

## RCD&gt;PLY&gt;RWD&gt;FFWD&gt;STOP&gt;EJ

Ibrahim Abumsmar, Doa Aly, Hazem Harb, Khaled Jarrar, Randa Mirza,  
Yara El-Sherbini and Ayman Yossri Daydban

Curated by Aya Haidar

14 October – 22 November 2014  
Private View, Monday 13 October 2014, 6-8pm



Kashya Hildebrand is delighted to announce *RCD>PLY>RWD>FFWD>STOP>EJ*, a group exhibition of work by Middle Eastern Contemporary artists. Running from 14 October – 22 November 2014 and curated by Aya Haidar, the show emphasises recording the present as a reference for the future.

Looking at the recent and current trends that have swept the Middle East, a combination of ongoing simmering tensions as well as a boom in construction and development have led to an urban landscape that is changing at an alarmingly rapid pace. In the process, history and local heritage sees itself becoming erased, and identities are in a constant state of flux.

Those living with – and observing – these changes, are forced to ask themselves: What is retained today to be referenced tomorrow? Artists are challenged to respond to how these events are reflected to not just a global audience, but, indeed, future audiences. How can these realities be presented without falling into a clichéd view of a region already plagued by stereotypes and pre-conceived notions of endless strife, oppression and upheaval?

It is precisely these insights into the Middle East's untold realities that this exhibition aims to explore. As the wider geopolitics are determined from above, another layer of history is being made, in the streets and behind closed doors. The artists here seek to reflect the actual realities of those who live and struggle to maintain them. They represent the everyday and question preconceptions and misconceptions of an otherwise preconceived and misunderstood region.

These are the subjects that artists are choosing to record. This is the today that they are saving for the future.

The works range in media from video to photography, drawing and sculpture.

The artists participating are:

**Ibrahim Abumsmar** (Saudi Arabia), **Doa Aly** (Egypt), **Ayman Yossri Daydban** (Palestine/Saudi Arabia), **Hazem Harb** (Palestine), **Khaled Jarrar** (Palestine), **Randa Mirza** (Lebanon) and **Yara El-Sherbini** (UK/Egypt).

**Ibrahim Abumsmar*****Al Qiblah Kite***

Winston Churchill once said “Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it.” This idea takes on new meaning with *Al Qiblah Kite*, by Saudi-born Ibrahim Abumsmar, who repurposes everyday objects as sculptures. In the case of his life-sized kite, Abumsmar explores the experience of one’s individual faith and its role within a collective. *Al Qiblah Kite* embodies the tenuous balance of one’s moral compass in the face of social pressure and a time of rivalled and challenging circumstances. The Qiblah is the direction Muslims face for prayer, fixed in the direction of the Holy Kaaba in Mecca. By appropriating such a recognizable symbol onto a kite, Abumsmar explores the moral triumph of faith and collectivism against prevailing defiance.

**Doa Aly*****Hysterical Choir of the Frightened (HCF)***

On the 25th of January 2014, thousands of people gathered in Tahrir square to celebrate the 3rd anniversary of the Egyptian revolution, while state police crushed nearby protests with tear gas and live ammunition. The proximity of the celebrations and the killings led many to call it the day of “death and dance”. On the 26th, journalist Wael Abdel Fatah started his daily column with the words, “Jihadi madness versus the hysterical choir of the frightened”. Aly is recreating this Hysterical Choir of the Frightened as a choir of four young women reciting excerpts from the Marquis De Sade’s novella “Justine” (1791). In these passages, De Sade’s protagonists are defending murder as a necessity to the regenerative forces of Nature. Aly’s HCF series drawings are based on Victorian post-mortem photographs, namely the ones where the deceased is made to pose as alive.

**Ayman Yossri Daydban*****Al Qablah Al Oola (The First Kiss) and The First & Last Prayer***

In 1999, Ayman Yossri Daydban created a series of paintings that portray figures standing alone in a large, isolated cube. Titled *The Room*, the series dealt with identity and communication. These two concepts make up the backbone of the artist’s practice. As Daydban sits alone in his studio, working in a room filled with miscellaneous objects and artwork, he ponders the environment that has become his sanctuary, the medium through which he communicates with the outside world. He questions whether it is the room that he belongs to, or rather the world beyond, through a connection via modern-day technology. Daydban’s work hinges on this interaction between his life in the room and his life in the space outside of it. This interchangeable existence suggests, for him, that belonging (as a result of communication) is nothing more than shifting a momentary state of consciousness. Indeed, as a Saudi resident of Palestinian origin, concepts of belonging hold particular significance for Daydban. In these works, Daydban returns to *The Room* by revisiting objects found within it.

