



DIA MRAD UTILITIES

11 JANUARY - 22 FEBRUARY 2023

DIA MRAD

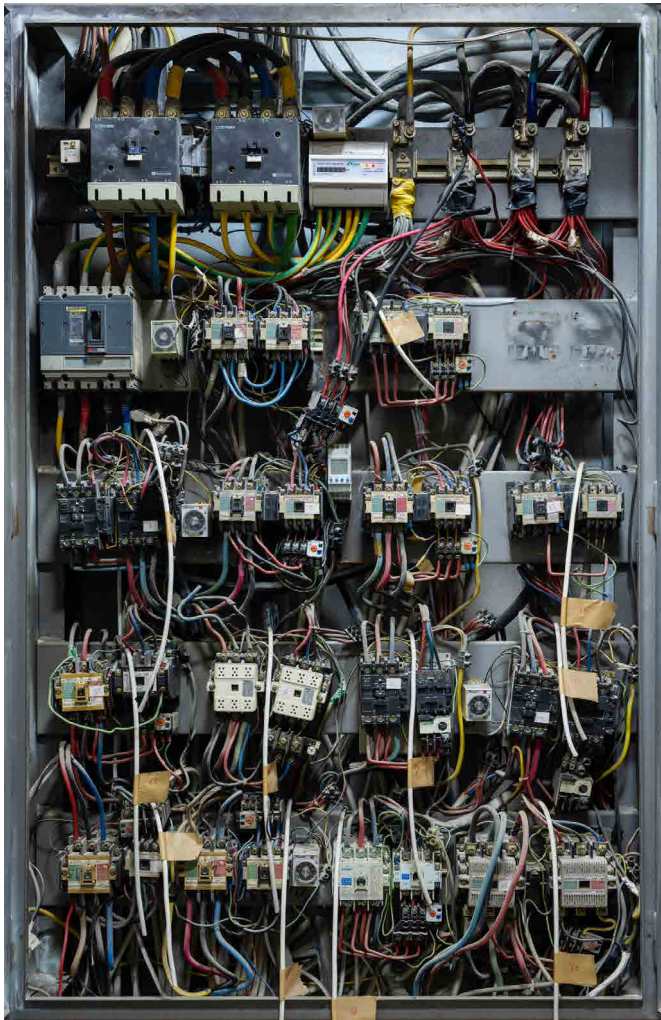
UTILITIES



Utilities seeks to excavate and document the multilayers of Beirut's economic collapse and employs an ethnographic lens to explore the material manifestations of the crisis across the city's urban fabric. The project unearths the material infrastructural apparatus that is emerging as a response to socioeconomic conditions; solar panels, water tanks, private generators, and prison-like façades of banks are all elementary fragments of this apparatus.

"(...) Artifacts, things, etc., actively shape, impact and transform the perception – and consequently understanding – human beings have of the world in which they dwell" (Kirchhoff, 2009). The artist thus seeks to excavate the built environment and record, through his lens, the many artifacts of Lebanon's economic crisis. The orthodox definition of an artifact entails a man-made object that reveals a way of life in a specific space at a specific point in time. According to this view, the economic crisis in Beirut would be attached, inscribed, or embodied in objects like solar panels. *Utilities* captures and isolates these contemporary artifacts, not for the sake of decontextualization, but to consider these utilities as more than simply a representation or manifestation. The artist explores how these artifacts themselves are the economic crisis, blurring the lines between the signifier and the signified.

Already immersed in Beirut's social and urban landscape as an inhabitant and artist, Mrad's work can be classified as an 'ethnography at home' that pushes us to think through objects. Ethnographic fieldwork not only requires its practitioners to engage with people but also with their things. The artist's practice advances this idea further by focusing on the material urban landscape as a site of socio-political and economic phenomena.



