

Venice Biennale and the Arab World

SPEAKERS



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Adila Laïdi-Hanieh

Adila Laïdi-Hanieh is a writer and academic. She has a PhD in Cultural Studies from George Mason University. She is now an Arab Council for the Social Sciences Post-doctoral fellow and previously received a Fulbright scholarship for her doctoral research. She published in 2017 the art biography *Fahrelnissa Zeid. Painter of Inner Worlds* and published in 2008 the first cultural review of contemporary Palestine: *Palestine. Rien ne nous manque ici*. Her articles and essays have been published in *The Arab Studies Journal*, *l'Art-Même*, *Contemporary Practices*, *the Journal of Palestine Studies*, and in *Weghat Nazar*.

Dr. Laïdi-Hanieh taught modern Arab intellectual history and the first course on Palestinian arts at Birzeit University, from 2006 to 2008. She was the founding director of the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre from 1996 until 2005. She curated the internationally touring memorial art exhibition *100 Shaheed-100 Lives (2001-2003)*.

Alexandre Kazerouni

Alexandre Kazerouni, PhD in political science, is a specialist of the contemporary Muslim world, with a focus on the neighbouring countries of the Persian Gulf until now. He has just published in French *Le Miroir des cheikhs: musée et politique dans les principautés du golfe Persique [The Mirror of the Sheikhs: Museum and Politics in the Principalities of the Persian Gulf]* at Presses universitaires de France, a book based on his doctoral thesis defended at Sciences Po in 2013. After a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University in 2014 with the display of Islam in American museums as a topic, he is currently a researcher at École normale supérieure in Paris and a member of its Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean Chair.

Bahia Shehab

Bahia Shehab is an artist, designer and art historian based in Cairo. Her street art has been on display in museums, galleries and streets around the world, and was featured in the 2015 documentary *Nefertiti's Daughters*. She is the recipient of many international recognitions and awards, which include the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture (2017), Prince Claus Award (2016), TED Senior fellowship (2016), BBC 100 Women list (2013 and 2014). Bahia is associate professor of design and founder of the graphic design program at the American University in Cairo where she developed a full design curriculum focused on the visual culture of the Arab world. Her publications include *A Thousand Times NO: The Visual History of Lam-Alif* (Khatt, 2010).

Candida Pestana

Candida Pestana is an art curator based in Saudi Arabia. She joined the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture as a curator and head of programs in 2014 to work as part of the museum team, managing and implementing the public programs for the upcoming exhibitions. Candida is responsible for both the educational programmatic offers to the public and the development and organization of these offers with a curatorial perspective. She has a BA in Fine Arts Painting at the University of Porto and completed her MA in Curatorial Studies at the Zurich University of the Arts (2012) with a thesis entitled: 'Uses Of Public Space'. She has worked in contemporary art institutions in Barcelona, Porto, Zurich and she has curated and programmed several contemporary projects, including "Coffee Talks" and the symposium 'Art in Public Space' at Perla-Mode in Zurich; 'Dialogue Among Civilisations' and a conference entitled 'Art and Social Justice'(2010), both projects in South Africa and supported by UNESCO.

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Catherine Cornet

Catherine Cornet has completed her PhD in March 2016 at the EHESS in Paris and University of Rome II. She is currently drafting her book proposal entitled: 'In Search of an Arab Renaissance: Artists, Patrons and Power in Egypt and the Middle East (2001-2013)' that deals with the paradigm of the *Nahda*, or 'Arab Renaissance' in Egypt and the Middle East. She holds a MA in Middle Eastern Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, a MA in Political Science (IEP Aix-en-Provence) and a MA in Comparative Literature (University of Aix-en-Provence). She has been working for 15 years in the cultural field in the Middle East and Europe and is a columnist on culture and the Arab world for the Italian weekly *Internazionale*.

