

daily **artivals**



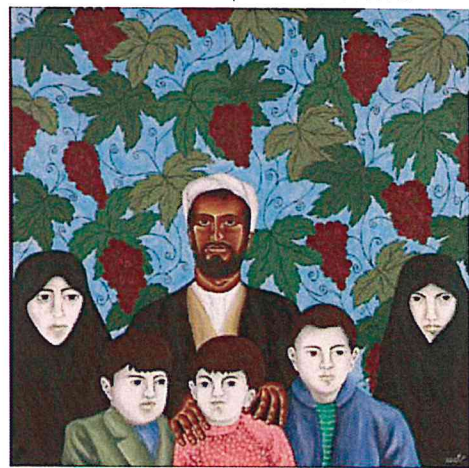
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- 04 **MEET THE ARTISTS**
- 06 SPOTLIGHT: MIDDLE EASTERN ART
- 08 SPOTLIGHT: INTERNATIONAL ART
- 10 SPOTLIGHT: ASIAN ART
- 14 NEW GALLERIES AT ART DUBAI
- 16 ALL ABOUT BIDOUN PROJECTS
- 20 OPINION: JACK PERSEKIAN
- 21 5 MINUTES WITH JOHN MARTIN AND
SHEIKH SULTAN SOOUD AL-QASSEMI

MIDDLE EAST: BLURRING THE EDGES

The lines between East and West become ever-harder to define as galleries from both inside and outside the region present solo and group shows that explore universal notions and stimulate a dialogue between Occident and Orient.

Cohesion is the name of the game. At **Galerie Chantal Crousel** (A37), a smooth, white porcelain miniature of Beirut's famous Martyr's Monument rests, a half-metre version of the city's most famous war monument given a twist by none other than the relentless, probing high priestess of edgy Contemporary art, **Mona Hatoum**. Part of a carefully selected international stable of artists, Hatoum is among an increasing number who are blurring the boundaries between East and West. Her reproduction – accurate down to the bullet holes that proliferate the original bronze sculpture – harks to 18th-century French table ornamentation, when pieces such as this served as centrepieces for lavish dinner



Rim El-Jundi, *Family Vineyard*, 2010. Acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm. Courtesy Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut.



Khaled Hafez, *The Book of Flight*, 2010. Mixed media on canvas, 600 x 250 cm. Courtesy Galerie Caprice Horn, Berlin.

parties. Indeed, *Witness* says a lot about translations of context. "It is my concern to present and promote artistic expressions that relate to the time we live in and stimulate our understanding of the world we live in," explains the gallery's Chantal Crousel.

Literally behind the wall, Beirut's **Agial Art Gallery** (A41) holds an intriguing installation. Entitled *FAIR SKIES*, Iraqi **Mahmoud Obaidi**'s work includes different coloured vending machines and video animation, which allow 'buyers' the chance to whiten their skin, turn their hair blonde and eyes blue. "The idea is about racial profiling," explains the gallery's Saleh Barakat. "It is a company that 'sells' kits to people coming from the Middle East or the Muslim world and which will allow them to become more acceptable in the eyes of American immigration officials... it's very cynical in this sense, and I thought it was a good time to show this installation and convey this message to the world." The booth also displays a large work by up-and-coming Lebanese **Ayman Baalbaki**, fast on the track to super stardom with his iconic paintings of rundown buildings and keffiyeh-clad men.

Bahrain's **Albareh Gallery** (B16) also brings mural paintings by Sudanese **Mohammed Omar Khalil** and Iraqi **Faisal Laibi**. The gallery's Hayfa Aljishi is acutely aware of bringing artists that appeal to buyers during these times. "As a result of the market correction, we have been very selective with the artists we present," she explains. "We want to exhibit masterpieces that give viewers transcendental moments but with some art-historical significance and emotional depth."

Oman's **Bait Muzna Gallery** (B26) are bringing a variety of artists, including up-and-coming Indian/Omani **Radhika Khimji** and established Omani master **Hassan Meer**. "We focus on Contemporary Arab Art, which includes a large variety of Arab nationalities," explains Art Director Ellen Molliet, who is enthusiastic about their first-time participation in Art Dubai. Not quite economically optimistic, though hopeful, is Lebanese **Galerie Janine Rubeiz's** (A3) Nadine Begdache, who is bringing works by 12 artists to the fair, including **Rim El-Jundi**, **Laure Ghorayeb**, **Joseph Harb**, **Charles Khoury**, **Jamil Molaeb** and **Hanibal Srouji**. A second-timer at Art Dubai, Begdache is a passionate champion of Lebanese art. "We have chosen to return to the fair because we are the face of Lebanon in the art world, since we promote only artists of Lebanese descent," she explains. "This is a vital part of Middle Eastern representation in the global art scene."

