

Visitor's Guide

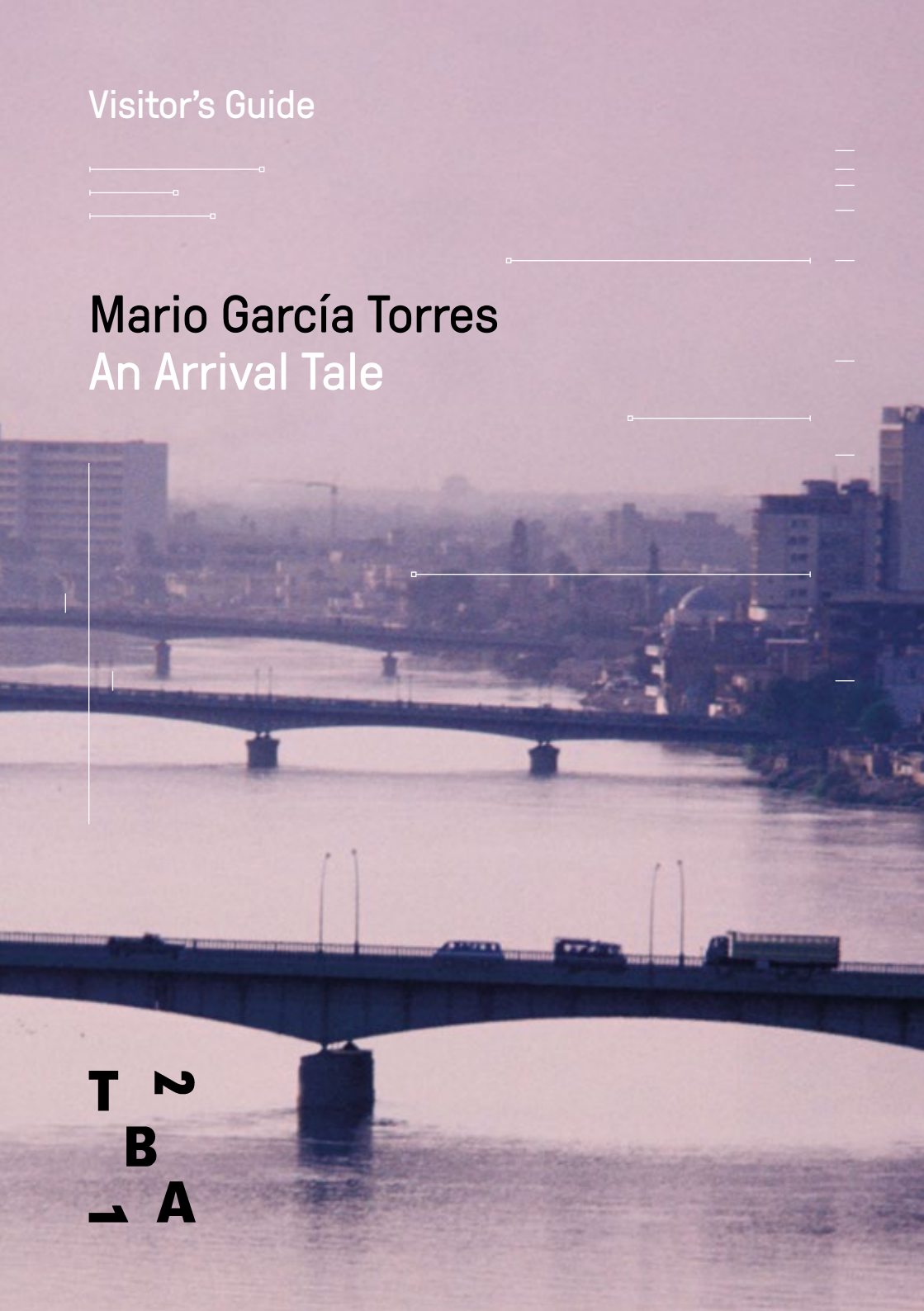


# Mario García Torres

## An Arrival Tale



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“*An Arrival Tale* is an exhibition that pretends to use a number of my works from the TBA21 collection to argue that the space of arrival, the space where one can reinvent oneself, could be an interesting one, and one that has historically been a space to thrive.”

