

ATLAS UNLIMITED: ACTS VII–X  
Karthik Pandian & Andros Zins-Browne  
with Zakaria Almoutlak

October 10 – November 3, 2019  
Thursday to Saturday: 4–8pm  
Sunday: 2–6pm

Conversation between  
Aruna D'Souza & Matthew Jesse Jackson  
Thursday, October 17, 7pm

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Special thanks to designer Casey Lurie, conservator Daniela Murphy Corella, and vocalists Aliana de la Guardia and Ganavya Doraiswamy.

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## ZAKARIA ALMOUTLAK

is a Syrian sculptor living in Belgium. He worked in his father's atelier in the city of Homs prior to participating in the Syrian revolution in 2011. Their works of forged ancient sculpture are held – uncredited – in the collections of several prominent museums. Almoutlak fled to Europe in 2015. *Atlas Unlimited: Acts VII–X* renders the banalities and atrocities of his life through sculpture and vocal performance. Artist Karthik Pandian and choreographer Andros Zins-Browne have been working with Almoutlak since 2017, incorporating fragments of his story into the previous acts of *Atlas Unlimited*.

In Belgium, 2018, Almoutlak carved a sculpture from a block of limestone before destroying it in the finale of *Act III*. In *Acts V–VI*, a conservator pieced the shattered body of the sculpture back together in Chicago. Over the four weeks of the exhibition at 80 Washington Square East, the sculpture will be disintegrated and reanimated, yet again. Refused entry to the U.S. due to the 2017 travel ban, Almoutlak's presence will be conjured by the voices of Ganavya Doraiswamy and Aliana de la Guardia, who will be singing for the duration of the show. Drawing on karnātik, operatic, and pop vocal traditions, the singers evoke the convulsions of Almoutlak's life through a libretto co-authored by Pandian, Zins-Browne, and Almoutlak.

Facade

## THE GAME

w/ Zakaria Almoutlak.  
Hand-engraved bronze. 2.5" × 5".  
2019.

Three lines from the Libretto:

When the music begin,  
that's when I said,  
we lost the game.

In 2016, the Russian government sent the Mariinsky Orchestra to play a concert in the Roman Theatre of Palmyra, then recently recaptured from ISIS. The lyric refers to the moment when Almoutlak first bears Bach's Partita No. 2 being played in the ruins of his ancestral home.

Gallery 1

## SCREEN

w/ Casey Lurie, Katie Soule,  
Jamaia Johnson, and Vinesha  
Johnson.

Poplar and plywood. 2019.  
*The screen is a composite of two types of boundary architectures: (a) a traditional Cairene balcony front – often placed in the street-facing side of a home – that forms a permeable boundary between public and private space; and (b) a border wall – a geographic boundary of steel bollards that allows for visibility but limits the movement of bodies.*

## FRAGMENT OF A HEAD

w/ Zakaria Almoutlak, Nerses  
Vardanyan, Anthony Adcock,  
and Casey Lurie.  
Limestone with oak, steel, glass,  
3D-printed brass hardware. 2019.

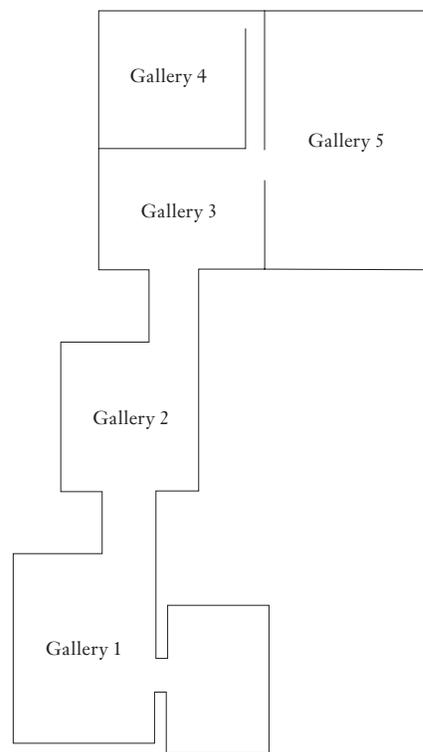
*Syria: Palmyra, adjacent to Roman Theatre. Limestone. Period unknown.*

*After breaking ground on the Experience Palmyra museum, a team of Russian archeologists uncovered this fragment of an animal head. While the style and material recall funerary sculpture of the Severan Period (193–235 AD) or Ingolt's Type III, the scale is highly unusual. Animal statuary from Palmyra ranges from the miniature (see the Oriental Institute's collection of tesserae or banquet tokens, A6744–A6765, A6767–A6770) to the monumental (see Lion of Al-Lata, slated to be returned to Palmyra under the glass dome of the EP museum in 2045) but has rarely, if ever, been found as a free-standing statue. Even rarer is the slope of the neck, which suggests a rearing pose not attempted in three-dimensional sculpture of this scale until the 17th century. While excavation notes translated from Russian identify the sculpture as "a bear's head", a more likely possibility is that it represents a dromedary. Ancient Palmyra's identity as a "caravan city" made camels a frequent occurrence in Palmyrene art, but mostly in low relief accompanying a more fully modeled human figure.*

Gallery 3

## CARNAVAL

w/ De Loizemaanen and Tim  
Vanhentenryk.  
Polyester and acrylic on styrofoam  
and steel. 2018–19.



Facade

*Two fragments of a float made by the Belgian carnival crew, De Loizemaanen, for the annual three-day festival in Aalst, Belgium. The camel reappeared in Act I, when it was paraded once again through the streets of Aalst and ceremonially beheaded. In Act IV the hoof was displayed in the Old Harbor of Antwerp, a major site of 19th-century European emigration to the United States.*

Gallery 4

## VISA

w/ Daniela Murphy Corella, Shao  
Lei, Jane Foley, Zakaria  
Almoutlak, and Nerses  
Vardanyan.  
Limestone, plaster, foam, slaked  
lime, fresco on panel. 2018–19.

*Pieced back together in Chicago, the body that was once a part of the sculpture now lays prone on the floor. In time, it will be pulverized, slaked, and transformed into a fresco, inset in the wall of the gallery.*

Gallery 5

## ATLAS

w/ Eve O'Shea, Maren Greinke,  
and the students of the HfBK  
Dresden.  
Acrylic on canvas, Beva 371  
conservation mounting film.  
2018–19.

*Atlas is a patchwork of fragments from a single scenic backdrop that was made, torn, and reassembled throughout Acts I–VI. The backdrop draws on the artists' previous work at Atlas Film Studios in Ouarzazate, Morocco, an open-air studio where dozens of Hollywood films, such as Lawrence of Arabia (1962), were shot. In Atlas, the mise-en-scène brings together distant landscapes: Tabrir Square in Cairo, the ruins of Palmyra in Syria, and the provisional space of a refugee encampment.*

## ATLAS UNLIMITED

w/ Zakaria Almoutlak, Aliana  
de la Guardia, and Ganavya  
Doraiswamy.  
Ongoing performance based on  
a libretto of 18 songs by Pandian,  
Zins-Browne, and Almoutlak.  
2019

*The libretto of Acts VII–X is based on interviews with Almoutlak covering periods of his life from his childhood to the civil war in Syria, his relocation to Europe, and a speculative future, envisioned in collaboration with the artists. The singers move through this material in a non-linear fashion, vocalizing his stories through disparate musical traditions.*