

# THE FUTURE OF A PROMISE

Contemporary Art  
from the Arab World

Curated by Lina Lazaar

Magazzini del Sale, No. 262 – Dorsoduro,  
Fondamenta, Delle Zattere. Actv Boat Line ①, Salute

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Abdul Latif Jameel  
Community Initiatives



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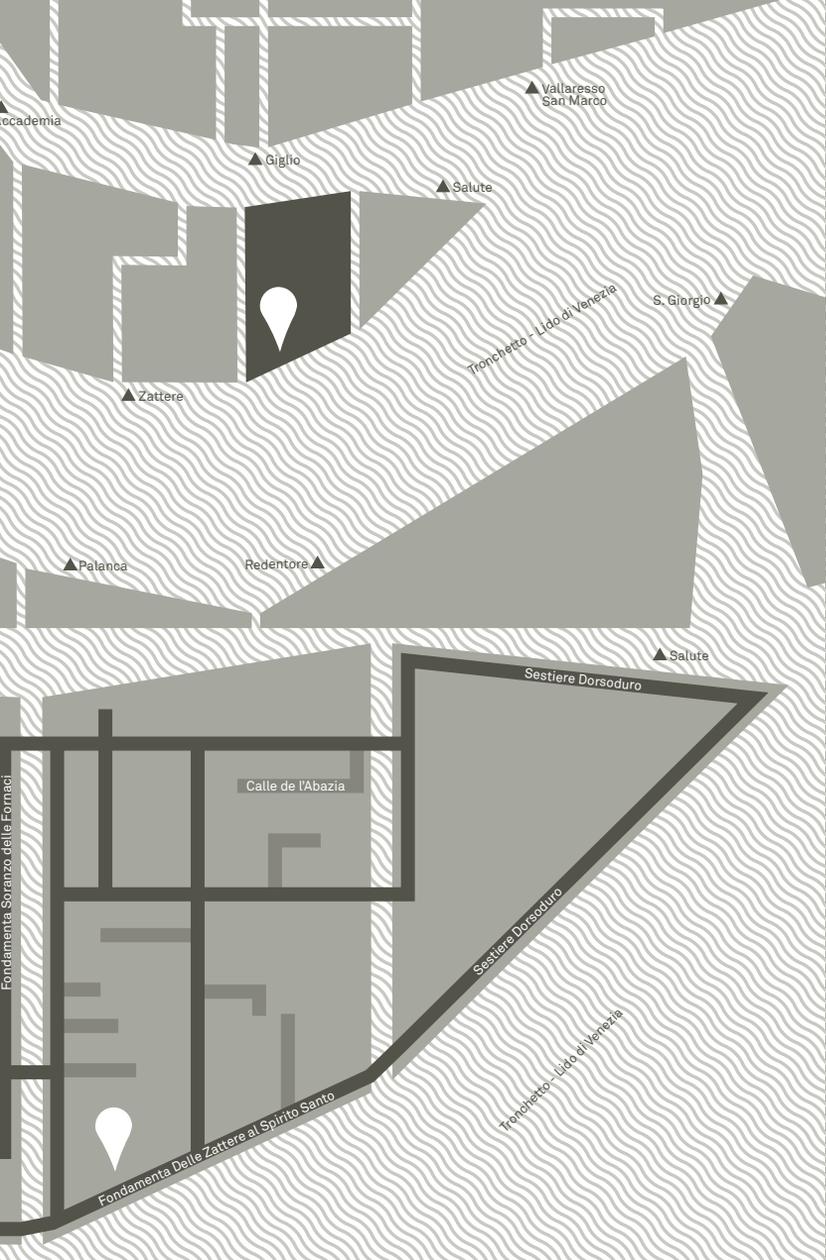
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OF  
ARABIA

Catalogue



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2nd June – 20th November 2011  
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Magazzini del Sale, No. 262 – Dorsoduro,  
Fondamenta, Delle Zattere.  
Actv Boat Line 1, Salute

[www.thefutureofapromise.com](http://www.thefutureofapromise.com)

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Presenting important artworks from across the Arab world, *The Future of a Promise* will be the Venice Biennale's first pan-Arab exhibition of contemporary art. From Tunisia all the way to Saudi Arabia, this landmark exhibition brings together more than 25 recent works and commissions, ranging from painting, drawing and photography, to video, sculpture and installation.

The exhibition is curated by Lina Lazaar, produced by Edge of Arabia and supported by Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives and Abraaj Capital.

## Venice Partners



## Production Partners

*The Future of a Promise* is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue in English, produced by Ibraaz Publishing.

## Gallery Partners



## Media Partners



What is a promise?

What does it mean to make a promise? In an age where the 'promise of the future' has become something of a cliché, what is meant by *The Future of a Promise*?

In its most basic sense, a promise is the manifestation of an intention to act or, indeed, the intention to refrain from acting in a specified way. A commitment is made on behalf of the promisee which suggests hope, expectation, and the assurance of a future deed committed to the best interests of all.

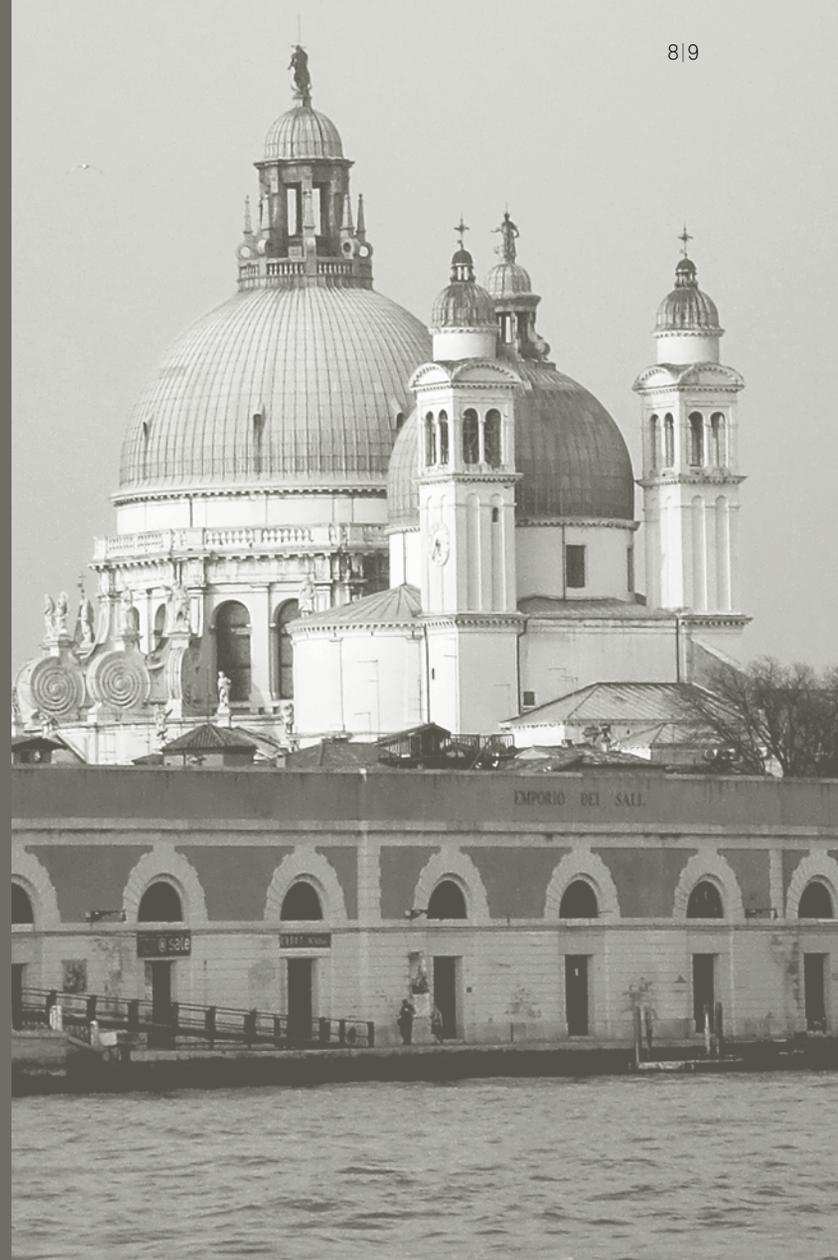
A promise, in sum, opens up a horizon of future possibilities, be they aesthetic, political, historical, social or indeed, critical. *The Future of a Promise* aims to explore the nature of the promise as a form of aesthetic and socio-political transaction and how it is made manifest in contemporary visual culture in the Arab world today.

In a basic sense, there is a degree of promise in the way in which an idea is made manifest in a formal, visual context - the 'promise', that is, of potential meaning emerging in an artwork and its opening up to interpretation. There is also the 'transaction' between what the artist had in

mind and the future (if not legacy) of that creative promise and the viewer. Whilst the artists included here are not representative of a movement as such, they do seek to engage with a singular issue in the Middle East today: who gets to represent the present-day realities and promise of the region and the horizons to which they aspire?