ORGANIZED CHAOS (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
150 X 97 cm

Edition of 3: \$4,800

Lebanon's multidimensional crisis did not occur overnight but is rather a product of a decades-long political and economic policy build-up. A network of interdependent private interests shaped Lebanon's post-war economic model, leading to its collapse. After fifteen years of war (1975-1990), a rent-seeking economy relying on the real estate and banking sectors has eroded state infrastructure and utilities in favor of their privatization. The collapse of this model in 2019 led to severe socio-economic consequences, which were only compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut port explosion in 2020; Lebanon is now a site of one of the world's worst economic crises since the 1850s.

The manifestations of the crisis in people's daily lives are partially shared and sporadic across households, neighborhoods, and social classes. Across the board, individuals could not sit passively against the failure of state services and lack of basic utilities and had to find alternatives. As the supply of state-generated electricity is now limited to a couple of arbitrary hours, many turned to and completely relied on private generators which offer a more systematic outage schedule. This reliance comes at a price as extremely high bills are being charged in US dollars, rather than the collapsed national currency, rendering the cost of this basic utility over 400% more expensive.

As a result of the collapsed energy grid, residents of Lebanon have resorted to solar power as a more viable alternative. In Beirut and beyond, any view from an elevated standpoint can testify to the burgeoning of solar panels on rooftops; you would quickly notice added patches of a dark-blue layer supported by metallic structures in the already-chaotic urban landscape. Failures in the infrastructure extended to incorporate another vital utility, water, as open sinks releasing only a few drops of water inside flats indicate yet another shortage. Residents turned to private water companies to fill their buildings' tanks or even their private individual tanks, all of which sit on the rooftops, a recurrent stage where the crisis is playing out materially. Water trucks can be spotted parked on the streets with thick black hoses sticking out and extending up to the top of buildings where the filling takes place.



