

SELECTIONS



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INSIDE THE ISSUE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ART
REMBRANDT, VERMEER AND THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE AT THE LOUVRE ABU DHABI
GREGORY BUCHAKJIAN AND HIS CABINET OF BROKEN BODIES

ARTS-STYLE-CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND
#48 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
IN ART
SPRING 2019 - LBP 30,000/AED 74

Paul Guiragossian,
Lost in Confusion,
1980s. Oil on canvas,
130 x 100 cm. Courtesy
of Christie's

Artwork chosen by
Michael Jeha

IT'S A EMOTIONAL EXPLORATION OF THE ART WORLD: WHICH ARE THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS WHEN IT COMES TO ART? ARTISTS, CURATORS, GALLERISTS, MUSEUM DIRECTORS, ART COLLECTORS AND MORE GIVE THOUGHTFUL AND DEEPLY PERSONAL ANSWERS TO OUR QUERIES, WHILE SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE CONTEMPORARY ART SCENE – AND OFFERING A GLIMPSE INTO ITS FUTURE.

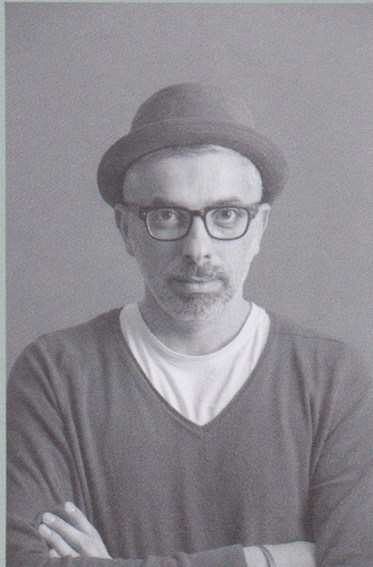
Artworks in this section have been selected by the contributors referencing modern and contemporary Arab art.



BIOGRAPHY

Aaron Cezar

Aaron Cezar is the founding director of Delfina Foundation, where he both curates and develops its interrelated programme of residencies, exhibitions and public events. He has overseen the physical expansion of Delfina Foundation into London's largest host of international residencies. He is also Advisor-at-Large at Art Jameel, one of Delfina Foundation's Strategic Partners. Independently and through Delfina Foundation, Cezar sits on numerous boards, committees and advisory groups.



Adel Abidin

Adel Abidin was born in Baghdad in 1973. He moved to Helsinki, Finland, in 2001 and has lived there since. Abidin joined the Finnish Art Academy in 2003 to pursue a Master's degree in art. During that time, he switched his practice from full-time painter to multimedia artist, and since 2004 he's pursued a career as a video and installation artist.

Abidin's art uses various media, such as videos, video installations, multimedia sculptures, sound-based installations, photography and paintings, to explore contemporary issues. His main point of departure is always linked to the intention to explore the complex relationship between visual art and politics and identity. Using a sharp palette of irony and humour, he creates works that explore different social situations while dealing with elusive experiences and cultural alienation.

The artist uses his cross-cultural background, as an Iraqi artist living in Helsinki, to create a distinct visual language often laced with sarcasm and paradox, while maintaining an ultimately humanistic approach. This sarcasm used is nothing but a medium of provocation to serve the purpose of extending the mental borders of the artwork beyond the limits of the exhibition space. Abidin is particularly interested in creating opportunities to prolong the discussions beyond artwork by enabling the audience to convey mental elements from the work into their daily life. He always finds the words "politics" and "identity" to be more than a terminology or a path that we travel in, as they unfold to other concepts like discrimination and mass media manipulation.

Abidin has received The Finland Prize for Visual Arts in (2015) and Five Years Grant from The Art Council of Finland in (2013). He was also an Ars Fennica Prize nominee in 2011. Abidin has been invited as a visiting lecturer at various art schools, including the College of Liberal Arts, Oregon State University, Portland, Oregon (2010), the Art Academy of Helsinki, Kuva, (2015), LASALLE College of Arts, Singapore (2016) and the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), Santa Clarita, California (2016).

Additionally, Abidin has exhibited his work at various biennales including the Moscow Biennale (2017), the 5th Guangzhou Triennial (2015), the 56th Venice Biennale-Iran Pavilion (2015), the 56th International Art Exhibition-Venice Biennale (2015), the Biennale of Contemporary Art of Bosnia (2013), the 54th Venice Biennale-Iraq Pavilion (2011), the 10th Sharjah Biennial (2011), the 17th Biennale of Sydney (2010), the 11th Cairo Biennale (2008), the 4th Gothenburg Biennale (2007), the 52nd Venice Biennale-Nordic Pavilion (2007) and the 5th Istanbul Biennale (2005).

