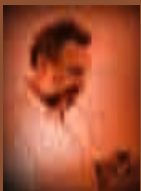


UNIVERSAL COLOURS



Yahya calls his poems 'stories', but what would he call his paintings? In both cases (paintings and poems) AL-Sheikh has an intensively strong language.

Yahya AL-Sheikh, Artist of the Issue (Page 10)

UNIVERSAL COLOURS

EDITORIAL BOARD

Amir KHATIB
tel: +358 40 558 68 96
euman_2000@yahoo.com

Avtarjeet DHANJAL
avtarjeet@hotmail.com

Ali NAJJAR
tel: 0046 4094 7974

Dr. Michael CASEY
casey0504@eircom.net

Moustafa AL-YASSIN
tel: +358 44 924 24 96
moustafa.al-yassin@pbezone.net

* * *

DESIGN, LAYOUT & PROOFREADING

Asa BUTCHER
asa@chameleonproject.net

* * *

PRINTED BY
Paar OÜ - www.paar.ee

ISSN 1456-5439

* * *

BECOME A MEMBER

Annual membership fee is 30€.
Download an application form
from our website:
www.eu.man.org or write to:



EU-MAN
P.O. BOX 523
00101 Helsinki
FINLAND

tel: +358 40 554 68 96

COVER

Yahya AL-Sheikh
Artist of the Issue
(Page 10)

Page 4

To enrich, not deprive - Ali Najjar

Page 6

Exhibition Review:

Gothenburg International Biennial - Ali Najjar

Page 10

Artist of the Issue:

Yahya AL-Sheikh - Farouk Yousif

Page 16

Inspiration By Kebede - Moustafa Alyassin

Page 17

Bridge:

Media and Immigrant Art - Thanos Kalamidas

Page 18

Debate:

Is it a question or what? - Alaa Alamir

Page 19

Mohammed Sami - Moustafa AL-Yassin

Page 20

Word into Art - Moustafa AL-Yassin

Page 23

Egypt with Finnish eyes - Azer Sawiris

Page 25

Persona:

Anish Kapoor's "Ascensions" - Galleria Continua China

Page 30

Last Drop - Avtarjeet Dhanjal

Editorial



Following the last issue of **Universal Colours**, we received lots of proposals, suggestions, questions and even gratitude, with many readers wondering about our continuation in this voluntary work asking how we can do our work and develop

it with basically nothing - as a matter of fact, we do not deny anything.

We endeavour to be balanced and we keep smiling, while maintaining a high quality of morals. We behave as good people all the time, like good boys to our fathers, we sometimes water the pavements, for no other reason than to refresh the air.

We consume our years like the chain smoker who lights one cigarette after another, we spread different kinds of glamour to the soul of those who need it and we move the colourful stripes to the depth of our memory. I say we move them because life is always static in exile - exile is a mental vision, an immigrant cannot confine this vision from reality because a migrant is the child of the first place, or at least that is what Gaston Bachelard believed.

I do not want to go far in this matter, nor make it my main subject, because there are a large number of priorities that we should deal with and we have to solve some riddles. Our association continues producing many things, this magazine being just one of them, and we have a lot of future plans; hopefully, we will be able to implement them and achieve what we hoping for.

This year has two exhibition projects and the start of the implementation of a large-scale project for the year 2009.

One of our projects this year will be in Helsinki in cooperation with the International Cultural Center CAISA, which has offered the use of their exhibition hall thank to the effort of Mr. Ahmed Akar, the CAISA's new director, who embraced us and offered a number of services.

The second exhibition will be held in Stockholm at the gallery of Katto 7 art and will hold our group exhibition that takes place during the first week of October this year.

Our focus in this issue is "Migrant art & artists in the European native media" and we hope this will open up the debate to enrich our scope and prospects in the future of our work with this magazine. In each of our future issues, we plan to focus on one subject concerning the affairs of migrant artists and the problems in Europe.

The editorial board have insisted upon this focus and they will be participating in it.

We believe that we should have our voice, so we dig up a rock and pass it through all channels to continue, we ring a bell that should be rang, we push that rock up the hill, undertaking our own Sisyphean challenge, maybe the gods will push it back down, but we will return it to the top again and again.

When we began this journey we did not expect that the road would be full of jasmine and other beautiful flowers, the very least we hoped for was that our voice would be heard, so we grew up morally and now we think that we should run faster than before because we are trying to cover the sea with tiles, whether its by our pens, brushes and tools.

We cannot deal with something other than beauty as a way of creating a better life, a life that is full of dreams and soft items, full of innocent shapes and, of course, we refuse to become old.

Amir KHATIB

To enrich, not deprive

By Ali Najjar

“We do not know anything about love or living together in mutual life without record. Unconditional hosting, which later became legal, is the basic condition. I am not sure that unconditional hosting belongs to morals - however, how to be moral without hosting.” - Jack Dreda

If immigration is a problem for European countries, and it is so from many different respects, then the term ‘foreign’ remains one of these problems at the highest level.

This is very clear in the cultural sector of each European country, through interactive mixing of the society, while “some times, it seems very limited” and politics play a main role in it, with terms like, ‘immigration’, asylum seekers’ and ‘foreigner’ becoming a mass of mixed-up meanings; they become ready terms to serve up in the integration policy of this or that country.

Integration has its own calculations concerning losing and vulnerability conditions, so it keeps itself as a harmonious plan in the society, which is what politicians calculate for one or two generations. It seems that the integration process is gaining fast in Europe because of global culture and technology, so it is ready to cross the borders or to close them.

Visual art, as a tool in this process, is very important because it has programmatic influences via the “visual, sound and light”. However, a clear mistake interferes with the integration process and that is the use of these terms and then deporting the different; this is clear in the integration policy of European countries.