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Mario García Torres

Appropriation, storytelling, reenactment, and reportage are some of the strategies that the Mexican artist Mario García Torres deploys to uncover (hidden) histories, narratives, and strategies embedded in sites and places and thereby to highlight the limitations of factual evidence and the agency of historical records and objects. *An Arrival Tale* uses a conceptual gesture that detaches the works by the artist in the TBA21 collection from their original contexts and descriptions and offers them as a collection of narratives and artistic experiments open for reinscription thereby addressing the contemporary conditions and urgencies of our societies. The exhibition seeks to collect, describe, and complicate stories of transplantation, pointing to migrations, displacements, relocations, and resettlements, which span both time and disparate geographies.

What are the actual conditions and what are the dreams, what are the politics housed in the bodies of the people moving, what is left behind,

and what is met anew? Is arrival a fresh start, or is it implicitly haunted by challenges of absence and disembodiment? The gesture of reimagining the frame of the exhibition itself is intended to open up new possible readings, thus allowing for speculation on the possibilities of reinvention and transcendence. Like much of García Torres's work, the exhibition itself questions narratives, both by looking back and complicating historical descriptions and by looking forward and projecting new possibilities. It is a sort of twisted archaeology of the artist's own practice, thus allowing his works made at different times to be read within the context of today's political sphere and human experience.

*An Arrival Tale* was developed in dialogue with migrants and asylum seekers in Austria, providing translations, their interpretations, and stories by intervening into the exhibition as guides and narrators and positing an additional layer through sporadic performative invigilation. Through this collaboration, the exhibition is developed as a investigative proposition to think specifically about the nexus of departure, arriving, and returning, tropes, at times, deeply invested within the notion of exile. It allows for an exploration of the reality, imagination, and overall complexity of the trajectories of displacement and movement, temporarily revisiting times and spaces that are imagined, embodied, occupied, constructed, inhabited, left behind, and traversed.

# Shar-e Naw Wanderings (A Film Treatment)

*Shar-e Naw Wanderings (A Film Treatment)* marks the beginning of García Torres's engagement with the histories of the Italian artist Alighiero Boetti (1940–1994) in Afghanistan. This work (along with the later *Tea*, 1391) specifically traces the moment when Boetti moved to Kabul to become a hotelier at One Hotel, which he temporarily inhabited and ran from 1971 to 1977. *Shar-e Naw Wanderings (A Film Treatment)* consists of a series of fictional faxes addressed to the deceased artist and revolves around García Torres's fictive journey to Kabul in 2001 to find the building that once housed One Hotel. The faxes, written candidly in the first person, both discuss the mundane details of his trip and the small changes to the area, and also serve as a report on the political climate at the time in Afghanistan, a particularly charged moment, acknowledged through references to the presence of US troops and the threat of Osama Bin Laden. The work takes the form of 19 thermal paper prints, a medium known to be unstable and to return to its original colorlessness over time, giving the story a certain feel of authenticity, as the grit of the fax process is visible on the surfaces of paper, but also a limited life span as a transmittable form of narration.

2006, 19 sheets  
of thermal paper,  
dimensions variable,  
Thyssen-Bornemisza  
Art Contemporary  
Collection, Vienna

**Opposite page**  
1 of 19 sheets of thermal  
paper, 26.7 x 21 cm each,  
Courtesy the artist  
and Jan Mot, Brussels /  
Mexico City

+ 93 70 27 60 21

+ 93 70 27 60 21

Dec 2, 2001

Alghiero: Things tend to get lost -disappearing between movements and changes. Maybe that is the case of the hotel building. In 2004, an Ariana plane will disappear from the local airport radar for a few days. It will then be found having crashed in the mountains, almost covered by the snow. There will be no survivors. Mario

I found an amazing construction near Share-Nau. Maybe you remember it from the time? It's a house with a polygonal shape, apparently covered with clay. It's really great. I could maybe use it to film some other part of the story.