SOLAR TABLET 1 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 100 cm

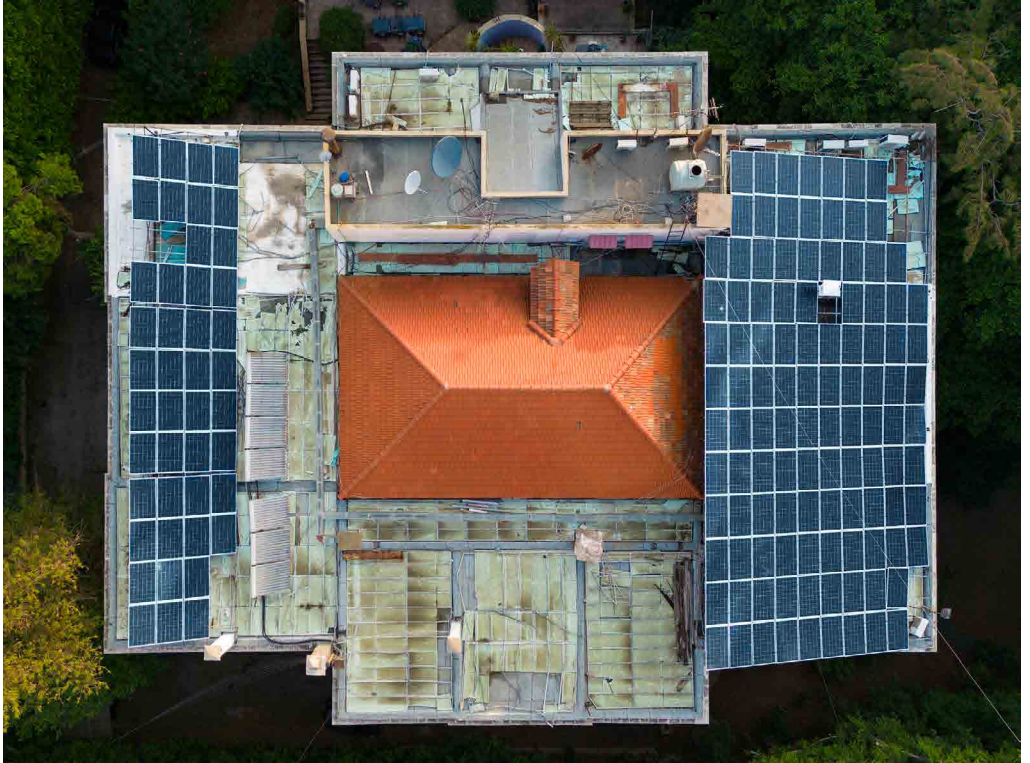
Edition of 3: \$3,800



SOLAR TABLET 2 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 100 cm

Edition of 3: \$3,800



SOLAR TABLET 3 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 100 cm

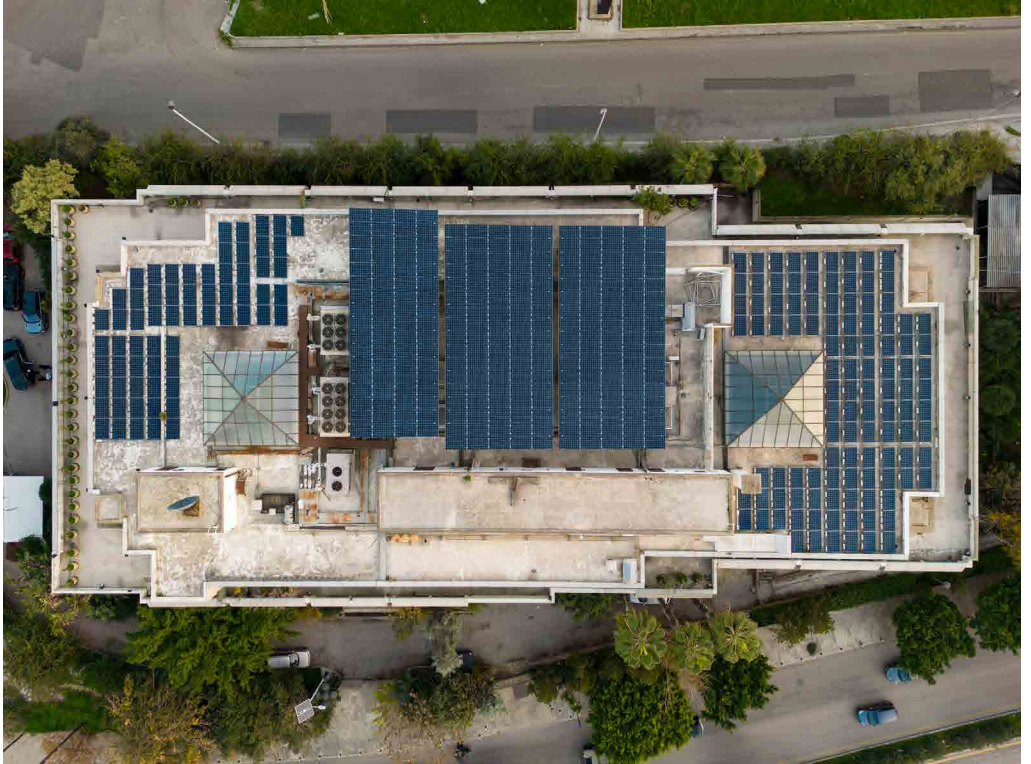
Edition of 3: \$3,800



SOLAR TABLET 4 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 100 cm

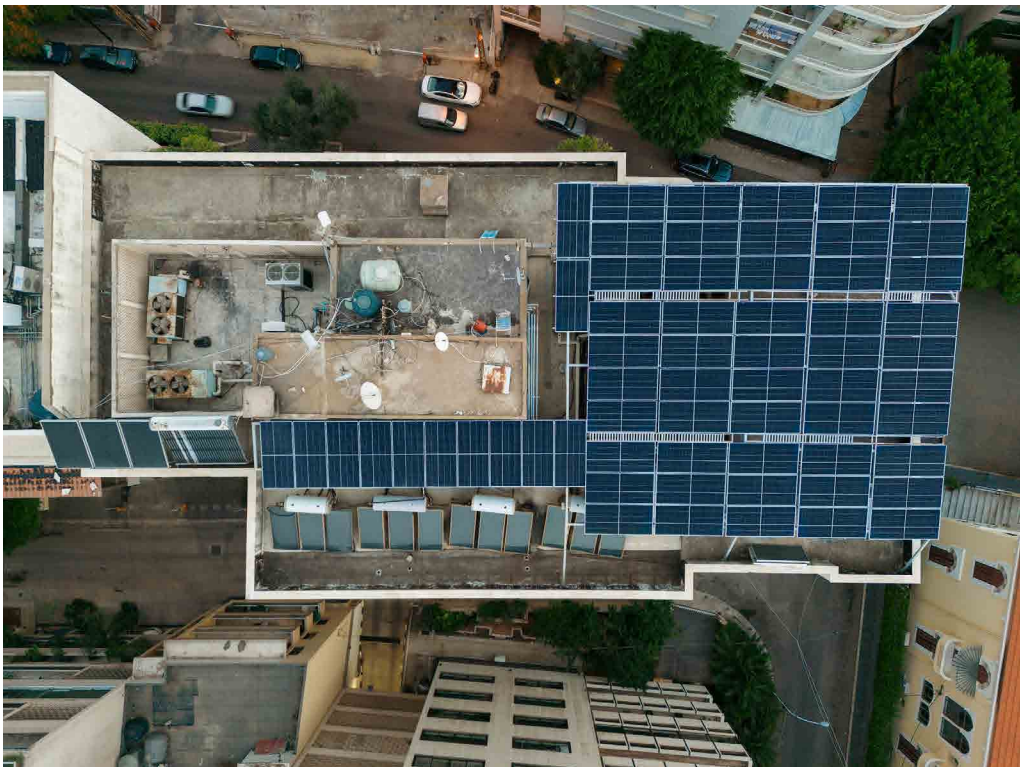
Edition of 3: \$3,800



SOLAR TABLET 5 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 100 cm