Charlotte Bank

Charlotte Bank is an art historian and independent curator, living and working between Berlin and Geneva. She studied Near Eastern archaeology, art history and Assyriology/Semitic philology at the University of Heidelberg. Since 2012 she is a PhD candidate at the University of Geneva, her PhD thesis titled 'The contemporary art scene in Syria 2000 - 2010: Between the legacy of social critique and a contemporary artistic movement in the Arab World' was submitted in March 2017. From 2013 to 2016 she was a member of the Swiss National Fund research project 'Other Modernities: Patrimony and Practices of Visual Expression Outside the West' at the University of Geneva. In her curatorial work she focuses on modern and contemporary artistic practice from the Middle East with a special emphasis on the independent contemporary art scene since 2000 in its global context. She curates exhibitions and video and film programs across Europe and the Middle East.

Claudio Cravero

Since 2014 he has been Curator at The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, Saudi Arabia. His curatorial research is focused on cultural diversity across the Middle East, investigating artistic resistance against public forms of censorship. His recent exhibitions include *Wasl-Beyond the Pen* (2016), co-curated with the British Museum, London. Earlier, he worked at the Castello of Rivoli-Museum of Contemporary Art, Turin, Italy (2004-2006), and at PAV-Centre for Contemporary Art, Turin, Italy (2008-2014). At PAV, his research explored the broader field of cultural ecology through socially engaged and community-based art exhibitions. Among his main exhibitions at PAV: *Intenaturalism* (2013), *Piero Gilardi* (2013). Cravero also curated the twentieth edition of Onufri Prize, the annual contemporary art contest promoted by The National Gallery of Fine Arts, Tirana, Albania (2014). Cravero is an author of articles for art magazines and blogs, and a series of essays collected in more than fifteen publications. He has also served as a member of international juries and art collections committees (Coal, Paris; Domaine de Chamarande, Paris; Cape Town Art Fair, Cape Town), as well as has presented in public lectures on Museum best practices. He holds an MA in *Philosophy and Applied Ethics* from the University of Turin, and a second MA in *Museum and Curatorial Studies* from the University of Turin.

Elsa Despiney

Elsa Despiney is an art historian. She has taught art history as well as the artistic evolution of various regions of the world, Africa and the Arab world, both at university and in different cultural institutes. This experience was followed by post-graduate studies in cultural policy, and art creation and production. Elsa Despiney holds a PhD in history and a master's degree in art history. She has published several articles and essays on contemporary art and new artistic expressions in Africa and the Arab world. She has commissioned various exhibitions centering on young contemporary artists, and is currently the head of the Kamel Lazaar Foundation art collection.

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BARAKAT

Eman Bukhari

Eman Bukhari is a cultural organizer and educator based in Saudi Arabia. Since 2013, Eman has been a Program Developer at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture. She has an MA in Middle East Policy Studies from the University of Exeter, UK and a BA in International Studies with a focus on International Relations and a minor in Psychology from the American University of Sharjah, UAE. Her teaching experience, public-speaking engagements and publications have focused on global awareness, public policy, and social and cultural identity development. Eman was a founding member of Kurt –a social business that strives to work with the community for sustainable positive change. She is also founder of Aurora Stage, a community culture initiative that runs programs in: Drama, Public Speaking, Writing, Intercultural Dialogue and Research.

Fatenn Mostafa Kanafani

Fatenn Mostafa Kanafani is the founder of ArtTalks | Egypt, a Cairo-based interdisciplinary art space offering exhibitions, lectures and publications since 2009, geared towards individuals and institutions committed to the acquisition of modern Egyptian art and the field of Egyptian art history. The gallery manages four estates and has access to Egypt's most prominent artists' estates. Ms Kanafani is a lecturer and author on 20th-century Egyptian modernism and has built one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of rare books, publications, and archive on modern Egyptian art history, currently housed in the premises of the gallery. She has contributed to the first catalogue raisonné for a Middle Eastern artist, Egyptian modernist painter Mahmoud Saïd and is currently working on a chapter in the monograph dedicated to Egypt's most inventive painter Abdel Hady el Gazzar as well as on the publication of her first book, *Crisis of Orientation: Independence, Identity and Art in Egypt (1850-1950)*. She has also contributed to the recent publication by Cambridge Scholars of *Daughters of the Nile: Egyptian women changing their world*, as one amongst 38 selected Egyptian living female achievers. She is a regular contributor to different local publications.

