

Southern Exposure

Highlighting
the work of
photographers
from the Majority
World

'The story of a pyromaniac photographer' is the first part of the Wonder Beirut project. We based our work on the collection of a Lebanese photographer named Abdallah Farah. Between 1968 and 1969, he was commissioned by the Lebanese State to take pictures to be edited as postcards. They represented the Beirut Central District, the Lebanese Riviera and its luxury hotels, which contributed to an idealized picture of Lebanon in the 1960s. Those same postcards are still on sale nowadays, although most of the places they represent were destroyed during the armed conflicts.

In the autumn of 1975, Abdallah Farah started damaging the negatives of his postcards, burning them little by little. He imitated the destruction of the buildings he saw gradually disappearing because of bombings and street battles. He began by doing so in a highly organized and documented way, following the trajectory of the shelling and defacing the images to parallel the events of the day. This first part is what we call 'the historic process', such as 'the battle of the hotels'.

Later, Abdallah began inflicting, accidentally or deliberately, additional destructions to those same buildings. This second part is what we call the 'plastic process'.

We took the initiative of having these images published as a new set of 18 'postcards of war'.

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