Edition of 3: \$3,800



SOLAR TABLET 6 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 100 cm

Edition of 3: \$3,800



SOLAR TABLET 7 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 100 cm

Edition of 3: \$3,800



SOLAR TABLET 8 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 100 cm

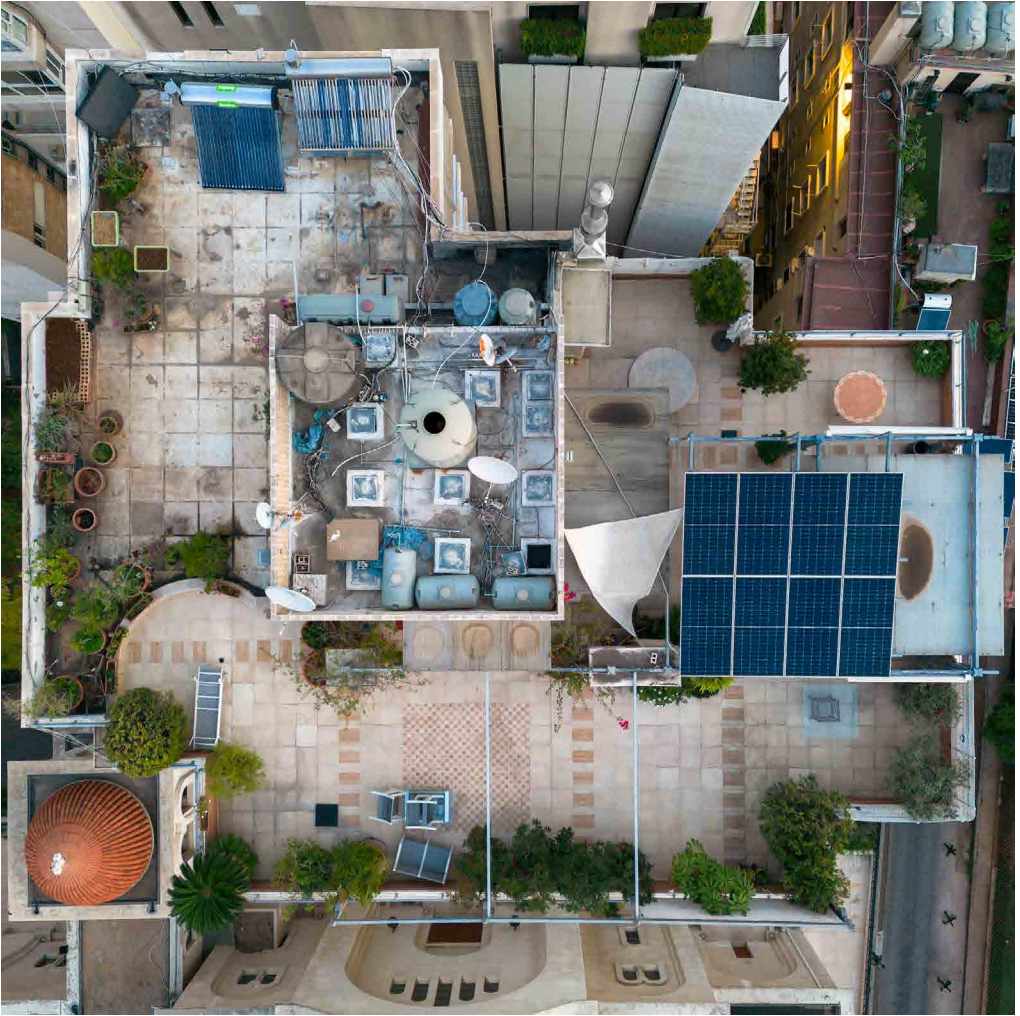
Edition of 3: \$3,800



SOLAR TABLET 9 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 75 cm

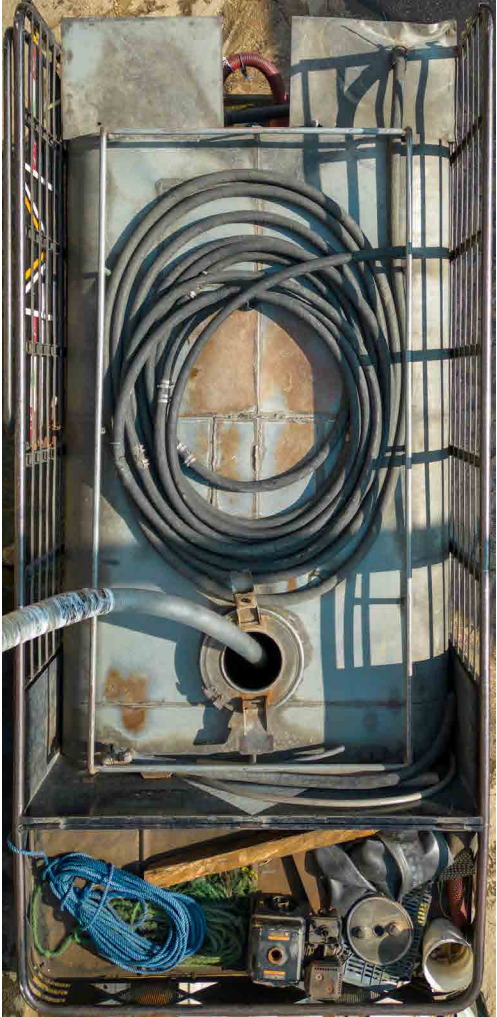
Edition of 3: \$3,200



SOLAR TABLET 10 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
75 X 75 cm

Edition of 3: \$3,200



CISTERN 1 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
100 X 48.5 cm

Edition of 3: \$2,600



CISTERN 2 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
100 X 43 cm

Edition of 3: \$2,400



CISTERN 3 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
100 X 48 cm

Edition of 3: \$2,600



CISTERN 4 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
100 X 47.5 cm

Edition of 3: \$2,600



CISTERN 5 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
100 X 46.5 cm

Edition of 3: \$2,600



CISTERN VEHICLE (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
100 X 150 cm