**Hazem Harb*****Forever***

Born in Gaza, Hazem Harb’s artistic practice is intrinsically linked to his Palestinian identity. Everyday life has become ever more compacted as space becomes even more economical as Palestinian settlements close in on themselves. Houses, families and lives are compressed into small cubic blocks. Reminiscent of Bauhaus architecture, the sharpness and clean lines of these blocks becomes a metaphor for daily life for Palestinian residents. *Forever* presents two chairs united as though they are blocks of Lego that can be easily pulled apart to give each his or her own space. The reality, for those in Gaza, however, has proven much more of a challenge.

**Khaled Jarrar*****Whole In The Wall and Olive Branch***

Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar works with photography, video and performance to interrogate the situation of his native country, particularly with respect to the recognition of the State of Palestine. He uses his artistic practice as a means of questioning conflict, nationhood, home and belonging. His *Whole In The Wall* photography series is inspired by meeting an elderly woman at the wall that separates Gaza and Israel on one of her many trips to visit her daughter. When

the wall was erected this woman and her daughter were cut off from each other and forced to live on either side. Though separated by the concrete structure, a small hole enabled them to see each other from a distance. With the recent death of this woman, Jarrar reconsiders her long visits to this hole in the wall and began to explore what was beyond.

Meanwhile, *Olive Branch*, made of reconstituted concrete from the so-called apartheid wall and olive wood reflects on how life can exist in even the most difficult of circumstances. Extending a proverbial olive branch, Jarrar highlights the power this barrier has in hindering the hand of friendship and peace. If a tree can grow from concrete, then there is hope for unity and a free Palestine.

#### **Randa Mirza:**

##### ***Beirutopia***

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990, Beirut has been striving to regain the glamour and splendour associated when it was known as the 'Paris of the Middle East'. Beirut's current urban landscape is undergoing rapid change with numerous reconstruction and renewal projects. Part of this construction boom comes from large inflows of foreign capital and the profitability of the speculative real estate sector. Here advertisements for construction projects show large billboards in situ reproducing fantastic proposed realities to come. Computerized 'biopolitic' renderings simulate the building, its interior, surroundings, illusory residences and lifestyle. *Beirutopia* does not differentiate these illusory images and the pastiche narrative that they embody. This confrontation allows for new forms of identification to arise and become reappropriated within the wider social and architectural fabric of the city. The photographs become sites of resistance.

#### **Yara El-Sherbini**

##### ***Buzzwords***

Yara El-Sherbini's interdisciplinary practice uses pop culture and humour to engage and question social and political systems of power and influence. By appropriating universally recognisable objects and events in a specific cultural context, El-Sherbini aims to elucidate systems in the production of knowledge. *Buzzwords* is a series of participatory sculptural works which subvert the game 'Buzz Wire' where players navigate metal words with a metal loop, without forming an electric circuit. When metal meets metal, it creates an electric charge triggering a warning buzz sound and light. The artist has created two new works in the series: *Current* and *Resistance*. Considering these words in light of the historical, present and ongoing political situation in the Middle East, the game ultimately asks us to consider our individual agency, playfully creating a parallel between political power and power in the form of an electrical charge. In questioning the importance of power, the game physically challenges us to determine how – and if – we choose to steer along certain routes and our response when we place ourselves in risky and dangerous terrain.

#### **Notes to Editors:**

##### **Aya Haidar**

Aya Haidar (b. 1985) graduated with a BA in Fine Arts from the Slade School of Fine Art in London and completed an exchange at the School of the Art Institute, Chicago. Following this, she achieved an Msc in NGOs and Development with Merit from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Haidar is a Lebanese multimedia artist whose work focuses on the use of found and recycled objects in order to create poetic works exploring loss, migration and memory. Her most recent solo exhibitions, titled *Year*

*of Issue* (2014) and *Behind Closed Doors* (2011) were shown at the New Art Exchange, Nottingham and Bischoff Weiss Gallery, London, respectively. Her most recent group shows, *Stitching Cyborgs* (2014) featured works exhibited at Contemporary Arts Platform, Kuwait and *A'Rebours* (2014) at Bischoff Weiss Gallery, London. She has also participated in various international art fairs, namely FIAC (2009), Art Dubai (2011, 2012, 2013), MENASA (2013) and Art Istanbul (2013). Haidar also undertakes independent curatorial and art education projects, namely Tate's *Illuminating Cultures* program (2010), V&A's *Record, Resist, Reframe* (2012) and most recently INIVA's *A Place for Conversation* (2014). Haidar currently lives and works in London and is represented by Athr Gallery, Jeddah.