Dubai is represented by seven galleries, including **Galerie Isabelle van den Eynde** (B3), formerly known as B21 Gallery, which presents works by the celebrated Iranian **Haerizadeh** brothers, **Rokni** and **Ramin**, as well as **Reza Aramesh**, **Khosrow Hassanzadeh** and



Mona Hatoum, *Witness*, 2009. Porcelain biscuit, 49 x 24.3 x 24.3 cm. Courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

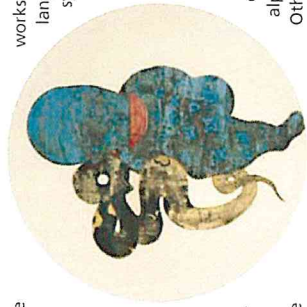
Egyptian **Lara Baladi**, whose *Diary of the Future* series includes a moving documentation of the final seven months of her father's life through coffees drunk over condolences. Fellow Dubai-based **The Third Line** (A28) is also exhibiting a range of artists, including **Farhad Moshiri**, **Golnaz Fathi**, **Lamy Gargash**, **Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian**, **Pouran Jinchi**, **Susan Hefuna**, **Youssef Nabil** and a unique work by **Hayy Kahraman**. **Artspace** (A14) has chosen to present a solo show of large-scale works by renowned Egyptian artist **Adel El-Siwi**. His *Watermelon Angel* builds on his examination of the present and its interaction with the past. "I tried to touch this relation through the human face for a very long time," explains El-Siwi. "Yes, the face: being old and recent in the same moment, now, perhaps I am haunting the same phantasm through the entire human figure."

Ayyam Gallery (A11) raises the flag for Syrian (and regional) artists and is showcasing some of its younger artists, including **Walid El-Masri**, **Mohannad Orabi** and **Thaier Helal** alongside pieces by Lebanese designer **Nadim Karam**. "I think *New Mona Lisa* by **Oussama Diab** will get the most attention due to its striking symbolism," says the gallery's Hisham Samawi. Depicting *Mona Lisa* with a gas mask surrounded by various symbols such as bombs and airplanes, the work is part of the young Palestinian painter's preoccupation with global political concerns.

Regular exhibitor **Galerie El-Marsa** (A10) from Tunis is featuring works by **Khaled Ben Slimane**, **Rachid Koraichi**, **Asma M'Naouar** and **Nja Mahdaoui**, among others. The stand features seven cross-generational artists who each explore the rich historical and cultural tapestry of North Africa, as well as aspects of Mediterranean, African and Arab influences.

Western Galleries, such as **Galerie Krinzinger** (A16) from Vienna are also carrying the torch for Middle Eastern art and feature some of the newest works by ABRAAJ winner **Kader Attia**, while Munich-based **Galerie Tanit** (B25) presents a coherent mixture of international

artists. "Since our Beirut branch [Espace Kettaneh Kunigk] opened in 2007, we have increased our efforts in putting Oriental and Occidental positions into a dialogue," explains the gallery's Verena Ferraro. "All of our Middle Eastern artists have kept their national identity but are living and working in various international places." Presenting works by Munich-based Iranian painter **Mojé Assefjah** and New-York based Lebanese master **Nabil Nahas** alongside international artists such as German Herbert Hamak, the booth is a living, breathing representation of multiculturalism and globalisation. Similarly, third-timers Thessaloniki-based **Kalfayan Galleries** (A8), are showcasing works by Damascus-based **Hrair Sarkissian** and Egyptian **Anna Boghiguian**, amongst a stable of Greek artists. "In the last few years, we have broadened our focus to include an emphasis on artists from the Middle East – Greece's near neighbours to the East," explains gallery owner and director Roupen Kalfayan. The gallery is also exhibiting works by Cairo-born Greek artist **Constantin Xenakis**, whose pieces, created specially for Art Dubai, draw on old Arabic books and encyclopaedias. "We have selected



Adel El-Siw. *Watermelon Angel*, 2009. Mixed media on canvas. Diameter 253 cm. Courtesy Artspace, Dubai