Gregory Buchakjian

Gregory Buchakjian (b. 1971) is a Beirut based art historian (Université Paris IV Sorbonne, dipl.) and photographer. Assistant professor at Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA), he co-founded, with Pierre Hage-Boutros and Rana Haddad, Atelier de Recherche ALBA (1997-2004), a transdisciplinary platform that tackled issues such as memory and space appropriation. Buchakjian's research deals with modern and contemporary art in Lebanon, focusing on city and history. From 2009 to 2016, he explored derelict buildings. This photographic project that involves mapping, architectural exploration, archive collecting and narratives generated his PhD dissertation: *Abandoned Dwellings in Beirut. Wars and Transformation of the Urban Space. 1860-2015*. He is member of the advisory committee of the Saradar Art Museum (Beirut) and took part in many academic and artistic juries including Sursock Museum's Salon d'Automne (2009), Boghossian Prize (2012) and Beirut Art Center's Exposure (2013).

Holiday Powers

Holiday Powers is Assistant Professor of Modern/Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar. She received her Ph.D. from Cornell University, where her doctoral research focused on modernism in Morocco. She has contributed to publications including *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, *Higher Atlas/Au-Delà de l'Atlas: The Marrakech Biennale [4] in Context*, and *The Journal of North African Studies*. She was the Artistic Program Coordinator and in charge of Parallel Projects for the fifth edition of the Marrakech Biennale, and she recently curated solo exhibitions of Khalid Albaih and Zineb Sedira in Doha.

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Ilaria Conti

Ilaria Conti is Research Curator for the Centre Georges Pompidou's new biennial platform, 'Cosmopolis'. Previously, she served as Exhibitions and Programs Director at the Center for Italian Modern Art in New York; Assistant Curator of the 2016 Marrakech Biennale; and Samuel H. Kress Interpretive Fellow at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She holds an M.A. in Contemporary Art History and Curatorial Studies from the University of Rome La Sapienza, where she served as Graduate Dissertation Advisor for the MENA region, and an M.A. in Visual Arts Administration from New York University, during which she pursued curatorial training at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Abu Dhabi Project and served as Art History Researcher to Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein.

Jenna Ann Altomonte

Jenna Ann Altomonte is an Assistant Professor of Art History at Mississippi State University. She received her MA (2009) and PhD (2017) from Ohio University. Her primary area of research centers on digital performance studies with a specialization in political/social intervention practice. She recently finished her dissertation titled, *Witnessing Violence, (Re)Living Trauma: Online Performance Interventions in the Digital Age*. The project examined the works of Iraqi and American artists directly and indirectly affected by the violent events of Persian Gulf and Iraq Wars. Current publications and research endeavors seek to connect representations of trauma to the virtual/digital realms in the post-9/11 era.

Maymanah Farhat

Maymanah Farhat is a writer and curator who has organized exhibitions at galleries, universities, and museums throughout the United States and across the Middle East. Farhat regularly contributes to international publications, including museum catalogues, academic journals, magazines, and edited volumes. She has presented her research at New York University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Harvard University, among other institutions. In 2014 she was listed among *Foreign Policy* magazine's 100 Leading Global Thinkers in recognition of her scholarship on Syrian art.

Mercedes Volait

Mercedes Volait is Research professor at CNRS and head of InVisu, a digital research unit on architecture, antiquarianism and applied arts in the modern Mediterranean at INHA (Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris). She is a specialist of architecture and heritage in modern Egypt, and currently interested in the iconography and topography of nineteenth-century Cairo. Recent publications include *Fous du Caire: excentriques, architectes et amateurs d'art en Égypte (1867-1914)*, 2009 and *Maisons de France au Caire: le remploi de grands décors mamelouks et ottomans dans une architecture moderne*, 2012. She edited in 2015 *L'Univers à Paris: un lettré égyptien à l'Exposition Universelle de 1900*, the first French translation of an Egyptian visit at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris. The show 'Le Caire sur le vif, Beniamino Facchinelli photographe (1875-1895)' that she co-curated at INHA is on view from 21 April to 8 July 2017.