It is with this in mind that the show will enquire into the 'promise' of visual culture in an age that has become increasingly disaffected with politics as a means of social engagement. Can visual culture, in sum, respond to both recent events and the future promise implied in those events? And if so, what forms do those responses take?

**Ziad Abillama**  
**Manal Al-Dowayan**  
**Jananne Al-Ani**  
**Ahmed Alsoudani**  
**Ziad Antar**  
**Kader Attia**  
**Ayman Baalbaki**  
**Lara Baladi**  
**Fayçal Baghriche**  
**Yto Barrada**  
**Taysir Batniji**  
**Abdelkader Benchamma**  
**Ayman Yossri Daydban**  
**Mounir Fatmi**  
**Abdulnasser Gharem**  
**Mona Hatoum**  
**Raafat Ishak**  
**Emily Jacir**  
**Nadia Kaabi-Linke**  
**Yazan Khalili**  
**Ahmed Mater**  
**Driss Ouadahi**





## Ziad Abillama Lebanon, 1969

### *Untitled (Arabes)*

*Untitled (Arabes)* (2011) stages the collapse of the dialectic between Self and Other, at the latest stage of Western imperialism. It is not a historical moment, but a crisis in philosophy, beyond the political.

The piece certainly witnesses the appearance of a nasty 'other', but it has less to do with 'real Arabs' per se as sovereign subjects, than with an ongoing meditation on the anxiety of Western science when dealing with the Arab world as an object of study.

*Untitled (Arabes)*, 2011

–  
Painted aluminium. Courtesy  
of Agial Art Gallery, Beirut.

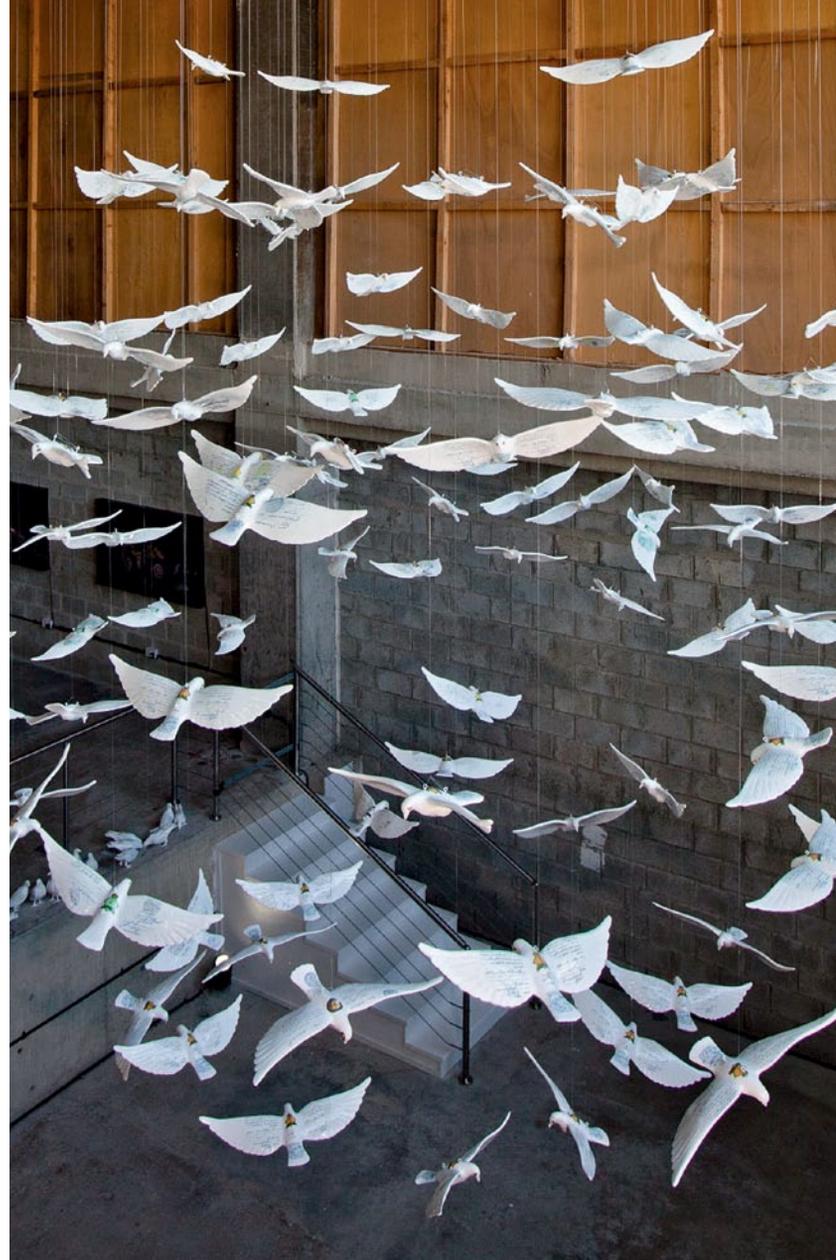
## Manal Al-Dowayan Saudi Arabia, 1973

### *Suspended Together*

*Suspended Together* is an installation that gives the impression of movement and freedom. However, a closer look at the 200 doves brings the realisation that the doves are actually frozen and suspended, with no hope of flight. An even closer look shows that each dove carries on its body the permission document that allows a Saudi woman to travel. All Saudi women are required to have this document, issued by their appointed male guardian.

The artist reached out to a large group of leading female figures from Saudi Arabia to donate their permission documents for inclusion in this artwork. *Suspended Together* carries the documents of award-winning scientists, educators, journalists, engineers, artists and leaders with groundbreaking achievements that contributed to society. The youngest contributor is six months old and the oldest is 60 years old. In the artist's words, 'regardless of age and achievement, when it comes to travel, all these women are treated like a flock of suspended doves'.

*Suspended Together*, 2011  
—  
Fibreglass with laminate coating. Courtesy of the artist and Cuadro Fine Art Gallery, Dubai.



*Shadow Sites II*, 2011

—  
Single channel digital video.  
Abraaj Capital Art Prize 2011.  
Courtesy of the artist.



## Jananne Al-Ani Iraq, 1966

### *Shadow Sites II*

—  
*Shadow Sites II* is a film that takes the form of an aerial journey. It is made up of images of a landscape bearing traces of natural and man-made activity as well as ancient and contemporary structures. Seen from above, the landscape appears abstracted, its buildings flattened and its inhabitants invisible to the human eye. Only when the sun is at its lowest, do the features on the ground, the archaeological sites and settlements come to light. Such 'shadow sites' when seen from the air, map the latent images held by the landscape's surface. Much like a photographic plate, the landscape itself holds the potential to be exposed, thereby revealing the memory of its past.

Historically, representations of the Middle Eastern landscape, from William Holman Hunt's 1854 painting *The Scapgoat* to media images from the 1991 Desert Storm campaign have depicted the region as uninhabited and without sign of civilisation. *Shadow Sites II* recreates the aerial vantage point of such missions while taking an altogether different viewpoint of the land it surveys. The film burrows into the landscape as one image slowly dissolves into another, like a mineshaft tunnelling deep into a substrate of memories preserved over time.