Sweden, for instance, “Where I have lived and worked since...” cultural authorities have already made the decision and they have the power, but when any question comes to the migrant “foreigners” they just have beautiful words, unimplemented promises and they are always without a plan, as they do for the normal native.

I offer here two examples.

First example

In the summer of 2006, migrant artists in Malmö each received an invitation to a seminar to aid their integration, answer problems, overcome provisional obstacles and suggest future plans. The invitation came from a committee created by the artists union, painters union and Sydsvenskan, a local newspaper, in cooperation with one “migrant artist, and because the secretary of the artists union was a photographer there was also a presentation about photography... it was a long presentation.

The migrant artist made a presentation about his professional life and his integration in a very personal presentation; no suggestions were discussed, no future plans offered and not even an imaginative plan about the migrant artists in Sweden was suggested. The people who organised the seminar could not find the time to discuss the proposals or listen to any questions from the audience.

In addition, there wasn't even a response to the important question of putting a definition to the term ‘foreign artists’ in the time of globalisation to which most of audience objected. As this seminar was planned to make useful objectives and the result was a continuing project, everybody knew the mistake was the

The Arts Council went on to declare that they had the right to keep the whole archive.

**Visual art,
as a tool
in this
process,
is very
important.**

seminar's preparation and its aim, so it was born dead. Everybody then left without saying goodbye.

Second example

Under the title "Activating and marketing the works of the migrant artists", the Swedish Arts Council STA TENSKONSTRAD made interviews with migrant artists and kindly asked them to send profiles, portfolios, publications, attributes and any relevant material that might help their professionalism in Sweden.

The announced title was very attractive and encouraged almost all of Sweden's migrant artists to respond, but, just like the first example, there was something wrong in the arrangement, a mistake had happened. What that mistake was nobody really knows, perhaps it was a simple misunderstanding or receiving the otherness, or the policy of openness to the other.

It was very unusual to deny the cultural and strategic solution to the increasing society of migrants in general and the artists among them, in particular. The Arts Council went on to declare that they had the right to keep the whole archive that they had collected for three years and then return it to the artists.

The result of that was that some relevant organizations or individuals will see the portfolios and then they might contact the artists. However, we saw that there was another aim, since some people were asked to implement hand-craft works, yet all of whom had been asked were not migrants, even though that is what we were expecting.

All had been arranged, so that the cultural authorities knew immediately to

whom they had asked and given the work, as if they just wanted to justify the work socially or legally. Otherwise it is not logically that the cultural authority organisation paid any attention to migrant artists as competitors to the others, but they made this act according to protocol.

Of course, it is very possible to activate the situation of migrant artists and place it in front of reality, but who wants this and what is in it for them? However, we still have hope that someone will read our suggestion as we see:

1: Make an evaluation of the provisional artists and help with their integration in society.

2: Print an annual catalogue that allows migrant artists "on the truck", so to say.

3: Give them a chance to equally participate in collective and solo exhibitions, as we know that in Sweden there are particular artists for each gallery leaving the chance for migrant artists as very little.

4: Create an official website that is linked to the official one of the natives. This will result in helping the market recognise them as artists and not as strange bodies - this will also help collectors to buy from them.

5: The European space has a very wide capacity to accept the other, but a need for others, precisely the visual art world, and by supporting activities as such European policy will be pushed forward toward multiculturalism and the right integration.

This will enrich culture, not deprive.

Exhibition Review

Gothenburg International Biennial

By Ali Najjar



[Political alternatives, challenges of the opposition and contemporary technology of the visual art]



Picture, as a cultural, artistic and media term, smoothly invites us to attack ourselves in a variety of ways, then it possesses us by its attraction, and if the attraction is justified, it works around the clock because it doesn't come from nothing, but through sociological and psychological work. It uses the fantasy code with unlimited variety, while in the service of politics, the marketplace or both simultaneously it can catch us all over the planet.

This picture stands as a ghost on top of our heads, or penetrates us, confusing our

minds, so it leaves us, as consequence, under its heavy shadow, which is parallel to its harmony or contrast.

If we say that visual art through the first decade of the 21st century works on picture/culture or Picture/economy, then the meaning is not absent to the politician; they use the picture as a flexible document laying a mine under their plans.

For the politicians this is news or personal charisma, it faces money laundry, or crossing of the boundary, and so on among all of the contemporary political games. It's a

great white lie that appears no matter what the visual artist tries, while he/she, as part of the cultural global scenery, tries to work on new media, whether it is photograph, video, film or print.

This is what we saw during the biennial event in Gothenburg, Sweden, last year, when projects on the theme “Political alternatives and challenge of the opposition” were exhibited by artists from different counties each showing how their artworks suited and worked in parallel with the theme of the show.

