

## Chapter 3

### Artistic Case Study

### Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme: *Contingency* (2010)

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Even before I emerged from childhood, I seemed to have experienced, deeply at heart, that paradoxical feeling which was to dominate me all through the first part of my life: that of living in a world without any possible escape, in which there was nothing but to fight for an IMPOSSIBLE escape.

*Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, 2013b.*

Possible and impossible escapes, changing territories, and border effects—, “issues to do with the politics of desire and disaster, spatial politics, subjectivity, and the absurdities of contemporary practices of power,” as they put it in their biographical statement—have been recurring motifs in the work of Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme (2018, website). Both were born in 1983; partners in life and work, they have collaborated artistically since 2007.<sup>1</sup> Since 2012, they have been based in New York City while maintaining strong personal and pro-

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1 Abou-Rahme was born in Boston and grew up in Jerusalem and Shefa'Amr, a predominantly Arab city in the northern district of Israel. Abbas was born in Nicosia, and grew up in Cyprus and Ramallah. According to Kevin Jones (2015, 106), “[b]oth born in the diaspora, they were swiftly brought into the Palestinian fold. Abbas’s family moved from Cyprus to Amman when he was 13, and he subsequently spent much of his time in Jerusalem, which is where Abou-Rahme grew up, having moved there from Boston with her family when she was three.”