

Carnivals

ART AND CULTURE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND ARAB WORLD

AYK: What was your reaction to the presidential election?

AA: Initially, I felt as if I were in a period of mourning.

AYK: And now?

AA: Once Trump became president, I was ready, as were tens of thousands of others, to break out from that feeling of paralysis.

AYK: What do you think Middle Eastern artists living in the US need to do about this?

AA: All artists have a role to play, but it's not by virtue of being an artist that you're automatically going to have a political position.

AYK: Has your art changed as a result?

AA: I've shifted from inanimate architecture to, all of sudden, people. Figures are entering my work.

AYK: What does this mean?

AA: I think it represents the proximity of what's happening, right here, in my city. So that's a shift that's been very real for me.

AYK: Have you thought about moving elsewhere?

AA: No. I feel an obligation to change things where I am, and where I'm from.



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ART PROTEST

Normally dedicated to post-Impressionist, Cubist, Futurist and other Modernist works from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the fifth-floor galleries and The Agnes Gund Garden Lobby of the MoMA in New York now also showcase contemporary art from the MENA region. Why? As an institutional response to President Trump's travel ban on seven majority-Muslim countries, the museum, under senior curator Jodi Hauptman, has replaced works from its permanent collection (think Picasso, Matisse and Boccioni) by artists from some of those countries (namely, Iraq, Iran and Sudan) in a subversive curatorial act. The new works are hung accompanied by a label indicating that the artworks are intended "to affirm the ideals of welcome and freedom as vital to this museum, as they are to the United States. They are by artists from nations whose citizens are being denied entry into the United States, according to a presidential executive order issued on January 27, 2017."

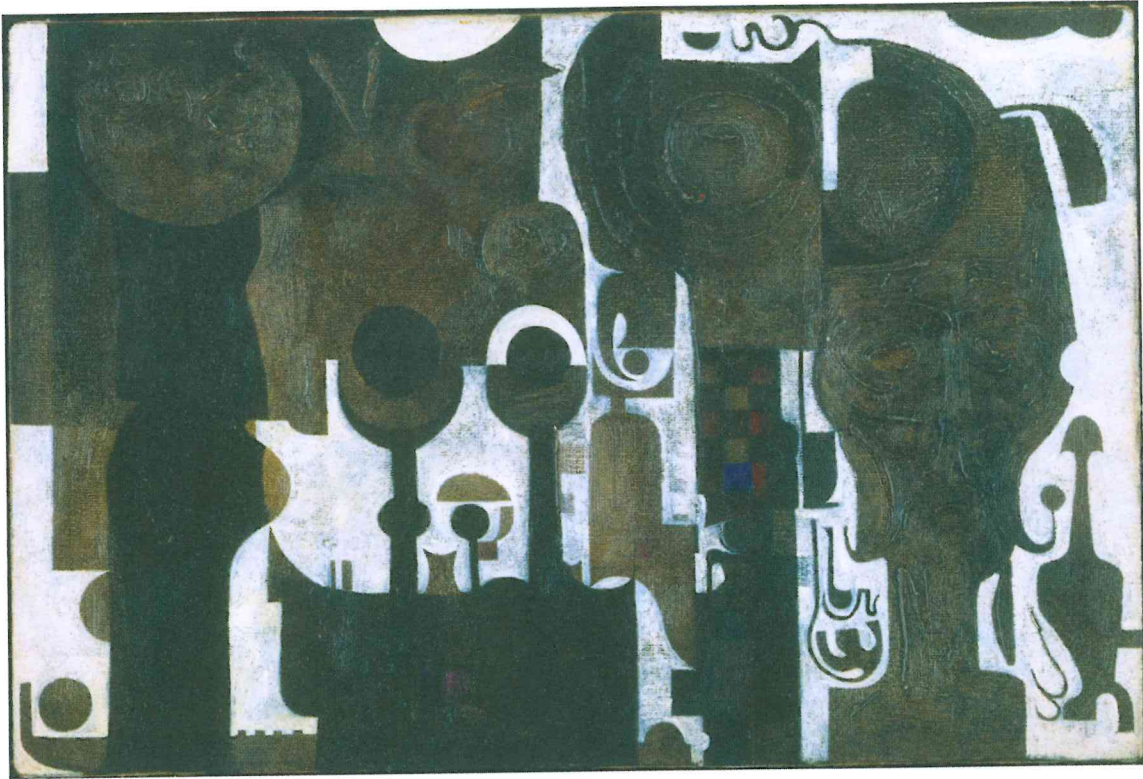


Installation view of the collection galleries at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photography by Robert Gerhardt.