# The Way They Looked at Each Other

*The Way They Looked at Each Other* is a visual essay on the tangential use of photography, the significance of the delay implicit in revisiting any photographic snapshot, and the way one sees more things from further away. The film revolves around an event that took place in 2011, eight years after the US invasion of Iraq, when a Spanish team made up of a judge, court technicians, and a few witnesses arrived in Baghdad with the intention of proving US military personnel guilty of assault, claiming that they shot to death two journalists and wounded three others positioned on various balconies of the Palestine Hotel on August 8, 2003. During the investigation the Spanish judge, Santiago Pedraz, took two innocuous and belated photographs in an attempt to reconstruct the event. Yet the images revealed only the impossibility of untangling a moment from the past. The confusion or complication that ensued is a gesture that, in the artist's eyes, gravitates more toward the symbolic than the forensic, thereby attesting to our subjectivity and our understanding of the visual politics of our times. [Translation into Arabic and subtitles by Tahajud Alghrabi, Rafaat Alhashimy, Ghifar Al Darkazanly and Ibrahim Al Bayati]

n.d., HD Video, color,  
sound, English with Arabic  
subtitles, 38:13 min.  
Commissioned by  
Thyssen-Bornemisza Art  
Contemporary, Vienna

**Opposite page**  
**Top** View from the  
Hotel Palestine to  
the Al Jurumiya bridge.  
**Bottom** View from  
the Al Jurumiya bridge  
to the Hotel Palestine.

Both photographs taken  
by Spanish Supreme Court  
Judge Santiago Pedraz,  
2011. Images Courtesy:  
Público, Madrid



# Carta Abierta a Dr. Atl (Open Letter to Dr. Atl)

*Carta Abierta a Dr. Atl (Open Letter to Dr. Atl)* explores memory and truth through a one-way epistolary exchange with a dead artist, the Mexican painter and writer Gerardo Murillo (1875–1964), a citizen of Guadalajara who signed his works Dr. Atl. This work was produced in the wake of the Guggenheim’s aborted plans to install a branch in the unspoiled Mexican landscape of the surroundings of Guadalajara, the Barranca de Oblatos, which Murillo, a traveling painter, depicted several times. In the film García Torres “discusses” with Murillo the possible implications of the arrival of the museum and addresses an imagined space of the existent (or nonexistent), focusing on gaps, blank spaces, the remains of the erased and left out. The work plays once more with ideas of displacement, speculation, and reemergence, this time engendered through the art world’s selective globalism. Using the historical frameworks of Dr. Atl and the Guggenheim’s expansionist global vision, García Torres imagines a new account of a possible situation.

2005, single-channel  
Super 8 transferred  
to video, color,  
silent, 6:26 min,  
Thyssen-Bornemisza Art  
Contemporary Collection,  
Vienna

