



**YARA ASMAR**



**Selected works**



# MR. SAMUEL'S TEATIME STORIES FOR GOOD KIDS & CONFUSED ADULTS

In a wonky universe set within the fake walls of an old abandoned children's TV show, Mr Samuel and his friends -peculiar, ugly puppets navigating the strange thing that is time- attempt to make sense of it all through stories, songs and arduous loops of nonsensical chores. A film in four parts.



Zizek's book 'The Parallax View' begins with a description of the first use of modern art as a method of psychotechnic torture: French anarchist Laurencic's 'colored cells'. "The cells were as inspired by ideas of geometric abstraction and surrealism as they were by avant-garde art theories on the psychological properties of colors... the walls, which were curved and covered with mind-altering patterns of cubes, squares, straight lines, and spirals which utilized tricks of color, perspective, and scale to cause mental confusion and distress." This four part video is my own take on these colored cells.





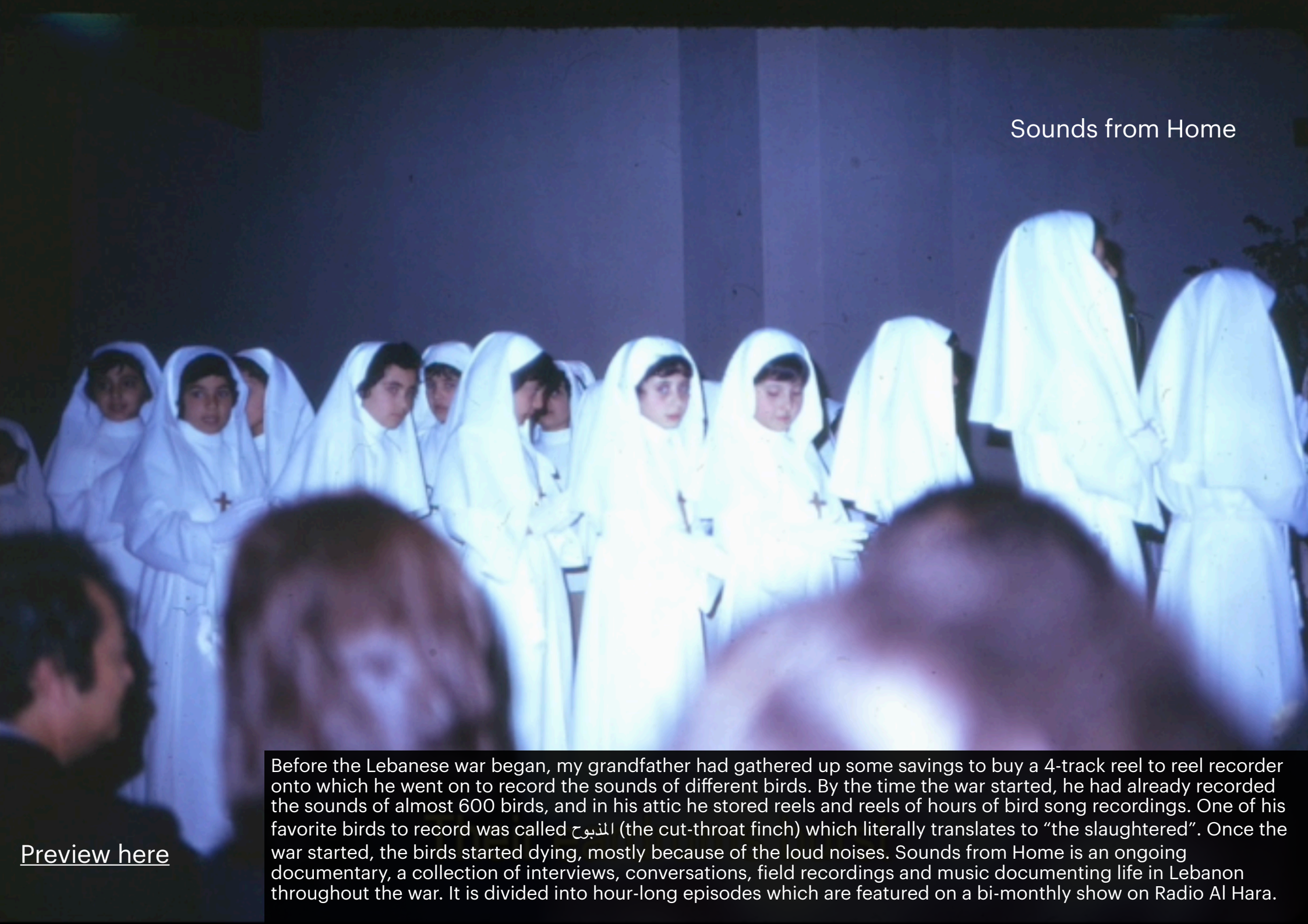
With an emphasis on set-building, the disintegrating world of Mr. Samuel manifests itself through a set that is falling apart, eventually leaving the protagonist floating alone in a vast void.



