

Announcement February 2017 ~ Truth or Dare 2017

The logo for 'Spring To Come' features the words 'SPRING' and 'TO COME' stacked vertically. The letters are filled with a vibrant, abstract pattern of yellow, orange, and green, resembling a close-up of a flower or a textured surface.

Spring To Come and Metropool International Art Projects/Studio Meritis MaKOM have announced their plans to team up and organise the 2017 festival TRUTH OR DARE.

Spring to Come is a platform through which researchers, activists and thinkers from the MENA region and Europe aim to explore the best ways forward in creative collaboration and examine the possibility of shaping innovative institutions beyond the current polarized frames. *Metropool International Art Projects / Studio Meritis MaKOM* is an organisation which stages artistic and cultural activities around core issues currently affecting Europe's societies, and helps to foster independent thinking, networking and co-production.

Inspired by the success of the first edition of the Spring to Come festival in April 2016, this year we will turn to the urgent subject of 'truth finding'. The debate on 'post truth' society - which currently dominates the news - is not new or an exclusively Western phenomenon. For many citizens in the Middle East and North Africa (the MENA region), living in a 'post-truth environment' has been a harsh reality for some time already. In Truth or Dare, we will connect with and draw on this extensive MENA experience with 'alternative facts', 'conspiracy theories', 'fake news', 'identity politics' and 'polarization' and take it as the starting point for our exchanges, explorations and reflections.

We live in a world in which the biggest loud-mouth seems to get all the attention. Facts, news, truthclaims appear more and more subject to political manipulation and polarization. They turn increasingly into sources of fierce social conflicts. All around, credibility is out of the window. Not much can be taken for granted, anymore. Legitimacy on the basis of experience or expertise is rapidly lost. It is unclear who represents whom or what.

Many public debates focus on the messenger rather than the message; the public

outcry more about the 'tone' of the debate than about the contents of the debate itself. This is a trend which in itself is also cause of further dispute and polarization.

Paradoxes reign. With the arrival of social media outlets, the public arena looks opener and more accessible than ever. This is, however, deceptive. Not everybody has the same access to media channels. Rapid technological change is accompanied by new inequities, in access to financial possibilities and networks. Besides inequalities in terms of money, power inequalities are also still there. On top of explicit differences in social or political status, people's public 'playing field' is often based on factors which remain more implicit: ethnicity, religion, or education. People's social 'status' is no longer so clear-cut.

In Truth or Dare, participants from the MENA region and Europe will engage in an international festival in which we will explore new concepts and ways of thinking together and test alternative, sustainable ways of collaborating. A series of digital publications on post-truth society will be launched in the Rozenberg Quarterly, Studio Meritis MaKOM. Throughout, we will draw on innovative research and artistic expressions.

Contact:

For Spring to Come, Fairouz ben Salah, Fairouzbensalah@gmail.com

For Studio Meritis MaKOM, Linda Bouws, lindabouws@gmail.com