

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.



Julien Breton and David Gallard, *Freedom*, 2011, Calligraphy: Julien "Kaalam" Breton,
Photography: David Gallard, 20 x 35.4 in / 50.5 x 90 cm, Edition of 5

Calligraffiti Speaks

An artist talk about graffiti writing of the past and present, the legacy of calligraphy and the convergence of both movements as an art form

Featuring:
Ayad Alkadhi, Julien "Kaalām" Breton,
Fab Five Freddy
eL Seed, LA2, and Rostarr

Moderated by Leila Heller

Thursday, September 26
6:30 pm
568 West 25th Street

The discussion will be followed by a site specific Light-
Calligraphy performance by Julien Breton at 8 pm

Seating is Limited, RSVP required:

RSVP@leilahellergallery.com

Please arrive between 6 and 6:20pm. The talk will start promptly at 6:30pm
and doors will close.

About the Artists:

Born and raised in Baghdad, Iraq, **Ayad Alkhadi** left his home to seek a better future in the aftermath of the first Gulf War. Since receiving a Master's degree in Fine Art from New York University's ITP Tisch School of the Arts in 2004, Alkhadi has continued to operate from New York City, creating works which takes as their focus cultural and political issues concerning Iraq and the wider Middle East. Often biographical in nature, and occasionally containing the artist's own image, Alkhadi's mixed-media canvases incorporate both Islamic calligraphy and Arabic newspapers to conflate traditional and contemporary artistic mediums, in a technique that evinces Alkhadi's perceived existence between the polarities of East and West. Through an exploration of the graphic possibilities of Arabic script combined with a use of emotionally-charged, explicitly post-9/11 imagery, the artist creates an intensely personal and deeply compelling "visual testimony of a self-described survivor". Ayad

Alkhadi has exhibited across the Middle East, Europe, Australasia and North America, including solo exhibitions at New York's Queens Museum of Art and the Maraya Art Centre in Al Qasba-Sharjah, UAE.



Image: Ayad Alkadhi, *Hear My Words & If Words Could Kill*, 2013

eL Seed's art was born on the streets, and illuminates cityscapes throughout the world including Montreal, Toronto, Doha, London, Melbourne, and New York. Following the 2011 Tunisian Revolution, eL Seed has completed large projects in Tunisia such as a commemorative mural in Kairouan and the minaret of the Jara mosque in Gabes. Weaving together traditions from differing artistic spheres, eL Seed is known for his symphonies of colors and shapes. Classic wild-style graffiti techniques spell out letters from the Arabic alphabet, which eL Seed skillfully sculpts into interpersonal visual poems. Difficult to decipher, each composition calls not only on the words and their meaning, but also on their movement, to lure the viewer into a different state of mind. Working primarily with subjects that seem contradictory,

eL Seed's art reflects the reality of our human condition. He currently lives and works in Paris, France.



Image: eL Seed, *This is just a phrase in Arabic, The shape of the city changes faster the heart of a human being, In the desert of language, calligraphy is the shade where I rest*, 2013

Fred Brathwaite aka **Fab Five Freddy** to Jazz loving parents in the Bed Stuy section of Brooklyn N.Y. He initially exploded on the scene in the late 70's as one of the first Graffiti artist to exhibit his paintings internationally. Along with close friends and contemporaries, Futura 2000, Keith Haring, Jean Michele Basquiat, Lee Quinones and others, Fab was key in getting the art world to realize New York graffiti was spawning

an art movement that would eventually pulsate globally until today, and give birth to street art. Like many creative figures from the New York downtown scene in the 80's Fab would explore other modes of creative expression. After numerous solo exhibits and group shows in the late eighties Fab wanted to reach a broader audience so he decided to expand expression. After numerous solo exhibits and group shows in the late eighties Fab wanted to reach a broader audience so he decided to expand on his experiences making the film *Wild Style* and direct music videos. Today Fab is focusing on making visual art, exhibiting his work, and was recently featured in the Los Angeles Museum Of Contemporary Art, "Art In The Streets", the block buster exhibit that was a historical survey on graffiti and street art.



Image: Fred Brathwaite, *Untitled 1*, 1986

Julien Breton AKA **Kaalam** was born in 1979 in Nantes, France, Kaalam grew up in a multicultural environment with friends of diverse backgrounds, including Portuguese Moroccan, Algerian, Tunisian and Turkish. Graffiti was his first approach to the art of writing, and its aim of deconstruction of lettering and reclaiming public space especially motivated him. His debut in calligraphy came after his discovery of Hassan Massoudy and Lassaade Metoui. He began to translate Arabic styles into the Latin alphabet, greatly inspired by their work. In his writings, he uses phrases of philosophers and Hip Hop. He creates each piece with the desire to transcend the meaning of the phrase, to create the traditional writing and the arbitrary order of letters. When he discovered the "lightgraff" process, he started to experiment with a new way of creating. He discovered a form of expression that is marked by body language, calligraphy and choreography. The possibility to "write in space," to work calligraphy according to the background perspective, colors and

history gives him the will to explore this new form of pictorial expression. Ink becomes light, paper becomes photography. All landscape and architecture is a pretext to be marked by them, to play with them, to write calligraphy on them and immortalize this meeting between writing and photography.

LA2 / LAROC aka **Angel Ortiz** is a graffiti writer from the Lower East Side of New York City. His tags can be found all over the city and are always used in his art works. In his early teens, Ortiz was befriended by the artist, Keith Haring which resulted in their collaboration on a number of works in the early 1980s. Among the increasingly popular NYC graffiti artists, Haring felt that Ortiz displayed the most impressive and promising of tag “writing,” interpreting his thick inter-mingling contours as an homage to Ancient Eastern calligraphy. After Haring died, LA2 continued exhibiting his works in New York galleries and around the world, collaborating with artists such as Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Kenny Scharf, Richard Hamblton

and Alexander Calder. He has exhibited worldwide including at Art Basel Miami Beach, MOCA (Los Angeles), and Musée de la Ville Paris. He currently lives and works in New York City.



Image: LA2 Room at Leila Heller Gallery, 2013

Romon Kimin Yang aka Rostarr is a multi-disciplinary artist, painter, calligrapher and filmmaker living and working in Brooklyn, New York. He is a graduate of the School of Visual Arts where he studied experimental graphic design and printmaking. Early in his career he managed to produce work in both the art and graphic design spheres, blurring the lines between the two. For the past fifteen years he has more widely been known for his colorful abstract polymorphic paintings, totemic iconographic characters and mostly black and white calligraphic drawings. Always creating works in a spontaneous manner, Rostarr is continually striving to find freedom within style, medium and form, and building upon the iconographic visual language he terms "Graphysics," a word that exemplifies the geometric dynamism characteristic in his work. In 2000, he was named one of I.D.

magazine's "I.D" 40 under 30," and recognized as an honoree at the 2004 AICP show held at MoMA for his contribution to a celebrated Nike Campaign. In February 2010, his forty-minute motion painting film, Kill the Ego, was shown at the Centre Pompidou, Paris.



Image: Rostarr, *Diluvium I*, 2013