[Link to part I](#)







## Sounds from Home

[Preview here](#)

Before the Lebanese war began, my grandfather had gathered up some savings to buy a 4-track reel to reel recorder onto which he went on to record the sounds of different birds. By the time the war started, he had already recorded the sounds of almost 600 birds, and in his attic he stored reels and reels of hours of bird song recordings. One of his favorite birds to record was called المذبوح (the cut-throat finch) which literally translates to “the slaughtered”. Once the war started, the birds started dying, mostly because of the loud noises. Sounds from Home is an ongoing documentary, a collection of interviews, conversations, field recordings and music documenting life in Lebanon throughout the war. It is divided into hour-long episodes which are featured on a bi-monthly show on Radio Al Hara.



# The 30 Best Jazz and Experimental Albums of 2023

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Our favorite unfamiliar, unsettling, provocative, transgressive, spaced-out, psychedelic, surreal, meditative, and confrontational albums of the year.

By Pitchfork

December 14, 2023

≡ Pitchfork



Hive Mind

## Yara Asmar: *synth waltzes and accordion laments*

Yara Asmar was drawn to the accordion by fate: The Lebanese multidisciplinary artist found her grandmother's vintage Hohner Marchesa in her parents' attic and taught herself to play it, tapping into its warmly reedy sound to accent her synth recordings. The result is the drifting *synth waltzes and accordion laments*, a set that transmutes the instrument's droning tones into a sweep of introspective, breath-catching moments of beauty. —Eric Torres



# Synth Waltzes and Accordion Laments

## Cyclic Defrost

*"Her music is strange, adventurous elongated and highly idiosyncratic, it's music that beckons you from afar and if you're willing to get close enough will fill your soul."*

[Full review here:](#)

## The Capsule Garden

*"Melancholic drifts sound through the overcast skies of synth waltzes and accordion laments, infusing ageless melodies with a sense of falling backward through time. History is stitched through gilded aural silhouettes and elegiac drones. Asmar's music is visceral. While electronics beckon beyond the sunrise stretched through a metallic shimmer, synth waltzes and accordion laments sticks with us while we remain lost in the hazy doldrums, always crawling forward tethered to our past lives. Highest recommendation."*

[Full Review here](#)

## Backseat Mafia

*"AN ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC JOURNEY OF DEEP EMOTION AND RIPPLING BEAUTY."*

[Full review here](#)

## Monolith Cocktail

*"In a diaphanous gauze of dream-realism, the Beirut multi-instrumentalist, composer, video artist and puppeteer **Yara Asmar** conveys a sense of dislocation, loss and remembrance."*

[Full review here](#)

## Honest Jons

*"Fragile, deep, utterly enthralling home recordings from Beirut; lost in memories, worry, grief, rapture, love."*

*Warmly recommended".*

synth waltzes  
and accordion laments

yara asmar

[bandcamp link](#)

## The Quietus

*" ...these tracks are a cushion against reality. Asmar creates music that unfurls in evanescent bliss, an invitation to a safe space both isolated and welcoming."*

[Full Review here](#)





# Chimes//Sounds of Places

Commissioned by Wonder Cabinet.



“Yara Asmar introduces wind chimes into Cremisan Valley, Palestine. The work features a nest swing skirted by gigantic steel chimes that can be activated naturally or intentionally. The chimes can be played by the wind, people using bars, or people sitting in and moving the nest swing. While the chimes will interact with the natural soundscape of the valley, made of steel, they will also seem jarring and out of place, suggesting construction work. Although pre-tuned, mirroring a preordained reality on the ground, the chimes hold creative potential. People can generate new sounds by swinging together, orchestrating a new collective scape. Similarly, the chimes pave a way for the artist to be present in spirit, like a ghost, in landscapes that her body is barred from visiting, for the time being.”