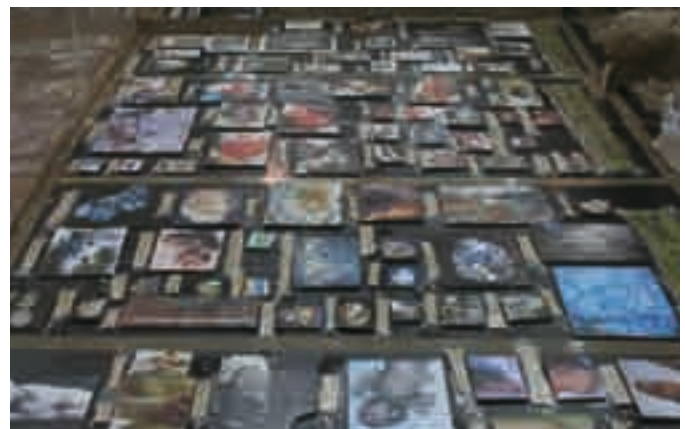
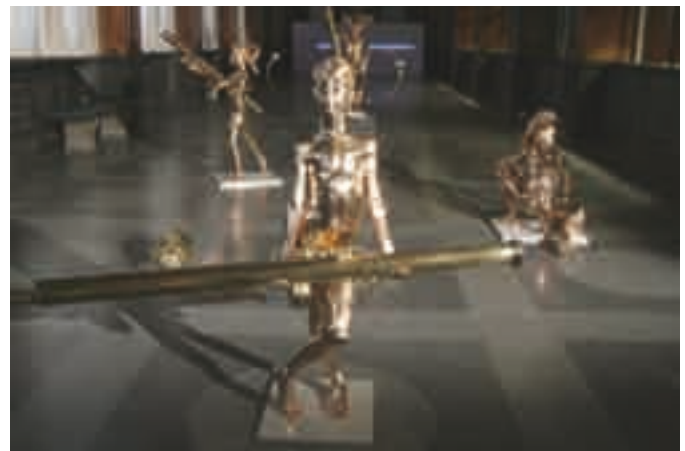
If politics is a survival reality, as is the art of possibility, then we can deal with this unclear concept by treating it visually, via ordinary technique and unordinary layout, as the artist receives support from the fund organizations though their addressing of “Political alternatives and challenge of the opposition” and artists will certainly work on the theme/event, not as possible solutions, but as a pile or intellectual tables of information, perhaps even as a personal or collective archive.

Artists attempted to begin a dialogue with the event, even if there is an aesthetic link to the artworks, so it is about the idea though the idea that sometimes seems like a hidden riddle inside the artwork. Our discoveries stay at the limit of our inspirations and our self-experiences, and so long as these artworks are full of their ideas and politically-led inspiration, we can ensure that mental visions propagate and are not too far from the area of the event.

28 artists from countries across the world participated in this biennial event that was in parallel with Documenta, held in Kassel, Germany, and the biennial in Venice. 55 shows were presented at the GIB in its five spaces, which included galleries, museums and private venues. Eight of the 55 were video-art and 15 were photography with different technique, the remainder of the shows were installations, sculptures or mixed media. Paintings disappeared totally, of course, although that was not strange since the title of the show did not allow a space for painting in general.

The show focused upon cultural, social and humanitarian attitudes, it dealt with a number of artworks that protested in optimistic voices, via techniques that parallel the

pictures in documentary and the event’s violence, even if some of the works shown as “just a document” most of them showed the secrets of politics’ purpose. However, each artist had the right to proof her/his own map - either cultural, geographical or sentential - and they remain documentary’s ability to strengthen our confidence in the techniques and activities of the new generation of young artists.





Presentation of some of the works:

The Afghani artist's work is like a trap, through its attractive scene which controls most of its space. Even though it was a video installation, its cinema screen showing virtual cable and the world of Afghanistan during and after the war, a 'virtual Kabul', reminded that, like any capital city in the world, it went through the destruction of war and it became heavy on its inhabitants, who were invalid even as trace.

The 15 young people responsible for the video installation artwork were involved in a fantasy or absurd duty, or it seems so, but they made a "super act" in front of a destroyed building, some of its outside walls were still standing. Dressed in black, these young men began tried to pull the building down by ropes, even though it was a charade they pulled in rhythm and the effect was representative of symbolic pulling.

Young people try to pull even if it is a destroyed old building, it will disappear soon. In a regular and irregular rhythm the viewer feels as though they are pulling a boat against the stream, the young people ended the scene by showing paper beside a grave, an elegy of time, everything in it is destroyed, but is very difficult to erase.

The magic of this work was in the slow-motion of the film and the crossings of its white lines "ropes" and of course the bodies of the people dressed in black and grey, with wild backgrounds, assembled as if there was a conflict moving this film. It must be the contrast/conflict of "life-distraction" concerning which political decisions live on both levels, both local and abroad. These decisions convene radically or pragmatically, so if there was a loser it should be the harmless ordinary human.

From Russia there were two works that grabbed attention through their differences in techniques and visions, especially the sculpture work of the group, which was entitled "Half of the fighter's life". There were also five bronze sculptures of naked children with guns and imaginative helmets in scenery closest to the imaginary scientific film.

This work insisted on the influence of the hypothetical picture by adapting the gun machine as pop-culture in contemporary times, so the work of this group presented the inventions of contemporary life, which politics uses as a tool to create a generation dealing with the guilty imaginary scientific discoveries, leaving the second work about the cold war of the two blocks.



A house is a nice place of living, it is as though the artist imagined a place of pride and challenge, which is what we see through the small model of a building, clawed through it, so it loses its lower-half to the viewer; the rest of the buildings were normal packing boxes, so it symbolises the inhabitants' quarters.

Artists try to say it is not a solution to the housing problems in those countries that depends on the limited economy, but it is the destruction of taste, heritage and art. We are in the highest need to treat it and enrich our visions and souls.

Jan Alexander, in her work, the guard turned the borders to wires around a green field while in one of its corners a man stands with a bird head. This bird head man seems forced to stand in this green land, which is beside some other land, also surrounded by wires, and covered in hundreds of rusty scythes.

If this small space is prepared for infertility, scythes must barren and there is no help for mankind. The sky will be closed and the earth will be useless, and if there should be some miracle that saves him then that's the duty of the three guards representing the boundaries in a world that limits our movement or even our breaths. If politics pitch the army against the environment then the highest interest will remain with the power of the money and the control of the decision makers.

At the entrance of the city gallery there was a sculpture to the group of "democracy". The sculpture was a sitting man full of civil outlook, he wears a bob-belt which pushes the bottom of his right hand. Our contemporary time served the show, so, if such a man receives us at the entrance of the gallery then we have to imagine or discover the rest of the show through the guilty political message.

The photography of Heindrik Zeitler, with its colourful attraction though the colour red in many pictures of his show, archived democratic housing and he uses it to observe the most secret corners during the young hood time.

