

## MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Singapore Art Museum and Barjeel Art Foundation present Southeast Asian survey of contemporary Arab art**

*Terms & Conditions provides insight into the diverse contemporary  
art practice from the dynamic region*

**25 June 2013, Singapore** – The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) is proud to partner Sharjah-based Barjeel Art Foundation to present *Terms & Conditions*, one of Southeast Asia's first surveys of contemporary art by artists from the Arab world. The exhibition features key works by artists such as Jananne Al-Ani, Huda Lutfi, Hassan Sharif and Sharif Waked, drawn from the Barjeel Art Foundation, the Abraaj Group Art Prize Collection, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Musée national de l'histoire et des cultures de l'immigration, CNHI Paris, as well as the collections of private individuals and artists.

The exhibition features 16 artworks specially selected to introduce audiences in Singapore to contemporary art of the Arab world. Majority of the works were created in the last five years, offering a window to this emerging contemporary art scene and the issues, ideals and challenges that contemporary artists are engaging with today. *Terms & Conditions* is an open-ended debate about the representation of history, identities and social realities, especially through the works of artists with links to the Arab world. Although history and geography are powerful forces shaping contemporary practice today, the artists in this exhibition grapple also with the challenges of speaking to the world beyond their specific localities, and what it takes to be visible, to communicate one's desires, hopes and fears amidst the push and pull of larger political, economic, and cultural forces – in other words, how one can be visible and have a voice within the terms and conditions of society today.

Featured artworks include Jananne Al-Ani's *Shadow Sites II*, a haunting video work – recently shown at the Sydney and Sharjah Biennales – of an aerial journey that reveals activity in a desert landscape otherwise thought to be uninhabited, to question perspectives and preconceptions; pioneering

An institution of



Supported by



conceptual artist Hassan Sharif's seminal installation *Cow Belly*, first commissioned for the Mathaf-Arab Museum of Modern Art, with its poignant critique of consumerism and hunger; while Adel Abdessemed's seven gigantic hand-blown Murano glass microphones in *Fatalite* is both satirical and sad in its commentary on the limits of discourse. Other iconic works in the exhibition include cultural historian Huda Lutfi's *Democracy is Coming*, a mixed media work that depicts famed Egyptian songstress Umm Kalthoum with military planes flying overhead, referring to the irony of attaining democracy through violence.

Director of SAM, Mr. Tan Boon Hui, said, "It has always been important for SAM to offer our visitors opportunities to stay connected with the wider contemporary art world. We are thus excited to be partnering with the Barjeel Art Foundation to bring audiences here an introduction into Arab contemporary art with *Terms & Conditions*."

As an emerging arts scene sharing many similarities with the development of contemporary art in Southeast Asia, as well as the shared Arab heritage, the exhibition clearly showcases how issues of identity and representation are recurrent concerns that face contemporary artists around the world. With this exhibition, we also aim to encourage discourse and discussion on how history and social realities are presented and re-presented in our inter-connected world today."

Guest curator, Ms. Mandy Merzaban of the Barjeel Art Foundation, added, "Many works in this exhibition uniquely investigate how perceptions of history and social realities are regulated and controlled, something that is very much global as it is present in the Arab world. Audiences in Singapore will be able to catch a glimpse of certain issues related to the Arab world but also be able to draw connections to ideas and scenarios that transcend borders and politics of particular regions."

*Terms & Conditions* will run from 28 June to 8 September 2013 at the Singapore Art Museum. A special tour by guest curator Mandy Merzaban, along with an artist talk by Khalil Joreige and Moataz Nasr, will also be offered for visitors to gain further insight into the themes and key pieces in the exhibition.

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For more information, please read on:

- **Annex A** – Exhibition synopsis and in-conjunction Events
- **Annex B** – [About the Artists and Artworks](#)

### **About the Singapore Art Museum**

The Singapore Art Museum (SAM) focuses on the creation of art in the present moment. It advocates and presents the contemporary art practices of Singapore, Southeast Asia and Asia, situating them within the global context of art making today. SAM has built up one of the most important collections of contemporary art from the region, and its programming aims to introduce new artistic practices and styles to the public, as well as nurturing discerning audiences for contemporary art. SAM is also organiser of the Singapore Biennale 2013.