Statement by Sharmini Pereira in collaboration with the artist

## Ahmed Al Saudani Iraq, 1975

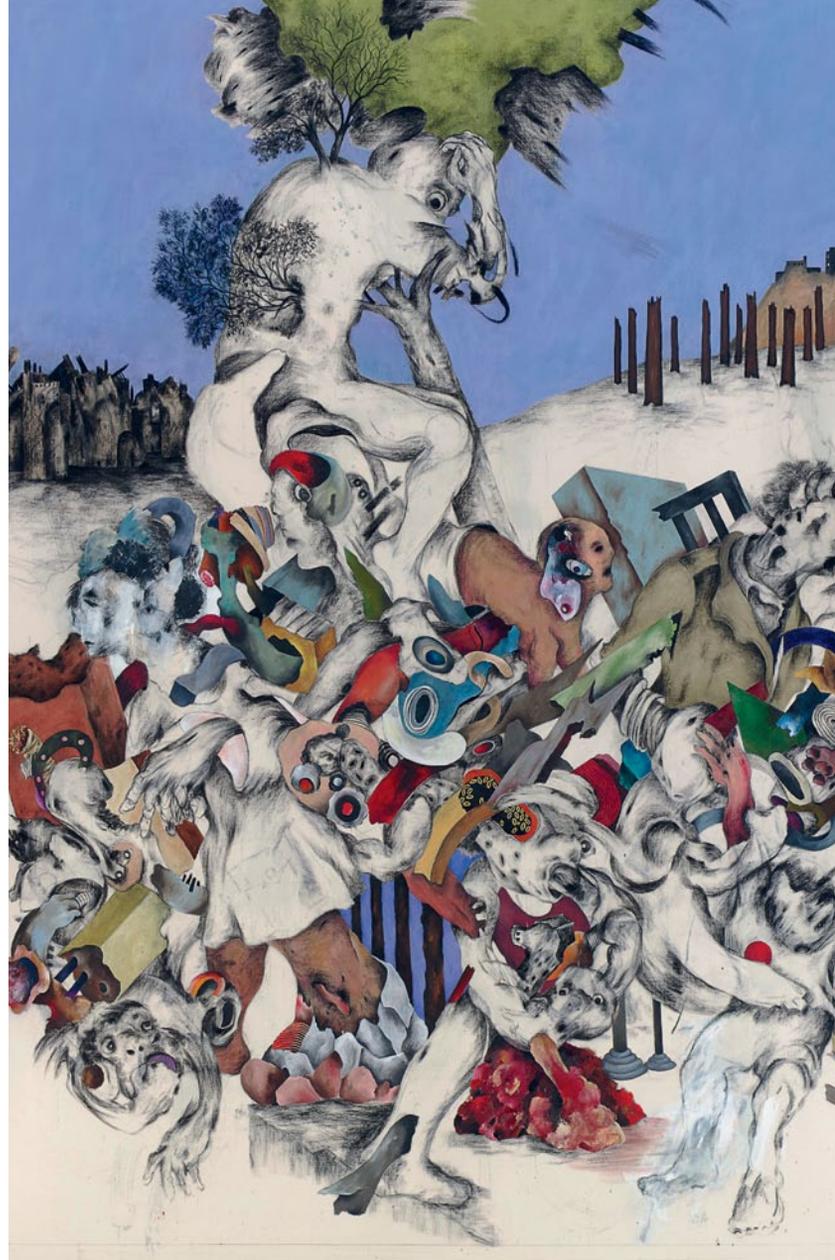
These turbulent paintings depict a disfigured tableau of war and atrocity. Although the content of the paintings draw on my own experiences of recent wars in Iraq, the imagery of devastation and violence – occasionally laced with a morbid and barbed humour – evoke a universal experience of conflict and human suffering. Deformed figures, some almost indistinguishable and verging on the bestial, intertwine and distort in vivid, surreal landscapes. Figures are often depicted at a moment of transition – through fear or agony – from human to grotesque.

*Untitled*, 2010

Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the artist and Haunch of Venison, New York & London.

*Untitled*, 2010 (overleaf)

Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of the artist and Haunch of Venison, New York & London.







## Ziad Antar Lebanon, 1978

—  
*Burj Khalifa*  
*UAE Coast 3*  
*Cairo*  
 —

In the year 2000, I purchased ten roles of expired black and white film from Studio Al Madani in Saida, South Lebanon. These films not only expired in 1976, but they were also poorly preserved, subjected to floods, humidity and fire damage.

It is the ruinous condition of the films that interested me as a medium for my work. As a result, the images are sometimes void of pigment, often damaged, blackened or blurred. To add to the experiment, I was also using an old camera – a 1948 Kodak Reflex II – and I had to work through the constraints of these expired films, trying to play with light in order to create an image.

The outcome was always unpredictable and uncertain. The whole experiment lies in the idea that even I did not know the result before the images were printed. And when the images were printed, a blurry limit was created in what the spectator sees and what he believes.

*Burj Khalifa, 2010*

—  
 Black and white silver print.  
 Commissioned by the Sharjah  
 Art Foundation. Courtesy of  
 the artist and Selma Feriani  
 Gallery, London.

*UAE Coast 3, 2010*

–  
Black and white silver print.  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Selma Feriani Gallery,  
London.



*Cairo, 2005*

–  
Black and white silver print.  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Selma Feriani Gallery,  
London.



## **Kader Attia** France, 1970

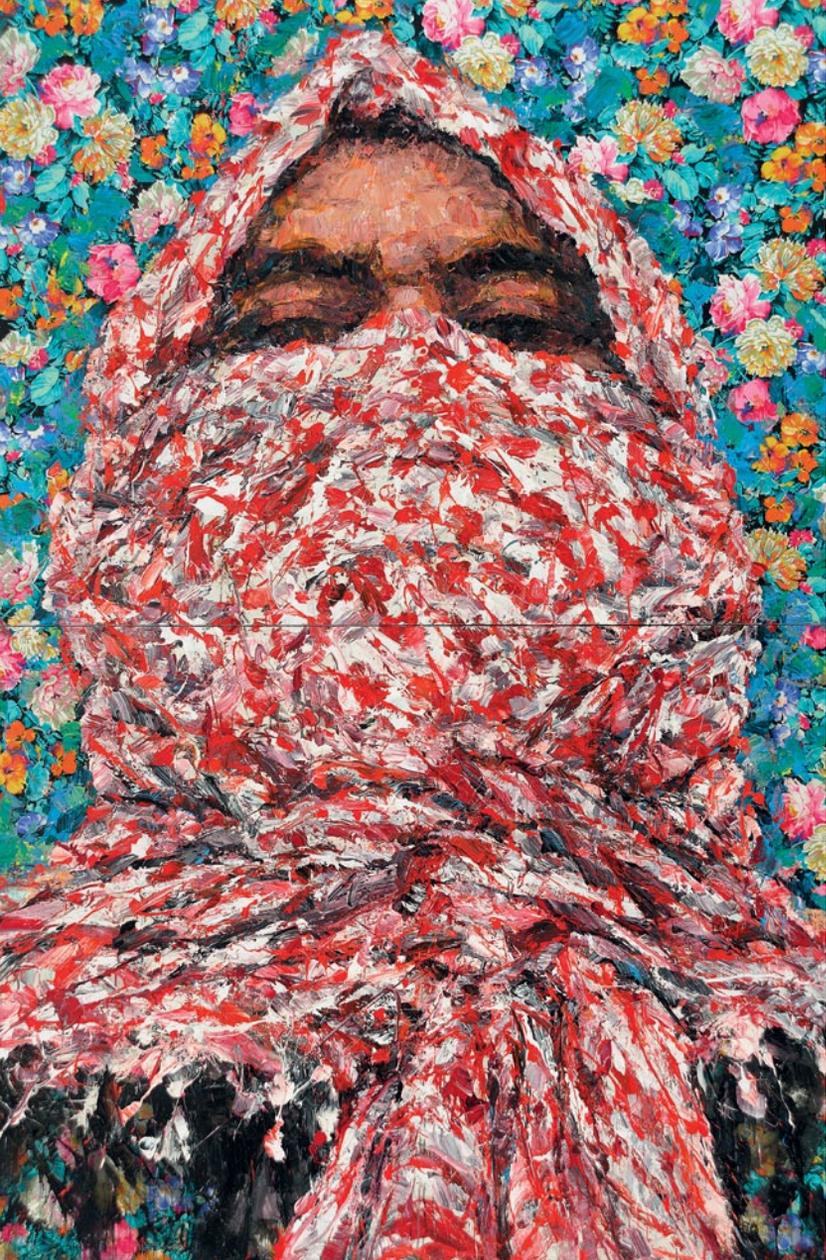
### ***La Colonne Sans Fin***

Kader Attia spent his childhood between France and Algeria, between the Christian Occident and the Islamic Maghreb. The more he grew up, the more he felt that being 'in between' was at the root of his identities. Awarded the 2010 Abraaj Capital Art Prize, Attia's work continues to explore the impact of Western cultural and political capitalism on the Middle East and North Africa, as well as how this residual strain of struggle and resistance to colonisation impacts Arab youth, particularly in the *banlieues* (suburbs) of France where Attia lived. While each new series employs different materials, symbols and scale, Attia's practice continually returns to a sustained look at the poetic dimensions and complexities of contemporary life.

*La Colonne Sans Fin*, 2010

–  
Stacked megaphones.  
Courtesy of Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris.





## Ayman Baalbaki Lebanon, 1975

### *Al Maw3oud* *Kalam Faregh (Empty Words)*

*Kalam Faregh (Empty Words)* is a project that combines images and texts: patterned images as represented by the 'cretonne' fabric, widely spread in the Levant area, perforated with embroidered, cut-out texts borrowed from flirtatious frivolous poems messages sent by lovers through SMS on Arabic satellite televisions – the new forums of exchange and free expression for the young generations, filling screens from Morocco to Iraq. The dichotomy lies in the shorthand superficiality of those shallow, insignificant texts devoid of meaning, as compared to the historical value of language in the Arab consciousness as the ultimate purveyor of culture, identity and pride.

*Al Maw3oud*, 2011

Oil on canvas and printed fabric. Courtesy of Agial Art Gallery, Beirut.