**This work was later performed as part of LGW festival in 2025. Field recordings of this installation along with the other sound sculptures in the valley were captured by Ibrahim Owais and then played in a sound piece alongside Alabaster Deplume and Yara Asmar.**



*Photo credit: Ibrahim Owais*



*Photo credits: Sofia Lambrou*







## Chatterbox

*Sculpture cast in bronze*

Recently, I have been working with the paper fortune teller, or chatterbox, as a sculptural form; I am interested in whether its extraction from context and its interaction with the performer can free it from the burden of its cultural associations. I wonder whether such gestures open up new possibilities and new ways of seeing the object, or whether a chatterbox will always remain a chatterbox. I work with a variety of materials, and I have cast the chatterbox in aluminum and bronze to give it a solidity it does not naturally possess. I have also experimented with different kinds of cameras to explore various aspects of its materiality.









Part of a series of sculptures and video performances that serve as a visual study of the paper fortune teller, in an attempt to isolate the movement and form from the global culture associations of the shape. For this piece, the feed from two cameras was run through the SANDIN Image Processor so that the movement between shots would mimic the movement of the fortune teller.

[Link to full performance](#)



# Score for 3 adjacent rooms

*Commissioned by the Abrons Arts Center, New York.*

Text-based chance  
compositions for three  
mechanical disc-playing  
music boxes, datamosh  
image transfers

[Link to video](#)

This was part of the collective exhibition: *Screen Memories* which considers the experience of mass media in the Arab world for a generation of artists who grew up in the early 2000s, at the tail end of network television's popularity. Using video and sound, artists Yara Asmar, Mona Benyamin, and Huda Takriti reference and reimagine the media they grew up with in new forms.





## Familiar Scenographies

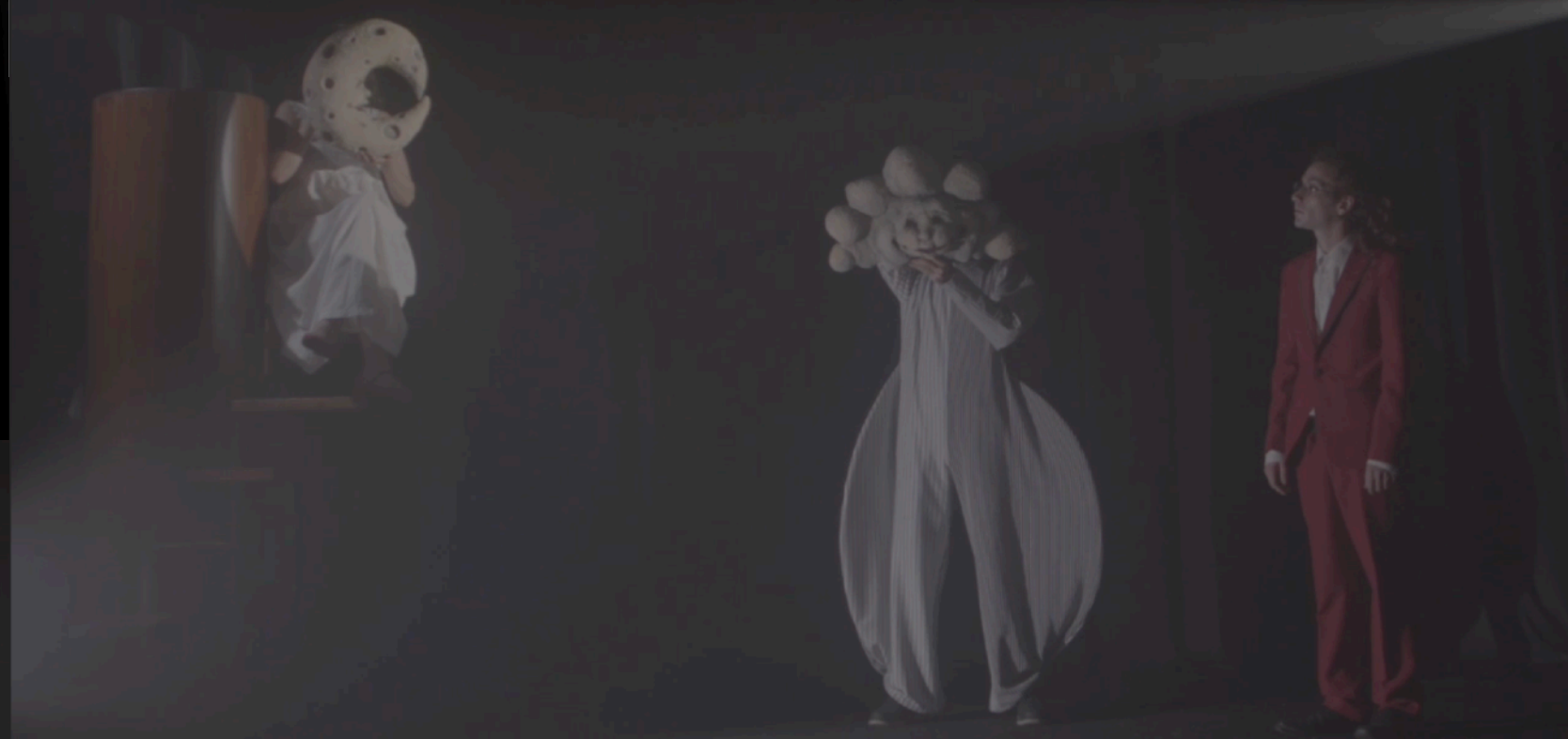
A series of filmed performances for analog film (super 8 and 16 mm). For this one, I built a mask out of mushrooms

