

Fotografisk Center presents the first exhibition in Denmark  
with the internationally acclaimed Syrian-Armenian artist  
Hrair Sarkissian



*Unexposed*, 2022, courtesy of the artist

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*On March 22, Fotografisk Center opens the solo exhibition *The Presence of Absence* with the Syrian-Armenian artist Hrair Sarkissian. The contemporary art centre introduces the Danish public to the internationally acclaimed artist for the first time. With this exhibition, Fotografisk Center wants to create a space for reflection and conversations on historical, social, and political events that seem hidden but have influenced and still influence us and our understanding of the world. Through Sarkissian's conceptual and poetical exploration of absence and presence, it becomes clear that the past clings to the present, and that historical narratives, conflicts, and traumas play a key role in the creation of both collective and individual identity.*

Exhibition opening: March 22, 5-7 pm  
Exhibition period: March 23 – May 19, 2024

## About the exhibition

The exhibition *The Presence of Absence* presents a selection from Sarkissian's significant body of work, which contains photography, moving image and sound art in various forms.

In this exhibition, presence and absence are two inseparable entities that cling to each other. It is difficult to talk about what is present in the works without also dealing with the absence that characterises them - and vice versa. Both presence and absence can be abstract phenomena to consider, but with his artistic approach, Sarkissian manages to deal with both tangible and intangible aspects of life.

Among other things, Sarkissian portrays the personal history by exploring his own story of being a descendant of Armenians who had to flee to Syria because of the Armenian Genocide (1915). This can also be seen in his photographs from certain places in the Netherlands that terminal patients have chosen as the last places to visit. Furthermore, he also manages to depict large-scale, collective stories about and experiences with populations displaced by dictatorial regimes. Here he shows the lingering shadows that the former, authoritarian regimes cast into the present. Neither the personal nor the collective histories and narratives are isolated entities in the exhibition. Instead, we find ourselves at the intersection of past and present and of personal history and collective memory.

With Sarkissian's works, it pays to let oneself be surrounded by and question the absence, to better understand what we experience in the exhibition. The more we invest ourselves in and examine the absence, the more the works give us something in return.

In connection with the exhibition, we have published a free exhibition catalogue which can be picked up at Fotografisk Center or read online.

The exhibition is supported by the Danish Arts Foundation, Augustinus Fonden, Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond as well as Grafik & Foto.

## About the artist

Hrair Sarkissian (b. 1973, Damascus) currently lives and works in London. Sarkissian is internationally considered to be one of today's leading conceptual photographers. His practice includes photography, moving images, sculpture, sound and installation, creating meditative dreamscapes in some moments and deathscapes in others. Sites where the muted voice, absent from the frame, is temporarily offered space to breathe.

Sarkissian earned his foundational training in his father's photographic workshop, *Dream Color*, in Damascus. Sarkissian is on the Advisory Board of the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut. His mid-career survey exhibition opened in October 2021 at the Sharjah Art Foundation, and toured to the Bonniers Museum in Stockholm (2022) and the Bonnefanten Museum in Maastricht (2022/23). The exhibition brought together two

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major new commissions and more than a dozen of his most significant bodies of work from the preceding 15 years. Selected other recent exhibitions include the *British Art Show 9*, The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the *14th Sharjah Biennial*, the *Brighton Photo Biennial*, the Sursock Museum in Beirut, the Imperial War Museum in London, the Baltic Contemporary Art Centre in Newcastle, the *10th Bamako Encounters African Biennial of Photography*, the Armenian Pavilion at the *56th Venice Biennial* (awarded the Golden Lion), Tate Modern in London, the New Museum in New York, and the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo.

#### Press photos, education material & contact

For interviews, press viewings or other exhibition material please contact Fotografisk Center: +45 33930996 / [info@fotografiskcenter.dk](mailto:info@fotografiskcenter.dk)

- Press photos can be downloaded here:  
[www.fotografiskcenter.dk/presse](http://www.fotografiskcenter.dk/presse)
- For more information and opening hours please see our website:  
[www.fotografiskcenter.dk](http://www.fotografiskcenter.dk).
- Exhibition tags: #ThePresenceofAbsence  
#FotografiskCenter @hrair\_sarkissian @fotografiskcenter
- For information about Hrair Sarkissian please visit:  
[www.hrairsarkissian.com](http://www.hrairsarkissian.com)

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