Artwork

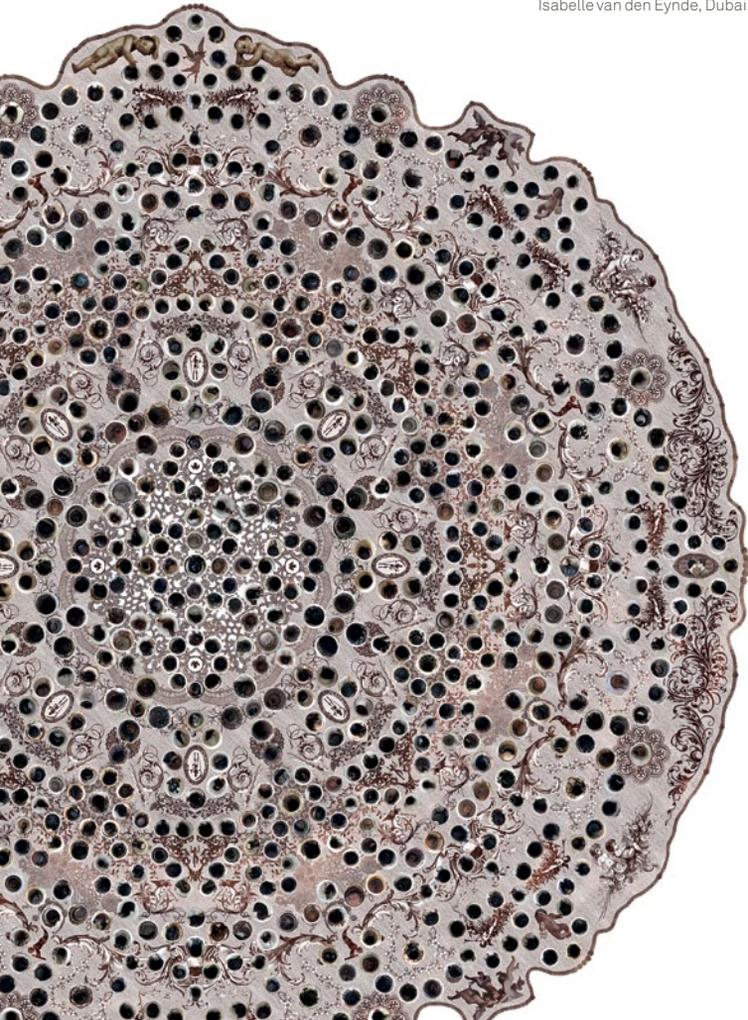
*Kalam Faregh* is an installation shedding light on the decadence facing actual discourse in the Arab world, and the necessity to stimulate critical thought in order to bring back to words the worth and respect they had in a civilisation which urgently needs to revisit itself, its identity and its values.

*Kalam Faregh (Empty Words)*  
2011  
–  
Embroidered cut-outs on  
printed fabric. Courtesy of  
Agjal Art Gallery, Beirut.



Rose, 2010

—  
Digital collage and archival  
print on gesso. Courtesy  
of the artist and Gallery  
Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai.



## Lara Baladi Lebanon, 1969

### Rose

—  
Ritual is a tender anchor. Through repetition we find comfort in an otherwise uncertain reality. It is this essence of ritual that is explored in *Diary of the Future*, an ensemble work, which emerged from the time preceding the death of my father.

The Arab tradition of reading the future from the residue left after drinking Turkish coffee was a perfect vehicle to record this period. My father's visitors unwittingly became part of an elaborate ceremony. I documented and archived this process chronologically. This inventory graces *Rose*, the large scale digital montage, central to *Diary of the Future*; a diary of individual lives running parallel yet interlaced, crossing each other and echoed in the deltas and rivulets fixed within the cups.

Our past, present and future are entwined. Just as the formations in the cups would differ from one day to the next, so our futures are defined by a constantly shifting present.

*Diary of the Future* points to an intangible yearning we feel in the face of mortality. The cups, ex-votos (out of a promise), hint at a desire for something eternal. But change is our only certainty.

# Fayçal Baghriche Algeria, 1972

## *Souvenir*

The works *Souvenir* and *Épuration électorale* employ different materials, but echo one another in a number of ways. The former is a luminous terrestrial globe, which turns so fast that it is impossible to distinguish continents or the demarcations that separate them from the oceans. For the latter work, I have vastly enlarged a page from a dictionary representing all the flags of the world and erased everything except the stars.

The installation evokes a simple, childlike decor: the Earth and the sky, or the universe and our planet. However, both works involve the deliberate blurring or erasing of specific elements which disrupts our perception of familiar images and national symbols. The terrestrial globe spins at such high speed that it blurs continental outlines and the geographical space of individual countries. The starry canvas is the result of a diligent exercise of erasure. National identities are done away with by distorting one of the most significant symbols of statehood – the national flag. The works invite us to look beyond superficial appearances and re-apprehend the reality they conceal.

*Souvenir*, 2009

–  
Terrestrial globe and motor.  
Courtesy of the artist.





## Yto Barrada France, 1971

### *The Magician*

*‘The hands of the magician are faster than the eyes of the spectator.’*

Abdelouahid El Hamri, aka Sinbad of the Straits.

In *The Magician* (2003), a private display of illusions is presented in the courtyard of Mr El Hamri’s house in Tangier, including the apparition of ping-pong balls and white doves, swallowing razor blades, and an attempt to reproduce his difficult trick ‘How to Make a Chicken Go to Sleep (El sueño de un gallo)’.

#### *The Magician*, 2003

Video, sound, 18'. Directed and filmed by Yto Barrada with Abdelouahid El Hamri, aka Sinbad of the Straits. Edited by Benoît Rossel. Produced by Yto Barrada with the support of Galerie Polaris. Courtesy of the artist and Studio Yto.

# Taysir Batniji

Gaza, 1966

## ***GH0809***

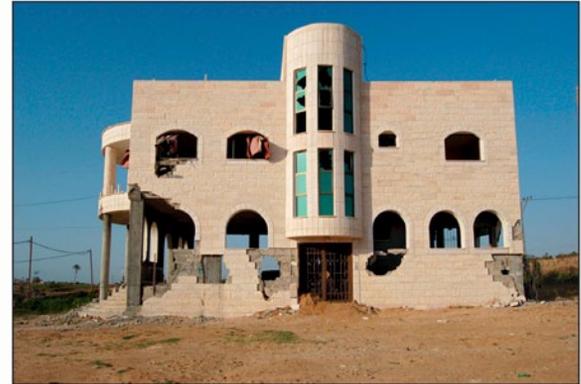
The title of *GH0809* is an abbreviation of 'Gaza Houses 2008-2009', its letters and numbers resembling an illusory real estate company. The project was conceived after the army of the Israeli occupation launched a war on Gaza in 2008-09. This war claimed the lives of many Palestinian civilians, most of them children, caused by the widespread destruction of houses and facilities.

What concerns me here is the treatment of the topic, as is always the case in my works that take on the situation in Palestine. I use a visual frame derived from daily life by evoking commercial advertising, but with altered content. In this contradiction between form and content is an invitation to contemplate a reality far from the familiar, and beyond the scope of a journalistic report.

My works are perhaps less concerned with a specific topic or situation, and moreover an inquiry into representation itself, testing new forms and techniques, or re-appropriating existing forms, in an attempt to challenge familiarity, whether the image in question is journalistic, documentary or 'artistic'.

*GH0809*, 2010

(1 of 20 panels shown) 20 digital colour prints on A4 paper, with Plexiglas and retro lighting. Courtesy of Galerie Sfeir-Semler, Hamburg & Beirut.



**Al-Twam zone,  
Al-Esrâ neighborhood, north of Gaza strip**

Area: 250 m<sup>2</sup> on 500 m<sup>2</sup> of land. Ground floor: 2 rooms, 2 sitting rooms, kitchen, bathroom/wc. 1<sup>st</sup> Floor: 3 rooms, office, sitting room, kitchen, bathroom/wc. Façade cladding: cut stone. Unobstructed surroundings, calm and sunny. Inhabitants: 5 people

**GH0809**

*Sculpture #9*, 2011

—  
Black ink on paper.  
Courtesy of Galerie du Jour  
Agnès B, Paris.



## Abdelkader Benchamma France, 1975

—  
*Sculpture #9*

*Sculpture #5*

*Sculpture #4*

—

My current practice links drawing, writing and installation. In the group show *Draw* at the Galerie du Jour in 2004, and in my solo show at the same gallery in 2007, a multifarious form of drawing started to emerge, which references landscape painting, fresco and minimalist drawing.

The drawing *One and One*, was realised in situ, drawn directly onto the ceiling of an art centre. It is conceived as an installation.

*One and One* gathers two ideas regarding the origin of the universe, conjuring up a vision borrowed from religious iconographic codes alongside an enormous explosion of transforming matter – a primary big bang. These two representations of the world could look at first dramatically different, but they are linked by their shared uncertainty, their mysterious signs and their ability to provoke contemplation and wonder. Questions of transformations, flux and dynamism are at the heart of my concerns.