[Link to video](#)

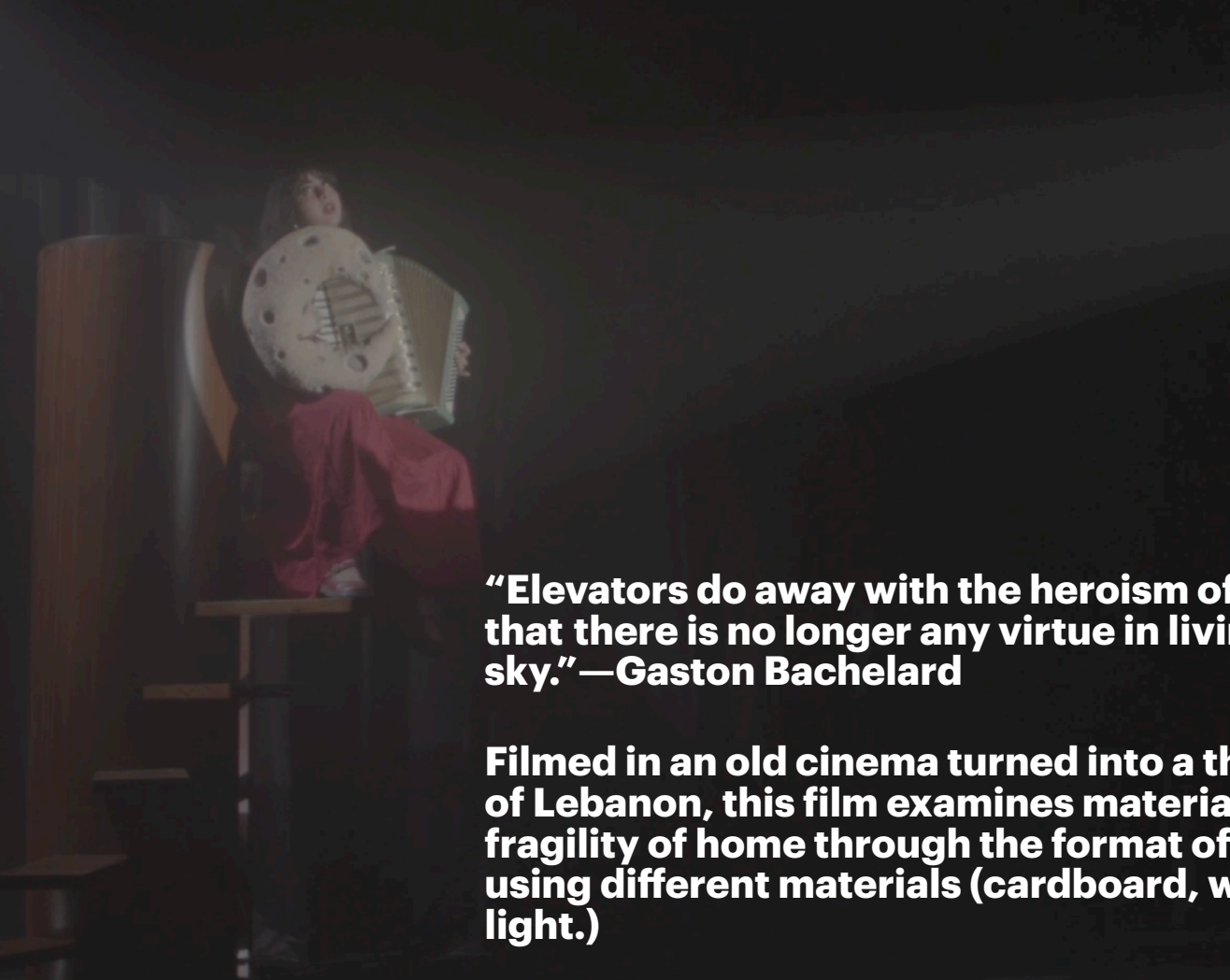


# PAPERHOUSE WALTZES

(FOR THE PERPETUALLY AWAKE)

