

**WHAT  
HAPPENED TO MY  
DREAMS?**

PHOTOGRAPHIC  
WORKS BY  
FOUAD ELKOURY

---

**NOVEMBER 12 – DECEMBER 17, 2009**

Private Preview: Wednesday, November 11, 2009, 7:30–9:30 pm

# FOUAD ELKOURY: WHAT I MISS MOST IS SILENCE

By *Naeem Mohaiemen*

You think she has a chauffeur. It fits with that silky voice.

But no, she is driver, the camera jerks with a sudden brake: *Sorry, he opened his door without notice and I didn't want to run him over.* No longer sexy upper class, more worn and smoky, wisps rising from wreckage.

The first time I watched "Welcome to Beirut" at Home Works in Lebanon, I thought of Fouad telegraphing nihilism of adrift generations. He calls it atlas syndrome: "Open a European atlas of the world, Lebanon is in the middle but also in the crack, central yet invisible." Fouad spent years excavating around the gaps, where things fall in but also out. *Makeup forever* winks a billboard, framed by cedar and wire. More than any militia, Fouad worries about the seduction of business. The new Lebanon merging with his visions of Dubai ("Civilization").

I want to ask Fouad why he sometimes abandons black & white. In works from previous decades, "Suite Egyptienne" or "Traces of War", the majestic images are panorama, scale, and always classically gray. Something happened over the years—to Fouad and his mediums. *Stop interrogation, where are our brothers?* Now he shifts to color, blood graffiti in sharper focus. The insertion of burnt hues as contra of abandon—filling up, infecting. Lovers slowly drift apart, a city crumbles under aerial bombing. Transition to video produces the vision of Welcome to Beirut: aftermath, cynicism and, a faint measure of joy.

After the post-mortem, Fouad has returned to photographs, and now he insistently scratches fragments of sentences—across the

core, on the margins, on separate frames. Superimposition of text functions as elegiac diary entry and triage surgery. A grand yacht becomes a sumptuous ad for the slogan that rends the scene: *Let us be Capitalistically Realistic.* But he must be worried that even bleak scenes can be instrumentalized. Take his conundrum of crows surviving on wires—couldn't that image be smoothly hijacked by an ad agency? In a recent conversation about artist intentions at 16 Beaver in New York, we debated whether artists could ever control how work is received. This also worries Fouad, and drives the insistence on inscribing on top of photos. Not captions that undermine ambiguity, rather these liner notes make amnesiac viewing difficult.

What now, after reading, of a Kurdish-German boy with the illegal name—three letters (q, w, x) not officially recognized in Turkey. This moment hopes to be beyond appropriation. Suddenly the tone shifts in the series. Tempo and layering, playing with our first reading, speeds up. The split screen card game that dons new slogans every time we tilt our head: from Communist to Socialist to Nationalist. But you noticed I skipped some slogans? We all have agendas.

In Don DeLillo's "Falling Man", killers destroy normal life, survivors make ferocious love, and bystanders quietly breathe air. In Fouad Elkoury's work, aftermath ethos matches staccato energy. From 9 am until midnight, friends visit and gift a smile. Somewhere in this city, soldiers peer into an empty swimming pool. Vacated, destroyed, reclaimed. And they? Warriors or survivors? Did he talk to them after the shutter click. There is more to the story than what is written. Keep reading.