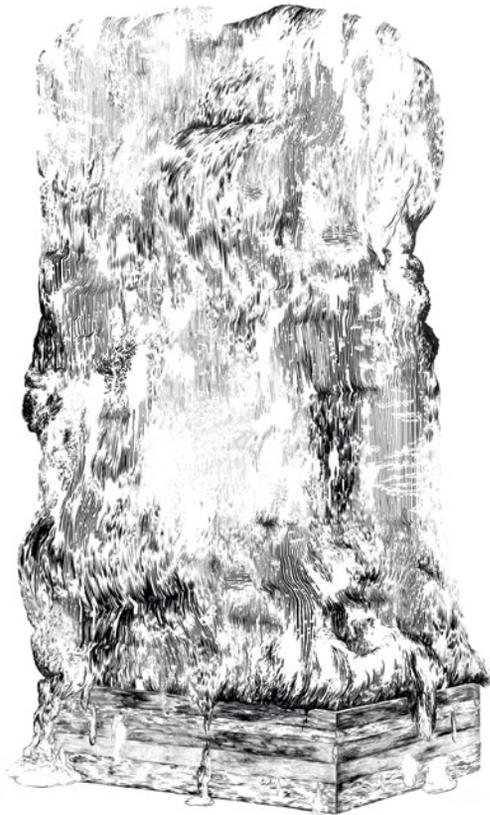
The *Sculpture* series, started in 2009, investigates other possibilities. The drawing is more minimalist, formed by a specific technique which brings to mind the aesthetic of a scanner or of an unlikely sort of modelling.

*Sculpture #5, 2010*

–

Felt pen and ink on paper.

Courtesy of ADN Gallery, Barcelona.

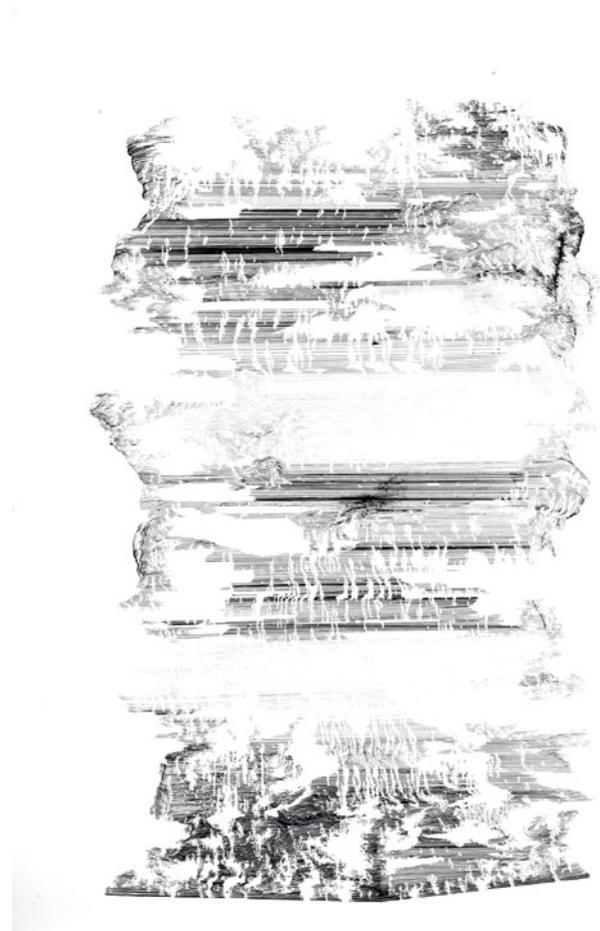


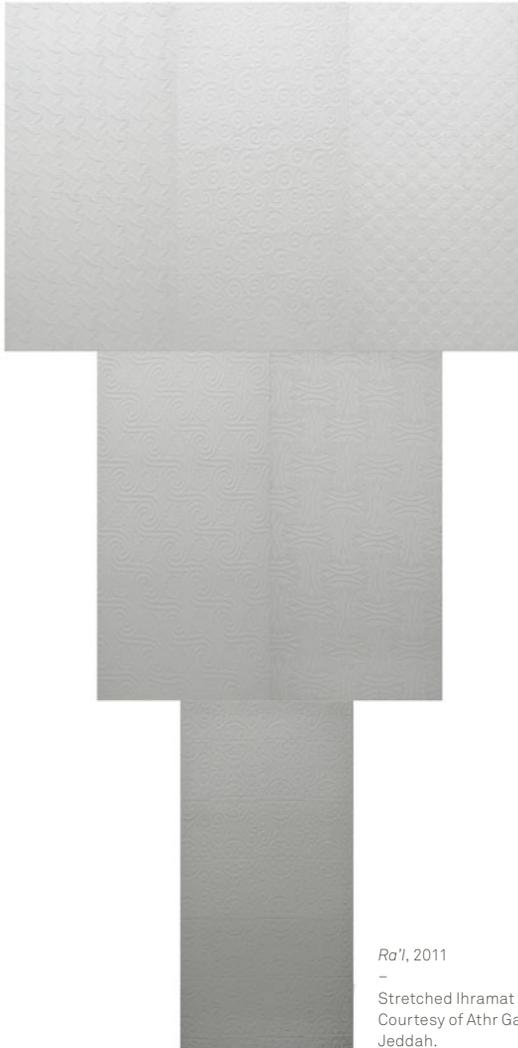
*Sculpture #4, 2010*

–

Felt pen and ink on paper.

Courtesy of ADN Gallery, Barcelona.





*Ra'I*, 2011

–  
Stretched Ihramat fabric.  
Courtesy of Athr Gallery,  
Jeddah.

## Ayman Yossri Daydban Palestine, 1966

### *Ra'I*

–  
Ihramat is a concept born of a defining tradition and custom adopted during the holy Hajj pilgrimage. This series uses authentic ihramat, the customary white cloth worn by pilgrims to Makkah, stretched onto wooden frames and presented in multiple variations. Every man is required to wear the white cloth; it erases any distinguishing features, presenting all as one, stripped down to their purest form, equal and united under the same faithful brotherhood.

*Ra'I*, from the Arabic language meaning guardian, is made up of six panels, each stretched with the authentic white cotton ihram and presented as an inverted pyramid. This piece represents the ultimate promise of a social ideal. This is a challenge to the conventional idea of a hierarchy; the most powerful dominate and rule at the top, over the masses at the bottom. By inverting this pyramid, the work highlights a ruler's duty and responsibility to serve the people.

At a distance, the ihram seem identical, but as you approach distinct patterns begin to appear. Parallels can be drawn with social ideals; each panel represents a building block in society. Various groups share differences and similarities in their patterning, yet work together under a greater umbrella to flow in peace and harmony.

## Mounir Fatmi Morocco, 1970

### *The Lost Springs*

*The Lost Springs* displays the 22 flags of the Arab League states at half mast. Two brooms refer to the upheavals that led to the fall of President Ben Ali in Tunisia and President Mubarak in Egypt. This evocative, subtle and trenchant work of art has been inspired by the current protests against neo-patriarchal powers in the Maghreb, the Mashriq and the Arabian Peninsula.

The flag is a symbol rich in identity and attribution. Through the aesthetics of sweeping, the artist testifies to some timeless spring. A standard bearer of the pan-Arabic revolutionary revivalism and its enchanting utopia, he breaks away from the prevailing monotony of always disenchanted tomorrows, irreverently using the devices of complicity... Giving his work an essential and symbolic function, he dematerialises it, as if to repeat over and over again that symbols are food for thought.

Extracts from *Spring Cleaning!* by Franck Hermann Ekra



*The Lost Springs*, 2011

—  
22 flags of the Arab League.  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Galerie Hussenot, Paris.



## Abnulnasser Gharem Saudi Arabia, 1973

### *The Stamp (Amen)*

*Have a Bit of Commitment* is part of the Arabic and English text set over the business-end of this wooden stamp. It is a scaled-up version of the one used every day across Saudi Arabia by bureaucrats, officials, policemen and soldiers – including the artist, a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Saudi Army – as they articulate an official reaction. This is both a reinforcement of their authority and the final stage in a transaction. Each stamp authorises or prohibits certain behaviours.

In 2008 the artist applied the first version of this stamp to the wall of an exhibition from which he had had several works removed. By doing so he proposed a separate authority, that of the author, or the artist.

Empowered by the stamp and all of its ersatz authority, the artist demands more rigour and more commitment, before finishing with a word that is in itself a stamp of approval: 'Amen'.

Statement by Henry Hemming

*The Stamp (Amen)*

2011

–

Rubber on wooden stamp

Courtesy of the Artist

and the Farook Collection.

Artwork

# Mona Hatoum

Lebanon, 1952

---

## *Drowning Sorrows (Gran Centenario)*

*Drowning Sorrows*  
*(Gran Centenario)* (detail)  
2002

—  
Glass. Courtesy of the artist.