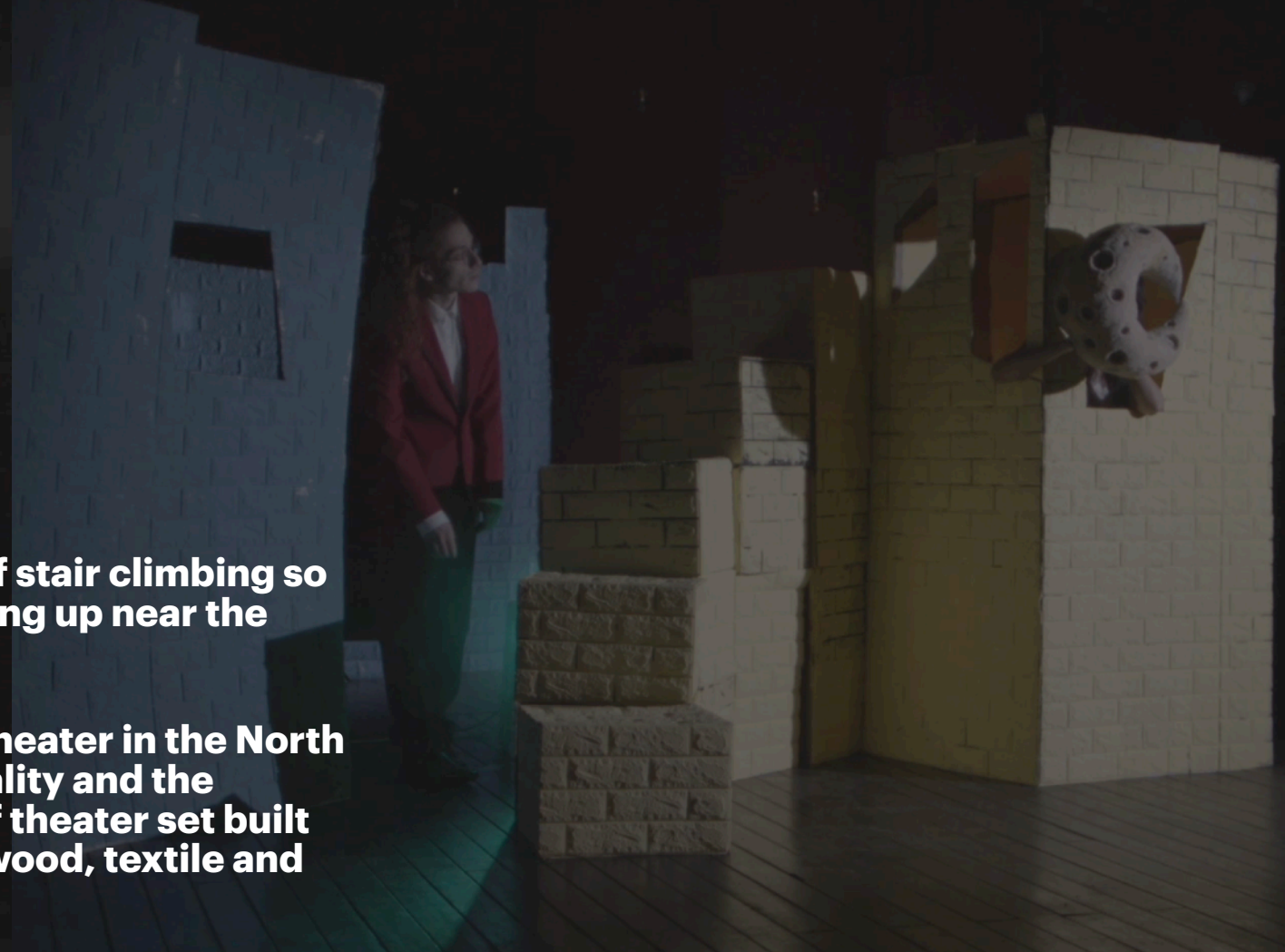






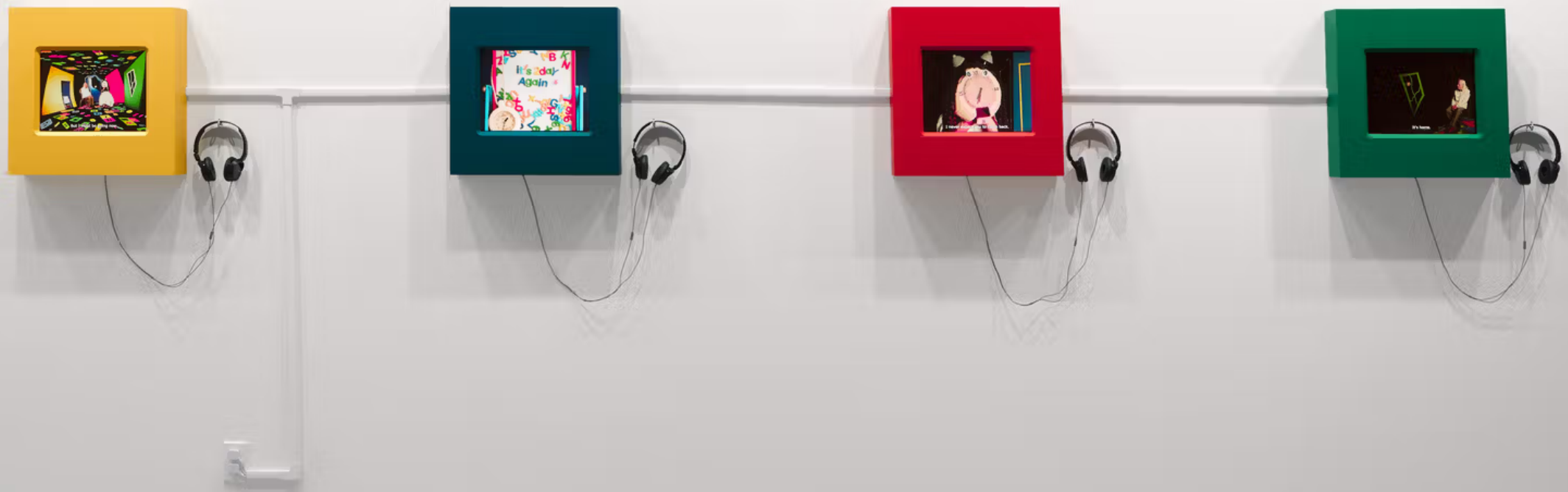
**“Elevators do away with the heroism of stair climbing so that there is no longer any virtue in living up near the sky.”—Gaston Bachelard**

**Filmed in an old cinema turned into a theater in the North of Lebanon, this film examines materiality and the fragility of home through the format of theater set built using different materials (cardboard, wood, textile and light.)**





## Screen Memories



Yara Asmar, *Mr. Samuel's Teatime Stories for Good Kids & Confused Adults*, 2024.



# **MUSIC & PERFORMANCES**





# Home Recordings 2018-2021

**"A TRULY DREAMY, TRANSLUCENT AND AMORPHOUS ALBUM OF DELICATE CLASSICISM, EXPLORATIVE PERCUSSION AND AMBIENT"**

"In a tumultuous climate, referenced in a sampled conversation piece on '4 Is An Okay Number' and in the unsaid but moody reflections and vaporous drifts that push out into the unknown and untethered, the twenty-five year old multi-instrumentalist, video artist and puppeteer manages to often leave the earthly mess of a region in crisis and float out above the city.

From an airy viewing platform we can identify swirls, waves, gauzy veils and echoes of the concertinaed (courtesy of Asmar's grandparents' accordion), tubular metallic rings and tingles (that will be the metallophone), a serious but graceful piano, a music box, hinges and searing gleams and a beatified magical spell of Christian church liturgy. The latter source was recorded by Asmar from church hymnal services around the Lebanon; transduced into the hallowed yet otherworldly and mysterious, given a gentle waltz-like ghostly quality and only sense of a presence. It sounds both equally as ethereal, as it does supernatural: passages into other realms.