Nadia Radwan

Nadia Radwan is an art historian specialized in visual arts in the Middle East. She is Assistant Professor of World Art History at the University of Bern, Switzerland, where she is also the director of the doctoral program in Global Studies of the Walter Benjamin Kolleg. In 2014, she was Assistant Professor of Art History at the American University in Dubai, UAE. Her research focuses on Egyptian modern art and transcultural interaction

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between the Middle East and Europe. More recently, she has been working on curatorial practices and heritagization in the United Arab Emirates, as well as representations of the Middle East in Swiss photography and print media at the beginning of the 20th century. Radwan is the author of articles about Egyptian modern art and architecture and has contributed to several exhibition catalogues. Her book about Egyptian modernism is currently in press (Peter Lang: 2017).

Nadine Atallah

Nadine Atallah is a doctoral candidate in art history at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris, France) preparing a dissertation on the topic 'Women, Art and the Nation. A History of the Exhibitions of Women Artists from Egypt (1952-1975)'. This research investigates the important contribution of women to the visual arts in modern Egypt, in relation to Nasser's Arab socialist and nationalist ideologies, while developing new writing strategies within feminist art historiographies.

Nadine Atallah is also a founding member of Madrassa Collective, a transnational curatorial platform which experiments and investigates collective practices and transborder collaboration through research and exhibition making, as a means to resist and confront the difficulties of art making in the Middle East and Africa.

Nele Lenze

Nele Lenze's research focuses on the cultural online sphere in the Gulf. Her main research interests include literature and art published in social media, cultural production online, and online participation culture. She holds a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies and Media Studies from the University of Oslo where she lectured on the Arab online sphere. She obtained her master's in Arabic literature from Freie University Berlin. She co-edited *Converging Regions: Global Perspectives on Asia and the Middle East* (2014) with Charlotte Schriwer as well as *The Arab Uprisings: Catalysts, Dynamics, and Trajectories* with Fahed Al-Sumait and Michael Hudson (2014), *Media in the Middle East: Economy, Gender, Activism and Culture* (forthcoming 2017) with Charlotte Schriwer, Zubaidah Abdul Jalil, and a monograph *Politics and Digital Literature in the Middle East. Perspectives on Online Text and Context* (forthcoming 2018).

Rehab Nazzal

Rehab Nazzal is a Palestinian-born multidisciplinary artist based in Canada and Palestine. Her video, photography and sound works deal with the violence of war and colonialism. Nazzal's work has been shown in Canada and internationally in both group and solo exhibitions, including Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, Toronto, Karsh-Masson Art Gallery, Ottawa, Khalil Sakakini Center, Ramallah, Art Gallery of Mississauga and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She is currently a PhD candidate at Western University in London, Ontario. Nazzal holds an MFA from Ryerson University in Toronto, a BFA from the University of Ottawa. She has received awards and scholarships from Western University, Ryerson University, and the University of Ottawa, as well as grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the City of Ottawa. She also is a recipient of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada doctoral award.

Rose Issa

Rose Issa is an independent curator, writer and publisher who has championed visual arts and film from the Arab world and Iran for over 30 years. She has lived in London since the 1980s showcasing upcoming and established artists, producing exhibitions and film festivals with public and private institutions worldwide, and running a publishing

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program. Her most recent title is 'Signs of Our Times: From Calligraphy to Calligraffiti' (Merrell Publishing, 2016). She has collaborated with the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2013, 2006); Leighton House Museum, London (2013; ongoing since 1992); Beirut Exhibition Center (2010-11); the Bluecoat Arts Centre, Liverpool (2010); Tate Britain, London (2008); the European Parliament, Brussels (2008); the State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow (2007); the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg (2007); the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), Berlin (2004); The CCCB (Contemporary Cultural Centre), Barcelona (2003); the IFA - Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (2002-3), Stuttgart; the Barbican Art Centre, London (2001, 1995); and the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam (2011-2013; 1996-1997).

