

# Hélène Mutter

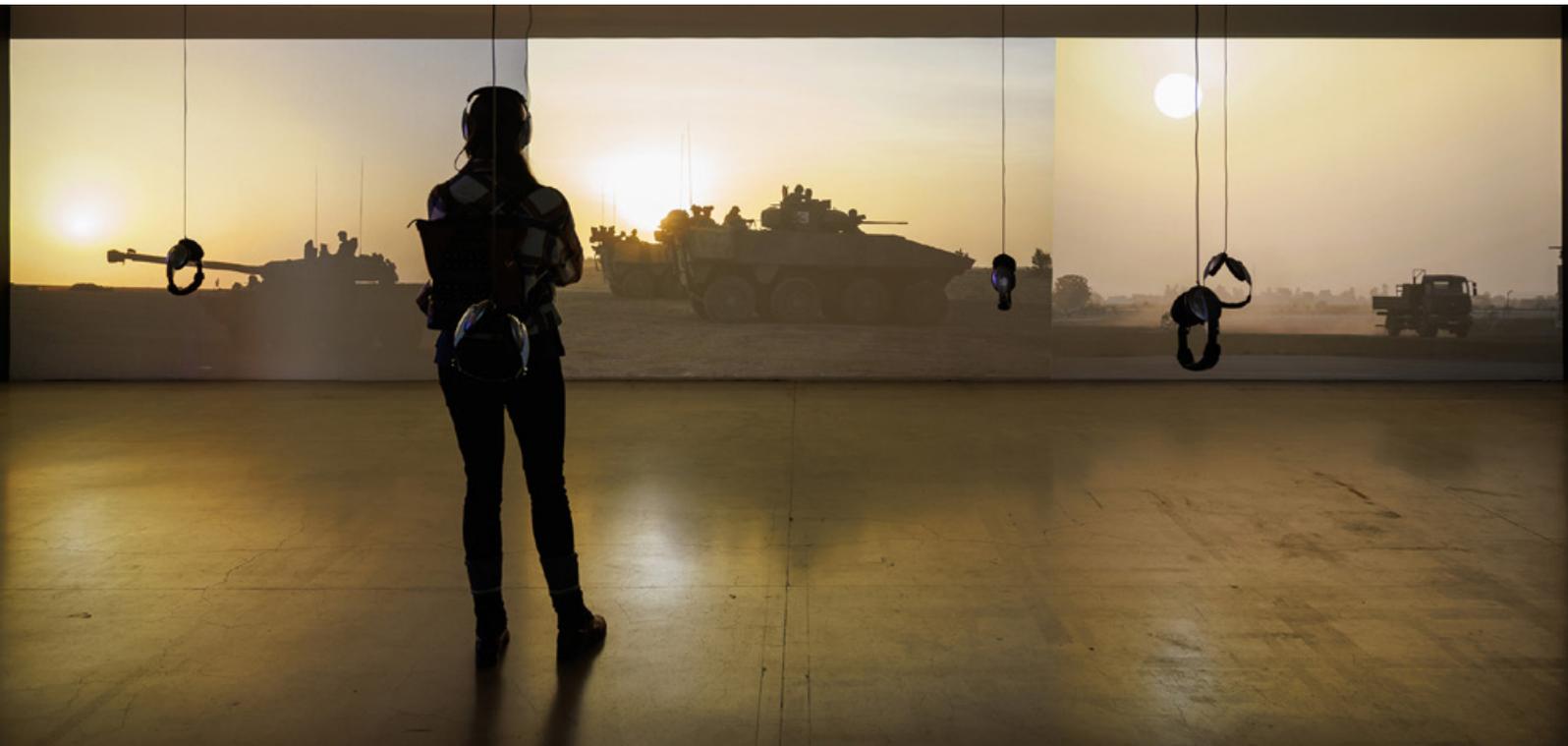
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Portfolio - 2024

## « MILITARY SUNSET » - 2023

*Digital color video installation, 76 archives photographs - 5'16*

*In partnership with ECPAD (Établissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense) - Coproduction Pompidou Center/Hors Pistes*



View of the installation at Pompidou Center, Hors Pistes festival « Seeing war and making peace », 2023.