### **Ibrahim Abumsmar**

An accomplished athlete who participated in many local and regional swimming competitions, Ibrahim Abumsmar (b. 1976) won numerous medals and become a national swimming champion. He later pursued his interest in art and photography and undertook several courses in oil painting and portraiture, design, sculpture, photography, Arabic calligraphy as well as interior architecture at Beit Alt-Ghouri, and was a student of fine art at Helwan University in Cairo, Egypt. Abumsmar recreates everyday objects as sculptures, with the intention of questioning the essence of their identity. Manufactured objects usually have a practical purpose and are created with the intention of making everyday life easier. Abumsmar's sculptures challenge this perceived practicality and suggest that the objective of their creation is more symbolic than practical, and that they succeed in impacting our lives on a more subconscious emotional level. His work *Cutting Edge* was acquired by the Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art in 2012. Abumsmar recently had his first solo in Paris, *A Saudi Artist In Paris* following his artist residency at La Cites Des Arts in Paris. Ibrahim has also recently exhibited at Sphere 6 at Galleria Continua's Le Moulin in 2013, a group show that coincided with 5 solo shows by Etel Adnan, Ai Weiwei, Anish Kapoor, Michelangelo Pistoletto and Sophie Whettnall.

### **Doa Aly**

Cairo-native Doa Aly (b. 1976) explores the relationships between mind and body, self and other as well as internal and external through a practice that encompasses painting, drawing and video. She attended the Faculty of Fine Arts, Helwan University, in Cairo and earned her BFA in painting in 2001. Working primarily with video and drawing, Aly traces so called "modern misfits", characters whose actions and constant struggle for effectiveness lead to an ambiguous state. Her selected group exhibitions include *Snap Judgments* at The International Center of Photography, NYC, and the 7<sup>th</sup> Dakar Biennial in 2006; *The Maghreb Connection*, Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, *In Focus* at Tate Modern, *Recognize* at The Contemporary Art Forum, London, "Port City" at the Arnolfini Museum, Bristol, in 2007; The 3<sup>rd</sup> Guangzhou Triennial, the Guangdong Museum of Art, *Cairoscope* at the Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin, PhotoCairo4, in 2008; The 11<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial, in 2009; *The Future of Tradition* at Haus Der Kunst, Munich, The 7th Busan Biennale, in 2010, *Meeting Points 6* at Beirut Art Center, and Argos, Brussels, in 2011; *The Ungovernables* at the New Museum, NYC, New York, 2012, and Eva International 2014, Limerick city, Ireland. Aly's most recent solo exhibitions were in 2010 at Darat Al-Funun, Amman, and the Townhouse Gallery in Cairo 2010 and 2013, and Gypsum Gallery in Cairo, 2013.

### **Ayman Yossri Daydban**

Ayman Yossri Daydban was born in Palestine (b. 1966), and has lived all his life in Saudi Arabia. Daydban's oeuvre is often a reflection of his life; a life afflicted with issues of identity and belonging. Many consider his work to be political, as much of it focuses on the deconstruction of the Palestinian national narrative. However, it is in fact deeply personal and has little political agenda beyond his search for a sense of self. His last name 'Daydban' means watchman, a mask that observes the viewer and its surroundings while at the same time remaining detached from them. There is an unbridgeable opposition between the watchman and what is being watched: They seem to be in different worlds, while in such close proximity, producing enormous tension. Daydban has been an artist in residence at La Cites des Arts in Paris, Cuadro Fine Art Gallery and Traffic Gallery in Dubai, and currently undergoing a residency program at Ashkal Alwan, Beirut. He has participated in various group and solo exhibitions in the Arab world and internationally. His solo exhibitions include a show at Selma Feriani Gallery in London entitled *Identity* in January 2011, as well as one at Athr Gallery in Jeddah, entitled *I am Anything, I am Everything* in January 2012. Amongst the group shows are *The Language of Human Consciousness* at Athr Gallery, and numerous *Edge of Arabia* exhibitions since 2008, including the Brunei Gallery in London (2008), *The Future of A Promise*, Venice Biennale (2009 & 2011), Berlin (2010), *Transition*, Istanbul (2010), *Terminal*, Dubai (2011), *We Need To Talk*, Jeddah (2012) and again *#COMETOGETHER* in London (2012). Other participations include '*Bravery of Being out of Range*' at Athr Gallery in Jeddah and subsequently at Sultan Gallery in Kuwait, *The State* at Traffic Gallery in Dubai, *Tessellation* at Galerie Zilberman and *The Aftermath* alongside Adel Abidin and Bahar Behbehani curated by Basak Senova at Akbank Art Center in Istanbul, as

