



# **Don't Forget to Count Your Blessings**

Christina Hajjar

State of Flux Gallery

January 20 - March 16

Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre

**Don't Forget to Count Your Blessings** is an installation-based exhibition inspired by hookah lounges, sites of gathering, and diasporic fictions. It complicates the Arab diasporic experience by unpacking quotidian objects and language through methods of repetition, recontextualization, and glitch. *Don't Forget to Count Your Blessings* explores transcultural and familial connections through placemaking. The photographs signal to the ways in which hookah lounges and restaurants often feature romantic landscape images of homeland. Since Hajjar has never been to Lebanon, the photographs only feature a figure—the artist's sister—against a backdrop of blue sky, performing improvisational gestures with a plastic tablecloth. Two experimental short films remediate the spectacle of lavish culture often represented through music videos emanating from lounge TVs. *Don't Forget the Water* (2021) and *The Landmarks of Memory* (2023) engage the tablecloth to evoke questions on luxury, ritual, and translation. Together, these elements work to ground diasporic longing and nourishment through mimetic gestures, which are at once solid and fleeting.

**Christina Hajjar** is a Lebanese artist, writer, and cultural worker based in Winnipeg on Treaty 1 Territory. Her practice considers intergenerational inheritance, domesticity, and place through diaspora, body archives, and cultural iconography. As a queer femme and first-generation subject, she is invested in the poetics of process, translation, and collaborative labour. Hajjar was a recipient of the 2020 PLATFORM Photography Award. Her film *Don't Forget the Water* won the Jury Award and Audience Choice Award at the 2021 Gimli Film Festival, as well as an honourable mention for the 2021 Emerging Digital Artists Award. Hajjar curates the SWANA Film Festival and co-edits *Carnation Zine* and *qumra journal*. Her zine *Diaspora Daughter*, *Diaspora Dyke* won Artzine of the Year at the 2021 Broken Pencil Zine Awards. Learn more at [christinahajjar.com](http://christinahajjar.com).

## **Don't Forget the Water**

5 minutes, 2021

A phone conversation sets the diasporic table as a disembodied figure prepares Qahwah Arabi / Arabic Coffee. Here, the contradictions inherent in Google Translate's instant camera feature are made visible through glitched mistranslations. Using these flaws as a prompt, the communication between a mother and a daughter considers ambiguity as a source of embodied knowledge.

## **The Landmarks of Memory**

7 minutes, 2023

A tattoo ritual and hookah session memorializes a pre-war flower shop. After seeing its storefront in archival footage of the Lebanese Civil War, a first-generation daughter seeks information and connection to place. Scenes of 1976 Beirut are paired with today's modern landscape, while roses are etched and coconut coals burn in a snowy diasporic setting.



Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre is a non-profit organization facilitating the presentation, interpretation, and production of contemporary visual, time-based and interdisciplinary arts. Modern Fuel aims to meet the professional development needs of emerging and mid-career local, national and international artists, from diverse cultural communities, through exhibition, discussion, and mentorship opportunities. Modern Fuel supports innovation and experimentation and is committed to the education of interested publics and the diversification of its audiences. As an advocate for contemporary art, as well as for artists' rights, we pay professional fees to artists in accordance with the CARFAC fee schedule.

Modern Fuel is situated on the unceded ancestral territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg peoples. We acknowledge the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg peoples as the past, present, and future caretakers of this land. We also recognize the Métis peoples and other nations from across Turtle Island who have called Katarokwi / Kingston home for generations upon generations. We are grateful to be able to live, learn and make art on this land and be in such close proximity to the waters of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. To acknowledge this traditional territory and waterways is to recognize this city and country's longer history pre-dating confederation and the work that must still be done in decolonizing our spaces and relations. We at Modern Fuel strive towards respectful relationships with all of our communities in hopes of walking a good path together.

We at Modern Fuel want to state unequivocally that Black lives matter, Indigenous lives matter, and that the lives of People of Colour matter. Modern Fuel strives to ensure that members and visitors feel safe and welcome in our space and at our events. We do not tolerate discrimination, harassment, or violence including but not limited to ableism; ageism; homophobia and transphobia; misogyny; racism and white supremacy. It is also important to us that Modern Fuel not only continues to present works and programs that support Black and Indigenous artists, members and visitors, but invests in the work of becoming an inclusive, anti-racist organization. We feel it is only then that Modern Fuel can advocate for artists and foster community with care and respect.

*Modern Fuel is open Tuesday to Saturday 12PM to 5PM. We're located in the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning, Unit #305 on 307 King Street West, Kingston, ON. Stop by for a visit or stay up to date online at [modernfuel.org](http://modernfuel.org).*

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