

Calligraffiti 1984/2013

September 5 – October 5, 2013



eL Seed, *Untitled*, 2013. Acrylic on canvas, 74.8 x 51.2 in./190 x 130 cm.
Courtesy Ouahid Berrehouma itinerrance GALLERY

Opening reception: September 5, 5:30 to 8:30 pm

"A calligraphic impulse has been behind some of the greatest works of Modern Art."

-- Jeffrey Deitch

"This show makes connections between pivotal artistic movements across cultures that have informed each other's creative processes. Just as the graffiti movement emerged from the economic and social turmoil of the 1970s in New York, it is now no surprise that some of the most groundbreaking street art is burgeoning all across the Middle East. Calligraphy as an art form is part of a Middle Eastern collective memory and as it continues to evolve, we are now witnessing a kinetic dialogue between these movements that will no doubt leave their mark on history."

-- Leila Heller

Leila Heller is pleased to announce *Calligraffiti 1984/2013*, on view from September 5 – October 5, 2013. Originally curated in 1984 by Jeffrey Deitch (Director, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles) at Leila Heller's former uptown gallery, *Calligraffiti* explored a myriad of possible connections shared between the seemingly disparate styles of select mid-century abstract, U.S. graffiti, and calligraphic artists from the Middle East and its diaspora.

By presenting an expanded and updated roster of artists including site-specific installations by emerging and established artists 30 years later, *Calligraffiti 1984/2013* re-examines the global impact of street art and calligraphy as converging modes of personal expression, popular culture, and political dissent mutually grounded in arrogating the systems of language. Featuring more than 50 works by artists ranging from Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner; Hans Hartung and Cy Twombly; Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat; and Hossein Zenderoudi and Pوران Jinchi, the exhibition will also include site-specific installations by emerging and established artists. LA2 will be creating an installation in Leila Heller Gallery's front room visible from 25th street, while Tunisian/French artist eL Seed will be

painting a mural in the 11th Avenue windows. An illustrated catalogue with an introductory text by Jeffrey Deitch will accompany the exhibition.

Brief Background

For centuries, calligraphers from the Middle East have visually transcribed verses from the Ayah and concepts surrounding Divine Infinity on public buildings and mosques by presenting the written word as art. In modern times, movements ranging from Dada, Surrealism, Tachism, and Abstract Expressionism have all incorporated elements of writing and language into their abstractions. Most recently, contemporary artists such as Hossein Zenderoudi, Parviz Tanavoli, Hadieh Shafie, and Poursan Jinchí, whose work will be on view, have transformed traditional Arabic script in order to create new abstract shapes and gestural marks, augmented by color, poetry, or rhyme which bridge distinctions between nationalities, generations, and beliefs.

As a means of political and social commentary and through name bombing, graffiti and street art exploded in the 1960s throughout North American cities. During the early 1970s in New York, the arrival of aerosol spray paint solidified graffiti's impact on the urban landscape with words and tags accompanied by elaborate cartoon-inspired images seen throughout the city and particularly on subway trains. By the 1980s, elimination efforts by local city councils and transit authorities proved futile as graffiti writers began actively working in London, Berlin, Paris, and beyond. During the early 1980s, the development of a definitive graffiti style by New York artists such as Keith Haring led to its rapid acceptance within the art world via exhibitions at galleries and museums. Closely tied to hip hop's popularity, graffiti continued its global expansion throughout the 1990s, though more as a commercial phenomenon. From December 2010 onwards, graffiti has swept across North Africa and the Middle East as a highly visible means of political protest, attracting a new wave of interest and reclaiming its importance as an unconventional, revolutionary art form.



Keith Haring, *Untitled (Subway drawing)*, 1985,
Chalk on paper mounted on board, 46 x 60 ¼ in.

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Featured Artists:

Carla Accardi	Shirazeh Houshiary	Mehdi Qotbi
Etel Adnan	Isidore Isou	ROSTARR
Yasmina Alaoui	Bill Jensen	Hadieh Shafie
Ayad Alkadhi	Pouran Jinchi	Niels "Shoe" Meulman
Massoud Arabshahi	Franz Kline	Ramellzee
L'ATLAS	Rachid Koraichi	Retna
Assurbanipal Babilla	Lee Krasner	Roland Sabatier
Ben	LA2 (Angel Ortiz)	Alain Satie
Zigi Ben-Haim	Farideh Lashai	Behjat Sadr
Jean-Michael Basquiat	Maurice Lemaitre	Nasser Al-Salem
Julien Breton & David Gallard	Eugene Lemay	Esrafil Shirchi
Jean Degottex	Reza Mafi	Pierre Soulages
Jean Dubuffet	Hassan Massoudy	Pat Steir
Mohammed Ehsai	Farhad Moshiri	Parviz Tanavoli
eL Seed	Shirin Neshat	Tee Bee
Keith Haring	Alfonso Ossorio	Mark Tobey
Keith Haring and LA2	Faramarz Pilemar	Cy Twombly
Hans Hartung	Leila Pazooki	Rob Wynne
Nir Hod	Jackson Pollock	Hossein Zenderoudi

Upcoming Exhibitions:

Shoja Azari & Shahram Karimi:

Magic of Light

In collaboration with MANA Contemporary,
Jersery City, NJ

September 29 – December, 2013

Iké Udé: *Style and Sympathies*

October 10 – November 9, 2013

Shoja Azari: *The King of Black*

November 14 – December 14, 2013

Leila Heller Gallery has gained widespread recognition for fostering the careers of emerging and mid-career contemporary artists working internationally across a multitude of disciplines and mediums through its cutting-edge exhibitions and programs.

Established in 1984 as a pioneer in promoting contemporary Middle Eastern artists, the gallery's mission is to explore current developments taking place in Middle Eastern art within a larger cultural and Art Historical context. This specialization has positioned the gallery well within the burgeoning Iranian, Turkish and Middle Eastern art markets. In addition, the gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets.

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