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Entirely composed by images produced by military operators in war zones, the artwork recomposes endlessly the cycle of a sunset. In contrast to the meaning generally associated with it in the collective imaginary, here, the sunset refers to a specific genre of military representation. The images are combined with a soundtrack of anonymous and intimate testimonials from soldiers deployed on field operations. Hélène Mutter confronts and questions the reality on the battlefield, close to fear and death, with this crucial question: what happens after the war?



View of the installation at Pompidou Center, Hors Pistes festival « Seeing war and making peace », 2023.  
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## «Pour moi, la guerre c'est...» (*For me, war is...*) - 2023

Sound project featuring 24 anonymous testimonials from French soldiers who talk about war and peace, 1h23'19.

Project for the 18th Hors-Pistes festival « Seeing war and making peace », with the support of Centre Pompidou Center, 2023.



View of the installation at Pompidou Center, Hors Pistes festival « Seeing war and making peace », 2023.

## « L'acide rougit le tournesol » (*Acid reddens the sunflower*) - 2021-2022

*Project carried out during my artistic residency at the Cultural Center of Neimünster, Luxembourg.  
With the support of Wallonia-Brussels International*

I conducted this work at the borders of 4 countries: Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, and France. Rich in more than 2000 years of history, the Neumünster Abbey was a nazi prison during the Occupation, before becoming The men's prison of Luxembourg, until 1985. The penal history of this place touched me and led my research during my residency.

What remains of an imprisoned man's memory? I have followed the path of the political prisoners during the war, from the Grund prison to the execution sites, Treves's jail, and the concentration camp of Hinzert, the Gedenkstätte SS-Sonderlager/KZ Hinzert, in Germany. My research has guided me to a group of 68 French Resistants, deported to this camp in 1942, and called the « Unschuldig- Franzosen », the "French Innocents". My great-grandfather was part of them. When I went to photograph the area surrounding the old Luxembourg jailhouse and the « Sites of Inhumanity », my family history became intertwined with the great History, to recount the path of an individual and collective memory still very burning.

The title of the project, "Acid reddens the sunflower", refers to the name of a sabotage operation organized by those French Resistants.



« L'acide rougit le tournesol » - analog et digital photographs, thistles, view of the exhibition at the Cultural Center of Neimünster, 2022, 200 x 750 cm.



« L'acide rougit le tournesol » - analog et digital photographs, thistles, view of the exhibition at the Cultural Center of Neimünster, 2022, 200 x 750 cm.



## « Lines » - 2018

«Lines» is a project entirely produced with Google Earth software, where I searched and archived thirty-nine border walls that still exist today in the world out of sixty already built or under construction. A project that questions the ambiguity regarding the confrontation between reality seen through software and the virtual representation of reality, I was very quickly confronted with the proper limit of the representation of digital technologies and obtain, for only representation of walls, abstract lines. We are witnessing an obvious simplification of the field of reality: all the images are similar and seem to come out of the same video game and our eye seems to have become accustomed today to such a logic of production of images.