## Raafat Ishak Egypt, 1967

### *Responses to an immigration request from one hundred and ninety four governments*

A formal request to immigrate was sent to 194 governments, 97 of whom provided a response, varying from congratulatory notes to outright suspicious interrogations of motive. What was evident, was that inherent laws and regulations, particular to each state, were in fact a conglomeration of sameness: race, language and religion, as well as economic and professional qualifications were key criteria. Unsurprisingly, 97 states chose not to respond at all.

*Responses to an immigration request from one hundred and ninety four governments* (2006–09) constitutes 194 painted panels, depicting the faded flag of each state superimposed with a summary of each response, or no response, in stylised and phonetic Arabic text.

What on the surface seems like an unprecedented opportunity to reclaim the world by self and citizen is obstructed by an inherent lack of freedom, in particular the freedom to cross borders and migrate from one distinct place to another. This work constitutes a polemic veneration towards otherness whilst engaging in a reconsideration of self and citizen as a contrivance of nation states mired in economic, social, political and historical relevance.



*Responses to an immigration request from one hundred and ninety four governments*  
2006–09

Oil and gesso on MDF. Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne and the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.

## Emily Jacir Saudi Arabia, 1970

### *embrace*

*embrace* is a circular, motorised sculpture fabricated to look like an empty luggage conveyor system found in airports. It remains perfectly still and quiet, but when a viewer comes near the sculpture their presence activates the work; it turns on and starts moving. The work's diameter refers to the height of the artist. The work symbolises, amongst many things, waiting and the etymology of the word 'embrace'.



*embrace*, 2005

Rubber, stainless steel,  
aluminium, motor and  
motion sensors.

Courtesy of Anthony  
Reynolds Gallery, London  
and Alexander and Bonin,  
New York.

## Nadia Kaabi-Linke Tunisia, 1978

### *Impressions of Cairo*

#### *Butcher Bliss*

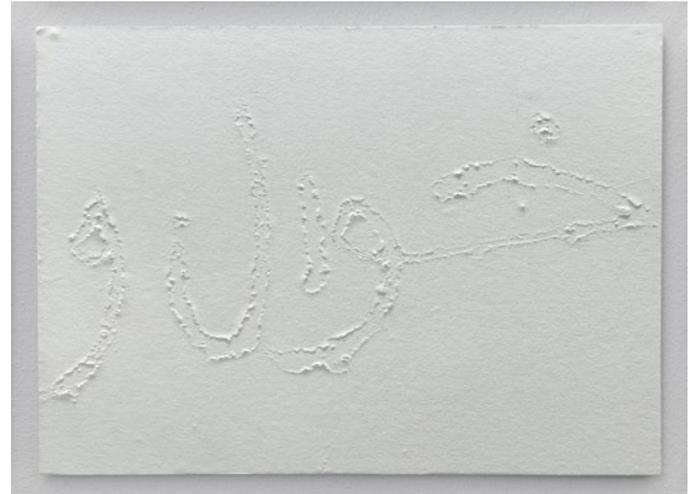
#### *Flying Carpets*

The flying carpet is a dream of instantaneous and boundless travel, but in Venice I saw illegal immigrants using carpets to fly the coop. They sell counterfeit goods to make some money to live. If they're caught by the police they risk expulsion.

There was a butcher in Tunis who wanted to honour Ben Ali, by calling his shop 'Butcher shop of the 7th November', the day when Ben Ali assumed the presidency in a 'medical' coup d'état from then President Habib Bourguiba. After he did so, he disappeared without a trace.

In 2010 I visited Cairo, a metropolis of stark contradictions: tradition and modernism, culture and illiteracy, poverty and wealth, bureaucracy and spirituality. All voices fade in the noisy hustle; risk a closer look at the walls and you will find the people's whispers carved into stone.

All three works document the crossing of borders: traversing the European border as EU-citizen, or not; the wide line between insult and homage transgressed through the unspoken proximity of slaughter and the governance of the former Tunisian regime; and the whispered longing for freedom in the police state of Cairo.



*Impressions of Cairo*, 2010  
(detail)

–  
Paper and light. Courtesy of the artist.

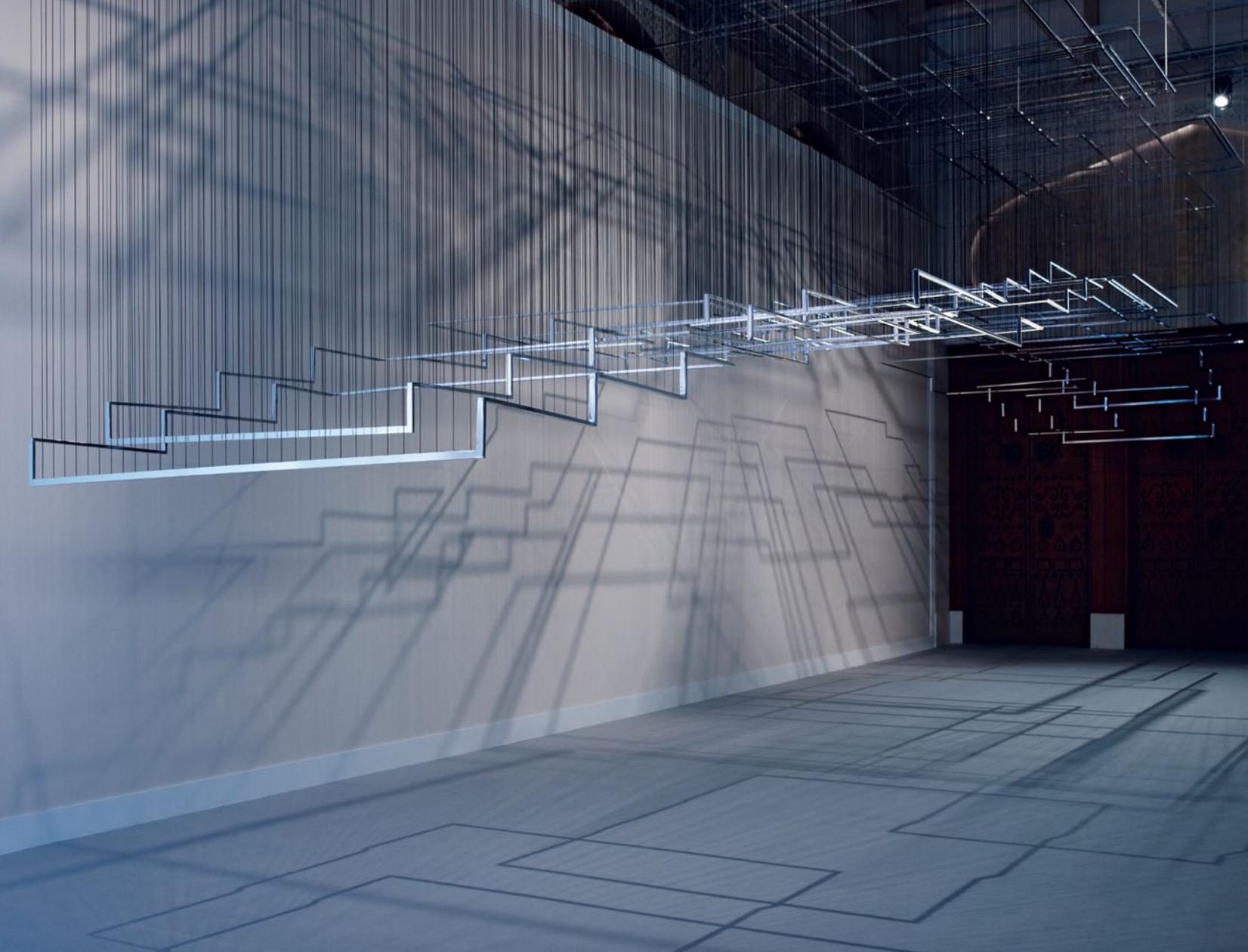
*Butcher Bliss*, 2010  
(overleaf)

–  
Porcelain prints of four ruminant stomachs (Abomasum, Omasum, Reticulum, Rumen), chrome-plated stainless steel meat hooks, metallic bar. Courtesy of the artist.

*Flying Carpets*, 2011  
(overleaf)

–  
Chrome plated aluminium, stainless steel and threads. Abraaj Capital Art Prize 2011.







## Yazan Khalili Palestine, 1981

### *Colour Correction*

The *Colour Correction* series is about losing lifestyle, mobility, freedom of choice and even the ability to dream of a brighter tomorrow. According to Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, these losses lead to a permanent state of emergency, where the possibility of thinking and living in the present becomes impossible.

This specific image shows Al-Amari Refugee Camp, located inside/beside/outside Ramallah City.

The form of the camp does not represent its economic status, but rather its loss and trauma as a political manifestation that persists due to the continuous emergence of ephemeral homes, contradictory ways of living and unbearably unstable relationships between Palestinians and their surrounding landscape. Altering the refugee camp's colours is a symbolic act. It aims to fill the loss – in the way a child fills the blanks in colouring books – and thus reignite the possibility of hope. Here I am attempting to appropriate an urban landscape that reminds us of the tragedy – of their existence and our disappearance – in order to subvert memory into a desired future.

