

The Armory Show

Focus: MENAM Special Project

CULTURUNNERS at The Armory



As Education Partner and Lead Cultural Partner of the Armory Focus: *Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean (MENAM)*, Art Jameel and Edge of Arabia will present *CULTURUNNERS*, an ongoing program hosting artistic collaborations and conversations to connect cultural territories between the USA and MENAM regions. At the Armory Show 2015, *CULTURUNNERS* will be sited in a mobile artist studio and broadcast vehicle, in the form of a modified Gulf Stream RV that uses custom-built artistic technologies to map, archive, and amplify stories and voices from the Focus section of the fair and related communities across New York.

About *CULTURUNNERS*

CULTURUNNERS is an artistic expedition across borders; it is a core component of Edge of Arabia's ongoing US Tour in partnership with Art Jameel. At the heart of the project is the development of cultural technologies that support artists in exploring and communicating alternative and often unofficial histories that can link communities between the MENAM region and United States. *CULTURUNNERS* takes shape through physical journeys and artistic creations supported by technologies for intercultural communication created through a workshop at MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology.

CULTURUNNERS is co-authored by **Azra Aksamija**, MIT Assistant Professor, and **Stephen Stapleton**, Director of Edge of Arabia, and developed in collaboration with artists who have spent a decade traveling between the US and the Middle East - from UK over Yemen to Saudi Arabia and Iran, and from the Balkans over Central Europe to United States.

CULTURUNNERS at The Armory is curated by **Azra Aksamija** and will host projects including:

- **YARN-DEZ-VOUS**: a giant quilt made of American and Middle Eastern textiles that can be transformed into letterman's jackets. Created by Azra Aksamija and developed with Andrea Boit, Lillian Harden and Karina Silvester.
- **MENAM ART MAP**: based on a text-network analysis of the region's contemporary art scene. Created by Dietmar Offenhuber, Nick Beauchamp, Chris Riedl and Siqi Zhu from NU Lab for Text, Maps and Networks at Northeastern University.
- **THE FLYING CARPET**: A series of performances by Darvish Fakhr, who will use a customised, motorized longboard (long skateboard) / Persian Carpet to travel through selected MENAM communities across New York.
- **ARITHMETIC PROGRESSIONS**: live audio and visual performances improvising with audio and video samples collected from MENAM communities. Created by Madeleine Gallagher and John Steiner.
- **A Now for MENAM**: a digital calendar that negotiates different perceptions and experiences of time across cultural artifacts from the MENAM region and the US. Created by Orkan Telhan.
- **RV SKIN-NY**: A digital and interactive re-skinning of the exterior of the *CULTURUNNERS* RV which will be launched on the first day of the fair. Led by Azra Aksamija and Stephen Stapleton. Website by One Darnley Road.

The *CULTURUNNERS* RV will also host the launch of *FREEWAY*, the online broadcast platform of Edge of Arabia's US Tour. *FREEWAY* will explore connections between the Focus and MENAM communities across New York. *FREEWAY* at The Armory is curated by **Ava Ansari** and **Stephen Stapleton** in collaboration with **Husam Al-Sayed** from Telfaz11, and supported by **SALAR**, **Yousef Poursohi**, **Hillary Sand** and **Kim Charles Kay**. Participating artists include **Brian Zeeger**, **FOUNDLAND** and **Ayman Yossri**.

As Education Partner for the Armory Symposium, Art Jameel will host a special *CULTURUNNERS* panel discussion on Friday 6th March. Featured Panelists include: Azra Aksamija, MIT Assistant Professor and *CULTURUNNERS* co-author; Husam Al Sayed, Telfaz11; Ava Ansari, Edge of Arabia Associate Curator; and Matthew Mazzotta, Artist. Moderated by Renata Papsch, General Manager Art Jameel.

For more information please contact:

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www.aljci.org | www.edgeofarabia.com | www.culturunners.com

Facebook: Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives | Edge of Arabia

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Image caption: *CULTURUNNERS* RV photomontage: Azra Aksamija, 2015.