Andrée Sfeir-Semler

Andrée Sfeir-Semler is an art historian who founded her eponymous gallery in Germany in 1985. Twenty years later, in 2005, she opened a second gallery in Beirut, transforming a defunct factory into the first white cube space in the Middle East. She studied history and history of art at the American University of Beirut as well as at the Sorbonne University in Paris under Pierre Bourdieu. She earned her PhD in 1980 at the University of Bielefeld. Sfeir-Semler Gallery has been representing artists who concentrate in their practice on conceptual and minimal art. Since 2003 the gallery has focused on contemporary art from the Arab World and has been instrumental in launching and developing the careers of numerous artists from the region.



Ashkan Baghestani, Sotheby's Head of Sale and Contemporary Arab and Iranian Art Specialist

Ashkan Baghestani joined Sotheby's Middle East Department in 2012 focusing on the Contemporary Doha auctions and developing this increasingly important art platform, including the April 2013 Contemporary Art Doha sale which realised \$15.2 million and established the highest price for an auction in the Middle East region, with records set for nine artists, including the record price for a living Arab artist, Chant Avedissian. His in-depth knowledge of the market for Modern and Contemporary Middle Eastern and Iranian works, his fluency in Persian, French and English, and his contacts in the region have been invaluable in cultivating this important collecting field at Sotheby's. He constantly travels across the Middle East region, participating in Sotheby's numerous travelling exhibitions across the region such as Jeddah Art Week, Saudi Arabia and Dubai Art Week Travelling Exhibition, UAE.

Mr. Baghestani grew up in Geneva, Switzerland and has travelled extensively to study and work in Paris, New York and London. Before joining Sotheby's in the summer of 2012, he studied Design and Management at Parson's, The New School for Design, in the United States in 2009, earning a BBA Degree and followed later with a diploma in Middle Eastern Art from Sotheby's Institute in 2011. He actively worked for the Jameel Prize at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

BIOGRAPHY



Basel Dalloul

Basel Dalloul founded the Dalloul Art Foundation in 2017 to manage and promote his father's (Dr. Ramzi Dalloul) vast collection of modern and contemporary Arab art. At over 4,000 pieces it is the largest collection of its kind in private hands. The collection includes but is not limited to paintings, photography, sculpture, video and mixed media art. Dalloul has had a passion for art since he was very young, inspired by his mother and father, both of whom are also passionate about art in all its forms.

Deborah Najar

Deborah Najar is the Co-Founder of the JPNF (Jean-Paul Najar Foundation), a museum for Contemporary Art located in Dubai. Among the first non-profits in the UAE, the JPNF came about as a partnership with Alserkal Avenue, from a desire to offer a diverse artistic experience, with strong emphasis on patronage, artist-collector archives and western abstraction. Nearly three years later, the JPNF team have welcomed over 30,000 visitors, curated nine shows, published catalogues and hosted rich public programs for all audiences, often in partnership with local and international institutions.

From 2011-2015, Deborah was the Middle East Representative for Bonhams, structuring two auctions a year as well as managing a diverse client portfolio across departments and reporting directly into the Group CEO. From 2005 to 2011 she oversaw the development of De Beers Diamond Jewellers in the Middle East as founding director and was later promoted to GM. She sits on the board of the Gstaad New Year's Music Festival, the Global Fine Arts Awards and heads up the Global Private Museum Network, which regroups the stakeholders of some of the world's largest private museums. She arrived in Dubai in 2004, is a graduate of the London School of Economics and speaks four languages.





Mahmoud Obaidi

Mahmoud Obaidi (b. 1966, Baghdad) is an Iraqi-Canadian artist whose work has been exhibited in museums and galleries around the world. After leaving Iraq in 1991, he obtained his Master's of Fine Arts at the University of Guelph in Canada, and completed diplomas in new media and film from Toronto and Los Angeles, respectively. His work has been exhibited extensively, including the British Museum, London-Qatar Museums, Doha; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Saatchi Gallery, London; the National Museum of Bahrain; the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; the National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman; Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Texas; the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Baie-Saint-Paul, Quebec; the Nabu Museum, Lebanon and others. His work is part of the permanent collection of a number of significant museums, foundations and private collections.