### List of boundary walls represented in the project :

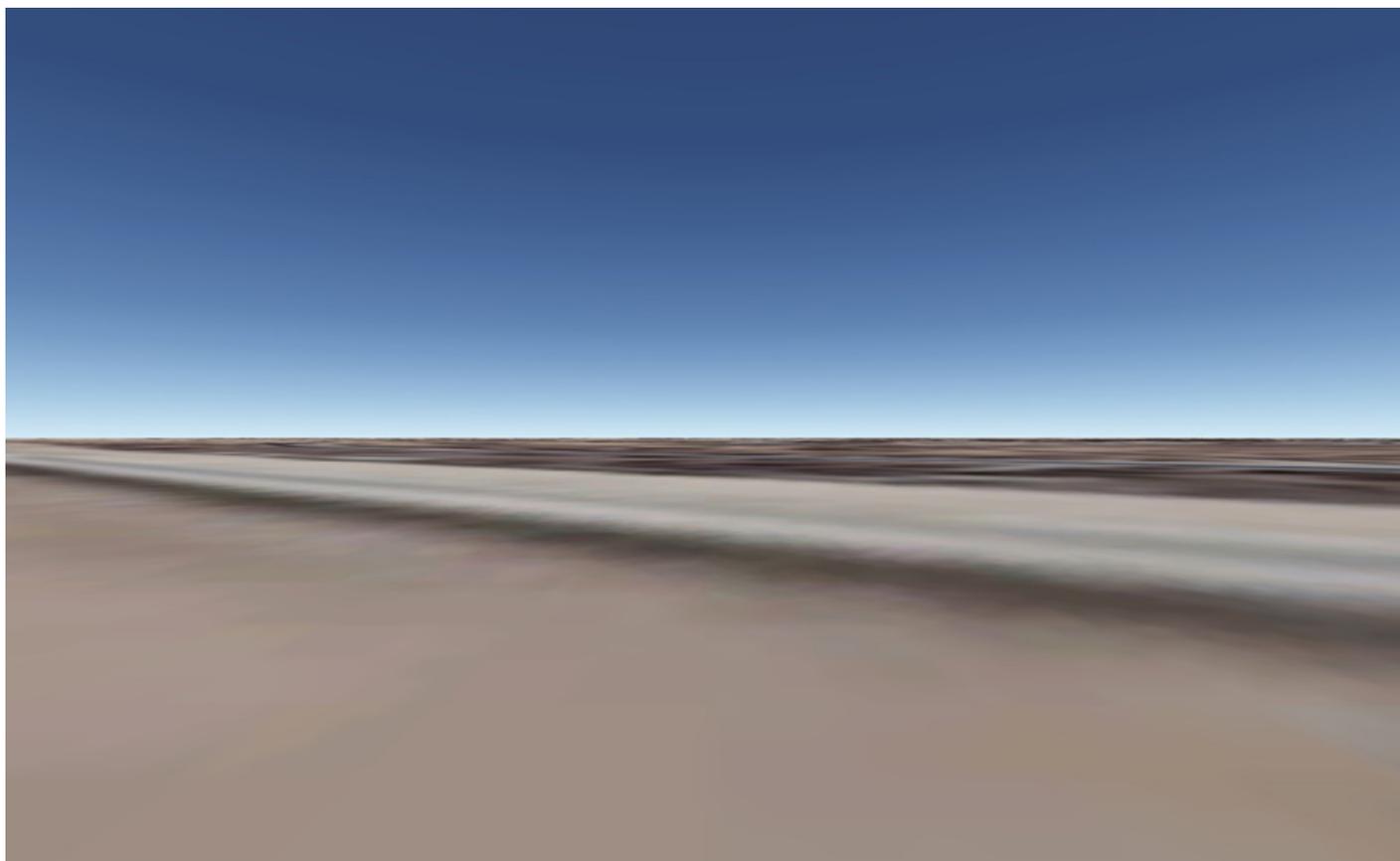
Afghanistan/Uzbekistan - South Africa/Mozambique - South Africa/Zimbabwe - Algeria/Morocco - Botswana/Zimbabwe - Bulgaria/Turkey - Ceuta/Morocco - North Korea/South Korea - Egypt/Gaza Strip - Calais/United Kingdom - Gaza Strip/Israel - Greece/Turkey - India/Bangladesh - India/Burma - India/Pakistan-Kashmir - Iraq/Turkey - Iran/Pakistan - Israel/West Bank - Israel/Egypt - Israel/Lebanon - Israel/Syria - Jordan/Iraq - Kenya/Somalia - Libya/Tunisia - Macedonia/Greece - Malaysia/Thailand - Morocco/Western Sahara - Melilla/Morocco - Mexico/United States - Oman/United Arab Emirates - Oman/Yemen



View of the installation at the FotoLimo Festival, Cerbère - 2018.



View of the installation at the FotoLimo Festival, Cerbère - 2018.