### **About Barjeel Art Foundation**

The Barjeel Art Foundation was conceived by Sultan Sooud al-Qassemi with the vision of creating a space where artwork drawn from diverse corners of the Arab world can coalesce in an interactive and communal setting. Art of the Arab world is as nuanced as the nations that comprise the historically, politically, socially and geographically diverse region. The foundation aims to exhibit works of established and emerging Arab contemporary artists in a public display that is unique to the region. Barjeel's guiding principle is to extend the privilege of viewing eminent pieces of Arab art to the community at large. A 475-square-metre space has been dedicated to showcasing the Barjeel collection, which includes more than 200 pieces of Sultan Sooud al-Qassemi's personal collection. The foundation will present artwork in rotating public exhibitions representing different themes of political, social and cultural importance to the Arab world.

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## Annex A: Exhibition synopsis and in-conjunction Events

### Terms & Conditions

28 June 2013 – 8 September 2013 | Singapore Art Museum

Terms & Conditions presents an open-ended debate into how history and social realities are represented, with an emphasis on the Arab world. One of the first Southeast Asian surveys of contemporary art from this dynamic region, the exhibition showcases works by artists with roots in the Arab world. These artists work across different geographic and cultural contexts, and through a combination of techniques, to produce unique artworks that fluidly traverse and defy social identities and representations.

Co-organised by the Singapore Art Museum and Barjeel Art Foundation, and guest curated by Mandy Merzaban, Curator and Collections Manager of the Barjeel Art Foundation, Terms & Conditions draws upon seminal works from Barjeel Art Foundation, the Abraaj Group Art Prize Collection, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Musée national de l'histoire et des cultures de l'immigration, CNHI Paris, as well as the collections of private individuals and artists.

#### Artist Presentation: Khalil Joreige and Moataz Nasr

Friday, 28 June 2013 | 7:30pm to 9pm  
Singapore Art Museum

Join in an exciting line-up of artist presentations at the opening weekend of *Terms & Conditions*, and take a closer look as Khalil Joreige and Moataz Nasr share about their works in the exhibition and their practice.

Free admission.

Registration required. Please visit [www.singaporeartmuseum.sg](http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg) for more details.

#### Curator Tour

Saturday, 29 June 2013 | 4pm to 5pm  
Singapore Art Museum

Guest curator, Mandy Merzaban of the Barjeel Art Foundation, leads a tour of *Terms & Conditions* and shares insights into the themes of key pieces. The exhibition features a dynamic range of artworks by leading international contemporary artists, and provides an inquisitive open-ended debate into how history and social realities are represented - with an emphasis on the Arab world.

\$12 (includes admission to the exhibition). Tickets available at SAM and SISTIC.

Limited spaces. For ticket availability at the door, please call SISTIC.

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### **Exhibition Venue**

Singapore Art Museum is located at 71 Bras Basah Road, Singapore 189555

### **Opening Hours**

Mondays to Sundays | 10am to 7pm (Last admission at 6:15pm)

Fridays | 10am to 9pm

### **Admission Fees**

Citizens, PRs and visitors aged 6 and below	Free
Adults	S\$10
Students and Seniors 60 years and above (with valid ID)	S\$5

*20% discount on adult admission fees for group of 20 pax or more*

Free admission on Fridays from 6pm to 9pm and on Open House days.

### **Museum Tours at SAM**

English Tours:	Mondays: 2pm   Tuesdays to Thursdays: 11am & 2pm Fridays: 11pm, 2pm & 7pm   Saturdays and Sundays: 11am, 2pm & 3.30pm
Japanese Tours:	Tuesdays to Fridays: 10.30am
Mandarin Tours:	Fridays: 7.45pm

### **SAM online**

[www.singaporeartmuseum.sg](http://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg)

[www.facebook.com/singaporeartmuseum](https://www.facebook.com/singaporeartmuseum)

[www.twitter.com/IAmASAMbody](https://www.twitter.com/IAmASAMbody)

[www.instagram.com/IAmASAMbody](https://www.instagram.com/IAmASAMbody)

[www.youtube.com/samtelly](https://www.youtube.com/samtelly)

### **Enquiries**

6332 3222 or 6332 3200

[nhb\\_sam\\_programs@nhb.gov.sg](mailto:nhb_sam_programs@nhb.gov.sg)

### **How to get to SAM**

By Bus: SBS 7, 14, 16, 36, 111, 131, 162, 175, 508, 518  
SMRT 77, 167, 171, 700

By MRT: 2-minute walk from Bras Basah MRT Station  
10-minute walk from Dhoby Ghaut, Bugis or City Hall MRT stations

