

METRO PICTURES

Macdonald, Emma. "Being Invited In With Asad Raza," *A-D-O.com* (February 25, 2019).

A/D/O



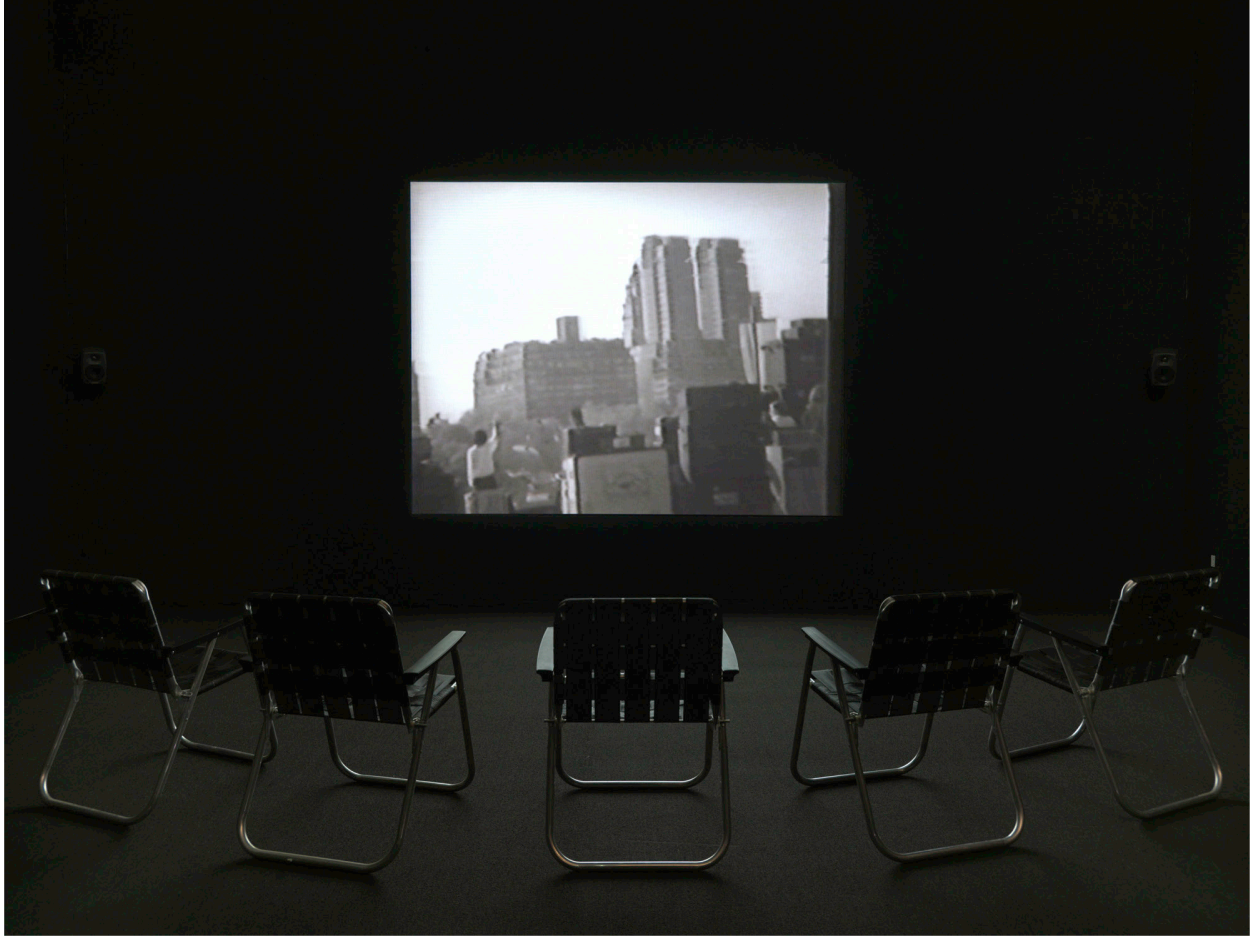
Asad Raza's work is interesting. To begin with, he and his projects resist categorization; Raza's work falls somewhere between and beyond typical conceptions of curation, performance, installation, and experiment in the art world. In part because of his commitment to art being a deeply personal endeavor, Raza's practice is interested in "breaking down—or at least questioning—the barriers between what is valued as art and what is not."

From his piece *Untitled (plot for dialogue)* where he famously turned a 16th Century church into an active tennis court, or the inclusion of work from his sister in *Home Show* curated in his apartment and his grandfather's in *Life to Come*, currently on view at Metro Pictures gallery, his pieces are inviting and inclusive. As Raza describes, "the only real way of learning something new or communicating anything is when someone you know, or admire, or are connected to says, 'here, you've got to see this.'" His aim is to be this familiar person to anyone encountering his work: to create an environment so that viewers become more than an audience and learn something new, or change their perspective.



Raza has described his approach to production as similar to filmmaking (he studied both literature and filmmaking in school), which is clear in the way he engages spatially. The desire to create a comprehensive exhibition experience that does not silo different mediums or disciplines means that stepping into a Raza exhibition is a bit like stepping onto a film set and suddenly being a member of the cast. There is a contract between the space and the viewer, much like on the set of a film, and his performative works can truly only happen if the viewer participates, whether they have any sort of “expertise” or not. This engagement is exactly what Raza wants.

In *Home Show*, another of his best-known works, Raza led tours through his own apartment, allowing the feeling of intimacy recognized in his work to come to the fore. Curated to include works by artists such as Carsten Höller, Sarah Morris, Adrián Villar Rojas, and his sister, Alia Raza, the experience feeds off of its surroundings. For him, the concept of “site-specific” and an attentiveness to a space’s architectural history applies whether he is working in a custom gallery space; his own home; or a church with hundreds of years of history. Even in *Life to Come*, set in a white-walled Chelsea gallery, Raza manages to transform the space into an intimate set of experiences. The show manifests a sense of the domestic right upon entry: a table with tea and a lamp is set up where there would typically be a checklist and press release. These are not technically part of the show (again calling into question this distinction between art and life), but set the tone of the space.



His commitment to the personal is one way in which Raza achieves the immersive, intimate effect of his installations. Another is his consistent disinterest in the primacy of the visual: all senses are involved. The exhibition at Metro Pictures includes a minute-long sound piece by David Lynch to “call a new world into being,” flower bouquets by Camille Henrot, a scent portrait of amniotic fluid; a piece of stylized Arabic text by his grandfather, and a participatory shaker dance initiated by one of the attendants, who are outfitted in colored contacts as another one of the pieces.

The press release for *Life to Come* describes Raza as having organized the exhibit, but he is more intimately involved than even this designation gets at: he is at once the producer, getting things done, while also encouraging a collaborative, social process in both the curation of his work and its exhibition: a rare care in art institutions writ large. His works often come across as unexpected to his viewers in their participatory nature; their intimacy; their generosity. But for Raza, this is more to do with the culture we operate in than his works themselves, he is simply suggesting an alternative for how we experience art. Art in any medium has the power to imagine a different way of living, and Raza’s practice is committed to not only thinking through this potential, but bringing you with him too.