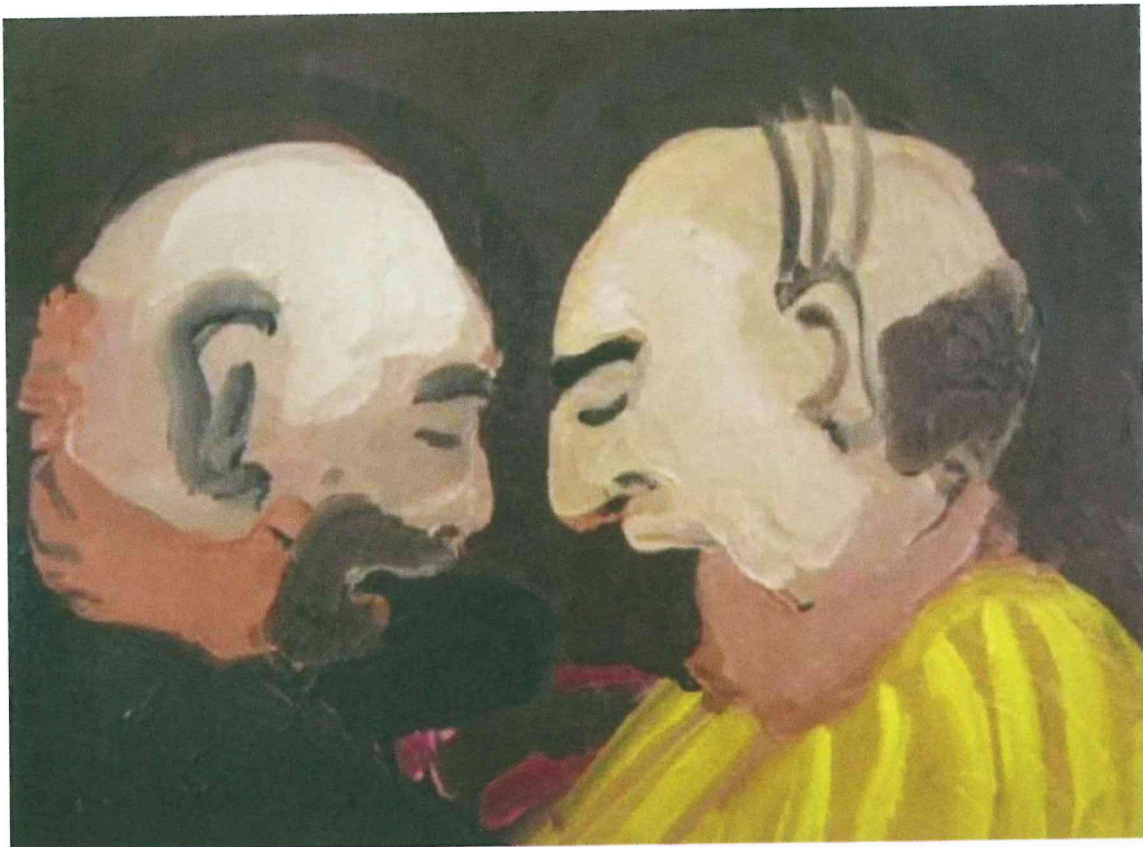


The Peak Project (1991), a painting by Iraqi-born, world-renowned architect Zaha Hadid, who passed away last year, is the winning, yet unrealised, design for a private health club in Hong Kong, which posits a re-imagined topography of an excavated, man-made granite mountain, with shard-like, splintered elements. In dissecting landscape and structure into geometric forms and suggesting multiple viewpoints at once, Hadid reveals her interest in Russian Constructivism and Cubism, while the composition of fractured geometries demonstrates an approach known as 'deconstructivist architecture'.



Above: *The Mosque* (1964) by Sudanese painter, Ibrahim al-Salahi, from the Khartoum school of art, known for incorporating Arabic calligraphy in his monochrome work, is hung alongside Picasso and Braque, creating a dialogue with Cubism, which is a movement that was in turn influenced by African Modernist art.

Below: *Chit Chat* (2007) by Iranian-American artist, Tala Madani, incorporates her signature style of loose brushstrokes and a gestural quality that is evident in her predominantly male portraits.



The Frances and John L. Loeb Gallery





This untitled work (1963), part of the *Earthworks* series, is covered in dried, cracked earth. It is by Marcos Grigorian (1924–2007), who was born in Russia to an Iranian-Armenian family and organised the first national Tehran Biennial in 1958 after representing Iran in the 1956 Venice Biennale.