By Car: Carparks available at Waterloo Street, Queen Street, NTUC Income Centre, Plaza by the Park, Hotel Grand Pacific and Singapore Management University

## Annex B: Artists and Artworks



Moataz Nasr

Elshaab

2012

25 ceramic characters

27 x 6 x 10 cm each

Barjeel Art Foundation Collection

Image courtesy of Galleria Continua, San Gimignano / Beijing /

Le Moulin

Photography by Oak Taylor-Smith

Moataz Nasr is a prominent painter, sculptor, photographer and multi-media artist whose conceptual and visual vocabulary is deeply invested in the urban fabric of Cairo. Drawing on a range of sources from Egyptian popular culture, historical and cultural icons of the sixties, Islamic calligraphy and current socio-political events in the region, Nasr has developed a body of work of considerable political poignancy and timeliness.

*El Shaab* (The People) continues Nasr's engagement with issues relevant to the Egyptian revolution. The piece consists of 25 ceramic figurines representing the religious, class, gender and generational diversity of Egypt's population. Far from a tableau vivant, the work references the civilian protests that have taken over Cairo's Tahrir Square since 2011. The most evident clue is a scene replicating a highly publicised image from the media: Egyptian military figures beating a female protestor, ripping her abaya and exposing her blue brassiere. A number of the figurines wear head bandages and eye patches, bearing witness to the violence of the past two years. More importantly, the artist, himself an activist, is depicted among those constituting Egypt's civilian population. Created using ceramics, a fragile medium, the protesters become miniature hand-held objects for observation and decoration. The work moves between optimism and hazard. While the unity of the people is commendable, their safety hangs precariously in the balance of the observer.

Born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1961, Nasr is a self-taught artist. After studying economics at the University of Alexandria, Nasr launched his art career in 1995 when he won third prize at a competition organised by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. He has gone on to exhibit internationally and has held solo shows in Cairo, Paris and London. In 2008, Nasr founded DARB 1718, a non-profit organisation dedicated to fostering contemporary art practices. He lives and works in Cairo.



Adel Abdessemed

Fatalité

2011

7 hand-blown Murano glass microphones

Variable dimensions

Peggy Scott & David Teplitzky Collection

© Adel Abdessemed

Image courtesy of Paris ADAGP

Adel Abdessemed is a conceptual artist practicing in a range of media: drawing, photography, performance and installation. He is known for a body of work that transforms everyday materials and images into provocative commentaries on violence and spectatorship. The simplicity of Abdessemed's formal language often betrays a complexity of meanings as the artist draws on an array of historical and philosophical references.

*Fatalité* is an installation comprised of seven, hand-blown Murano glass microphones. Striking in its elegance, the work nonetheless hints at a lurking menace, the rich luxury of the material distracts from its inherent ineffectuality. The choice of glass for a microphone suggests the idealism of transparent communication, however, the material also exposes the vulnerability of exchange. This fragility is underscored by the imposing stance and repetition of the microphones, which both invite and prevent the opportunity to be heard. Delicate and dictatorial, the formal beauty of the transparent microphones conveys a sharp and poetic commentary on the role politicians as orators of grand ideologies and the emptiness of words.

Abdessemed was born in Constantine, Algeria in 1971. He attended the Beaux-Arts in Algiers from 1987-94. In 1994, political unrest in Algeria brought him to Lyon, France where he continued his training at Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He completed his studies in Paris in 2000. A year later, he enrolled at the International Studio Program at P.S. 1 Contemporary in New York. He has participated in international group exhibitions as well as solo shows throughout Europe and the U.S. He lives and works in Paris.



Huda Lutfi  
Democracy is Coming  
2008  
Acrylic and collage on paper  
37 x 45 cm  
Barjeel Art Foundation Collection  
Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation

Trained as a cultural historian, Huda Lutfi mines Cairo's markets, antique shops and the urban environment for images and objects that draw on Egypt's rich cultural heritage. Re-contextualising and subverting this imagery in collages, paintings and installations, Lutfi utilises bricolage as strategy to create works that are both playful and politically poignant. Frequently incorporating text from Sufi and medieval Arabic poetry into her work, Lutfi interweaves historical narratives and icons to comment on contemporary issues, often related to gender politics.

