

# The Museum of Modern Art

## MoMA PRESENTS LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN'S VIDEO *WALLED UNWALLED* AND HIS PERFORMANCES *AFTER SFX*, *AIR PRESSURE*, AND *NATQ* IN THE KRAVIS STUDIO

### ***Lawrence Abu Hamdan: Walled Unwalled and Other Monologues***

April 8–June 11, 2023

The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio

**NEW YORK, March 7, 2023**—This spring, MoMA presents ***Lawrence Abu Hamdan: Walled Unwalled and Other Monologues***, bringing the work of Lawrence Abu Hamdan to The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Studio from April 8 through June 11, 2023. As a practitioner of “forensic listening,” Abu Hamdan examines the capacity of sound—and the physiological act of hearing—to exonerate and incriminate. His video *Walled Unwalled* (2018) investigates how information transmitted through walls—both by sophisticated surveillance technology and the human senses alone—has been used as evidence in courts of law and instrumentalized as a tool of the state. For this exhibition and program of performances, *Walled Unwalled* will be adapted for the Kravis Studio; the work, itself a solo performance for camera, will be presented alongside a series of live performances, or “audiovisual essays,” by the artist: *After SFX* (2018), *Air Pressure* (2021), and *Natq* (2019). *Lawrence Abu Hamdan: Walled Unwalled and Other Monologues* is organized by Ana Janevski, Curator, and Erica Papernik-Shimizu, Associate Curator, with May Makki, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Media and Performance. Performances are produced by Lizzie Gorfaine, Associate Director and Producer, and Kate Scherer, Manager and Producer, with Olivia Rousey, Assistant Performance Coordinator, Performance and Live Programs. It is presented in conjunction with the exhibition [Signals: How Video Transformed the World](#).

Acquired by MoMA in 2019, *Walled Unwalled* is one of four works by Abu Hamdan in the Museum’s collection. In the video, the artist delivers a monologue connecting three narratives in which sound, architecture, and politics intersect: the case of *Kyllo v. United States* (2001), the murder trial of Oscar Pistorius (2014), and the accounts of survivors of the Syrian regime’s Saydnaya military prison. Recorded at an East Berlin sound studio once used by state radio to broadcast propaganda throughout the Eastern Bloc and over the Berlin Wall, the video was filmed through the studio’s glass walls. In prior installations of this work, the video has been projected onto a glass surface; the presentation at MoMA incorporates the Kravis Studio’s floor-to-ceiling windows, transforming the room into a citation of the work’s original setting and amplifying the work’s core concerns.

The Kravis Studio will host a series of ticketed performances by Abu Hamdan, with three works each being presented in two evening performances and one matinee performance over three weeks during the exhibition:

### ***After SFX* (2018)**

Saturday, April 8, 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 9, 3:00 p.m.\*

**MoMA**

11 West 53 Street  
New York, NY 10019

Monday, April 10, 8:00 p.m.

*After SFX* is prompted by Abu Hamdan's investigations into crimes that are heard but not seen. The artist explores sounds described by "earwitnesses" in interviews conducted by Abu Hamdan or sourced from trial manuscripts. In order to facilitate their testimonies, Abu Hamdan built hybrid objects, created to unlock witnesses' acoustic memories, called *Earwitness Inventory* (2018–ongoing). A selection of these sculptures will be activated in the live performance.

Following the performance on April 9, the artist will appear in conversation with curator Ana Janevski.

***Air Pressure* (2021)**

Friday, June 2, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 3, 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 4, 3:00 p.m.\*

*Air Pressure* draws on research, conducted between May 2020 and May 2021, into the aerial soundscape of Lebanon, documenting 2,412 instances of Israeli fighter jets and drones. Through chronological sequencing and live audio processing, the performance analyzes the relationship between background noise and atmospheres of violence.

***Natq* (2019)**

Friday, June 9, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 10, 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 11, 3:00 p.m.\*

In Arabic, *natq*, meaning "to vocalize," is also the word that is used to describe speech that has been transmigrated from the living to the dead. In this performance, Abu Hamdan examines the politics of listening to reincarnated testimonies—accounts from witnesses who can testify to long and continuous crimes that leak across generations and threaten the future.

Capacity for all performances is limited; tickets may be purchased on [moma.org](https://moma.org) beginning one month before each performance date.

\*The installation of Lawrence Abu Hamdan's *Walled Unwalled* will be closed during regular Museum hours on April 9, June 4, and June 11, except for the 3:00 p.m. performances.

**ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Born in 1985 in Jordan, raised in England, Lawrence Abu Hamdan is the founding director of Earshot, an agency dedicated to listening to, with, and on behalf of people affected by corporate, state, and environmental violence. Abu Hamdan's work has been presented in the form of forensic reports, lectures and live performances, films, publications, and exhibitions all over the world. He received his PhD in 2017 and has held fellowships and professorships at the University of Chicago, the New School, New York, and, most recently, the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, where he developed his research project [AirPressure.info](https://airpressure.info).

Abu Hamdan's audio investigations have been used as evidence at the UK Asylum and Immigration Tribunal and have been a key part of advocacy campaigns for organizations such as Amnesty International, Defence for Children International, and Forensic Architecture. His projects that reflect on the political and cultural context of sound and listening have been presented at the 22nd Biennale of Sydney, the 58th Venice Biennale, the 11th Gwangju Biennale, the 13th and 14th Sharjah Biennials, Witte De With, Rotterdam, Tate Modern Tanks, Chisenhale Gallery, Hammer Museum LA, and the Portikus Frankfurt. In addition to MoMA, his works are part of the collections of the Reina Sofia, Guggenheim, Hamburger Bahnhof, Van AbbeMuseum, Centre Pompidou, and Tate Modern. Abu Hamdan was awarded the 2020 Toronto Biennial Audience Award, the 2019 Edvard Munch Art Award, the 2016 Nam June Paik Award for new media, and, in 2017, his film *Rubber Coated Steel* won the Tiger short film award at the Rotterdam International Film festival. For the 2019 Turner Prize, Abu Hamdan, together with nominated artists Helen Cammock, Oscar Murillo, and Tai Shani, formed a temporary collective in order to be jointly granted the award.

## **SPONSORSHIP**



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