Paths, entrances, even sleeping or living places, crowded spaces of everything, do not represent anything, while shoes, beds, books, musical instruments are all absurdly consumed in this absurd life, or in its way to be absurd, crowded of the places that gave it life or a kind of freedom. Freedom does not mean completed, since "it is a young hood struggle" and it is not completed with the graft registration that covers many of the walls, appearing even in the hidden corners.

The body is full of its freedom, often the mental attack of the space that freedom provides through its regular and irregular logic, and as the environment gives its space, sometimes to be released, or sometimes to narrow it, as experimentalism does, yet how wide it is at the same time narrow. However, the red presence in these pictures is a vivid Gloria to the documents, vivid in the respect of the creative game.

The video installation work by Adel Abidin, who lives in Finland, was about the Iraqi situation, though Adel built it via an intensive way, and that is what the artist meant because he took it and presented the analysis of the roots of the destruction act of "bombardment, suicide, the individual and the collective one". If we teach the child a second language, not his first language, with words like 'kill', 'stole' and 'terror', this act will destroy the people later.

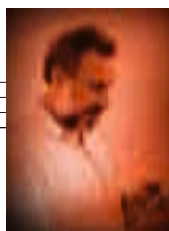
What remains to be mentioned is that the presented artworks were effectively direct with their details and colourful sceneries, even they were dreams; a dream is a brightened picture, it neither does leave our mental or our imagination easily, so if the picture was full of ideas and visions, it does not leave its geographical surround, and that was what the show insisted upon.

All the artists were working on the social culture denying the determined geographical location, visual art of today by its tools and techniques opened up on all horizons equally to all continentals of our globe.





Artist of the Issue



Yahya AL-Sheikh

By Farouk Yousif



The ghosts of the gravedigger are still in Yahya's depth; some days that gravedigger was a companion to him, but now that companion tries to become a thief. If AL-Sheikh gained many habits that are good for paintings from his successive exiles, then the sensitivity of that gravedigger to the material did not leave him for even one moment.

Yahya's thinking about the change of his hand, which once improvised its imagination when it touched the material, but what did not change is his need to reference that digger to be inspired by his strong glance and his confidence of professionalism; it is a kind of belief in the value of human struggle.

This artist grew-up in a context which sanctified work, so that he does not pledge the result of his works to a destiny, as other gravedigger do. What appears in his paintings establishes a strict and delicate meaning, but this meaning is not easy to follow. Its influences are not unclear, but they present the multitude of faces that also reflects the artists, so he resides outside of himself to watch his inside changes.

For a long time AL-Sheikh has not cared about the "big" meanings, this change was a reflection of his unsettledness; his soul became a shelter to many little details, they are his tools which became the inner feelings that his anticipation depends upon and the habits of exile made him more confident to the vanishing atmosphere.

The struggle of living takes the shape of an epic: in the beginning human was a title of change to Yahya, and then it became an element of different alternatives. Is humanism an act or a peculiarity? I think that this question continues to torture him. During the 1960s Yahya was presented in the Iraqi visual arts scene as a liberator renewer. He was the advanced person that others do not feel respect towards or even any valuable thing, but he quickly discovered through his personal experience, "I say that and I know how much he is aware to evaluate truly himself." His visual meditations that were implemented in an absurd bohemian way could not stand successfully.

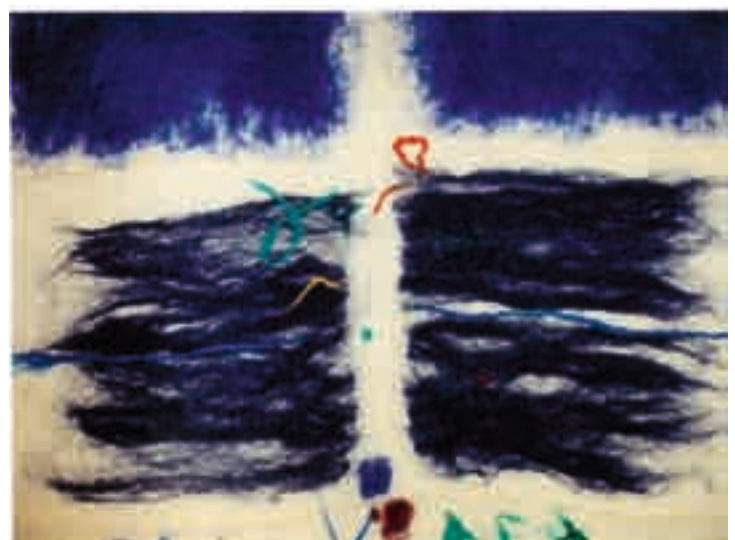
Yahya believes that 'Human' is still an experimental term and his pictures have necessarily become a laboratory to tragedy. This profession Yahya tries to cover has a clear amount of transparency, yet he is sad for humanity which has lost its mentality; a mentality that does not come back at all.

Promise of visual gifts

Yahya calls his poems 'stories', but what would he call his paintings? In both cases (paintings and poems) AL-Sheikh has an intensively strong language. It is his instrument to face the details from which he composes his ordinary day. Language that is not valid for description, but for creation, it is a language of inspired man that his emotions promise him visual gifts, which is also mixed with things that, yes, erase it and other things pass through as though it wasn't there.

In a store of deceived visions the painter can use them as helpful items, they help him when existing things go to ruin, which is the moment of painting, that's because Yahya's paintings, like his poems, do not appear as what it consumes. They are more a picture about that thing, it is not a similar but it is a reminder of all that makes it possible and clear to show a capacity of comparable enjoyment.