Manuel Rabaté, Director of Louvre Abu Dhabi

Manuel Rabaté is a graduate of the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po, 1998), and of HEC Business School (2001). He began his career as a deputy director at the auditorium of the Musée du Louvre from 2002 to 2005. He participated in the creation of new programmes on Islamic Arts in the context of the first performance contract between the French government and the museum for its modernisation. He joined the Musée du Quai Branly as deputy director of cultural development a year before its opening in 2006, then led the launching of the first exhibitions abroad. Rabaté joined Agence France-Muséums in 2008, a year after the signing of the intergovernmental agreement between France and Abu Dhabi. He has followed the Louvre Abu Dhabi project from its conceptual phase until its operational implementation as secretary general and acting CEO since 2010. He was appointed CEO of Agence France-Muséums in 2013 to set up in Abu Dhabi a multidisciplinary team of museum professionals and follow through the phases of the project realization in collaboration with the major French museums and their UAE partners. In September 2016, Rabaté was appointed director of Louvre Abu Dhabi by the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi. Aside from his duties in the service of museums, Rabaté has also chaired the reflection group Culture & Management, in which he had created the museum department. He has also taught arts and cultural management at various universities in France and Abu Dhabi.



Hormoz Hematian

Hormoz Hematian founded Dastan's Basement in 2012 to showcase emerging and experimental Iranian art then followed with Dastan+2, dedicated to established artists and Dastan:Outside, a program of curated pop-up exhibitions throughout town. Together, the three initiatives cover the full spectrum of Iranian contemporary and modern art practices. In addition to an extensive local program of shows, pop-ups and eclectic collaborations, the Dastan group of galleries can be regularly sighted at established international venues such as Frieze New York, Art Basel Hong Kong, Art Dubai and Contemporary Istanbul.

BIOGRAPHY



Michael Jeha

Michael Jeha is the managing director and deputy chairman of Christie's Middle East. In his role as managing director of Christie's Middle East, Jeha is responsible for implementing and executing the firm's strategic and commercial vision for the region. Christie's was the first international auction house to open an office in Dubai in 2005 and began holding bi-annual sales the following year. Under his management, Dubai has become a regular and important selling centre on the international auction calendar with the two annual auctions of Modern and Contemporary Arab, Iranian and Turkish Art, achieving sales of over \$250 million. Jeha joined Christie's in January 1999, exactly 20 years ago. Originally Lebanese, Jeha was born in London and studied at the City University Business School.

Mounira El Solh

Born 1978 in Beirut, Lebanon, Mounira El Solh lives and works between Beirut and Amsterdam. She studied painting at the Lebanese University, Beirut, from 1997 to 2001, and fine arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam, from 2003 to 2006. She was also research resident at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam in 2007 and 2008. She is a visual artist embracing inter alia video and video installations, painting and drawing, embroidery, and performative gestures. Irony and self-reflectivity are central strategies for her work, which explores feminist issues, tracks patterns of micro-history, is socially engaged, and can be political and escapist all at once. In 2008, Al Solh started a NOA Magazine, a performative gesture co-edited with collaborators such as Fadi El Tofeili and Mona Abu Rayyan, and Jacques Aswad (NOA III). She has had solo exhibitions at the Art Institute Chicago (2018); ALT, Istanbul (2016); KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2014); Center for Contemporary Art, Glasgow (2013); Art in General, New York (2012); and Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam (2011). As well as group exhibitions at C'arré d'Art Musée d'Art Contemporain de Nîmes (2018); documenta 14, Athens and Kassel (2017); 56th Venice Biennial (2015); New Museum, New York (2014); Homeworks, Beirut (2013); House of Art, Munich (2010); and the 11th International Istanbul Biennial (2009).