Tracks like 'We Put Her In A Box And Never Spoke Of It Again' are almost lunar in comparison to those hymns; lending a moon arc of Theremin-like UFO oscillations and cult library cosmic scores to this set of peregrinations and field-recordings. Yet for the most part this is a truly dreamy, translucent and amorphous album of delicate classicism, explorative percussion and ambient; an ebb and flow of reverberations and traces of moods, thoughts that literally floats above the clouds and out beyond the Lebanese borders. These home recordings recorded onto cassettes and a mobile phone capture something quite unique, in what are the most unique of times. "

-MONOLITH COCKTAIL

**links**

[bandcamp](#)

[spotify](#)



**"TINY WORLDS EXPAND AND CONTRACT IN THE PALM OF YARA ASMAR'S HAND. THESE RECORDINGS ARE REMARKABLE IN THEIR ABILITY TO COMMAND ATTENTION IN THE GENTLEST TERMS. THERE ARE STORIES TO FIND ON THIS ALBUM AND NEW WORLDS TO DISCOVER. "**

"Metallic timbres dance like personified music boxes in a room of solemn feedback swells and ramshackle, jangly percussion on the beguiling opener, "it's always october on sunday." Shades of gray cloud the earth tones moving in angled, choreographed patterns. In the resonant darkness flowing just out of reach, Asmar stretches outward as if reaching for something unseen and unheard. Tape-saturated piano arrangements wobble and decay on "we put her in a box and never spoke of it again." There's a feeling of remorse woven into the fuzzy chords, warm with twilight sun missives. It's quiet here, however, before giving away to the stoic chord progressions and hazy determination of the song's back half.

Asmar's soft touch haunts each transportive note, the ghosts that will never leave us. Each piece on Home Recordings 2018 – 2021 has a secret story, and without any direct narratives, we're left picking out clues in the emotive soundscapes. On "there is a science to days like these (but i am a slow learner)," breaths of relief are golden paeans hanging in the still light. "sleeping in church – tape 1 – on a warm day i turned to tell you something but there was nothing there" fuses lilting ambient synth and piano passages with church field recordings, burning through a ritualistic thread. "

**[full review here](#)**



**"WHO IS YARA ASMAR AND HOW DOES SHE MAKE MUSIC SO STRANGELY BEAUTIFUL? THE 25-YEAR-OLD INSTRUMENTALIST-PUPPETEER LIVES IN BEIRUT WITH HER CAT, MUSHROOM, AND PRESUMABLY THAT'S THE FELINE'S SHADOW NEXT TO THE ARTIST'S ON THE ALBUM'S BACK COVER. THE WARM LIGHT OF THAT PHOTOGRAPH AND THE QUIET BEACH SCENE OF AN ABANDONED LIFEGUARD'S STATION AND AN EMPTY NET TELLS YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW. HOME RECORDINGS 2018-2021 IS AN ASSURED DEBUT ALBUM THAT BUILDS AN EERIE TENSION OUT OF DREAMLIKE LAYERS OF ISOLATION"**

Her titles are as enigmatic as her music, like the 10-minute opener "It's Always October on Sunday." The piece begins with a fragile main motif played on reverbed toy piano, with various percussion effects emerging from a watery mix, which seems to play out the narrative suggested by the front cover: the layers wash and wobble as if underwater, with the relative clarity of that toy piano figure gently competing with swooning sounds punctuated by the unexpected percussion of what sound like irregular dance steps. It's a brilliantly constructed aural space; each element occupies its own distinct plane, but that tension between the solid and the unstable makes one unsure exactly which way is up. There's the vague sensation of drowning, yet it's not at all unpleasant.

Recorded on cassettes and her mobile phone, these home recordings may be best appreciated in the echo of a bathroom, all the better to bring out the resonance and odd sense of space. If the album were a movie, it would be *Carnival of Souls*, the 1962 horror picture that's the only feature made by industrial film producer Herk Harvey. Asmar's music is similarly eerie and sui generis. While simple melodies briefly suggest, say, *Music for Airports* or *Discreet Music*, the textures are richer and more unexpected; if Eno's ambient music has a knack for hook-like riffs, Asmar will lure you in with dark melodies but just as quickly—if smoothly, as if injecting a delayed-action sedative—lead you down an unknown path. Such pathways are more or less laid out in title that read like mysterious diary entries: "Sleeping in Church – Tape 1- On a Warm Day I Turned to Tell You Something But There Was Nothing There." There are looped, incomprehensible voices in the mix that beckon to the listener from the depths of the sea. Part of the magic is that, just when the listener is as disoriented as possible, Asmar introduces a more conventional piano melody: just a couple of notes, mildly distorted, plaintive and finally elusive but oh so enticing.

The titles do evoke some kind of nautical narrative. But even a playful heading like "Fish Can't Tie Their Shoelaces, Silly" keeps your head underwater, as it were, with a heavily echoed, calliope-like melody that leans even more into *Carnival of Souls* territory, as does "We Put Her in a Box and Never Spoke of It Again." Tracks like these play like an underwater circus, with childlike instrumentation drenched in effect, the ghostly music of a bag of kittens slowly sinking in the murky river.