*Democracy is Coming* depicts Egyptian singer Umm Kalthoum, one of the Arab world's most famous icons from the decade of the 1950s and '60s, the height of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's Pan-Arab movement. With military planes flying overhead, Kalthoum is depicted with a halo inscribed with the words, "democracy is coming." Through its decisively sparse visual language and limited palette, the work poignantly underscores the sanctioned violence that signals the arrival of democracy and its ostensibly noble deliverance. Portraying Kalthoum as a medieval saint, Lutfi plays with the singer's almost religious following in the region whilst presenting a haunting reminder of the deadly ramifications of failed political promises both of the past and present. Produced in 2008, the work assumes a heightened significance in the context of the current Egyptian revolution.

Huda Lutfi was born in Cairo in 1948. She received a Ph.D. in Islamic Culture and History from Montreal's McGill University in 1983. As a visiting professor at Harvard University, Lutfi began to experiment with art making and started exhibiting her work in mid-1990s. She has since shown widely in international group and solo exhibitions. She is currently an associate professor of Islamic Cultural History at The American University in Cairo.



Raafat Ishak

Nomination for the Presidency of the new Egypt  
2012

Acrylic on MDF

480 x 150 x 200 cm

Barjeel Art Foundation Collection

© Raafat Ishak

Image courtesy of Andrew Curtis and Sutton Gallery, Australia

Raafat Ishak is best known for a distinct graphic language in which rectangular shapes are built up through pastel colours and circumscribed within a curvilinear line. Ishak's practice combines an interest in Arabic and Western art histories and often presents an engagement with notions of otherness. Using transliterated English into Arabic script, Ishak's work presents a challenge in deciphering meaning and shifts between both specific and non-specific references to his cultural heritage. In his most explicit work dealing with the uprisings in Egypt, Ishak uses painting and installation to present a well-researched proposition.

*Nomination for the Presidency of the new Egypt* is reflective of Ishak's interest in working across artistic and socio-political histories. A long scroll, referencing Egypt's Pharaonic history, details a proposed political party's manifesto for a post-Mubarak Egypt. Focusing on food distribution and land cultivation, the manifesto suggests a re-flooding of the Nile to re-introduce the river's natural irrigation cycle, which ended in 1970 with the completion of the Aswan High Dam. Even though the manifesto promises a new future for the civilian population of Egypt, it is displayed as an aesthetic relic. Positioned on the pedestal of a black box, the potential future imagined by the party's manifesto is drained of its effectiveness and transformed into an object of historical contemplation.

Ishak was born in Cairo in 1967. He received a Bachelors of Fine Arts in painting from Victorian College of Arts in 1990 and has exhibited widely in international shows. Currently a doctoral candidate at Monash University, Ishak is researching the relationships between Malevich's *Black Square* and the Ka'aba of Mecca. He is a founding member of Ocular Lab Inc, an artist run collective. Since 1982, he has lived and worked in Melbourne.



Mona Hatoum

Plotting Table

1998

Wood, MDF, UV lights and fluorescent paint

81 x 262.5 x 144 cm

Barjeel Art Foundation Collection

© Mona Hatoum

Image courtesy of White Cube

One of the most critically acclaimed contemporary artists, Mona Hatoum is renowned for her body of work that combines minimalist, surrealist and performative strategies to provoke intellectual and sensory responses in the viewer. Often playing with the scale of objects in relation to the viewer's body or through the use of her own body, Hatoum invokes broader discourses on power, violence and oppression. Hatoum's work investigates a series of themes sometimes particularly relevant to the Arab world—exile, displacement and violent conflict. Yet Hatoum's work is equally invested in the history of art, its cultural icons, formal styles, and attendant ideologies.

Succinct in its formal vocabulary and immaculate in its design, *Plotting Table* expresses the socio-political through a minimalist aesthetic for which Hatoum has become known. A fluorescent light from below radiates through hundreds of holes drilled in a tabletop to illuminate a world map. Referencing the modernist impulse to map and Hatoum's own repeated interest in cartography, each accompanied by its own relationship to discourses of power and Imperialism, *Plotting Table* conveys a Machiavellian theatre of global military ambitions.