Courtesy Whitten Sabbatini who photographed it at the Art Institute of Chicago



Photo by Sueraya Shaheen, 2014

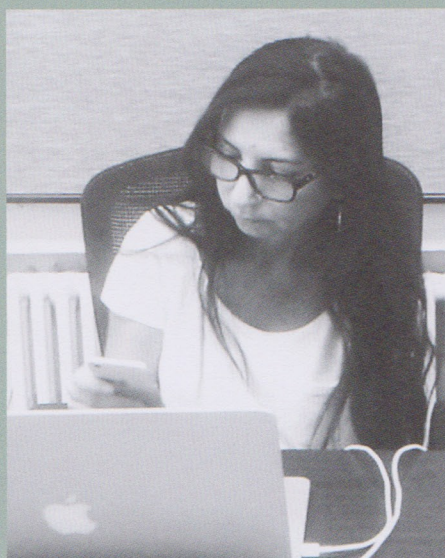
Nada Shabout

Nada Shabout is a professor of art history and the coordinator of the Contemporary Arab and Muslim Cultural Studies Initiative (CAMCSI) at the University of North Texas. Shabout's research and teaching addresses modern and contemporary visual practices and problems of representation from a global perspective, with emphasis on questions of methodology and in relation to the cultural politics of the Middle East. She teaches courses on modern Arab art, global modern art, contemporary Middle Eastern art and Islamic art. She is the founding president of the Association for Modern and Contemporary Art from the Arab World, Iran and Turkey (AMCA). She is the author of *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics*, University of Florida Press, 2007; co-editor with Salwa Mikdadi of *New Vision: Arab Art in the 21st Century*, Thames & Hudson, 2009; and co-editor with Anneka Lenssen and Sarah Rogers of *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2018. She is currently working on a new book with the working title, *Demarcating Modernism in Iraqi Art: The Dialectics of the Decorative, 1951-1979* for which she received a Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant.



Nadim Karam

Nadim Karam – an artist and architect working from Beirut – initially trained in architecture at the American University of Beirut then earned a doctorate in architecture from the University of Tokyo, Japan. He has recently finished building his own workshop, A.MUSE.UM in the Lebanese mountains, which will be also used as a platform for art, research and exhibitions. With Atelier Hapsitus, the pluri-disciplinary group he founded in 1996, he has realised temporary and permanent urban interventions in cities worldwide such as Prague, Beirut, Melbourne, Tokyo, London, Kuwait and Yerevan, using public art as an instrument for urban stimulation. Based on a cross-fertilisation of disciplines and nationalities, the 20-year-old practice has a multidisciplinary composition, which feeds into the experimental nature of its work. He has held academic positions in Tokyo and Beirut, gives lectures internationally and has published several books.



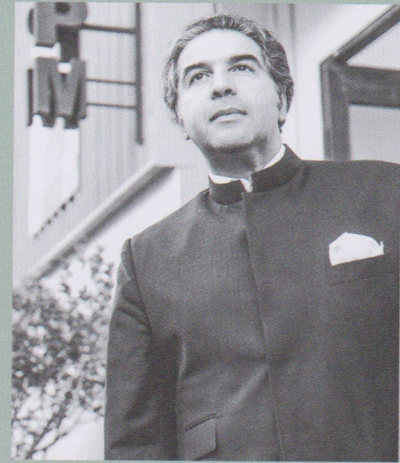
Nayla Tamraz

Nayla Tamraz is a Lebanese writer, curator, researcher and professor of literature and art history at Saint Joseph University in Beirut where she has also been, from 2008 to 2017, the chair of the French Literature Department and where she created, in 2010, the MA program in art criticism and curatorial studies that she currently heads. She also organized several events including the symposium *Littérature, Art et Monde Contemporain: Récits, Histoire, Mémoire* (2014, USJ, Beirut). In parallel, she leads a career as an art critic and a curator. In this context, she co-curated the exhibition *Le Secret* (Espace Ygreg, Les Bons Voisins, 2017) in Paris and curated the exhibition *Poetics, Politics, Places* that took place in the Museum of Fine Arts of Tucumán in Argentina, in the frame of the International Biennale of Contemporary Art of South America (BienalSur, 2017). Her research is about the issues related to the comparative theory and aesthetics of literature and art in their historical context, which brings her to the topics of history, memory and narratives in literature and art in post-war Lebanon. Her current research explores the relationship between poetics and politics as well as the representations associated to the notion of territory.

BIOGRAPHY

Omar Kholeif

Omar Kholeif is an Egyptian-born, British writer and curator. He is co-curator of Leaving the Echo Chamber, the 14th Sharjah Biennial and Time, Forward! The V-A-C Foundation Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale. He is also a guest curator for Abu Dhabi Art and the Manchester International Festival, as well as a visiting tutor at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford. Kholeif has held curatorial positions, including Manilow senior curator and director of global initiatives at MCA Chicago; curator at Whitechapel Gallery, London; senior curator at Cornerhouse and HOME, Manchester; curator at FACT, Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, Liverpool; founding artistic director of the UK's Arab Film Festival and senior editor at Ibraaz Publishing. He has curated or co-curated major international projects including the Cyprus Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale; FOCUS: Middle East, North Africa and the Mediterranean at the Armory Show, New York; and the 2012 Liverpool Biennial. The author and or editor of over 20 books and catalogues on art, Kholeif's recent books include *Goodbye, World! Looking at Art in the Digital Age* (Sternberg Press) and *The Artists Who Will Change the World* (Thames and Hudson, both 2018).