Samia A. Halaby

A Palestinian refugee, Samia A. Halaby was born in Jerusalem in 1936. She is a painter, writer, and activist for Palestine. Now in the middle of her sixth decade as an active painter exploring abstraction and its relationship to reality Her central medium during the first three decades was oil and later acrylic. Within the parameters of her ideas, Halaby explored the digital medium by programming kinetic abstractions with sound beginning in the mid 1980s. Her work is in museum and private collections internationally and her one-artist shows include Arab, European and American Galleries. Halaby authored a book titled the 'Liberation Art of Palestine' for which she interviewed forty-six artists. A second book titled 'Drawing the Kafr Qasem Massacre' explains the documentary drawings she made on the subject and their basis. A third book titled 'Growing Shape' explores how her abstractions evolve. She is the subject of two monographs and numerous reviews.

Sara Mondini

Sara Mondini is adjunct professor of Art History of India and Central Asian at the Venice Ca' Foscari University since 2009, and adjunct professor of Islamic Art and East Asian Art at FIT - Fashion Institute of Technology, New York at Milan Politecnico since 2016. She holds a PhD in Oriental Studies from Venice Ca' Foscari University (2009) and she has conducted extensive researches on Muslim, Indian and Indo-Islamic art and architecture in India, the Middle-East, and North Africa, that have led to the publication of several contributions, and whose results have been presented in numerous international conferences. She is interested in the role of artistic productions in political propaganda and identity construction, in the dynamics of patronage, and in the work of art as a social production able to shape or transpose political conceptions and religious identities.

Sarah Johnson

Sarah Johnson is currently pursuing a PhD on Middle Eastern art at the Freie Universität in Berlin. Her dissertation focuses on the artist Hafidh al-Droubi (1914-1991) and Iraqi art in the second half of the twentieth century. Previously she was a curator of Islamic art at the British Museum in London and a researcher at the Freer and Sackler Galleries in Washington, D.C. She completed an MPhil in Islamic art and archaeology at Oxford University, where her research focused on the early Islamic period, and an undergraduate degree in art and archaeology at Princeton University.

Silvia Naef

Silvia Naef is a full professor at the Arabic Studies Section of the University of Geneva since 2006, where she obtained her Ph.D. in 1993 with a thesis on modern art in the Arab world (published in 1996). She has taught in Tübingen and Basel and has been a

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visiting professor at the University of Toronto (2007-2009), the University of Sassari (Italy, 2012), the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris (2016), and a visiting researcher in Göttingen (2013) and Princeton (2003). Her research focuses on modern art, visual representations and images in the Arab and Islamic world; she is also interested in gender issues. She has been in charge of the four-years research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation *Other Modernities: Patrimony and Practices of Visual Expression Outside the West*, in collaboration with Prof. Irene Maffi (University of Lausanne) and Prof. Wendy Shaw (Free University Berlin), (2013-2017).

Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi is a United Arab Emirates-based columnist whose articles have appeared in *The Financial Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, *The Huffington Post*, *The New York Times Room for Debate*, *Foreign Policy*, *Open Democracy*, and *The Globe and Mail*, as well as other notable publications. Sultan is also a prominent commentator on Arab affairs on Twitter. Rising in prominence during the Arab Spring, his tweets became a major news source, rivaling the major news networks at the time, until *TIME* magazine listed him in the '140 Best Twitter Feeds of 2011'. Sultan was an MIT Media Lab Director's Fellow from 2014-2016, and in the Spring of 2017 Sultan was a practitioner in residence at the Hagop Kevorkian Center of Near East Studies at New York University, where he offered a special course on Politics of Middle Eastern Art. Sultan is also the founder of the Barjeel Art Foundation, an independent initiative established to contribute to the intellectual development of the art scene in the Arab region.

Yasmine El Dorghamy

Yasmine El Dorghamy is based in Cairo, Egypt and holds a Masters Degree in Education Policy from Stockholm University and works in the field of education. She publishes RAWI- Egypt's Heritage Review, a bilingual (Eng/Ara) semi-annual publication established in 2010, dedicated to all things Egyptian history and heritage. The eighth edition, published in 2016, is on Modern Egyptian Art and has been widely acclaimed and is considered by many to be a reference on the subject.