

PHOTO KEGHAM

of Gaza: Unboxing



KEGHAM DJEGHALIAN JR IN DIALOGUE WITH **KEGHAM DJEGHALIAN SR**

SHARJAH BIENNIAL 16: to carry

9.02 - 15.06.2025



SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

PHOTO KEGHAM of Gaza: Unboxing

CONTENT

- P.5 Photo Kegham of Gaza: Unboxing
- P.8 Unboxing Gaza, curatorial text by Kegham Djeghalian Jr
- P.14 Unmade Archive as Resistance by Özge Baykan Calfato
- P.16 Photo Kegham: Seeing Gazans, Unsilencing a Grieving Heritage by Karène Sanchez Summerer
- P.20 Three Boxes by Adeena Mey
- P.23 The Exhibition:
 - The Studio
 - Gaza Momento
 - Family Album
 - Zoom Call
- P.38 To Weave Unmade Histories

ORIGINAL PHOTOS: KEGHAM DJEGHALIAN SR
ARTIST & CURATOR: KEGHAM DJEGHALIAN JR

CURATORIAL ASSISTANT: SARAH ELMASRY
CATALOGUE DESIGN: GHALIA ELSRAKBI



@photokegham_gaza_official



@keghamdjeghalian

THREE BOXES

ADEENA MEY

SCHOLAR, EDITOR AND CURATOR,
EDITOR FOR THE AFTERALL JOURNAL

After the tragic date of 19 October 2023, when the custodian of a substantial part of the Kegham Djeghalian's photo archive, Marwan al Tarazi, was killed in an Israeli bombing, with other members of his family, three boxes of photographs are what remains now, physically, and in possession of the photographer's grandson Kegham Djeghalian Jr.

In his musings on the genealogy of the concept of the archive, historian and political theorist Achille Mbembe has noted that an archive is not only a collection of documents, but with regards the genealogy of the term, it is also understood as intricately linked to the spatial, architectural and institutional container that hosts it - 'There cannot [...] be a definition of 'archives' that does not encompass both the building itself and the documents stored there' writes Mbembe¹. For reasons the ongoing relentless destruction of Gaza has sadly rendered too obvious, the case of Photo Kegham begs the invention of a different archival thought and practice. This rethinking of the archive, to which we could add the museum and, more broadly, institutions with the capacity to provide the conditions and set the parameters of what can produce and uphold what Edward Said referred to as 'the idea of Palestine'. The latter, for Said, 'is adequate to their [Palestinians'] real memory, their actual present and their minimal requirements for the future.'²

This idea, which 'hounds Zionists'³, and the minimal requirements Said spoke of might be what Kegham Jr's project contributes to institute and sustain. According to Mbembe, 'The status and the power of the archive derive from this entanglement of



building and documents.’⁴ The case of Kegham, however, seems to make the case for the very opposite: it derives its power from the disentanglement of its parts. What I am tempted to call Kegham’s Jr archival practice without a building is one marked by the impossibility of return, the acknowledgement of permanence found in exile, of a wound from the umbilical cut from the motherland that cannot be healed. As put by Kegham Jr himself, once liberated from the demands of archival normativity, he realised that his project needed to embrace ‘disruptions’ and ‘disrupted histories’. In his own words: ‘the disrupted history of Kegham himself through his journey; the disruption of the Western Armenian context through genocide and displacement; the disrupted history of Kegham’s own physical archive through its precarious survival or definite loss; and most certainly, the disrupted history of Gaza, its communities and the continuous ruptures of Palestine’.⁵

For the past year, Kegham Jr has relentlessly been lecturing about his grandfather and curating his photographic archive, engaged in what he calls a ‘para-archaeology’ of *Photo Kegham*. If the destruction of what remained of the archive in Gaza is irremediable, on the other hand, people and families photographed by Kegham have flocked to share their own images and archives. With para-archaeology, the archive exists by various other means. Against the colonial desire to acquire, conserve and classify in order to control, as painful as it is, in the face of ongoing destruction, Kegham’s para-archaeology articulates a catachrestic archive which makes room for disruptions. If the colonial archivist claims that one must memorise everything, the idea of Palestine proves to be immemorial.

1 Achille Mbembe, ‘The Power of the Archive and its Limits’, in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid & Razia Saleh (eds.), *Refiguring the Archive*, Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2022, p.19.

2 Edward Said [1982] quoted in Nashwa Baha, ‘Edward Said: “The Idea of Palestine Hounds Zionists”’, *In These Times*, 18 September 2023, available at: <https://inthesetimes.com/article/edward-said-palestine-zionists-israel-invasion-1982>

3 Ibid.

4 Mbembe, op. cit.

5 Kegham Djeghalian Jr, ‘Unboxing Gaza’, *Afterall*, Issue 57, 2024, p.87.



THE EXHIBITION



This publication is part of Kegham Djeghalian Sr and Kegham Djeghalian Jr's *Photo Kegham of Gaza: Unboxing, 2020-2024* (original photographs by KD Sr 1944-c1979) presented in Sharjah Biennial 16: *to carry* (2025).

Sharjah Biennial 16: *to carry* is curated by Alia Swastika, Amal Khalaf, Megan Tamati-Quennell, Natasha Ginwala and Zeynep Öz.