Lara Baladi. *La Mère Noire*, 2010. Digital collage, permanent pigment print on Somerset paper or gesso. 110 x 110 cm. Edition of eight. Courtesy Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde

works that reflect the artist's unique visual language, borrowing from omnipresent symbols and codes of everyday life, from alchemy and the zodiac to Egyptian hieroglyphics," explains Kalfayan. A parallel could be drawn to the works at Berlin-based **Galerie Caprice Horn** (B19), whose large-scale *The Book of Flight* is an amalgamation of inspirations, from hieroglyph-like alphabets to snipers, tanks and helicopters. Other Western galleries that are regulars on the fair circuit, such as **Selma Feriani** (A2), **Priska C Juschka Fine Art** (B27), and **Paradise Row** (B12) feature a Middle Eastern roster. Iran comes in strongly with New York's **Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller** (B7) bringing **Reza Derakhshani**, **Shiva Ahmadi**, **Shoja Azari**, **Shirin Neshat** and **Parviz Tanavoli**, to name a few, while Tehran-based **Aaran Gallery** (A9) and **Assar Art Gallery** (B8) are showing a host of artists. "The works we present are very 'Contemporary Iranian'," explains Assar's Maryam Majid, "yet well-received by an international audience." So, an impressive roster of Middle Eastern talent, and one that is far from random. The tightly curated shows are a sign of an increasingly globalised world, in which East and West become

harder to separate. As Crousel succinctly puts it: "The artists I am interested in – of whatever origin they might be – explore the universal values of life, love and death, and all aim at transcending the trivial to approach the sublime."  [Anna Wallace-Thompson, Canvas](#)



Ousama Dib. *Idtial* New Mona Lisa, 2009. Mixed media on canvas. 180 x 180 cm. Courtesy Ayyam Gallery, Beirut/Damascus/Dubai.

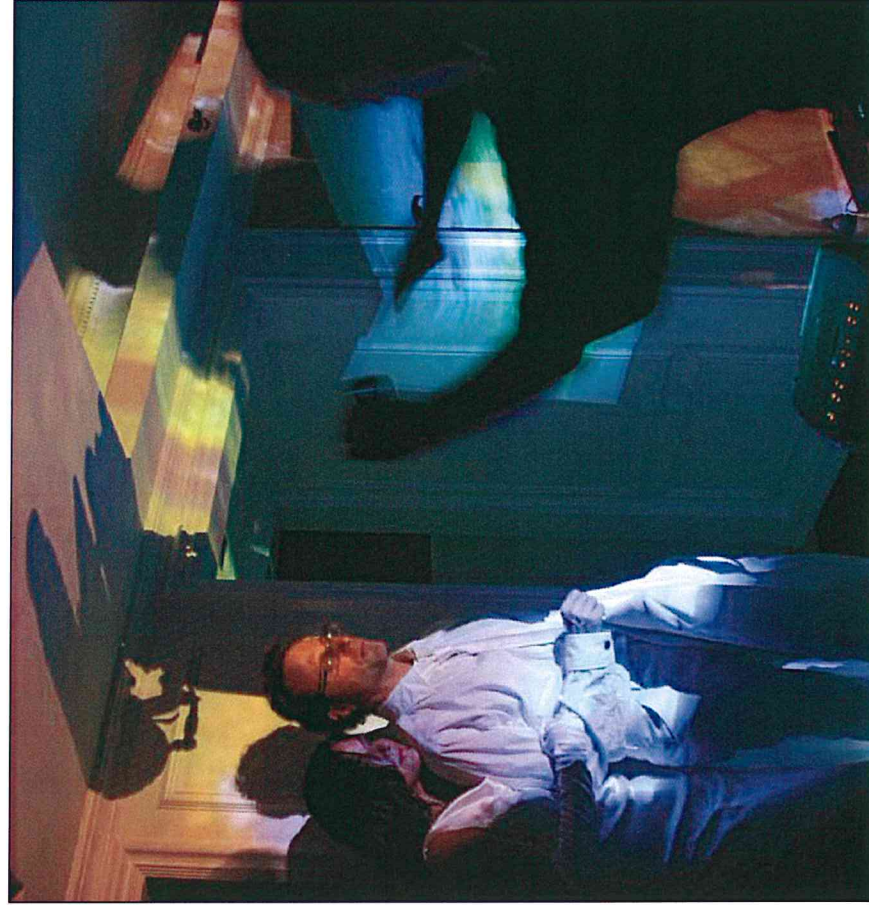


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