*Naeem Mohaiemen is a writer & artist working in Dhaka+ New York [shobak.org].*



*Palestine 2048, 2009*  
Ink jet print mounted on aluminium  
90 x 60 cm

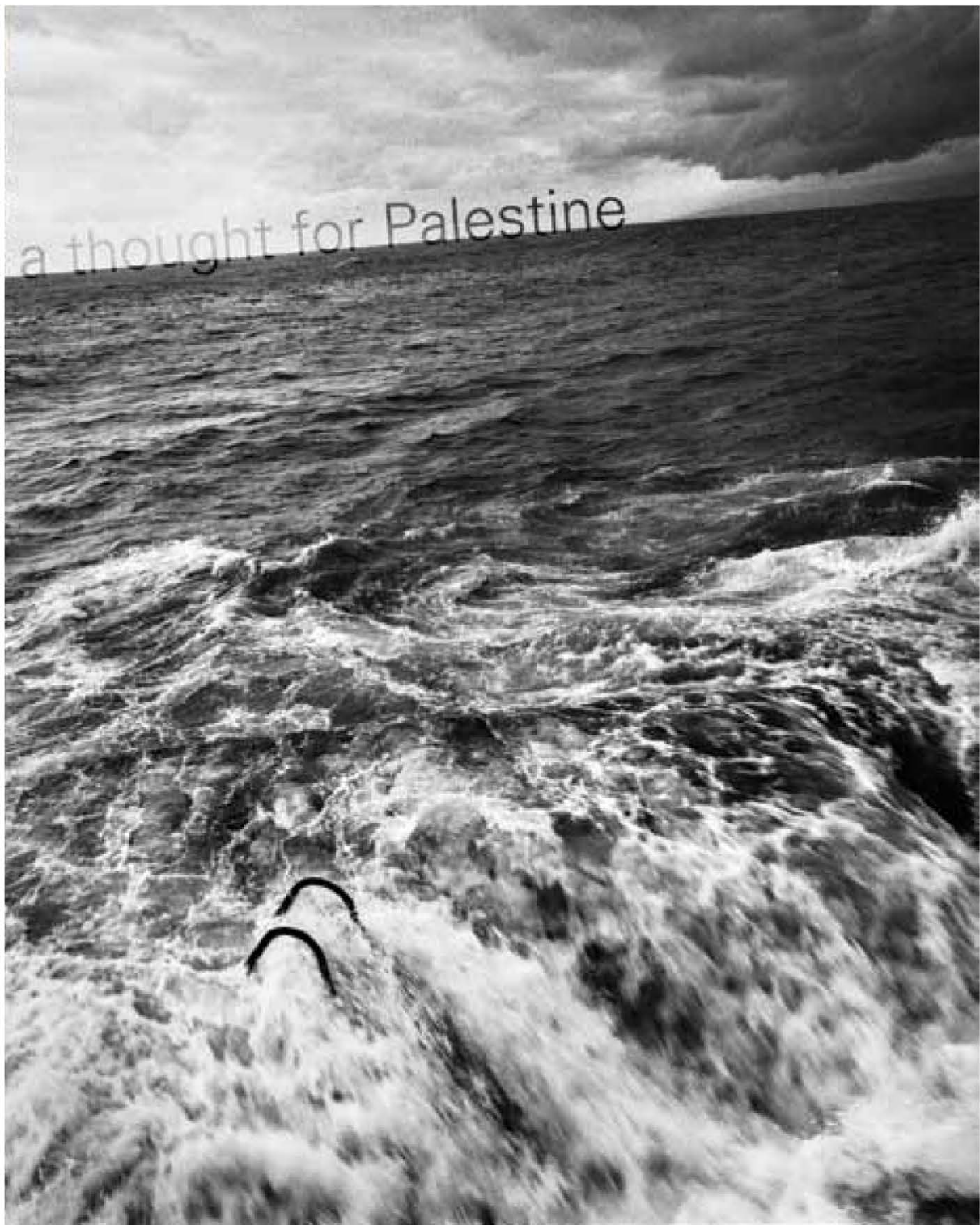


*No Consolation, 2009*  
Ink jet print mounted on aluminium  
60 x 40 cm





*Lisboa, 2009*  
Ink jet print mounted on aluminium  
60 x 40 cm



*A Thought For Palestine*, 2009  
Ink jet print mounted on aluminium  
62.5 x 50 cm

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1952, Fouad Elkoury is undoubtedly Lebanon's best-known photographer, whose work has consistently placed him at the forefront of photographic practice in the region. Elkoury now lives between Paris and Beirut.

After completing a degree in architecture in London in 1979, Elkoury turned to photography, first covering the 1982 Israeli invasion of Beirut and then, in 1984, publishing *Beyrouth Aller-Retour*, a book documenting the bomb-shocked city. Throughout his prodigious and distinguished career, Elkoury's photographic subjects have ranged from documenting war-torn territories to capturing intimate personal narratives of the Egyptian cinema. Co-founder of the Beirut-based Arab Image Foundation, in 2001 Elkoury introduced video into his repertoire with the film *Lettres à Francine* to accompany his chiaroscuro-esque photographic series, *Sombre*. The films *Moving Out* (2004) and *Welcome to Beirut* (2005) soon followed.

Elkoury's works have exhibited in numerous shows across the Middle East, Europe and the US. His previous series *On Love and War*, a collection of daily journal entries and images documenting the 2006 Israeli incursion into Lebanon, was exhibited in Lebanon's first National Pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale.

الخط الثالث

---

the third line

Al Quoz, PO Box 72036 Dubai, UAE  
T +971 4 3411367 • F +971 4 3411369  
[www.thethirdline.com](http://www.thethirdline.com)

---

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM

**brownbook**  
an urban guide to the middle east

■ **Veuve Clicquot** ■



What I miss most is your incredible smile