Hatoum was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1952 to a Palestinian family. From 1970-72, she attended Beirut University College. She visited Britain in the mid-seventies, settling in London in 1975 when the Lebanese Civil War (1975-90) prevented her return home. She trained at the Byam Shaw School of Art (1975-79) and the Slade School of Art (1979-81). She has held residencies in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Egypt and Jordan and solo exhibitions throughout the Arab world, Europe and North America. In 1995, Hatoum was shortlisted for the Turner Prize at the Tate. She lives in London and Berlin.



Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige  
The Lebanese Rocket Society – A Carpet  
2012

Handmade rug and documents  
277 x 138 cm

Barjeel Art Foundation Collection

Image courtesy of The Third Line

*A Carpet* is part of Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's ongoing project, about the Lebanese Rocket Society that includes a documentary feature film "The Lebanese Rocket Society, the strange tale of the Lebanese space race" and a series of art installations. The story began when Dr. Manoug Manougian, a professor of Mathematics and Physics at Beirut's Haigazian University, formed a student society to study space exploration. The result was the creation and launch of 10 rockets dubbed the *Cedar* series, named after Lebanon's national emblem, the cedar tree. To honour the society's contributions to the space race, the Lebanese government created a stamp, which is reproduced here as a large-scale handmade rug. In addition, *A Carpet* acknowledges a second forgotten story referencing a carpet factory in the Lebanese village of Ghazir established by the American organisation Near East Relief to accommodate Armenian orphans in Lebanon following the 1915 Armenian genocide. More than 3,400 carpets were produced there and as a sign of gratitude to NES, the girls of the orphanage sent a hand-woven rug for President Calvin Coolidge at the White House. Several of those girls later became the mothers of the students in the Lebanese Rocket Society. *A Carpet* is an evocation of these two stories, or two generations, representing the ability of a group to persist, aspire, and dream. Formed at the height of Arab nationalism, The Lebanese Rocket Society dissolved the same year as the Arab defeat during the Arab-Israeli war in 1967.

Hadjithomas and Joreige work together as artists and filmmakers, producing fictional films and documentaries, photographs and video installations. Together, they have created numerous installations and videos which have been shown in important museums and art centres around the world, and more recently at The Museum of Modern Art in Paris, Victoria & Albert Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art; the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston; Centre Georges Pompidou, the New Museum in New York; Mori Art Museum in Tokyo and KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin. In the past two years, they have participated in the Sharjah Biennial, the Istanbul Biennial, Biennale de Lyon, the Kochi Biennale, the Gwanju Biennale and the Triennale of Paris.



Raed Yassin

China

2012

Porcelain Vases

Variable dimensions

Abraaj Group Art Prize Collection

Image courtesy of Abraaj Group Art Prize

Raed Yassin is an accomplished musician and visual artist whose diverse practices encompass video, performance and sound art. One of Lebanon's most prominent artists, Yassin excavates the popular culture of the Arab world to create visual and aural collages that speak to a shared culture across the region.

In *China*, Yassin joins two generations of Lebanese artists who critically examine the history of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and the country's official post-war culture of amnesia. Researching newspaper archives and interviewing members of the country's militias, Yassin produced a series of drawings based around seven key battles of the civil war. Yassin then commissioned five masters from Jingdezhen, the porcelain capital of China, to reproduce the drawings on mass-produced vases. Displayed within the circular form of the monumental vases, the artwork suggests the perpetual nature of conflict as well as its continual transformation throughout the history of art into an object of artistic contemplation. The result is a captivating installation which disguises and dilutes the severity of the Lebanese Civil War. Exploring issues of contested histories and collective commemoration, Yassin interweaves the particular history of the Lebanese Civil War with broader art historical questions of authorship, consumer culture and the politics of display.

Born in Beirut in 1979, Yassin graduated from the Theatre Department at the Lebanese University (2003). He received the Abraaj Group Art Prize for *China* in 2012. He has exhibited extensively in Lebanon, and internationally and also runs the independent record label, Annihaya. He lives and works in Beirut.



Akram Zaatari

Untitled (Nabih Awada's Letters from Family and Friends)

2007

Colour photograph

49 x 40 cm

Barjeel Art Foundation Collection

Image courtesy of Galerie Sfier Semler, Hamburg

Akram Zaatari is a filmmaker, photographer and curator. He is part of a generation of Lebanese artists who came to prominence during the 1990s for a set of practices that critically reflect on archives and the impossibilities of establishing a cohesive narrative of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-90). Likening his practice to fieldwork, Zaatari collects and re-contextualises a range of visual and textual documents to mediate the relationship between history and memory with a particular focus on the context of Lebanon.