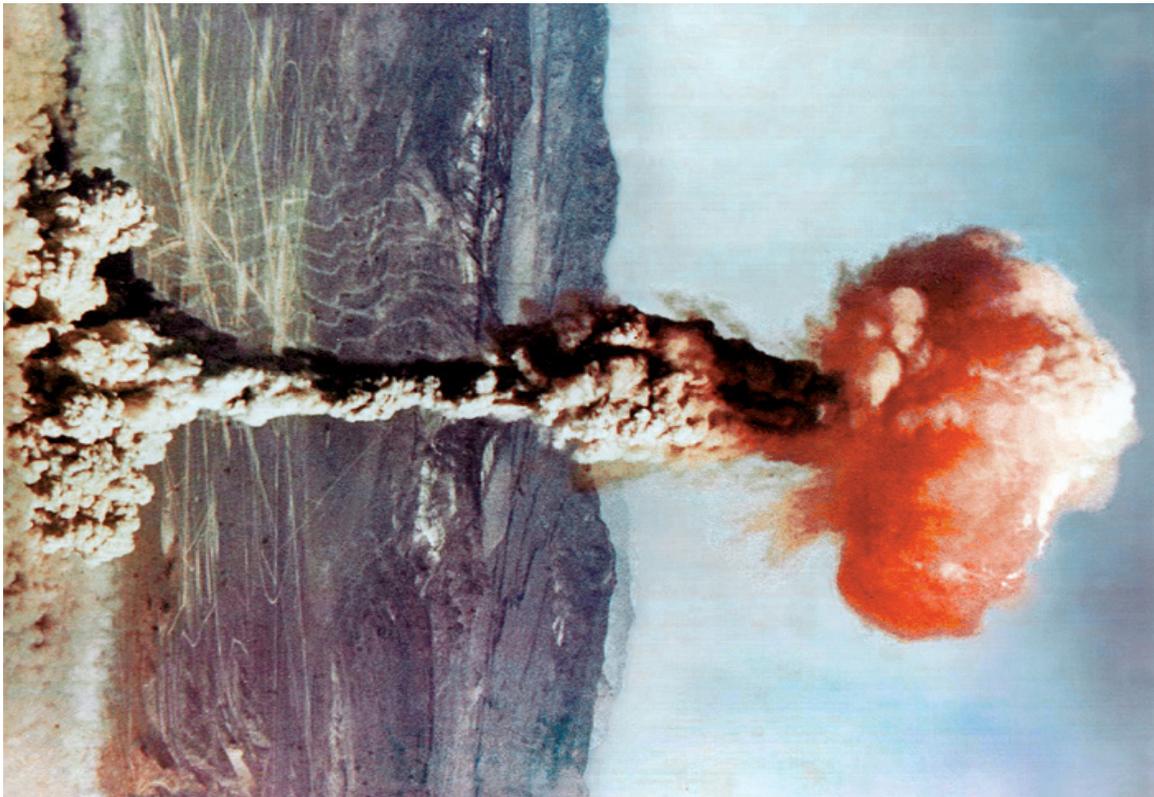
« Lines » - detail, 2018.

## « Nuclear Memory » - 2017 - 2020

Series of postcards, archive images from free access internet sources. Nuclear explosion tests in Nevada Test Site in the 50's and 60's.



« Nuclear memory », 10 x 15 cm - 2017/2020.



Federal Government of the United States  
Operation Buster-Jangle, Charlie, Nevada Test Site, 1951.

National Nuclear Security Administration

Hélène Mutter, *Nuclear Memory #1*, 2017

« Nuclear memory », 10 x 15 cm - 2017/2020.

# The Gulf War 1990-1991

## Research & Creation Project

**I began working on the Gulf War in 2009**, when I discovered the military archives of my father –a former military officer—, in our family house. These archives were composed of several photographs, videos and newspaper articles. What attracted me most were the photographs: I felt both impressed by the historical significance of the images and, at the same time, confused by my inability to understand them. The link I created with this conflict –thanks to those archival elements— is therefore, first and foremost, personal and intimate. But the Gulf War is also a conflict which is rarely mentioned today, even though it marked a major turning point in the way we think about the representation of war. The images’ broadcast at that time –whether in the press or television— produced a real rupture in the visual field of war so much so that the absence of representation is the main aspect one may recall about that conflict.

**In 2022**, after more than 11 years of study of the archives of my family and the French army’s, I started a new phase of my work by undertaking research on ground. The project «Here, There» originated from this approach. It combines the production of a photo series and a creative video documentary across France and the countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq. It questions the multiplicity of points of view on the Gulf conflict by taking a sociological look on it more than 30 years later. At the same time, it examines the phenomenon of war and, particularly, its representation.

«Here, There» traces back the temporal unfolding of the historical facts and their geographic trajectories. These two dimensions are represented not only by the subjects of the proposed visual documentation but also by the technique employed for its production: the black and white infrared photography, a technology of military origin.