Such music is melancholy, yes, and it's an earned wistfulness. *Home Recordings* is a perfectly benign title under ordinary times, but these have been extraordinary times, and Asmar's aural depiction of home is that of alienated horror. The spoken word samples in "4 is an Okay Number" sound like a radio signal that buzzes in and out of comprehensibility, the encouraging hint of human contact tempered by a callback from the toy piano figure that opens the album, a reminder that the nightmare isn't over. The brief closer "Thanks for Coming" tells us that the album's musical narrator has never left her ocean grave. How remarkable: through a series of highly abstract musical compositions, Asmar has communicated volumes about the world we live in."

**Full review on Spectrum Culture Magazine**



# SELECTED PERFORMANCES

**Semibreve Festival - Braga, Portugal**

*Solo performance.*

**Le Guess Who? Festival - Utrecht, Netherlands**

*Solo performance.*

**Ekko Festival - Bergen, Norway.**

*Solo performance.*

**Colombo Video Arts Festival-  
Colombo, Sri Lanka**

*Solo performance.*

**La Becque, Tour-de-Peilz, Switzerland**

*Double bill with Matmos.*

**Le Guess Who Festival.**

*Filmed performance in partnership with Radio Al Hara.*

**Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz - Berlin, Germany.**

*Solo performance.*

**Jazzwerkstatt Festival - Bern, Switzerland.**

*Solo Ciné-Concert.*

**Theatre Granit - Belfort, France.**

*Festival International de Musique Universitaire*

*Duo Performance with George Nassar as part of Apartment 52.*

**El Cortez Theater - Taos, New Mexico, USA.**

*Performance with Cocorosie's Bianca Cassidy, Olga Maximova, Piotr Kurek.*

**Railyards, Albuquerque, New Mexico.**

*As part of percussion group and 'The Happy Birthdaze' band.*

**Irtijal Festival - Beirut, Lebanon.**

*As part of quartet2345.*

**Le Guess Who Festival.**

*In partnership with Radio Al Hara.*

**Deutsches Harmonikamuseum - Trossingen, Germany.**

**Vogelklang Soundcamp - Sankt Georgen im Schwarzwald, Black Forest, Germany.**

**Metro Al Madina - Beirut, Lebanon.**

*Everything's Funnier in RGB - Solo live scoring performance.*

**Roman Ruins - Deir El Kalaa, Lebanon.**

*Solo performance - Closing of art exhibition 'Lost in the Right Direction'.*

**Werkplaats Walter - Brussels, Belgium.**

*Jazz improvisation concert.*

**Bozar - Brussels, Belgium.**

*Goethe Institute's Halaqat jazz improvisation concert.*

**Badhuis Oedipus - Amsterdam, Netherlands.**

*Solo performance.*

**Time is the New Space - Amsterdam, Netherlands.**

*Solo performance.*





# PERFORMANCES

## MUSIC FOR CORRIDORS (AND OTHER IN-BETWEEN SPACES)



## SONATINA FOR 19 MUSIC BOXES



Music composed for 19 music boxes to be played by members of the audience as an opening piece for a performance for accordion and metallophone. Performed in Sankt Georgen im Schwarzwald in the Black Forest.



Music for corridors is a series of performances put together by Yara Asmar: An attempt to take over a site that would otherwise be inactive, and work with its natural reverb and resonance - music that is born in a place and that dies the moment it is evacuated. So-called liminal spaces in physical limbo.

Volume I took place in an old textile factory in Bourj Hammoud, Lebanon and was performed by Christelle Njeim on vibraphone and Yara Asmar on accordion and metallophone.

Volume II took place in the Beirut Art Center and featured Christelle Njeim on vibraphone, Youmna Mroue on Cello and Yara Asmar on metallophone and glockenspiel.



## LGW - PERFORMANCE

“Radio Alhara presents an unprecedented collaboration between Beirut-based multi-instrumentalist and puppeteer Yara Asmar, electronic musician Sary Moussa, and Bethlehem-based tenor of the Greek Orthodox chorus of the Nativity church Laurence Samour. The experiment is as much an attempt of apprehending an unforeseen encounter, as well as resisting physical boundaries through sonic content. The collaboration is structured around the ever growing magical world of Yara, the long lasting spiritual world of Laurence, and the soundscape based music of Sary. The result is yet to be discovered.”

[YouTube link](#)