*Colour Correction*  
(from the *Camp* series)  
2007–10

–  
Digital lambda c-type print.  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Newtown|Art.

## Ahmed Mater Saudi Arabia, 1979

—  
***Antenna***  
***The Cowboy Code***  
—

*Antenna* is a symbol and a metaphor for growing up in Saudi Arabia. As children, we used to climb up to the roofs of our houses and hold these television antennas up to the sky.

We were trying to catch a signal from beyond the nearby border with Yemen or Sudan; searching – like so many of my generation in Saudi – for music, for poetry, for a glimpse of a different kind of life. I think this work can symbolise the whole Arab world right now... searching for a different kind of life through other stories and other voices. This story says a lot about my life and my art; I catch art from the story of my life, I don't know any other way.

*Antenna*, 2010

—  
Neon. Courtesy of the artist  
and Prognosis Art.



*The Cowboy Code, 2011*

–

Plastic cap gun discs.  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Prognosis Art.

## THE COWBOY CODE

1. A COWBOY NEVER TAKES UNFAIR ADVANTAGE – EVEN OF AN ENEMY.
2. A COWBOY NEVER BETRAYS A TRUST. HE NEVER GOES BACK ON HIS WORD.
3. A COWBOY ALWAYS TELLS THE TRUTH.
4. A COWBOY IS KIND AND GENTLE TO SMALL CHILDREN, OLD FOLKS, AND ANIMALS.
5. A COWBOY IS FREE FROM RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCES.
6. A COWBOY IS ALWAYS HELPFUL.
7. A COWBOY IS ALWAYS A GOOD WORKER.
8. A COWBOY RESPECTS WOMANHOOD, HIS PARENTS AND HIS NATION'S LAWS.
9. A COWBOY IS CLEAN ABOUT HIS PERSON IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED.
10. A COWBOY IS A PATRIOT.

## Driss Ouadahi Morocco, 1959

—  
***Fences 1***

***Fences, Hole 2***

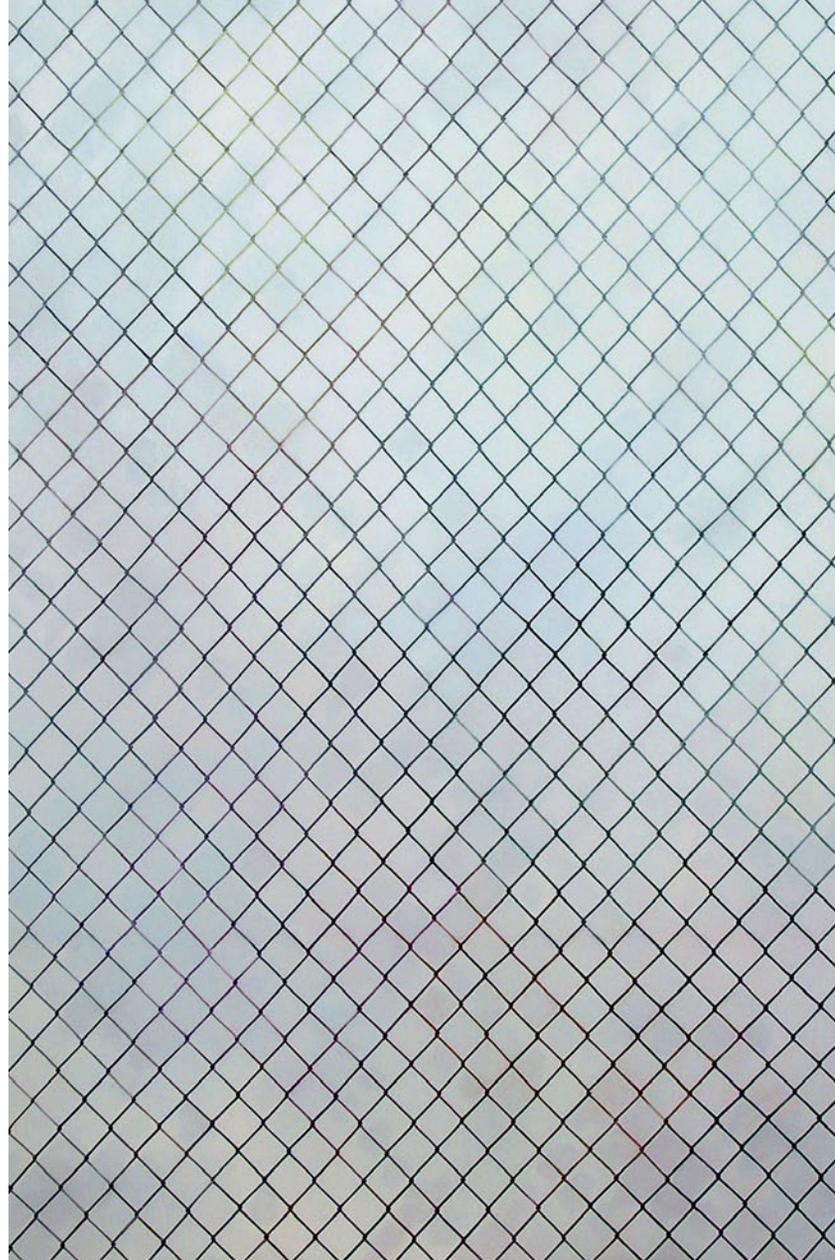
—

Over the past seven years I have been painting urban landscapes collaged from elements such as high-rise housing blocks, streets and parking lots, playgrounds and small green spaces – all to be found in metropolitan suburbs worldwide.

The suburban place – ‘Dans Cité’ – bears a direct relation to and is reflected by the ‘Densité’, the density of the work. Through my paintings I express my interest in developing a universally readable visual language from the light and atmosphere of the urban landscape. More recently I have been focusing on two types of urban elements – one is tiled passageways as often found in subway systems, conveying the claustrophobic and scary atmosphere of blocked escape routes. The second type is spatial demarcations, depictions of chain-linked fences, such as those in *The Future of a Promise*, which are both minimalist abstractions and signifiers of separation.

*Fences 1*, 2008

—  
Oil on canvas. Courtesy of  
Hosfelt Gallery, New York &  
San Francisco.





*Fences, Hole 2*, 2011

Oil on canvas. Courtesy of  
Hosfelt Gallery, New York &  
San Francisco.



**Abdul Latif Jameel**  
Community Initiatives

Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives was established in 2003 as the corporate social responsibility programmes provider under the prominent ALJ Group. It has global coverage and through its many successful initiatives and social programmes provides a multitude of successful globally applicable sustainable projects, solutions, schemes and mechanisms. Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives have developed and promoted a portfolio of globally applicable sustainable projects and solutions, supported socio-economic development by providing social programmes for the needs of communities, and brought about a reduction of unemployment and poverty through novel and innovative schemes and mechanisms.

[www.aljcsp.org](http://www.aljcsp.org)



Abraaj Capital is delighted to initiate its partnership with Edge of Arabia through the patronage of *The Future of a Promise*.

In our business, we are committed to sustaining and spotlighting the unequivocal talent emerging from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asian region. In 2008 we established the Abraaj Capital Art Prize to give artists the opportunity of creating new and innovative artworks that without such support would not have been possible.

We are pleased that two winning works unveiled this March are on display. Venice has for centuries been an inspiration for artists, and like Dubai, a mercantile centre bridging East and West. Nadia Kaabi-Linke's *Flying Carpets* eloquently highlights the presence of foreign peddlars trading on the bridges of Venice. Joined by Jananne Al-Ani's powerful film *Shadow Sites II*, these two works highlight the diverse ways artists today can capture the essence of our region.

Frederic Sicre, Partner, Abraaj Capital

[www.abraajcapitalartprize.com](http://www.abraajcapitalartprize.com)

# EDGE OF ARABIA

Edge of Arabia is an independent contemporary arts platform and travelling exhibition promoting artists from the Arab world and with a particular focus on Saudi Arabia.

Since launching in London in 2008, this grassroots initiative has travelled to Riyadh, Berlin, Istanbul and Dubai, engaging international audiences and shedding light on the relatively unknown contemporary art and culture of the region. This exhibition builds on Edge of Arabia's presentation of eight Saudi artists at the Palazzo Contarini Polignac on the Grand Canal, during the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009.

Edge of Arabia has taken the opportunity to produce *The Future of a Promise*, the 54th Venice Biennale's first pan-arab contemporary art exhibition.

[www.edgeofarabia.com](http://www.edgeofarabia.com)



Ibraaz is a new online publishing forum for writing on visual culture in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Through the publication of essays and projects by academics, artists, curators, historians, commentators, writers, and critics, Ibraaz will offer a primary research forum for in-depth, peer-reviewed texts about the MENA region. The long-term ambition of the project is to utilise these essays and ideas to further commission and develop full-length, illustrated books.

