

JACK PERSEKIAN

An indefatigable supporter of Palestinian and Arab art worldwide, Jack Persekian moved back home from Sharjah to Jerusalem, where he is now the head curator of the Palestine Museum, due to open in 2014. Last year, he spearheaded the efforts behind Qalandiya International, a biannual festival which showcases Contemporary Palestinian art alongside international work. The Palestinian-Armenian former director of the Sharjah Art Foundation and artistic director of the eighth and ninth editions of the Sharjah Biennial rallied seven Palestine-based institutions to bring exhibitions, film screenings, book launches, musical performances and curatorial tours to cities across Palestine. The event, a happier call to fame for a city notorious for its Israeli checkpoint, spread across Nazareth, Hajja, Jamma'in, 'Abwein, Birzeit, Ramallah and Al-Bireh, Qalandiya, Jerusalem, Gaza and Dhahiriya. In a land riddled with checkpoints and logistical roadblocks, this was no mean feat. Currently a visiting professor at the Royal College of Art in London and a member of the 13th Istanbul Biennial Advisory Board, Persekian is also the Founding Director of Anadiel Gallery and the Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art, both in Jerusalem.



© Canvas Archives.



Photography by Lana Kurtz. Image courtesy Leila Heller Gallery, New York.

LEILA HELLER

Imagine being a dealer promoting Middle Eastern art in New York post-9/11. It has been a tough job, but Leila Heller has pulled it off. The Iranian-born Brown University graduate – who has worked with the likes of Andy Warhol and Jeffrey Deitch – is a cultural island in the Big Apple. After operating a space on Madison Avenue for 25 years, Heller added a second location in late 2011 – a 325-square-metre space in Chelsea, on the same block as the Pace and Marlborough galleries. A fierce networker, her vernissages see the likes of Christian Amanpour, Bob Colacello, Her Majesty Farah Pahlavi, Tom Wolfe and Eleanor Coppola in attendance. She has also invited artists and curators, including Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, Shirin Neshat and Ashok Adiceam to curate shows at her space. Last year alone, Leila Heller Gallery participated in nine art fairs – in New York, Miami, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Los Angeles, among others – and has flown the flag for Middle Eastern art at all of them. Dubbed by some admirers as an 'Energizer Bunny', Heller has been instrumental in numerous initiatives that have sought to promote the region's art. In just one year, 2012, she placed works by the likes of Marcos Grigorian, Ayad Al-Kadhi, Shoja Azari, Pouran Jinchi, Shiva Ahmadi, Reza Derakshani and Hadieh Shafie in museums such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Brooklyn Museum and the San Francisco Art Museum.

... THE POWER 50 ...