Often Yahya titles his paintings by signs which do not indicate a direct meaning, but through the title he tries to paint in an empty space: what the picture does not say, words try, but might often create an added unclear space. It's always there as a tight rope extended to an empty space, but it cannot be more than a resource to unsettledness, which explains why AL-Sheikh titles his paintings... it adds a deeper puzzle to them.





Fragmented, tortured

Yahya approaches painting as though he did not paint all his life. His friends watch him carefully, "That what you have done to yourself, and no one has done to you." Painting stole Yahya of his life, fragmented him, tortured him, and left him to stand in a deep hole.

AL-Sheikh makes what he loves, he control areas that art cannot do and he walks with legs that show as if he did not learn yet how to walk. He trains his feelings to stop what can be coached. Announcing his difference to exhaust his friend, that creature who knows that Yahya will come back to him in a moment when experience mixes with knowledge.

If Yahya was following the Sufi of their anticipations, then he does not hide his love of some experience that may lead to the inevitable trap because Yahya is the son of the experience. He places all of his experience in question, measuring in his dalliance scale, and he measures the distance between him and the world by the scale of his freedom.

The ghost of the grave digger which did not leave him, pushes him to make more mistakes, they are mistakes that the artist stands with full dignity. It is because they made the artist out of him, Yahya is not the son of his profession, but he is a consequence of his rebellious imagination; an artist that evolves each moment from the extraordinary beauty which is still in development.

Depth of the material

Often Yahya expresses his puzzle, as he tries to explain what he does. Material which inspires his idea imagination about a picture is his partner in the act. In this partnership both make a secret dialogue, while many things come out of the process that might find its way into the art.

When Yahya thinks or works, direct results do not attract him, but he means what effects his soul by gathering material and ideas. As he brings from the depth of the material what makes him happy, it brings from his depth what make him satisfied.

Two magicians reside on the border of the interactivity exchange - a mutual scandal -, so when Yahya finds a suitable space to show his works on nature, he does not delay to implement his desire to return the material to the origin space. Perhaps Yahya tries to take away a heavy load, while he pushes away works, which, far from the artistic dimension, leave it to the nowhere space.





INSPIRATION

BY KEBEDE



By Moustafa Alyassin

Ashenafi Kebede is an actively working artist, who has lived in Helsinki, Finland, for many years. He has attracted the attention of many Finns through his aesthetic and professional pieces of art.

Many Finns collect his artworks because they remind of the European high value of elsewhere.

Recently Ashenafi held an exhibition in Gjutars Galleria that ran from February 20th to March 9th.



Media and Immigrant Art

By Thanos Kalamidas



With immigration becoming a big debating topic over the last few years and having moved from a social to a security and political issue, European media often forgets the creative challenge that emerges from this uprooting and relocating to a new country, which the immigrants express through art. The bitter truth is that the media, especially the European media, has often overlooked immigrant artistic efforts, while the work of foreigners or local artists that has been created abroad has been overestimated and over-promoted.

Why is that? I think the attitude of the media towards immigrant artists reflects ignorance of art itself and that the stereotypes created from and in society have been reflected in the media. A small example, Indian art, from textiles to literature, has become often fashionable in Europe, especially in Great Britain, while very few Indian artists who live and create in Europe have actually managed to have any kind of access or promotion from European media. All societies - and with this I include all the countries from struggling Africa to the consuming West - have an icon for the immigrant: poor, uneducated, ready to do the hardest works for some pennies; an inspired immigrant artist is far from all of these stereotypes!

Immigrant art is also often neglected as it is portentously categorized as ethnic art. This is where ignorance enters. I'm a Greek who has immigrated to Finland and often when talking about Greek art I have to deal with references to the Acropolis and Homer's classics - it doesn't matter how educated my interlocutor is. People 'forget' that Greece has produced two literature Nobel Prize winners over the last 50 years with G. Seferis and O. Elytis, who was the father of the music modernism movement of the 20th century. I. Xenakis

and N. Eggonopoulos are among the most recognized Surrealist painters and I could go for hours with names that cover every single field of art - and remember that this is about a Greek who is European.

If the media and the people exhibit so much ignorance for my country's contemporary art - don't forget that after all I am a European citizen - imagine how difficult it is for them to accept me as a painter who has created a personal painting style on the edges of pop-art and, furthermore, what happens with a contemporary dancer from Somalia or a photographer from Ethiopia?

Most immigrant artists are naturally inspired from the difficulties of living away from home, nostalgia is a great part of their work; they are inspired by the environmental differences of their new homes where everything is new and magical, and finally they are combining techniques and touches from both countries trying to create new roots and new styles. Some artists that mainly adopted what was expected from them, like a colourful ethnic touch, found a voice through the European media but the majority is searching for a way to come out of the invisibility.

Thanks to the help of some institutions and organizations a few have found their way to the public but they are the exceptions that prove the rule. The majority of immigrant artists balance between anonymity and ethnic art often suppressing real creativity.

You see, other than better understanding and tolerance, the European media have one more obligation to help the immigrant artists in their effort with the business side of art in Europe. This is essential for all of us; you see art has one very unique talent which is able to transcend socio-economic borders.

Is it a question or what?

By Alaa Alamir

Art has an important role in transferring the image of any community to others, as it has a definite beautiful character; it is not black or white, it is rather colourful and variable scenery.

Since it is so, I think the role of an artist is huge and great as well, as it includes leading and changing the society. However, we always need to define who the artist is and what the main role that an artist can play is.

Maybe I went directly to the subject and did not make myself clear, but never mind, I think the situation requires going straight to the point, since there is no time any more to hesitate or to even be polite to achieve your goal. We have spent many years in this exile and we hear that the programme of the government will be better towards immigrants, but this talk is only during the elections, after the election there is silence.