**Opposite page**  
Film stills, Courtesy of  
the artist and Jan Mot,  
Brussels / Mexico City





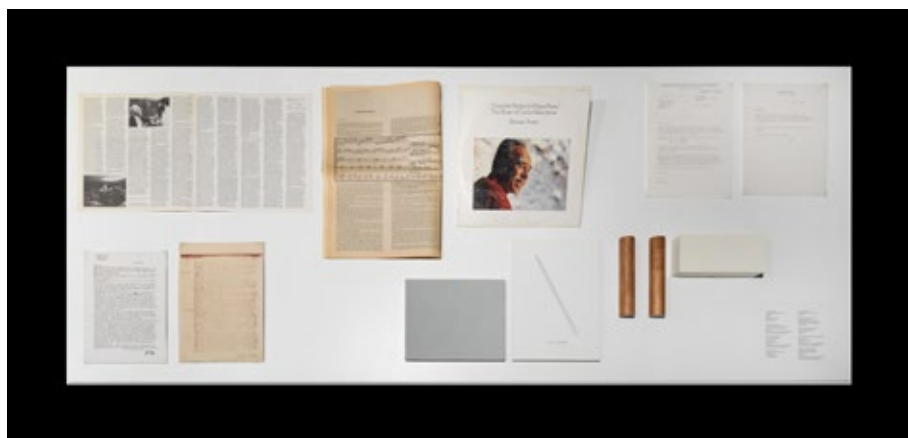
# Sounds Like Isolation to Me

*Sounds Like Isolation to Me* is a museographic essay about the struggle between the social and political consciousness of the avant-garde and the autopoetic aura behind the idea of isolation as a fertile space for creativity. It also implicitly tells the story of breaking away from one life in order to reinvent oneself under new circumstances or perhaps the inability to perform such radical acts in the place that one comes from, highlighting the freedom gained through a new arrival. In this undated artwork, García Torres detemporalizes his “essay,” thus removing it from the factual temporal-historic axis of his own investigation, placing it in a free-floating circulation of experience and practice. *Sounds Like Isolation to Me* charts the story of the composer Conlon Nancarrow. Born in the United States, Nancarrow immigrated to Mexico in 1940, fearing possible harassment by the US government because of his political affiliations as a member of the Communist Party. In exile, Nancarrow created an overwhelming musical repertoire, mostly in “temporal dissonance,” living in relative peer isolation, with little contact with other avant-garde musicians of the twentieth century. This story explores the isolated studio space and makes a case for the possibility of prolific creative output even when living in isolation, away from your supposed cosmos. The work consists of a number of objects, documents, and artworks as well as a sound component created by the Berlin-based composer Nils Frahm.

n.d., acetate, cardboard,  
ink, linen, magnetic tape,  
oil, paper, sheet metal,  
sound, video, wire, wood,  
dimensions variable,  
Thyssen-Bornemisza Art  
Contemporary Collection,  
Vienna

**Opposite page**  
Installation views,  
8th Berlin Biennale  
for Contemporary Art,  
May 29–August 03, 2014,  
Museen Dahlem, Berlin

Photos by Jens Ziehe,  
Courtesy of the artist  
and neugerriemschneider,  
Berlin



# Tea

Screening times 12:00, 1:15, 2:30, 3:45, 4:55, 6:00pm

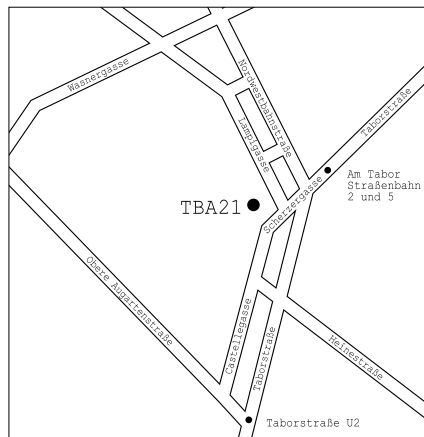
*Tea* is the work that closed García Torres's exploration of Alighiero Boetti's time in Kabul. The work follows the narrative originally established with *Shar-e Naw Wanderings (A Film Treatment)*. Commissioned by Documenta 13, *Tea* follows García Torres's actual journey to Kabul, staged more than ten years after the fictionalized trip, which was said to have taken place in 2001. The artist's process of physically traveling to Kabul, thus making a piece of fiction into a reality, raises a number of speculative questions about truth, nostalgia, hospitality, and displacement: What does it mean to return to a place while visiting it for the first time? How far is Afghanistan from Mexico? Can one relive a memory even if it may have never really happened? How can a guest become a host due to his belated arrival? The film elaborates on these questions and is a recollection of García Torres's and Boetti's respective stories of relocation. Boetti's move to Afghanistan in 1971 was particularly puzzling and intriguing because of the way the artist disappeared and subsequently reinvented himself through travel and transfiguration, allowing him to leave behind his persona as an artist and become someone else, not only a hotelier but also one of a fictional set of twins. [Translation into Dari and subtitles by Tawab Baran, Milad Wasil, Milad Amiry and Akbar Muratov]

1391, single-channel  
35 mm film transferred  
to HD Video, color,  
sound, 64:00 min,  
Thyssen-Bornemisza Art  
Contemporary Collection,  
Vienna

**Opposite page**  
Film stills, Courtesy  
the artist and Jan Mot,  
Brussels / Mexico City



Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary--Augarten  
Mario García Torres *An Arrival Tale*  
17.06.–20.11.2016



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Straßenbahnlinie / Tram 2 & 5 (Am Tabor)  
U-Bahn / Underground U2 (Taborstraße)

#### Opening Hours

Wednesday–Thursday, 12–5pm  
Friday–Sunday, 12–7pm

#### Free Admission

For information about the educational program  
in German, English, Arabic and Dari, please contact  
augarten@tba21.org or visit [www.TBA21.org](http://www.TBA21.org)

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Photo: Nik Wheeler / Alamy (detail)