

Beirut 1963 (2003),
Mekhitar Garabedian
2min 14s, DVD,
DVD-installation,
TV-monitor, sound on headphones

Breaking off with something, someone, someplace ... is the fate of the emigrant; he has definitively left something behind, but this keeps haunting him and it determines his (new) identity. What is in the past, is never just in the past, is never over, but it becomes a ghost, that keeps coming back and that disturbs the quiet (and fullness) of the now. Diaspora: the disappearance, the recollection, the forgetting, the migration of identity, language, family, culture, history. What kind of image remains of the homeland that was left behind, after a whole life in a new country? What remains of a language when the voices which feed this language are dying out? (*1)

Mekhitar Garabedian's video 'Beirut1963' shows an old family photograph. A photograph with creases that have a story to tell. The video starts with an intact, undamaged version of this photograph. Slowly the creases of the old, crumpled photograph appear for a while. Then the creases disappear again. In the background 'Happy Birthday' is being sung in Armenian, Arabic, French, Dutch and English. The consecutive languages reflect the eventful diaspora this family experienced. The apparent merriment of the song is in stark contrast with the tragic fate of a community left to wander. (*2)

(*1) *written by Mekhitar Garabedian, published in Kunst Nu (Art Now) sept-okt 2003
(my translation)*

(*2) *written for the Smak-exhibition 'coming people'*