What are we waiting for from others, is it fair that we wait? We have a small possibility to do something else, never-

theless when the question comes to the media and the activities of the migrants we can shout with the loudest voice that there really is very little that the media writes about. The cultural activities of the migrant under the focus, and they always marginalise us, while an artist can go to some native art organization, ask them for some help and they immediately tell two things.

The first one is that they send the migrant culture maker to some specific organisation, meaning that they underline immigrants, and when you show them that those specific organisations are not professional they say we do not like to deal with immigrants as immigrants, because we believe that migrants should be integrated into society. Indeed, they can rapidly forget that they were talking about that specific organisation.

One of the immigrants may want to work or collaborate with the native organisations, but one can imagine when some immigrants want to do some cultural activities, she or he should offer a great sacrifice, and already you have to consider yourself a martyr or an un-

**You
have to
consider
yourself
a martyr
or an
unknown
soldier.**



known soldier... or even Jesus - face what the other tells you or shows you or is even a snake with you.

Hypothetically if, as I said, one of the immigrants wants to participate in some activity, let's say make a film for example, he or she must use all methods and assert all their power. They must agree with the wife or husband that when they return home the partner should be ready for shouting or even fighting just to get rid of the bad feelings that have amassed during the day.

After that great experience one can say what a great film you have made, you can be proud of yourself that you are something, you brought the bull down by its horns, or you have even done something useful for society. You take a breath and plan what to do next.

You still have some money to host a reception for the launch of the film and you can wear your best suit and buy a bottle of the most fragrant perfume. It is your day, so a dream comes true, between you and the reality take a few minutes to deliver your message, your words. I am ready for the press conference.

Oh dear, the reception at was scheduled to begin at 5:00 pm, but only a few people have come. Now it is 6:00 pm, where are the people, where is the media? My friends are here, yet I sent some 300 invitations and there are some 20 people actually present.

OK, no problem. I remember the story of that great filmmaker, I think he was an Italian, a man came to ask him who is the best audience that can watch and understand your film? The great filmmaker answered: It is me.



== Mohammed Sami ==

By Moustafa AL-Yassin

Among the three chosen artists, the Iraqi Mr. Mohammed Sami was chosen to present his artworks, in an exhibition that opened on January 24th.

Mohammed is considered one of the top young surrealist artists to share his view with fellow surrealists around the world.

The exhibition was arranged by the International Surrealism Artists Association, which has its headquarters in Germany, but the city of Stuttgart hosted the exhibition which remained open until February 29th 2008.

Other participants were Dr. Ulrich Wilhelm Röpke and Dr. Reinhard Fratcher.

Word into Art

By Moustafa AL-Yassin

**Artists from the Modern Middle East
February 7th to April 30th 2008
Dubai International Financial Centre**

The British Museum has arranged a large-scale exhibition of artists from the Middle East and North Africa, whose aim was to highlight the image of Middle Eastern modern art and society.

Curator Mrs. Venetia Porter worked with this project widely and hardily, and she successfully presented this exhibition to audiences from around the world. In 2006 the British Museum witnessed a wonderful exhibition project that collected together some 109 artworks by 90 artists from different backgrounds, all with a high quality of professionalism.

Shadi Ghadrian, Portrait, Iran.



© Private Collection.



©The artist/British Museum.

Dia al-Azzawi, Homage to Baghdad, Version F. Prints (1/100).
Lithograph series. Iraq/UK, 1982.

“Word into Art” focuses on how script has been used in Middle Eastern art from the calligraphic traditions of Quranic and poetic verse, through to more innovative and modern manifestations. In the process it demonstrates how script is used to convey a diversity of symbolic, political or purely aesthetic meanings.

There are a number of other styles too and this is quite a contrast to the modern problem of very limited Arabic fonts - most newspapers, websites and software use just one. This problem was the subject of a presentation by the founder of the Khatt Foundation, which initiated a collaborative design project in Holland resulting in the creation of five new Arabic fonts (www.khtt.net).

The majority of works in the exhibition are from the British Museum, which, uniquely among British institutions, has been acquiring works by artists from the Middle East and North Africa since the mid-1980s. The exhibition is

divided into four sections. The first is Sacred Script, which explains the relationship between Arabic script and the religion of Islam, showing the enduring vitality of the Islamic calligraphic tradition today.

The powerful literary tradition of the Middle East, the enduring appeal of ancient and modern Arabic and Persian poetry, and the work of Sufi writers is evoked in the second section Literature and Art. The innovative work of Ahmad Moustafa, Kamal Boullata, Khaled al-Saai, Fou'ad Honda, Siah Armajani and Erol Akyavas are included in this section.

In Deconstructing the Word, the third section, works by Dia Azzawi, Hassan Massoudy, Etel Adnan, Abdallah Benanteur, Shirin Neshat, Farhad Moshiri, Ebrahim Bousaad, Jamal Abd al-Rahim and others reveal how artists seek to find ever more inventive ways of writing or illustrating these famous texts.

Letters and words are sometimes legible but more often they are not, having been turned into beautiful abstract patterns by artists as di-



Hassan Massoudy,
Calligraphy illustrating the poetry of al-Arabi. Iraq.

Leila Shawa, Children of War, Children of Peace (2 parts). Palestine / UK, 1995.



verse as Rachid Koraichi, Michal Rovner, Faisal Samra, Parviz Tanavoli, Yussef Ahmed and Ali Hassan.

Finally, Identity, History and Politics looks at the ways in which the words embedded in these works can provide society with real snapshots of history, as well as revealing reactions to the region's devastating conflicts during the past few decades. Included here are the works of Kareem Risan, Walid Raad, Laila Shawa, Sabah Naim and Khusrau Hasanzade.

Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum, commented, "This will be the first time that the British Museum has sent an exhibition to the Middle East. Dubai is the perfect choice as it is a thriving centre for contemporary art. It is wonderful that Dubai Holding have given us the opportunity to stage this important exhibition in such an important city."