It will be launched at the Venice Biennial in June 2011 alongside its first publication, the catalogue for *The Future of a Promise*. The catalogue is edited by Anthony Downey and Lina Lazaar and includes illustrations of all works in the show, artists' statements, essays by the editors, and essays by Samir Kassir and Rachida Triki.

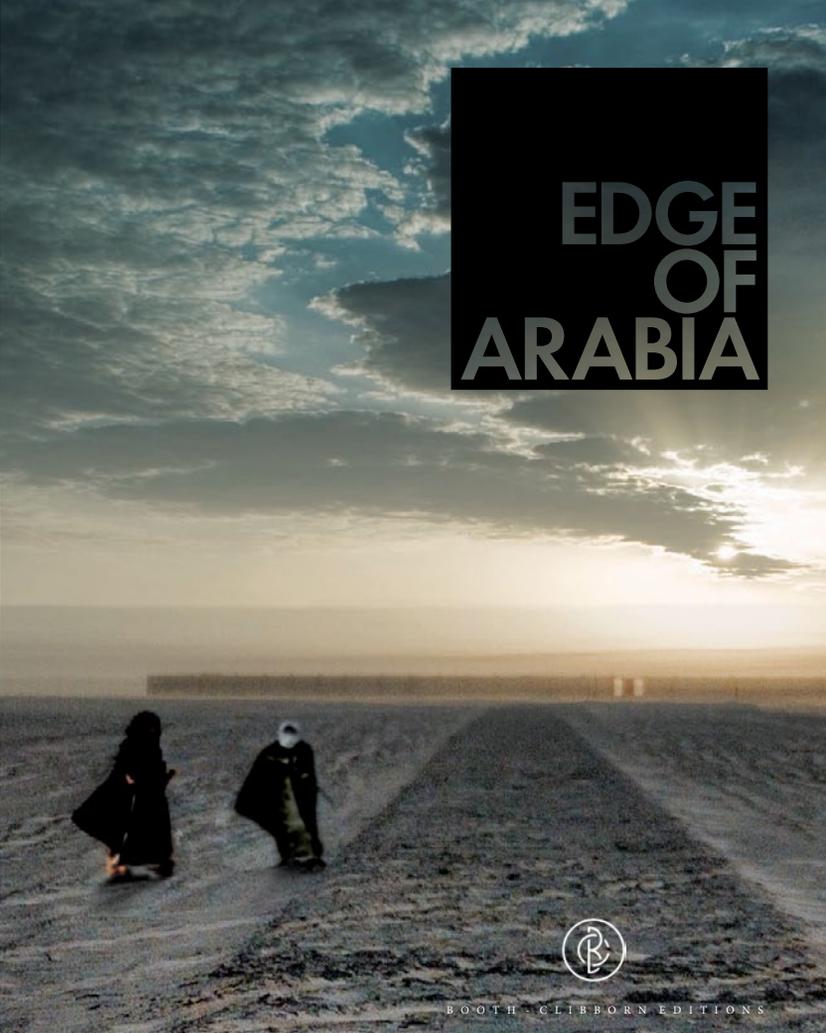
Ibraaz was initiated and made possible by the support of the Kamel Laazar Foundation.

[www.ibraaz.org](http://www.ibraaz.org)

Acknowledgements

Curator Lina Lazaar and Production Director Stephen Stapleton would like to thank all the team that have worked to bring *The Future of a Promise* to Venice:

Abdullah Al Turki	Laura Egerton
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Anne-Sophie Stapleton	Meg Bianchini
Aya Mousawi	Michela Canessa
Benedetta Ghione-Webb	Michele & Giovanni
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Coline Milliard	Miriam Lloyd-Evans
David McFarline	Rania Kfoury
Ibrahim Vaid	Samual Adams
Inger Steenstrup	Sebastiano Bianchini
James (Rollo) Rawlinson	Susannah Worth
James Sevier	Sven Knowles
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# EDGE OF ARABIA



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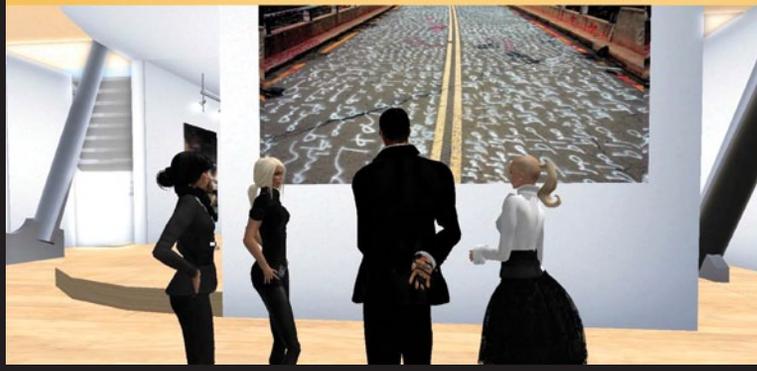


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Framed stainless steel on braille paper

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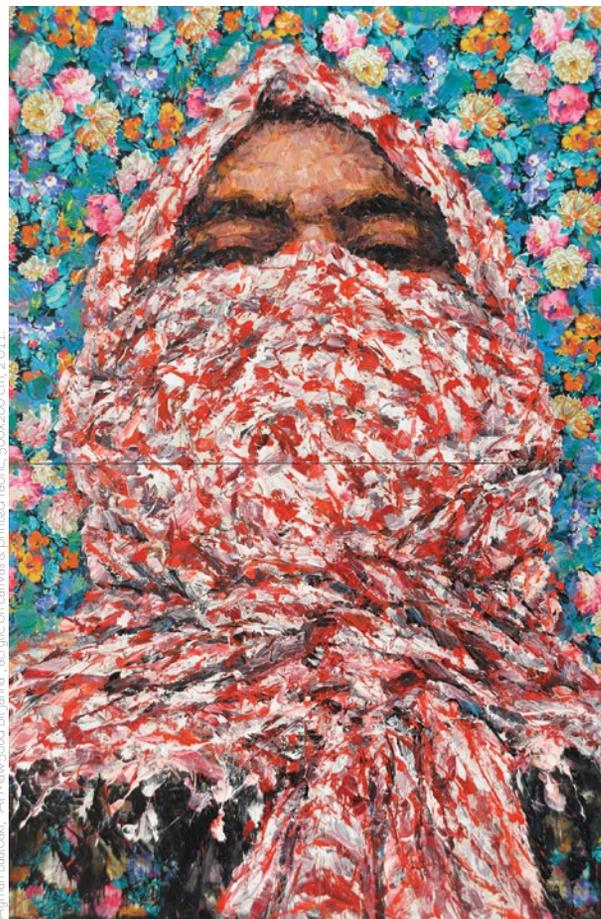
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Ayman Bjalbaki "Al Maw'zoud Bil'Imam", acrylic on canvas & printed fabric, 300x200 cm, 2011

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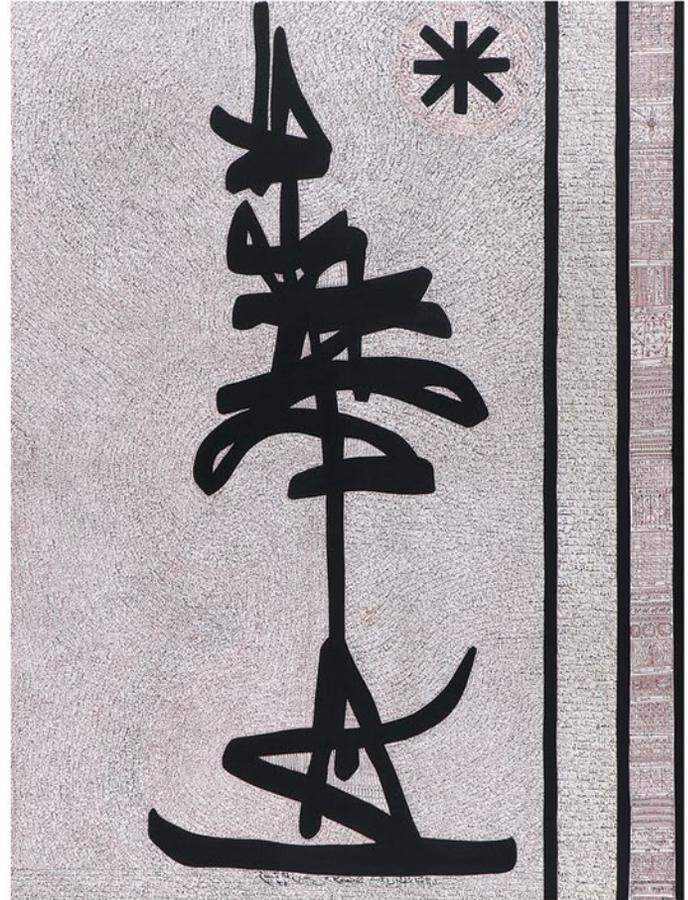
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