Zaatari's *Untitled (Nabih Awada's Letters from Family and Friends)* photo series presents a book of letters exchanged between Nabih Awada, a Lebanese resistance member of the Communist Party, and his family and friends during his 10 year imprisonment in Israel. Awada joined the Lebanese resistance in 1986 and took part in several military operations against the Israeli Army in Southern Lebanon. Captured in 1988 at the age of 16, Zaatari's installation draws attention to the intimate stories often concealed within official histories. The artist contemplates the potentially banal details of an individual's life set against a political history of incredible regional significance.

Zaatari was born in 1966 in the coastal town of Sidon in Lebanon. He received a Bachelors of Architecture from The American University of Beirut and a Masters of Arts in Media Studies from New York's New School for Social Research. In 1997, he co-founded the Arab Image Foundation, a Beirut-based organisation dedicated to the collection and preservation of photographs from the Middle East and North Africa.



Jananne Al-Ani

Shadow Sites II

2011

Single Channel Digital Video

8 min 38 sec

Abraaj Group Art Prize Collection

Image Courtesy of the Artist

Photography by Adrian Warren

Jananne Al-Ani uses video, film, photography, and installation to investigate how the 19<sup>th</sup> century Orientalist stereotype of the Middle East as an exotic and unoccupied space continues to inform Western media representations of the region.

*Shadow Sites II* takes the first Gulf War as a reference point to continue Al-Ani's previous research-based projects on 19th and 20th century European photographs of the Middle East. The film runs through a sequence of aerial shots of a landscape taken from different altitudes. Surveying the landscape's natural and man-made, ancient and contemporary features the work's stunning formal beauty bares a chilling reminder of the use of remote photography in Western media coverage of contemporary warfare. Distanced from the realities on the ground the landscape becomes an abstracted visual field where its minute movements and structures become highlighted by shadows just before twilight. The looming noise of the airplane's engine echoes the sound of drones as the film seems to burrow into the landscape as if searching for a target. It is through the redeployment of the camera's purportedly documentary view that Al-Ani refocuses our perspective on photography's divisive histories in the region.

Al-Ani studied Fine Art at the Byam Shaw School of Art and graduated with a Masters in Photography from the Royal College of Art. She has participated in international exhibitions and held solo shows at the Beirut Art Center (2013); Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC (2012); Darat al Funun, Amman (2010); and Art Now - Tate Britain, London (2005). Recipient of the Abraaj Group Art Prize (2011), her work can be found in collections including Tate Gallery, London; Centre George Pompidou, Paris; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; and Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna. She is currently Senior Research Fellow at the University of the Arts London.



Hassan Sharif

Cow Belly

2010

Steel, copper and aluminium

160 x 385 x 100 cm

Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art Collection

Image courtesy of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art

Photography by Orlando Vicente II

Hassan Sharif is one of the first Emirati artists to take a conceptual approach in his practice. Working with natural and manufactured materials, Sharif liberates objects from their traditional signifiers with an interest in spontaneity and simple handicraft, rather than technical skill and intricate production.

*Cow Belly* testifies to Sharif's continuous concern for environmental and cultural issues with a focus on Dubai's growing consumer culture. Sheets of aluminium, cut into pieces, are rolled up, roped with a copper wire and suspended from a heavy iron beam. The reflective surface of the aluminium contrasts with the title's reference to the warm softness of the animal's body. The installation draws attention to the exploitation of nature by industrial development in contemporary life. Critics have also suggested that the piece conjures a local reference in its visual suggestion of a palm trunk loaded down with ripe dates. In addition, the distinction between the work's title and its medium also spotlights the materiality of the piece, situating Sharif within a regional history of Modernism and a shared attentiveness to Formalism.

Born in 1951 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sharif studied art at Warwickshire College near Birmingham, England. In 1984, he received a degree in Fine Arts and Design from London's Byam Shaw School of Art. Upon his return to Dubai, Sharif established the Emirates Fine Arts Society and the Art Atelier in Youth Theater and Arts and founded the artist's collective, Group of 5. He has participated in international exhibitions and biennials and held solo exhibitions in the Arab Gulf. He lives and works in Dubai.