**Word into Art:
Artists of the
Modern Middle East**
7 February – 30 April 2008

**Dubai International Financial Centre
The Atrium
(between buildings five and six)**

**Open daily: 12.00-21.00
Admission free**

www.britishmuseum.org/wordintoart

THE
BRITISH
MUSEUM



Dubai
International
Financial
Centre

Egypt with Finnish eyes

December 5-13 2007

By Azer Sawiris

Moona Metsoila's search for warmth... Will she ever find it?

Sponsored by



KLM Royal
Dutch Airlines



Ever since her first visit to Egypt in November 1990, Moona Metsoila has been looking for a piece of her soul that she left behind there. However, her recent return after 17 years may have left an even larger part of her soul that will be urging her to make several comebacks.

On the 90th anniversary of Finnish Independence, artist Moona was chosen to be the Finnish eye to see - and still sees - "Egypt with Finnish Eyes", the Egyptian exhibition held to mark Finland's birthday. Her art collection was exhibited in *Beit El-Umma* Museum and it was a unique reflection of her special passion for Egypt and Egyptian civilisation.

Perhaps the artist had been affected by the theory of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society or perhaps she believed in this theory, to a certain extent, because it is not a coincidence that she combines those two worlds to simulate the visual marriage between north and south.

We believe so, especially after having a quick look at her collection in a trial for reading her visual achievements with their cultural values that reach human beings equally well. This could be seen applied in her combination of Finland representing nature on one hand and Egypt as the source of old civilisation on the other, but when nature calls viewers to go back to pre-civilisation, civilisation calls them to think about what mankind has produced...

in other words, what has civilised society produced in a certain place in a particular time?

The combination between nature and civilisation is parallel to the artist's deep belief in the convergence of civilisations and thus comes the concept of living together on the surface of the planet in a single multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society; she, in her visual achievement, recognises and acknowledges this belief, and supports it with an intentional act and free willpower.

Moona's style, in mixing the Egyptian elements, such as the pyramids and the historical figures, with the Finnish landscape and nature, make her paintings unique. Here is Isis looking for Huors in the forest and her "Winter Wishes" positions the pyramids in the background of the similarly famous Finnish natural asset, the forest; she replaces the sand with snow and emphasising the leafless trees in the front of the painting, hinting at the lengthy Finnish winter.

The exhibition, which was held from December 5th to 13th in Cairo, also witnessed another scattered collection of the artist's hidden feelings - her struggle in life as a woman, mother and an artist.

"The Riddle" is another one of these artworks that express Moona's deep feelings, a room that has two sides, dark and lit, with iron bars in between... A man on one side and a woman on the other... Did she want to puzzle us by putting it in such a way that makes it really hard to know which one of the two figures in the picture is imprisoned and who is free?

If we go on analyzing the details of Moona's artworks we'll find ourselves in front of an artist who digested a great deal of both cultures, the Egyptian and the Finnish. She's an artist who wants to strongly prove that there are many meeting points between these two cultures.

One more important fact in Moona's artworks is her use of colours, as she lets her soul apply the colours, spontaneously, but intentionally. Moona's colours are also revealing the contrast within her, she is a mother, a journalist, but, at the same time, she is a rebel and bohemian who wants to break free.

Moona uses yellow and blue often in her paintings, they are almost the main two colours in her collection. They are also a reflection of the cold north and the sunny south, between which she is hanging, swinging.

'Warmth' is the key



word in Moona's search for a meaning of this life, and as she feels this longing to the warmth, her artworks reflect that. While Moona was trying to find the piece she left behind 17 years ago, she came back to Finland missing an even bigger part, which will demand many more trips to the warm south.

Will she ever find it?

Beit El-Umma (The House of the People) was the house of Saad Zaghloul (1859-1927), who fought for the Independence of Egypt from the British occupation and led the 1919 revolution, which resulted in his exile to the Seychelles. Saad was called "za'im el-umma", which means 'the leader of the nation'.



Galleria Continua

≡≡≡ **Anish Kapoor's "Ascensions"** ≡≡≡

By Azer Sawiris



Galleria Continua in Beijing has the great honour to present Anish Kapoor's first solo exhibition in China, which opened on September 1st 2007. Having worked with the Anglo-Indian artist since 1997, Galleria Continua is now delighted to offer to the local and international public a show conceived for its premises at the 798 Da Shanzi Art District.

Exhibiting one of the most influential artists of his generation, in one of the most active and pulsating areas of the Chinese contemporary art scene, is certainly a reaffirmation of the gallery's keen will of taking a step further towards the construction of a mature system of artistic vital experience.

Anish Kapoor is an artist who commits himself to construction, in every sense, valuating the aesthetic perception of spaces rather than focusing on objects themselves. This is true for his large-scale installations as well as for his smaller art works, where the space is captured inside its earthly setting of the physical limits of the sensory matter, and is returned altered and deformed in a way that induces intensified perception and aesthetic experience.

In the work of Anish Kapoor the meaning of the constructive act is immediate, especially whenever there are sensorial games or illusions: the void that can be perceived as surface, or creating shape; the reflection that overturns or erases the image; light that alters or modulates colour; figures that take shape as a result of physical and optical effects mystical ascensions, ghostly presences which lead





elsewhere. The latter, in particular, can describe the impression that comes to the onlooker while entering “Ascension” latest installation in the Beijing Galleria Continua’s space.

A massive spiral pathway takes one through a sensorial experience that leads the witness from a low, half-shaded gate, through a darker and narrower corridor, to the final luminous opening. The claustrophobic feeling that can invade one’s experience is suddenly denied by the revelation of ascending and ethereal apparition.

Known and admired for his enigmatic sculptural forms, this new *corpus* of works shows how Anish Kapoor continues his exploration of the antithesis: inner and outer, emptiness and fullness, presence and absence, the solid *versus* the intangible.