Ramin Salsali

Ramin Salsali started his collection at the age of 21 and has been developing it ever since. Born in Tehran in 1964, he studied economics, strategic management and marketing with a focus on industry design in Germany and England. Parallel to his studies he founded a specialised consulting company for innovative and green technologies for application in the field of the petrochemical industries. Later, he entered into real estate development with particular focus on the preservation of historical buildings. For the last 12 years, his vision to share his passion for art with the public has been the moving force to establish a museum. In April 2011, Ramin Salsali decided to open his private museum in Dubai realising a long-term dream. Salsali Private Museum (SPM) opened its doors on the 11.11.2011. SPM is the first Private Museum for contemporary art in the region in which Salsali's collection of over 800 pieces of painting, photography, video art, sculpture and installation is showcased. SPM also hosts the collections of guest collectors and travelling exhibitions from around the world. Salsali's mission is to contribute to the development of art, culture and creative communities, support artists and promote the culture of collecting by encouraging individuals, families and corporations to collect art and share it with the public. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai has recognised and honoured Ramin Salsali as Patron of the Arts for the consecutive years, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 for his sustained support of the art community in Dubai.



Till Fellrath and Sam Bardaouil

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath are founders of the multidisciplinary curatorial platform Art Reoriented in Munich and New York, chairmen of the Montblanc Cultural Foundation in Hamburg and affiliate curators at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin. Bardaouil and Fellrath have jointly curated numerous critically acclaimed exhibitions at renowned museums and institutions worldwide, and have held teaching positions at universities including the London School of Economics and New York University. They are award-winning authors with contributions to academic journals, books, newspapers and art magazines. They are currently preparing their international thematic exhibition *Walking through Walls* opening in September 2019 at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin. For the upcoming 58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia they are curators of the National Pavilion of the United Arab Emirates.



Courtesy of UAE National Pavilion

Samia Halaby

Samia A. Halaby was born in Jerusalem, Palestine in 1936. She is a visual artist, writer, scholar and activist. Now, rounding out her sixth decade as an active painter, she continues to explore abstraction and its relationship to reality. She has exhibited in galleries, museums and art fairs throughout the US, Europe, Asia and South America. Her work is housed in private and public collections around the world, including the Guggenheim Museum (New York and Abu Dhabi) and the Institut du Monde Arabe. Halaby has authored and contributed to a number of books, notably: *Liberation Art of Palestine* (2001), *Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre* (2016) and *Growing Shapes: Aesthetic Insights of an Abstract Painter* (2018). She is the subject of two monographs and numerous reviews.



Courtesy Triangle Gallery, London, February 2013

Venetia Porter

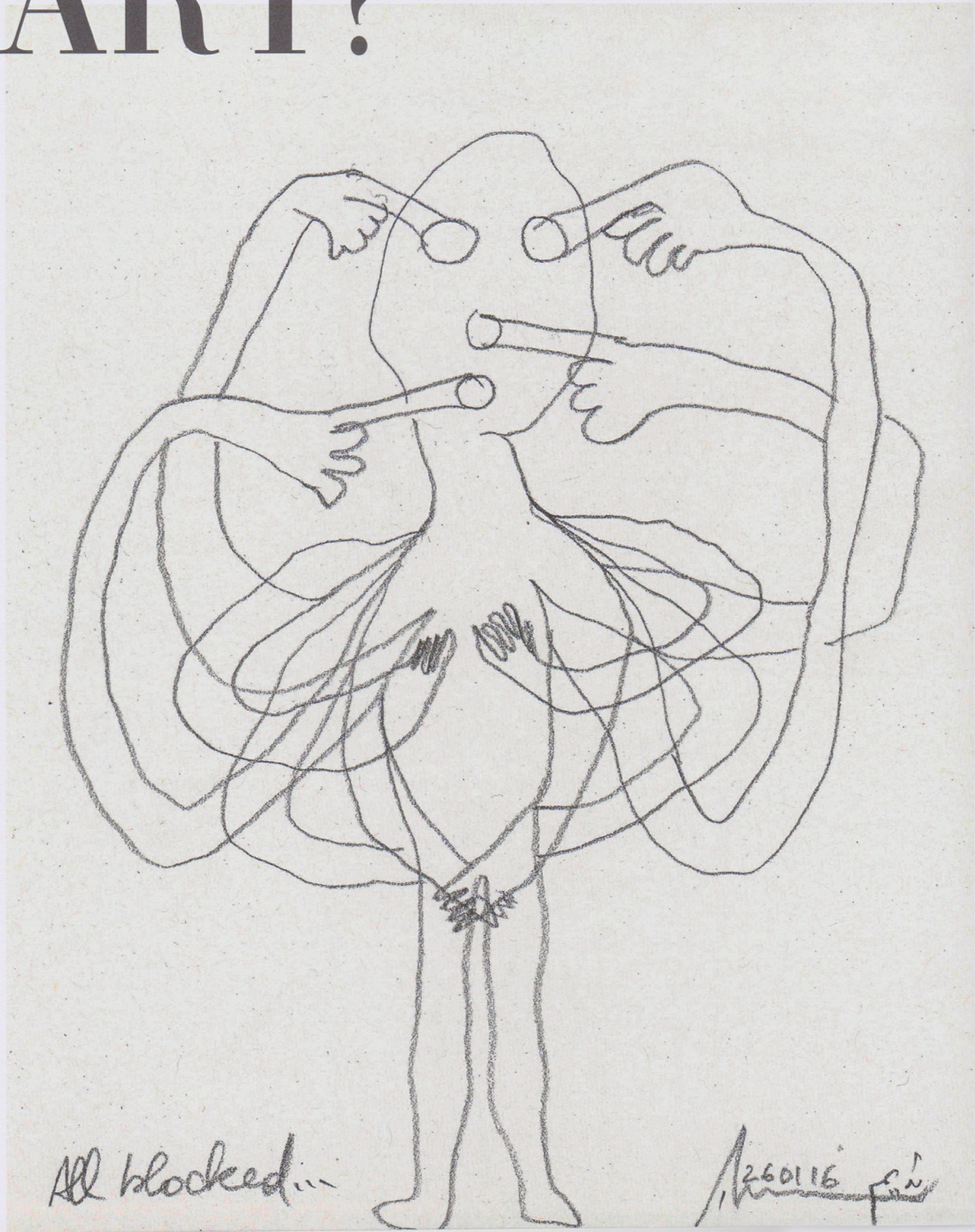
Venetia Porter is a curator responsible for the collection of Islamic art, in particular of the Arab World and Turkey, as well as developing the collection of the modern and contemporary art of the Middle East.