In so doing, the work invites the viewer to acknowledge and reflect on the way the visual information produced in the contexts of war is disseminated and perceived.

Gathered under the same title, each stage of work corresponds to a chapter in the project:

Prelude: “Reconnaissance” (France, 2009 - 2019)

Here, There - “Chapter 1: Ultrasound Images of War” (Saudi, France, 2022 - ongoing)

Here, There - “Chapter 2: At the Dawn of Darkness” (Kuwait, 2024 - ongoing)

Here, There - “Chapter 3: Under the Blind Suns” (Iraq, 2025-2026)

Epilogue

These diverse approaches and voices form the framework for this large-scale project.

# Prelude

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« *Reconnaissance* »

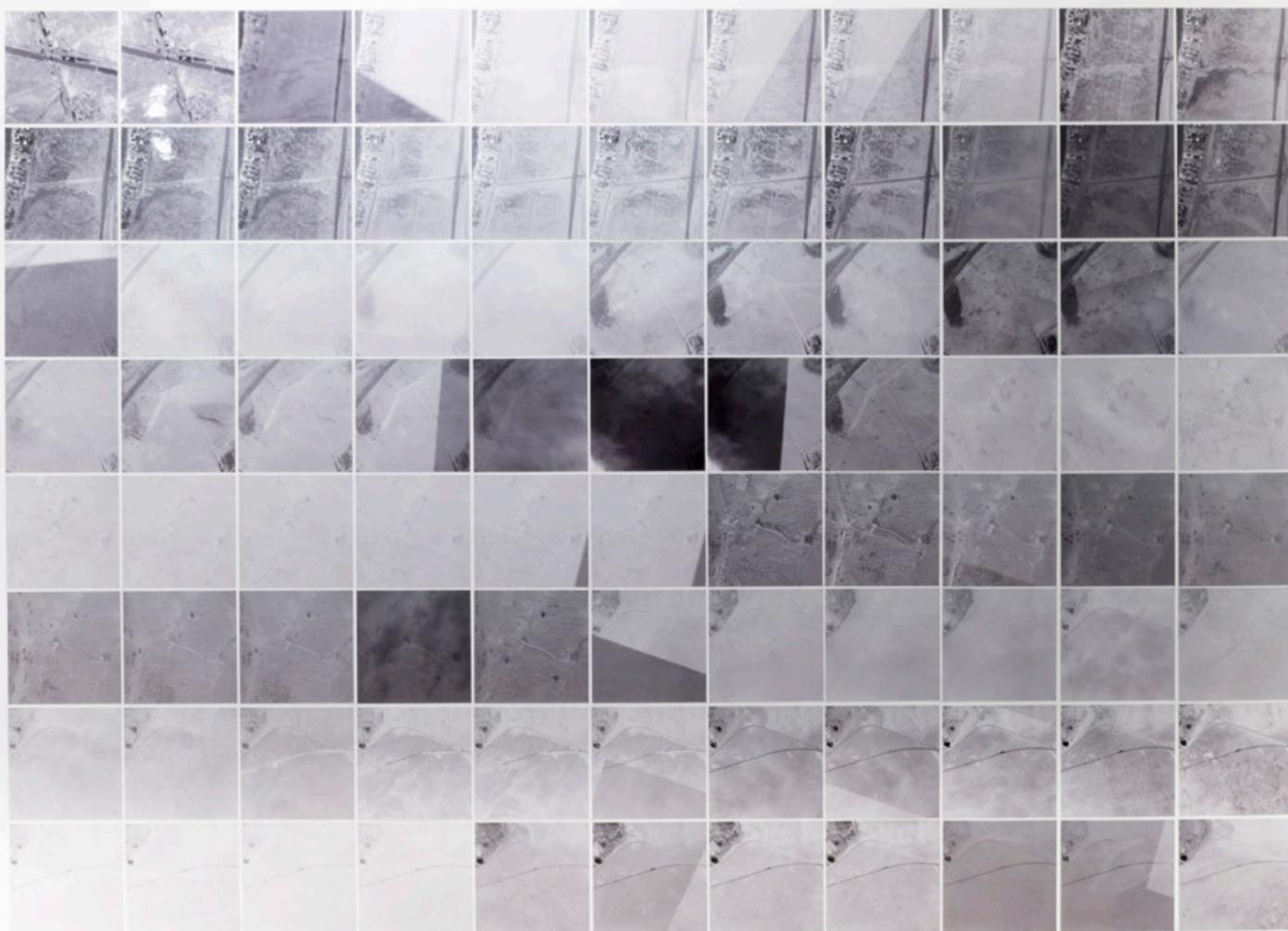
France, 2009 - 2019

## Prelude: « *Reconnaissance* » 2009-2019

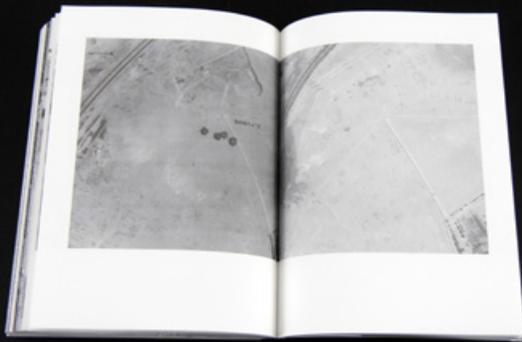
«Reconnaissance» is a long term research-creation project conducted over ten years, around family military archives from the First Gulf War. It is also the title of the exhibition of my thesis defense, and the result of all this work, both artistic