

BRYN MAWR

COLLEGE

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ARTIST BRINGS INTERACTIVE WORKS WITH POLITICAL RESONANCE TO PHILADELPHIA

Installations by Tania El Khoury explore lives of Syrian and Palestinian activists and refugees

Bryn Mawr, PA – July 12, 2018 – During this September’s Fringe Festival, Bryn Mawr College Performing Arts Series in partnership with FringeArts will present multiple installations by Tania El Khoury in the most extensive showing of the artist’s work to date. Titled *ear-whispered: works by Tania El Khoury*, the project consists of five installations and performances that can be experienced on Bryn Mawr’s campus and in Philadelphia’s Old City.

Working between Lebanon and the United Kingdom, El Khoury meticulously crafts innovative performances and installations that engage the audience in multi-sensory interaction. This activation of the senses invites the audience to build a deep connection with the oral histories of the killed and the marginalized and with the work overall.

The centerpiece of *ear-whispered* is *Gardens Speak*, an immersive sound installation in which audience members lie in a garden to listen to the oral histories of protesters who were killed in the Syrian Civil War and buried in private gardens. The newly commissioned *Tell Me What I Can Do* uses letters written in response to previous showings of *Gardens Speak* that include audience reflections on politics, empathy, loss, and death – illustrating how art can imprint us with a personal sense of urgency and responsibility. The other works collected in *ear-whispered* are *Camp Pause*, a video installation telling the stories of residents of a generations-old Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon; *Stories of Refuge*, which invites audience members to recline on metal bunk beds and watch videos shot by asylum seekers in Munich; and *As Far As My Fingertips Take Me*, during which one visitor at a time puts an arm through a gallery wall to feel the story of a family’s journey out of Syria painted on their skin by the performer Basel Zaraa.



"This is my first opportunity to simultaneously present several works along with related events," said **Tania El Khoury**. "I am excited that this is happening in Philadelphia, considering the city's history and the intertwining of politics and art throughout. Bringing together local audience, colleagues, and academics, I would like to jointly explore themes of the right to mobility, the discrimination of borders, the writing of history from below, and our right to the city—which makes up much of the content in the presented work. Equally important is to open up a critical conversation on the role of artistic processes and forms, such as audience interactivity, in producing political potential."

Lisa Kraus, Performing Arts Coordinator at Bryn Mawr College, explained the college's decision to work with El Khoury. "When I saw *Gardens Speak* in the Netherlands, I knew that this timely, smart, beautifully crafted and deeply moving work needed to be presented in the Philadelphia area," said Kraus. "With the addition of four more of the young artist's works into the *ear-whispered* project, I am excited for audiences here to experience the breadth of El Khoury's unique artistry."

Project Details

ear-whispered runs from September 6 – September 23. At Bryn Mawr, audiences will be able to experience four works: *Gardens Speak*, *Camp Pause*, *As Far As My Fingertips Take Me*, and the newly commissioned *Tell Me What I Can Do*. FringeArts is partnering with the College to present two works in Philadelphia's Old City: *Stories of Refuge* and *As Far As My Fingertips Take Me*.

To view images from *ear-whispered*, check viewing times, and pre-order tickets, visit taniaelkhoury.brynmawr.edu.

About the Artist

Tania El Khoury is a live artist whose work focuses on audience interactivity and is concerned with the ethical and political potential of such encounters. She creates installations and performances in which the audience is an active collaborator. El Khoury's solo work has toured internationally, and she is the recipient of the ANTI Festival's International Prize for Live Art, the Total Theatre Innovation Award, and the Arches Brick Award. Tania holds a PhD from Royal Holloway, University of London. Her research and publications focus on the political dimension of interactive live art in the wake of the Arab uprisings. Tania is associated with Forest Fringe collective of artists in the UK and is a co-founder of Dictaphone Group in Lebanon, a research and performance collective aiming at questioning our relationship to the city and redefining its public space.

Learn more about the artist at taniaelkhoury.com.

About the Bryn Mawr College Performing Arts Series

Since 1984 the Bryn Mawr College Performing Arts Series has presented great artists and performances to Philadelphia-area audiences, creating an environment in which the value of the arts is recognized and celebrated. Providing talks and workshops free to the public to develop arts awareness and literacy, the Bryn Mawr College Performing Arts Series has partnered in recent seasons with such organizations as the Barnes Foundation,

Pennsylvania Ballet, Bryn Mawr Film Institute, and FringeArts. The Series has presented performances by such diverse luminaries as Trisha Brown Dance Company, Meredith Monk, John Waters, Jennifer Koh, the Khmer Arts Ensemble of Cambodia, and Ralph Lemon.

Major support for *ear-whispered: works by Tania El Khoury* has been provided to Bryn Mawr College by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage (the Center), established in 2005, is dedicated to stimulating a vibrant cultural community in the greater Philadelphia region. The Center makes project grants in two areas, Performance and Exhibitions & Public Interpretation, as well as awarding grants to individual artists through our Pew Fellowships. The Center also makes Advancement grants, substantial awards to high-performing organizations seeking to make lasting improvements to their programming, audience engagement, and financial health. Each year, Center funding makes possible numerous performing arts events, as well as history and visual arts exhibitions and other public programs for audiences in Philadelphia and its surrounding counties. The Center is also a hub for research and knowledge-sharing on issues critical to cultural practice. View projects at pcah.us.

PHOTO CREDIT: *Gardens Speak*, Jesse Hunniford

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