Lawrence Abu Hamdan
Errata

April 9th — June 18th, 2022
Opening: April 9th, 4 to 8pm

Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *The Witness-Machine Complex*, 2020-2021

For his second solo show at mor charpentier, British-Lebanese artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan follows his research on sound as legal evidence, focusing on the unbreakable relationship between testimony and the technology used to record it. Interested in the blind spots of global justice systems, the artist examines sound as a means to reveal historic acts of erasure and rupture. Taking the Nuremberg Trials (1945-1946) as starting point, the three works presented on the two levels of the gallery question the mechanisms of the judicial machine and explore the act of witnessing by illuminating dissonances in language and speech.

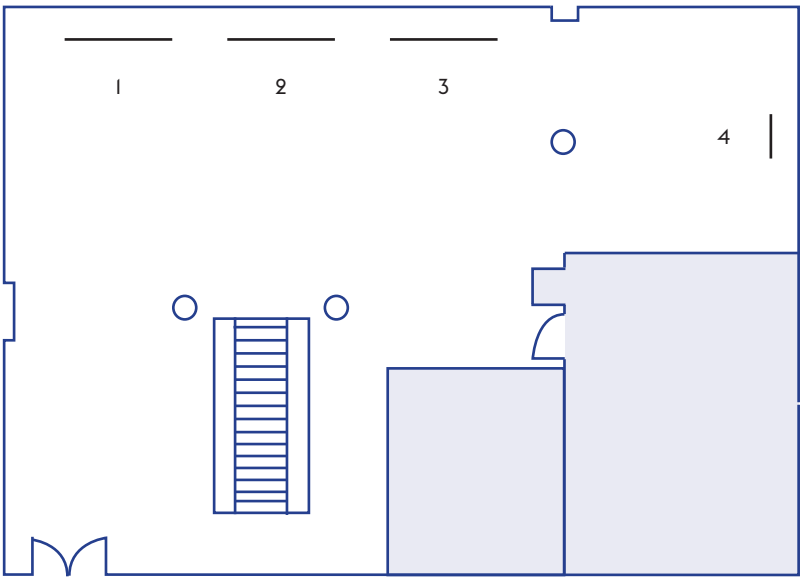
In the lower ground, the immersive installation ***The Witness-Machine Complex*** takes the audience back in time to the Nuremberg Trials – during which 24 Nazi officials were tried and sentenced for crimes against Humanity – and focuses on the new electroacoustic device developed at the time to allow for the simultaneous translation of testimonies into Russian, French, German and English. With the help of a system of yellow and red light bulbs, the interpreters were able to react live to the statements collected by the magistrates, ordering the witnesses to raise their voices, to slow down or to repeat a particular sentence.
These silent interactions – which do not appear in the written transcripts of the trials – are however clearly seen on the video recordings, which show a series of flashes due to the utilization of the bulbs. It is this impression of cacophony, absent from the official reports, that Lawrence Abu Hamdan has sought to highlight by isolating seven specific cases where the irruption of technology directly influences the testimony and modifies the manner in which it is delivered.

The installation plays to the rhythm of seven metal stands all equipped with yellow and red bulbs, which simultaneously broadcast sound extracts of the trial in different languages, and project on the walls the corresponding English translation as well as the interruptions of the interpreters and the Court.

Upstairs, a group of three light-boxes hung on the main wall of the gallery, further develops the artist's research by replacing the actions of translators – who were so far rendered invisible – at the heart of the trial and its archival documentation.
Upon the ten carbon paper sheets that compose ***Errata***, the artist intervenes into the original transcript and reinserts the breaches, nervousness, and breaks within testimony that were redacted from it. By rejecting this misconception of a trial flowing seamlessly from voice to voice, Abu Hamdan tells a new history of this key moment in international justice, not through its official narrative but through its interruptions.

The performative video ***A Thousand White Plastic Chairs***, shot at the University of Chicago in March 2020, completes this investigation. Facing the camera as he evokes his great uncle's funeral, the assassination of Bobby Kennedy or the work of court stenographers, the artist subjects himself to the device used in Nuremberg to show the asymmetry between the speed of the machine and that of the human mind, and the issues it raises in the restitution of memory.
Like in the other works, Abu Hamdan focuses here on the act of "bearing witness" and on the interstices – the breaking points of language – where, eventually, truth can be found.

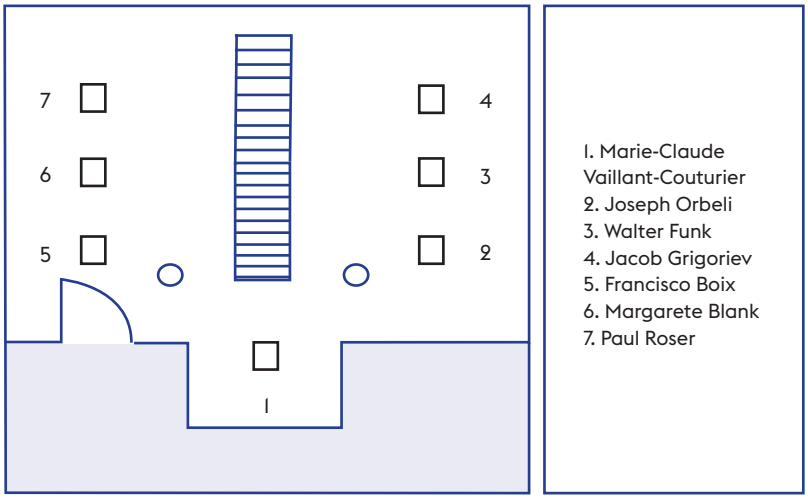
Ground floor



(1-3) ***Errata,*** 2022
Typewritten and annotated prints on carbon paper,
mounted on 3 light boxes
171 x 71 x 10 cm each
Unique pieces

(4) ***A Thousand White Plastic Chairs***, 2021
Single channel video, color, sound
13:20 min.
Edition of 6 + 2 AP

Lower ground



(1-7) ***The Witness-Machine Complex,*** 2020-2021
7-channel video installation including 7 podiums
with light bulbs and audio device
140 x 35 x 35 cm each
Edition of 6 + 2 AP