John Jurayj,
Untitled (October 23, 1983)* and *Untitled Artifact (The More Present I Become,
The Harder It Is to See Myself)

7 May – 18 June 2016
Opening Reception: Friday, May 13th, 6:00 – 8:00pm

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present two bodies of work, *Untitled (October 23, 1983)* and *Untitled Artifact (The More Present I Become, The Harder It Is to See Myself)* by John Jurayj. For the past decade, Jurayj has been producing work in response to the destruction and displacement of the Civil War in Lebanon where his father was born and raised before immigrating to the US. Jurayj explores his experiences as an Arab-American artist, straddling vast cultural and continental divides. Notions of nationalism, exile, familial expectations, trauma and the fluidity of personal identity are fundamental to his practice.

Presented in Gallery 1, *Untitled (October 23, 1983)* includes an installation of three single channel videos containing appropriated news footage from the bombing of the American Marine Barracks in Beirut on October 23, 1983 which killed 241 American Marines. The attack was seminal in American military history and prophetic in regards to America's contemporary Middle East quagmire. Classified as a terrorist attack by the US State Department against Americans, the original footage has been digitally altered by Jurayj into hypnotic Rorschach stains while keeping the real time audio intact. The dialogue varies from special broadcasts by Edwin Newman, Tom Brokaw and President Reagan, to real time reportage of the site and its catastrophic aftermath. The three videos are played collectively to create a visual spectacle with an increasing awareness of the noise and confusion from the overlapping audio. Juxtaposed within the same gallery are a new series of paintings that utilize digital prints on aluminum panel, enamel spray paint and gold foil trauma blankets. The printed images depict Middle Eastern palm trees sourced online, the palm being a key trope in the visual history of Orientalism as constructed by the Occident.

In Gallery 4, Jurayj presents a "non-survey" installation by emptying out the complete inventory of his unsold work held in the gallery's storage and ganging it backwards against one wall of the exhibition space. Sculptures, paintings and framed drawings are all turned against the wall, un-viewable, some still wrapped in packing materials, some with inventory stickers. Exposed yet hidden in plain sight is Jurayj's 10 year history with the gallery. On the facing wall hangs a single unwrapped portrait, *Untitled (Eli Hobeika)* from the *15 Untitled Men* series. Screen printed with ink and gun powder on polished stainless steel, the figure blindly witnesses the piles of inventory. Upon closer inspection, the politician's eyes have been burned out, questioning the agency of seeing and the privilege which it supposedly entails.

John Jurayj lives and works in Brooklyn and currently teaches at The School of Visual Art. He received his MFA from Bard College in 2005 and BFA in architecture from Washington University. Jurayj's work has been exhibited internationally including *No Paradises*, Alberto Peola Gallery, Turin; *Undead;* Participant Inc., New York, NY; *Untitled Lebanon (Fragments)*, The Third Line in Dubai.; *Light from the Middle East: New Photography*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London*; (Space): Constructing the Intangible*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; *Translation/Tarjama* at the Herbert Johnson Museum at Cornell University and the Queens Museum of Art, New York; *Noise* at Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut and *Exposure 2009*, Beirut Art Center. Jurayj is represented in a variety of public and private collections including the Hirshhorn Museum of Art, the British Museum of Art, the Victoria & Albert Museum and Harvard's Schwartz Collection.

The gallery is located at 2642 S. La Cienega Blvd. in Los Angeles and is open from Tuesday through Saturday, 11am to 6pm. Please visit the gallery website at www.waltermacielgallery.com.