and theoretical. All these projects were carried out between 2009 and 2019, and according to the information gathered around these documents. At the crossroad of several field of research as art, social sciences, geopolitic as well as astronomy, this project was conducted as the form of a long investigation where I questions images as a part of History construction.



View of the exhibition « Reconnaissance » at Eté78 gallery, Brussels - 2020;



« Before & After » - Images from Google Earth, series of 92 photographs (88 presented), digital prints, 269 x 195.5 cm - view of the exhibition «La guerre imag(in)ée» at the Peinture Fraiche gallery, Brussels - 2016/17.



Publication of «Before & After» project in «Talweg 03 : Le Sol», Petrole Editions, 2017.



Showcase of personal archives : images extracted from Paris Match magazine, Figaro Magazine, text written by my father, family military archives - View of the exhibition «Reconnaissance» at the Eté78 gallery, Brussels - 2020.



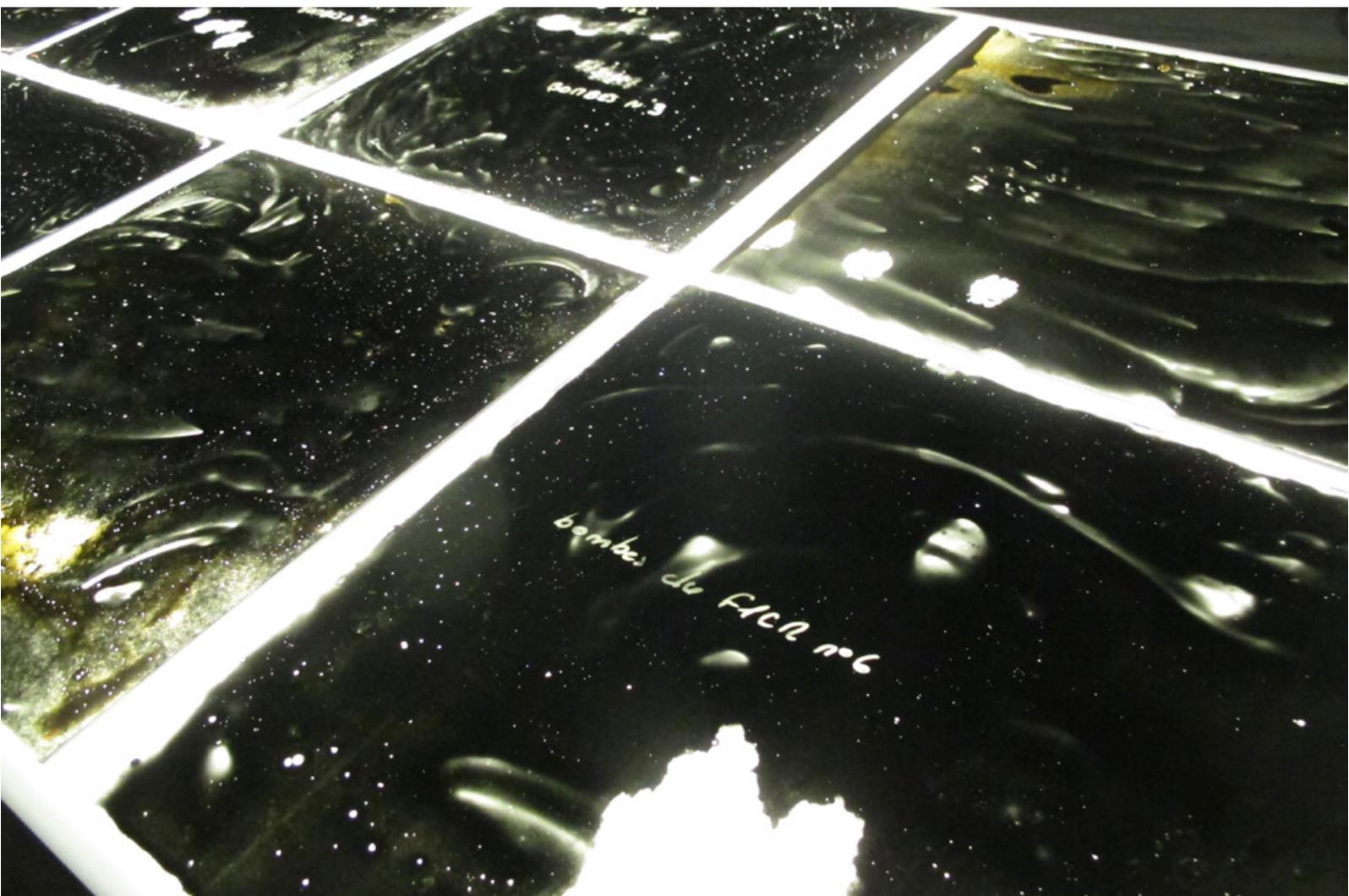
« 1990 » - Family military archives, digital print, 200 x 100 cm - 2010/2020?