She was previously curator of Islamic coins in the Department of Coins and Medals. She gained a degree in Arabic and Persian at the University of Oxford, followed by a M.Phil in Islamic Art, obtaining her PhD on "The history and monuments of the Tahirid dynasty of the Yemen 858-923/1454-1517" from the University of Durham. She recently curated the exhibition *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam* (2012).



Photo by Munir Atalla

WHAT IS ART?



Aaron Cezar: A way of thinking and approaching the world, often represented as objects but could also incorporate actions.

Adel Abidin: Art always represents a new way of seeing and perceiving the world around us aiming to create new arguments that would challenge the existing realities. Through this puzzling challenge we manage to notice the different surfaces of the actual realities that are wrapping us, that which enables us to break through with totally new perceptions.

Ashkan Baghestani: Art is that which moves you, which has the power to make you tense or happy. At its core, art is something that forces you to think outside your comfort zone, making you question your environment, whether past or present.

Basel Dalloul: Well, the dictionary definition of art is as follows: "the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power." Art is the creative expression of an individual or group of individuals. Art takes many forms, some visual, some literary, some musical or even performative. Mother nature is the most divine of all artists. I've even seen real feces used in a work of "shit art."

Hormoz Hematian: Art is an intellectual production that has a physical manifestation.

Mahmoud Obaidi: I'm not sure yet, but it's an act of doing or making something. It's a reaction and documentation of an event.

Manuel Rabaté: It takes time to give the full philosophical explanation but as the director of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, my definition would be: all manifestations of creativity and beauty in mankind. That would be a way to encompass many formats being painting, sculpture but also writing, performing arts, beyond what we exhibit in the galleries.

Michael Jeha: Art is a visual expression of the imagination that is primarily non-functional. It's a form of communication that produces an emotional and subjective reaction. Art can have many facets and over time its scope has broadened to encompass not only flat art and sculpture, but also video, conceptual and performance arts, amongst others.

Mounira Al Solh: Art can be any practice you designate as art.

Nadim Karam: Mmmm; what is art?

Nayla Tamraz: It's not easy to give an absolute definition of art, especially when this definition has been repeatedly questioned through history. If there should be an absolute definition of art, well, I would say that art is about creativity, in the sense that it's an operation within which one invests a certain energy called creativity. And since this energy seems to be vital to some people, I would say that art is necessary to those who practice it. Art is then creativity and necessity. A necessity to the artist, and a necessity to human societies also, but that's another debate. Other definitions, more contingent ones, could be added to this constant, because they are more historical. In the philosophical tradition, art is defined by its aesthetic dimension: art is beauty. But we also know that it is difficult to uphold such a statement since Duchamp transformed a urinal into a fountain, that is, into a work of art. If the Fountain is a work of art, it is because it was considered, and maybe acknowledged, that art defines more or less itself as such (the famous "Art as art" by Joseph Kosuth), and that it doesn't necessarily lie in the work of art itself anymore but in the idea. That is the conceptual shift. Nevertheless, it has to be said that these definitions that seem to be simple are far from being simple, and that the human psyche, being the heir to an old tradition and a strong discourse with long-lasting effects, resists to give up the idea of beauty. Let's then keep in mind that art is a space that is permanently open to new meaning donations, and that it is in a continuously questioning of what it is. Art, in sum, is asking the question of art. That is where, probably, the essence of art lies.

