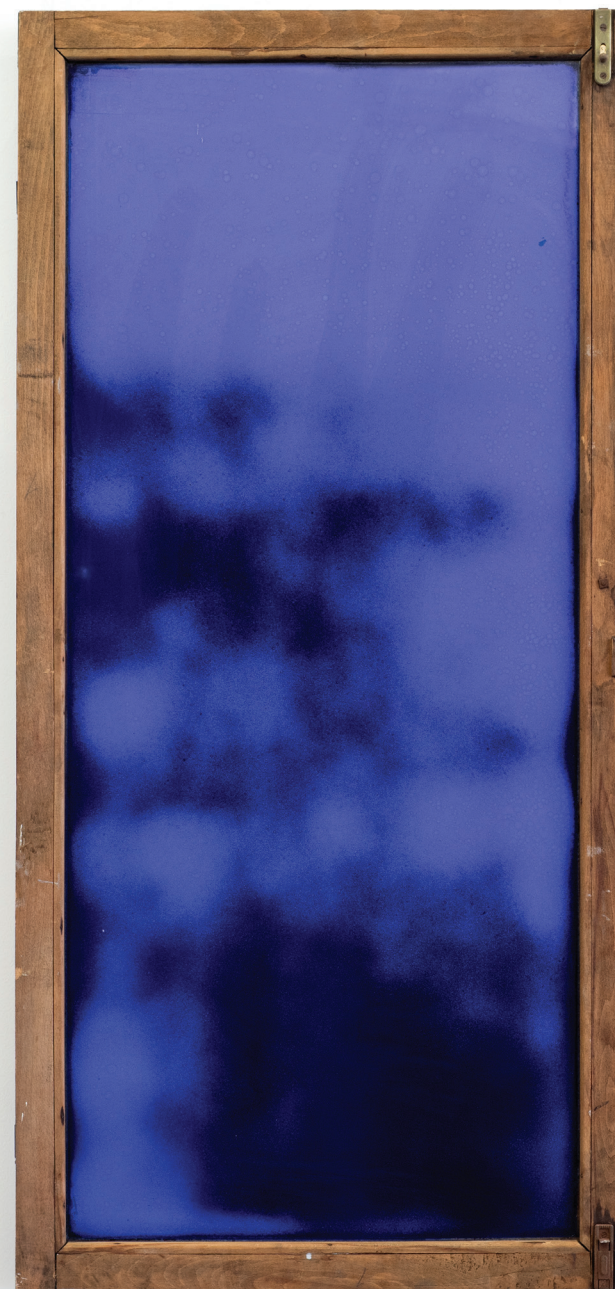
Lastly, in the lower floor of the pavilion the artist references the 2020 Beirut explosion, exhibiting a series of jugs made from glass fragments retrieved onsite following the blast, envisioning a symbolic repair.





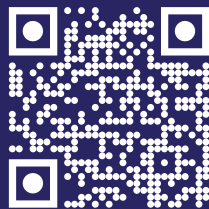
The artist

Rayyane Tabet (b. 1983, Ashqout, Lebanon) has had solo exhibitions at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2021), Sharjah Art Foundation (2021), Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York (2020), Parasol Unit Foundation of Contemporary Art, London (2019), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2019), Musée du Louvre, Paris (2019), Carré d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes (2018) and at the Kunstverein in Hamburg (2017). He took part in numerous international group shows, among which *In the Heart of Another Country: The Diasporic Imagination Rises*, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE (2023), *Machinations*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain, the Whitney Biennial (2022), the 7th Yokohama Triennial (2020), the 2nd Lahore Biennial (2020), the 21st Sydney Biennial (2018), Manifesta 12 (2018), the 15th Istanbul Biennial (2017), the 32nd Sao Paulo Biennial (2016) and the 10th and 12th Sharjah Biennial (2011, 2015). Rayyane Tabet lives and works between Beirut and San Francisco.





Pascal Aubert, Sarah Beaumont,
Emma Bervard, Sandra Biwer, Geoffroy
Braibant, David Celli, Michelle Cotton,
Minh-Khan Dinh, Diane Durinck,
Zuzana Fabianova, Clarisse Fahrtmann,
Marie-Noëlle Farcy, Sylvie Fasbinder,
Paula Fernandes, Laurence Le Gal,
Christophe Gallois, Jordan Gerber,
Martine Glod, Richard Goedert, Vere Van
Gool, Thierry Gratien, Christine Henry,
Juliette Hesse, Camille d'Huart, Julie
Jephos, Germain Kerschen, Clara Kremer,
Deborah Lambolez, Vanessa Lecomte,
Nathalie Lesure, Carine Lilliu, Ioanna
Madenoglu, Frédéric Maraud, Tawfik
Matine El Din, Tess Mazuet, António
Mendes, Max Mertens, Laura Mescolini,
Mélanie Meyer, Clément Minighetti,
Barbara Neiseler, Carlotta Pierleoni,
Markus Pilgram, Inès Planchenault,
Clémentine Proby, Boris Reiland, Susana
Rodrigues, Jade Saber, Alexandre
Sequeira, Elodie Simonian, Lourindo
Soares, Bettina Steinbrügge, Cathy Thill,
Aurélien Thomas, Joel Valabrega, Sam
Wirtz and Ana Wiscour.



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Images:

Cover: Installation view of *Rayyane Tabet: The Return, 2023*

Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery Beirut/Hamburg
Photo: Walid Rashid

pp. 19, 23: *Rayyane Tabet, Six Nights, 2023*

Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery Beirut/Hamburg
Photo: Walid Rashid

pp. 20–21: Installation view of *Rayyane Tabet: The Return, 2023*

Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery Beirut/Hamburg
Photo: Walid Rashid

pp. 24–25: *Rayyane Tabet, Six Nights, 2023*

Courtesy of the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery Beirut/Hamburg
Photo: Walid Rashid

Authors:

pp. 4–15: *Rayyane Tabet* (with excerpts from Louise Schouwenberg's text 'Sanatorium Paimio (bedroom furniture), 1930–33' on p. 9).

p. 16–17: 'A Model', Bettina Steinbrügge

p. 18: 'The Exhibition', Mudam

Bibliography:

p. 5: 'Fort Thüngen', Musée Dräi Eechelen, 2019, <https://m3e.public.lu/fr/forts/fort-thuengen.html> (accessed on October 16, 2023)

p. 7: *Mudam. The Building by Ioh Ming Pei*, Mudam Luxembourg, 2009

p. 9: Louise Schouwenberg, 'Sanatorium Paimio (bedroom furniture), 1930–33', written in 2019 within the context of the exhibition *Beyond the New*, curated by Hella Jongerius & Louise Schouwenberg (guest: Alexandre Humber).

Acknowledgements

Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean thanks the Ministry of Culture, all the donors and sponsors, and particularly

The Leir Foundation, JTI, Luxembourg High Security Hub, Allen & Overy, Banque Degroof Petercam Luxembourg, Cargolux, The Loo & Lou Foundation, M. and Mme Norbert Becker-Dennewald

as well as

Arendt & Medernach, Baloise, Banque de Luxembourg, CapitalatWork Foyer Group, CA Indosuez Wealth (Europe), Elvinger, Hoss & Prussen, PwC, Atoz, AXA Group, Société Générale, Soludec SA, Swiss Life Global Solutions, Bonn & Schmitt, Dussmann Services Luxembourg, Indigo Park Services SA, Les Amis des Musées d'Art et d'Histoire and American Friends of Mudam.

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