Edition of 3: \$5,200



PORTAL 1 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
210 X 104 cm

Edition of 3: \$6,200



PORTAL 2 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
210 X 109 cm

Edition of 3: \$6,200



BLOM
BANK SAL

SELAMAT DATANG
Klik menu yang diinginkan
atau tekan tombol
BLOM BANK

RECEIPT
CARD

NUMISMATIC 1 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
120 X 160 cm

Edition of 3: \$5,800

The individuals' determination to provide for themselves further revealed itself with the banks, in which deposits and savings are withheld as their value evaporates. Since the outset of the economic crisis, banks transformed into sites of volatile hostility and became heavily securitized and even militarized. Long waiting lines emerged outside banks and ATMs as depositors await to withdraw what little they are allowed to from their imprisoned savings. Such scenes take place under the cautious gaze of private security and police officers. Banks are also heavily guarded with metal sheets that completely wrap the façades of the building, further insinuating a fear of deposited money breaking out of its confines. Such security measures came as a response to collective practices of force such as vandalism and break-ins committed by protestors, as well as the almost-daily incident of armed depositors breaking into a bank and holding staff hostage until a requested amount of cash is set free. These cracks and traces of Lebanon's economic crisis have become very visible in the social, cultural, and urban fabrics of the city, transforming the lived realities of inhabitants and ushering them into new modes of survival.



NUMISMATIC 2 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
214 X 110 cm

Edition of 3: \$6,800

CASH WITHDRAWAL



NUMISMATIC 3 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
100 X 67.5 cm

Edition of 3: \$4,200

NUMISMATIC 4 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
100 X 75 cm

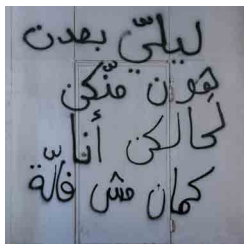
Edition of 3: \$4,200



\$\$\$ (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
130 X 173 cm

Edition of 3: \$6,400



VAULT 1-12 (2022)

FineArt Inkjet print on archival paper (Hahnemühle 310 gsm)
40 X 40 cm

Edition of 5: \$1,200 each | \$12,000 set

[ENTER VIRTUAL EXHIBITION](#)



Zawyeh Gallery

Utilities

11 Jan 2023 to 22 Feb 2023

ENTER EXHIBITION

START GUIDED TOUR



BIOGRAPHY

Dia Mrad (b. 1991) is a Lebanese visual artist working in the field of photography. He lives and works in Beirut.

Mrad graduated in 2017 with a Master's degree in Architecture. Soon after, he started using a mix of photography and academic formation to decipher Beirut's built environment, a subject that intrigued him. He employed strategies he had learned and practiced to produce a fresh perspective on informed/informative architectural photography and visual storytelling.

In 2017 Dia relocated outside of Beirut and went on an extended trip around Europe. But being away from the city offered perspective and time to reflect. Dia returned to Beirut in 2019 with an idea that would set the tone for his future work: that Beirut's unique mix of architectural styles woven between layers of history was so particular yet so neglected, a forgotten treasure that needed to be uncovered. This turning point led to working on a systematic photographic archive of Beirut, an imprint of the city and its architecture.

Through his work, Mrad captures the shifting urban environment from aesthetic, social, economic, and cultural perspectives. Focusing largely on Beirut, the artist portrays buildings as silent witnesses alluding to themes of identity and its transience. He applies the same documentary approach as he visits other sites around the globe as a way to decipher and uncover hidden narratives of human activity.

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Boghossian Foundation (Brussels, Belgium)

The Coronet Theatre (London, UK)

Barjeel Art Foundation (Sharjah, UAE)

A.R.M. Holding (Dubai, UAE)

Dalloul Art Foundation (Beirut, Lebanon)



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