Omar Kholeif: For me, art is anything that critically asks questions of the world around us.

Samia Halaby: In painting, it is the exploration of the language of form.

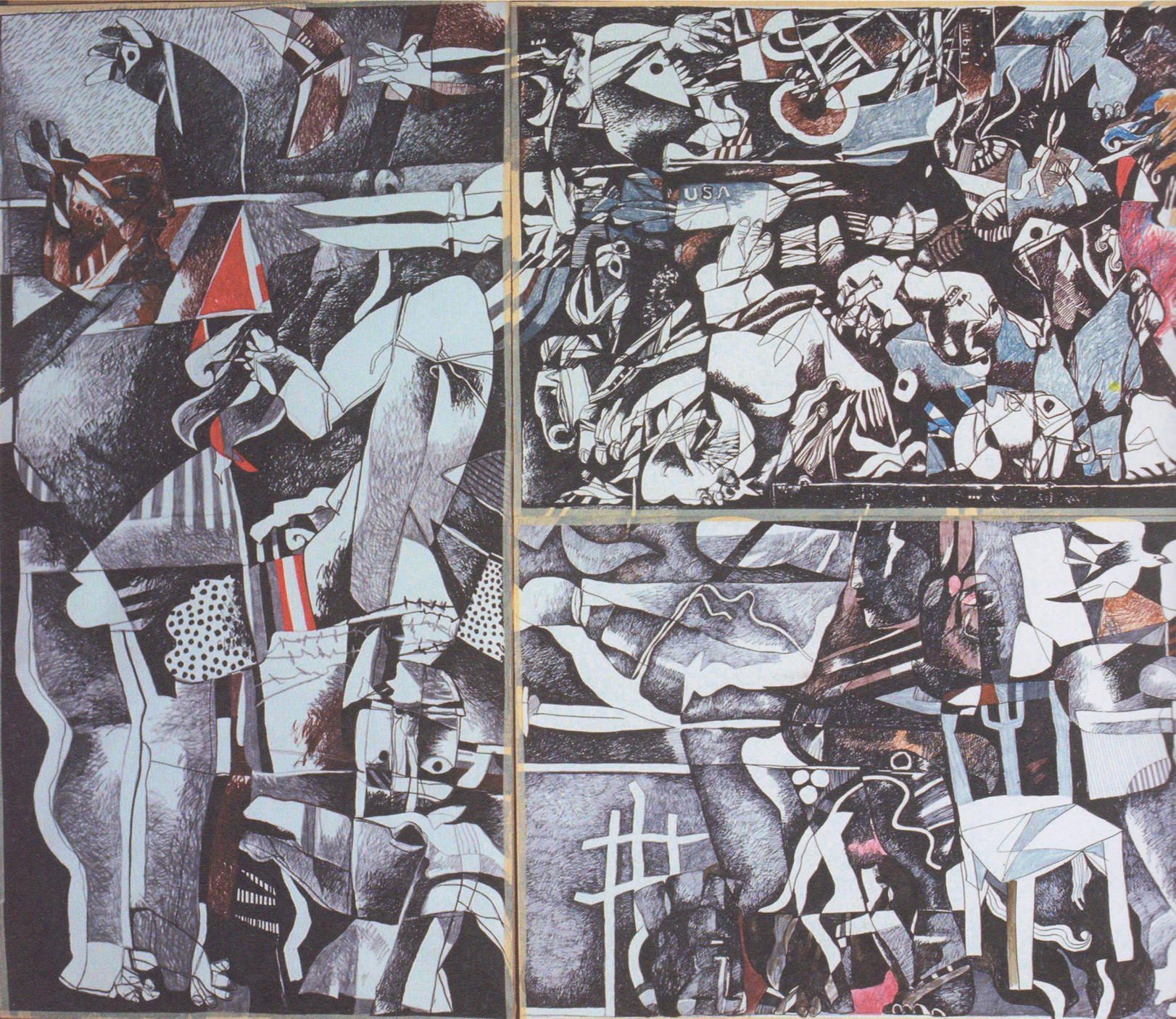
Till Fellrath and Sam Bardaouil: Art is able to express all those things, that cannot be put into words.