Kader Attia

History of A Myth: The Small Dome Of The Rock  
2010

Multi-media installation

Abraaj Group Art Prize Collection

Image courtesy of Abraaj Group Art Prize

Kader Attia is best recognised for his dramatic installations that convey his interest in issues of migration, identity, architecture and urban politics, and the consequent paradoxical relationship between absence and presence.

The subject of *History of Myth: The Small Dome of the Rock* is one of the world's most widely recognised and fiercely contested monuments. Depicting Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock in his piece, the 7th century architectural monument is re-imagined in the composition of two ready-made objects: a brass bolt and two silver nuts. Projected onto a screen, the objects achieve a symbolic grandeur and are released from their commonplace associations. Attia complements the projection of the architecture with an experiential soundtrack: the whistling of wind charged with infra-bass emanating through four directional speakers. The sounds echo the wind against the mosque's walkway. Whilst the installation invites viewers to reflect on the nature of religious icons, it also offers a contemplative space, decontextualised from the site's political and religious discord. Attention is therefore directed to the sheer beauty and architectural magnitude of the Dome of the Rock.

Born in 1970 in France to Algerian parents, Attia studied art and philosophy in Paris. In 1993, he spent a year at Escola de Artes Aplicades in Barcelona. He held his first solo exhibition in 1996 in the Democratic Republic of Congo and has since participated widely in international exhibitions. *History of A Myth: The Small Dome Of The Rock* received the Abraaj Capital Art Prize (2010). Attia lives and works in Berlin.



Zineb Sedira

Mother Tongue

2002

Video installation

3 plasma screens, 3 videos, 3 headphones

27 min

Musée national de l'histoire et des cultures de l'immigration, CNHI Paris

© Zineb Sedira

Image courtesy of Kamel Mennour, Paris

London-based artist Zineb Sedira works across photography, video and installation. Sedira is known for her practice that engages with issues relating to colonialism, diaspora, immigration and the role of storytelling within those experiences.

*Mother Tongue* considers how changes in language, particularly among migrant communities, estrange generations from one another. Across three video screens, three generations of women (Sedira, her mother and daughter) attempt to discuss, through an interview-type format, their individual memories of school as young girls. As each woman speaks in her native tongue (Arabic, French and English respectively), the artist reveals how communication breaks down between the first and third generations. Sedira conveys this frustration to the viewer by choosing not to use subtitles. Although the bare white walls offer no contextual clues, the linguistic trail from Arabic to French to English follows Sedira's own personal immigration history: from her birthplace in Algeria, to her childhood in France and adulthood in England. As the grandmother and granddaughter struggle to communicate, the legacy of colonialism is shown as a threat to the familial bonds formed through memory and story-telling.

Born in Algeria in 1963, Sedira grew up in Paris before moving to England in 1986. She trained at London's Central St. Martin's School of Art, Slade School of Art, and the Royal College of Art. She has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the world. She is a recipient of the Chevalier des Ordres des Arts et des Lettres, awarded by the French Ministry of Culture. She lives and works in London.



Adel Abidin  
Three Love Songs  
2010  
Three Channel Video installation  
8 min 41 sec  
Artist Collection  
Image Courtesy of the Artist

Helsinki-based artist Adel Abidin has created a body of work that is compelling in its combination of meticulous, thoughtful design and strategic use of irony to reflect on a host of contemporary political issues such as displacement, alienation, and the ongoing conflict in Iraq.

*Three Love Songs* is a video installation that presents three archetypal western chanteuses: a 1950s lounge performer, a jazz singer performing in a restaurant and a pop sensation singing a ballad. Although each female appears to be performing a sultry love song, they are in fact singing well-known Iraqi songs commissioned by Saddam Hussein to glorify his military regime. Paradoxically, the masculine content of such nationalist songs mirrors the sensuality of their performances for an assumed male audience. Instructed to emphatically sing each melody in an Iraqi dialect of Arabic, the women are unaware of the songs' meaning and seem to unwittingly profess the desires of the regime. *Three Love Songs* underscores the insidious power of ideology while highlighting a contemporary relationship between music and propaganda.

Born in 1973 in Iraq, Abidin received his Bachelor of Arts in 2000 from the College of Fine Arts at the University of Baghdad. He continued his training in Finland, receiving a Master of Fine Arts in 2005 from the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki. Abidin participated in the Nordic Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007) and the 11th Cairo Biennale (2008). He has shown widely throughout Europe, the U.S., and the Arab world, including a solo exhibition at Darat al Funun in Amman, Jordan. He lives and works in Helsinki.



