have been hung in groups, underlining the pictorial conventions of the era, place, and studio and playing the individual choices of pose, clothing, and masculine gesture against the blunt military presentation. In a series of full-figure portraits, men and sometimes young boys holding guns are dressed in military gear or kaffiyehs; they stand like soldiers in frozen stances on a round pedestal. The images document the arming of the civilian population and a militant understanding of manhood—they also, concomitantly, reflect '70s fashion trends such as bell-bottoms and sideburns.

There are comic moments, as in the 1966 series of two boys caressing a film ad in the form of a cardboard cutout of a Western woman. Another series, from the '50s, shows a man sitting in an untidy studio. He is portrayed in an almost identical position in each individual shot, but each time the lighting changes; in some, though, the subject has almost lackadaisically slipped out of the picture. In fact, Madani's flash had stopped working, and these photographs record his attempts to fix it.

However, when faced with innovations in film technology, Madani seems to have been somewhat at a loss. This bewilderment is reflected in unintentionally comic and stilted scenes from his Super-8 holiday films of the '50s and '60s. The people in the films carry out only the simplest of tasks, clearly under strict instructions from the photographer: They walk back and forth in front of holiday settings in Egypt or

Lebanon, staring into the camera with frozen smiles. Madani was unable to adapt to film's capacities for storytelling—to him, film was simply an extension of the static image.

Zaatari depicts Madani's studio in a large panoramic photograph; he uses the same format for a map (with a key) of this entire exhibition. The studio shot (*Studio Shehrazade: Reception Space*, 2006) shows a scene frozen in time since the '70s; not one single contemporary detail has managed to sneak in. In "Madani's Desk," 2006, a series of ten photographs, Zaatari has positioned pencils, paper clips, lenses, feathers, and razor blades in neat rows, photographing them against a white background.

Zaatari's new, authorized prints of Madani's negatives and his grouping and display transform Madani's vernacular photography into art photography. Zaatari's understanding of collecting as an artistic strategy focuses more on the photographs as documentation than on the production of fiction, as in the case of an artist such as Walid Raad. Yet Zaatari shows Madani to be an active, inquiring subject, much like Zaatari himself. Madani claims to have photographed 90 percent of the inhabitants of Saida; his archive can therefore be seen as a private portrait of a town before, during, and after the civil war.

—*Nina Möntmann*
Translated from German by Jane Brodie.

Akram Zaatari
GALERIE SFEIR-SEMLER

When the Hamburg gallery Sfeir-Semler opened an exhibition space in Beirut two years ago, it began to show the work of artists from the Middle East, including Akram Zaatari, one of the founders of the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut. The foundation's aim is to research and archive the photographic history of the Middle East; it holds the collections of numerous photographers, including the archives of Hashem el Madani (born in 1928), which contains approximately 150,000 portraits. For his exhibition in Hamburg, Zaatari selected and reprinted images from the archive of Madani's Studio Shehrazade in Saida, Lebanon. These photographs date from the '50s through the '70s, the time of the studio's greatest commercial success.

In one group of photographs, candidates for military training are shown from the front and in profile, as in mug shots; the portraits were submitted by their subjects to the Lebanese Army. The pictures