Venetia Porter: Something that moves you, provokes a response, that makes you want to keep looking and go deeper.

ART — FAQs

Dia Azzawi, Sabra and Shatila Massacre, 1982-83. Ink and wax crayon on paper mounted on canvas, 300 x 750 cm. © Dia al-Azzawi

Artwork chosen by
Venetia Porter





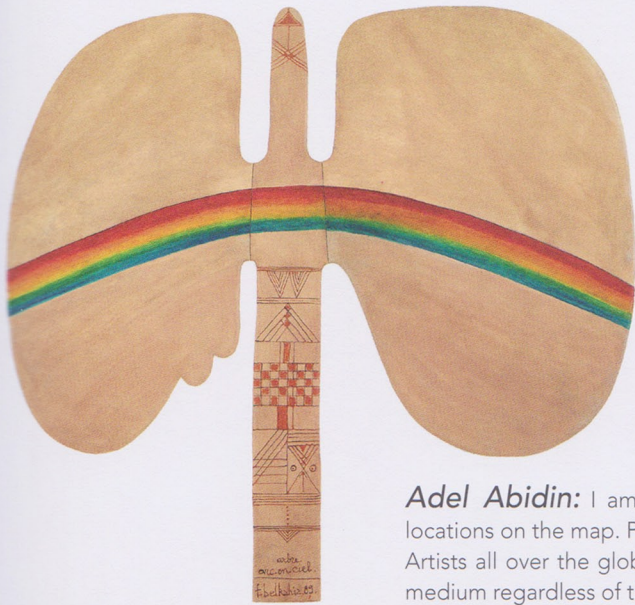
WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ARAB ART?

Willy Aractingi,
Clair de Lune sur les
Pyramides, 1988. Oil
on Canvas,
81 x 100 cm. Courtesy
of Christie's

Artwork chosen by
Michael Jeha



02.



Farid Belkahia
(1934-2014) Morocco
Rainbow Tree, 1989
pigments on skin
mounted on panel
157 x 179 x 1.5 cm
Courtesy of Ramzi
& Saeda Dalloul Art
Foundation

Artwork chosen by
Ashkan Baghestani

Adel Abidin: I am strongly against categorising any art practice based on nationalities or certain locations on the map. Pigeonholes always have their negative approaches to what is actually happening. Artists all over the globe have the same point of departure while choosing to express themselves in any medium regardless of their location. Yet, their environments have a huge impact on their practices, which is very normal. That does not mean that we have to label this art.

Art is more of a generic notion. The themes and elements that artists use are just ways of creating arguments to deliver further meanings. I am of course talking about genuine artists not pretentious ones.

Unfortunately, sometimes curators and art dealers categorize the works to take the easy path without sufficient research. Curators do it out of laziness for extensive research and dealers for the sake of more sells. If we want to go deeper, Arabic contemporary art does not exist, yet the scene does.

Ashkan Baghestani: As with many areas, there is a distinction between the academic definition and what you would see in galleries and auction houses. My personal opinion is that contemporary Arab art encompasses everything following the Revolution in Iran and the Mecca Siege – both earth-shattering events taking place in 1979.

Basel Dalloul: There is contemporary Arab art and the contemporary art movement and the difference between both is that one describes the state of art (an adjective) and another is the name of the movement itself. Locally, the latter is defined as art created after the 1980s while the Contemporary art movement is not only the art produced after 1980 but also the one involved with the dynamic forces of its time, be it local, or global. The soul of a contemporary artwork lies in its concept and its ability to question the notion of art itself.

Mahmoud Obaidi: I don't think that there is such a thing as contemporary Arab art, but simply contemporary art.

Manuel Rabaté: Connection and Momentum. There is something interesting happening and many questions arise. What's the structure? What will remain? What's its legacy? Only time will tell. What is sure is that when there is movement, creation and artists, something interesting will remain.

Nadim Karam: Is it a reflection of contemporary Western art?

Omar Kholeif: Contemporary Arab art is difficult to define. If it could be described through one feature it would be for its heterogeneity.

Samia Halaby: It is an innovative search for our cultural future.

Till Fellrath and Sam Bardaouil: The same as contemporary non-Arab art.

Venetia Porter: Terms such as this are incredibly problematic. Theoretically of course it is art made by artists who consider themselves to be Arab and the "Arab" world comprises 22 states. So this then suggests it is one thing which it's not. We all like labels but in the end you need to be able to define and demonstrate that there something intrinsically "Arab" for works that you may be grouping under this heading.