As Pier Luigi Tazzi wrote “One of the constants in the work of Anish Kapoor is the creation of clefts on the crust of the world, [...] a crust pierced at different levels, at different heights or altitudes, with varying and different degrees of penetration, suggesting a multiplicity of directions and possibilities, of varied thickness and depth, of varied and different impact”.





Last Drop

By Avtarjeet Dhanjal



At one time on this planet, there were only fish, animals, birds and insects, and one of the animals looked like humans, yet they were not different from the other animals. They were all fighting and killing and eating one another and that made God very unhappy. God called a meeting of all his angels, and asked for their advice. It was decided to create a loving, thoughtful and disciplined creature and call it a human being.

One morning God decided to follow the Sun with a bag full of the seeds that would change human like animals into real human beings.

God picked up a country on earth that had the highest mountain, which happened to be India. God chose the best attributes from his bag of Feelings, Love, Passion, and Devotion, and God continued showering these gifts until He reached Greece. The Greeks had already heard of God's coming and his gifts, so they set up a welcome party and consulted among themselves, what gifts to ask from God. God was very pleased by their efforts. The Greeks thought that they were of different race from the dark people to the East and the South, so they deserved something special. After listening to their requests and a little bit of thinking, God said, "I shall give you the best attribute that I have got, 'Thinking, Dialogue & Logic'. With these attributes, you will create new ideas, theories;

those will be followed by all of your kind."

God also warned that they should not expect all humans on the planet to follow their theories, especially the people he had already given the Feelings and Passion. God also added, "When you do not obey my advice there will be destruction on this planet."

Before God continued on his journey around the planet, there was a delegation from Africa, urging Him not to ignore them. God said, "You have travelled far and I have to give you something which you have already shown to me, the 'Strength', physical strength." God assured them that no other people will be able to match them; as a result women from all the continents would secretly long for you.

The Sun had already reached the other side of the planet, shining on Japan and China and other countries of the East; God just managed to catch up and saw that the Japanese were a very different race. God was running out of attributes/gifts to distribute, but while he was thinking hard to find a new attribute he noticed that these people were very polite and waiting patiently on their

knees.

God said, "I shall give you something no other people have, 'Discipline and Dedication'." God added that with these two attributes you will be known all over the planet, you would work hard to make these attributes perfect. The most obedient people have since been working hard and making everything perfect.

Part II

When I was attending St. Martin's School of Art in London one of our lecturers used to take our weekly seminars where he would bring his written papers and read to our Post-Grad class. These discussions were very varied, since almost half the students came from other countries, among which were French, German, Turkish, Japanese, Singaporean and an Indian as well, so it was very interesting how, at the beginning of the year, all the foreign students kept a low key in discussions as a sign of politeness and most of the British students would tow the line of the paper's presenter.

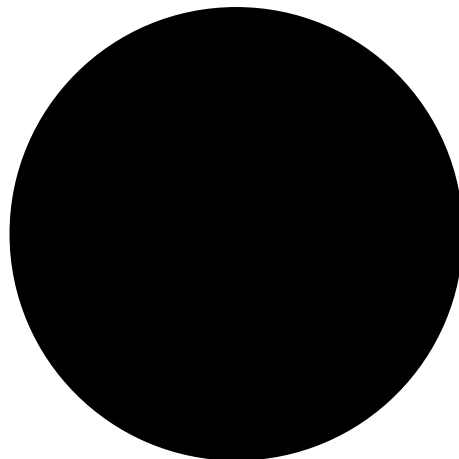
One afternoon the presented paper's title was 'SCULPTURE IS A THING' and the learned presenter spoke for over an hour about the 'thingness' of the sculpture. Some of the foreign students were getting edgy. What I discovered for the first time in my life was that as long

as I was listening to the speaker I was following the argument, but at the end of the reading if someone had asked me what the paper was about, there was nothing I could remember.

So I faced the lecturer, told him politely, but boldly, that his arguments in the paper were like sand, that just filtered through my fingers and I was left with nothing to hold on to. Normally when one listens to someone's argument for over an hour, whether one has agreed with speaker's point of view or not, you at least knew what the argument was about? However, in this case, there was nothing

I could hold onto from the 'thing-ness' of the sculpture.

In India, where I grew up, when some one told something very abstract, such as TRUTH or HONESTY, it was always illustrated with a story. At the end of the story the core idea became evident as a shining pearl, as if it had just popped out of its shell, and was now sitting in full daylight upon your palm.



It would always leave you amazed at why you did not find this pearl before.

Our learned lecture very firmly told me that was not how things are done in Europe, "You are after pearls of wisdom, but we only use logic to build an argument. We do not need to be passionate about these things. After all "Sculpture is only a Thing".





Helsingin kaupungin kulttuuriasiainkeskus
Helsingfors stads kulturcentral

CAISA



OURVISION 2008

GRANDE FINALE

26th of April 8pm.-11pm.
at FINLANDIA-HALL

TICKETS:
20 € / 15 €
CHILDREN
UNDER 14 YERAS
10 €

THE BRIGHTEST STARS WILL SHINE tonight as the grandiose Ourvision Finale gathers together the most talented singers of all the continents! Come and join the unforgettable musical journey around the world! In the Ourvision Finale the ten persevering finalists, two from each of the five geographical categories compete for the championship of Ourvision 2008 and for the prize of 2500 euros. In addition, the Best Voice, Best Performance, Best Own Song and Best Band will be awarded in the Ourvision 2008 Finale.

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
LIPPUPALVELU,
WWW.LIPPUPALVELU.FI /
TEL. 0600 10 800

Finlandia-Hall
Mannerheimintie 13 b
00100 Helsinki

www.ourvision.fi