« Irak-Koweït, 1991 » - Series of 9 photoengraving on polished steel, family military archives, 30 x 30 cm - 2014.



« Irak-Koweït, 1991 » - Family military archives, photoengraving printed on paper, 64.5 x 45 cm - 2014.



« Etat » - Series of 26 photographs on spectroscopic glass plates, family military archives, gelatin, photographic emulsion, 30 x 30 cm - 2018/19.



« Etat » - Series of 26 photographs on spectroscopic glass plates, family military archives, gelatin, photographic emulsion, 30 x 30 cm - 2018/19.

# Chapter 1

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Here, There:  
*«Ultrasound images of war »*

Saudi Arabia, France, 2022 - ongoing

# Here, There - « Chapter 1: *Ultrasound images of war* » 2022 - ongoing

Saudi Arabia, France

*In 2022, this project was made possible by the support of Al Balad Residency Program in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In 2023, it was awarded the Aide Individuelle à la Création by the DRAC Occitanie in France. It is currently exhibited in Saidia, Morocco until September 2024 as part of the 8th edition of “Orienta” Festival.*



Composition of 40 digital infrared black and white photographs, France, Saudi Arabia, 2022-2024.

**Here, There - « Chapter 1:  
Ultrasound images of war »  
2022 - ongoing**



Module of 220 x 120 cm, «Here, There», view of the 8e Edition of «Orienta» Festival , Saïdia, Morocco, 2024.

## Here, There - « Chapter 1: *Ultrasound images of war* » 2022 - ongoing

*Project carried out during the Al Balad Residency Program, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.*

*With the support of Hafez Project and the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*



View of the exhibition, *Al Balad Residency*, Jeddah's Tamer House, Saudi Arabia, 2023.



View of the open studio, Rubat Al Khunji al Saghir, Al Balad, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 2022.



View of the open studio, Rubat Al Khunji al Saghir, Al Balad, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 2022.



The Red Sea, digital infrared black and white photograph, Jeddah-Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, 2022.



Al Iskan buildings, digital infrared black and white photograph, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 2022.



Al-Ahsa, digital infrared black and white photograph, Saudi Arabia, 2024.



Sa'ad Desert, digital infrared black and white photograph, Saudi Arabia2024.

**Thank you**