Sharif Waked  
To Be Continued...  
2009  
Single Channel Digital Video  
41 min 33 sec  
Edition 5/5  
Barjeel Art Foundation Collection  
Image courtesy of the Artist

Through painting, video and installation, interdisciplinary artist Sharif Waked explores contemporary politics. Compelling in his use of irony, Waked poignantly exposes the power of the gaze and the daily realities of injustice often with a particular focus on Palestine.

In its formal language, *To Be Continued...* appears to enact a video testimony of a living martyr about to embark on a suicide mission. Using familiar visual signifiers and clichés often seen in suicide bomber farewell videos, a man sits with his rifle reciting in Arabic from an open book while a green flag with machine guns hangs in the background. Despite these visual associations, the man reads from the book: *A Thousand and One Nights*, a compilation of stories that centres around the character, Scheherazade, who marries a Persian King Shahryar, known for marrying women only to murder them the day after. To protect herself, Scheherazade captivates the King with a folktale each day, only to leave the story's conclusion until the following night. This continues for 1001 nights ending his gruesome practice. *To Be Continued...* brings together two types of narratives, folktale and testimony, both of which are narrated in the fragile space between life and death in order to critically reflect on the region's most enduring stereotypes.

Waked was born in 1964 in Nazareth to a Palestinian refugee family from Mjedil. From 1983-86, he studied Art and Philosophy at Haifa University. Since 2000, he has participated in numerous international exhibitions and biennials. He lives and works between Nazareth and Haifa.



Sharif Waked

Chic Point

2003

Single Channel Digital Video

5 min 27 sec

Edition 4/5

Jean Marc Decrop Collection

Image courtesy of the Artist

Chic Point: Fashion for Israeli Checkpoints is one of Waked's most well known works and reflects on issues of surveillance, power, humiliation, desire, the body and masculinity. The video brings together two radically different worlds: the high fashion catwalk and the Israeli checkpoint. One of the most salient signs of Palestinian life, the checkpoints restrict the movement of Palestinians and subject them on a daily basis to strip searches by Israeli authorities checking for suicide bombs. Set to the heavy beat of techno music, Chic Point—a play on the word check point—portrays slender male models strutting down the catwalk in heavily tailored trends that expose isolated parts of their body. The video concludes with a series of photographs taken between 2000-03, portraying Palestinian men being searched at Israeli checkpoints. As the visual codes revealing the body shift from the catwalk to the checkpoint, the pleasure of the capitalist gaze that desires both the body and the fashion is violently interrupted by the reality of life under military occupation.

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Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige  
*A Letter Can Always Reach its Destination*  
2011

Video installation featuring Double HD Video, 122  
min, hologram, audio, booklet

Abraaj Group Art Prize Collection

Image courtesy of Abraaj Group Art Prize

Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige are part of a generation of artists based in Beirut whose multi-disciplinary practices focus on images and narratives of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-90) and postwar society. Reflecting on the space between individual memory and collective history, Hadjithomas and Joreige question the conventional boundaries between fictional and historical narration.

*A Letter Can Always Reach Its Destination* is suggestive of Hadjithomas and Joreige's broader interest in the role of narrative in animating the concept of virtual and material presences. Since 1999, they have been collecting over 5000 spam and scam emails. Playing with the ways in which such emails prey upon the receiver's empathy for rescue, charity or immigration in exchange for a sum of money, the artists commissioned non-professional actors to embody the emails, transforming the original generic format into a monologue that imagines the sender as an individual speaking in realtime. Grounded in the contemporary moment, based on a tradition of swindle from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the project narrates a kind of strange history of the past 10 years. It also exposes the geopolitical networks, and technologies that enable such virtual corruption while highlighting the hazy divide between cyber and human connections.

Hadjithomas and Joreige work together as artists and filmmakers, producing fictional films and documentaries, photographs and video installations. Together, they have created numerous installations and videos which have been shown in important museums and art centres around the world, and more recently at The Museum of Modern Art in Paris, Victoria & Albert Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art; the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston; Centre Georges Pompidou, the New Museum in New York; Mori Art Museum in Tokyo and KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin. In the past two years, they have participated in the Sharjah Biennial, the Istanbul Biennial, Biennale de Lyon, the Kochi Biennale, the Gwanju Biennale and the Triennale of Paris.