well as *Haji: Journey to the Heart of Islam* at the British Museum in 2012. Daydban also launched his first public art project *Change* on billboards across Dubai and Sharjah during Art Dubai 2013. Finally, Daydban is part of the permanent collections of the British Museum, Al-Mansouria Foundation, the Abdul Latif Jameel Foundation, BASMOCA, the Salsali Private Museum in Dubai and the Greenbox Museum in Amsterdam. He is currently undergoing his artist residency in Askhal Alwan in Beirut (2014).

### **Hazem Harb**

Palestinian artist and Gaza native Hazem Harb (b. 1980) currently lives between Rome, Italy and Dubai, UAE. In 2004, Harb enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and graduated from The European Institute of Design in 2009. Harb deals with a number of core issues including war, loss, trauma, human vulnerability and global instability. He continues to explore his work multi-media by using all and every tool at his disposal. In 2011, Harb was awarded a residency at The Delfina Foundation, which was also supported by the A.M. Qattan Foundation; which awarded him the Young Artist of The Year award in 2008. Hazem's series *Beyond Memory* has been acquired by The British Museum, UK in 2013. Harb has participated in numerous international exhibitions which include *Made by War* at the National Ethnographic and Pre-historical Museum Luigi Pigorini, Rome, Italy (2007), *Sphere 6* at Galleria Continua's Le Moulin in (2013), a group show that coincided with 5 solo shows by Etel Adnan, Ai Weiwei, Anish Kapoor, Michelangelo Pistoletto and Sophie Whettnall and most recently, Hazem participated in a two-artist show titled *Traces & Revelations* at the University of Durham, England (2014). In 2014 Hazem opened his first solo exhibition in Saudi Arabia titled *Al Baseera*, and is scheduled to open a solo in Dubai at Salsali Private Museum in March, 2015.

### **Khaled Jarrar**

Khaled Jarrar (b. 1976) lives and works in Ramallah, Palestine and was born in Jenin. He completed his education in Interior Design at the Palestine Polytechnic University in 1996, then graduating from the International Academy of Art Palestine with a BA in Visual Arts in 2011. Jarrar rose to prominence with his 2007 exhibition *At the Checkpoint*, which was placed in full view of Israeli soldiers at Howarra and Qalandia checkpoint. Recent solo exhibitions include School of Fine Arts, Paris/Polaris Gallery, Paris/Gallery One, Ramallah (2014); Ayyam Gallery London (2013); Galerie Guy Bartschi, Geneva (2013); the NEWTOPIA: The State of Human Rights Contemporary Arts in Mechelen and Brussels (2012); Galerie Polaris, Paris (2012); Al-Mahatta Gallery, Ramallah (2009); Al-Mahatta Gallery, Ramallah (2007); International Academy of Art Palestine, Ramallah (2007). Recent group exhibitions and film festivals include New Museum, New York (2014); Helsinki Festival (2014); University of Applied Arts, Vienna (2014); Samsung Blue Square and Busan Museum of Art, South Korea; USF Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa (2013); The Madrid Palestine Film Festival (2013); the 15th Jakarta Biennale (2013); the 7th Berlin Biennale (2012); 52nd October Salon, Belgrade (2011); Al-Ma'mal Foundation, Jerusalem (2010); London Film Festival (2010); and the Instant Video Festival, Marseille (2009).

### **Randa Mirza**

Lebanese Randa Mirza (b. 1978) is a visual artist and freelance photographer, dividing her time between Beirut and Marseille. Her work has received numerous prizes, including the No Limit award at Les Rencontres Photographiques d'Arles (2006), an international prize for photographers whose work takes the medium beyond currently acknowledged boundaries. Mirza has shown her work in solo exhibitions at the Finnish Museum of Photography, Sfeir-Semler gallery (Hamburg) and Galerie Tanit (Beirut), with her most recent solo shows including *On Sex and Gender, Vol de Nuits*, Marseille, France (2013) and *Beirutopia*, Quattrocento Metri Quadri, Ancona, Italy (2012). She has exhibited within Beirut Art Center (Beirut), Moving Walls (Beirut), Phillippe de Pury (London), FIAC (Paris), Miami Basel, Armory show (NY), Art Dubai, Paris-Photo, fondazione Merz (Torino), Witte de With (Rotterdam), Raster gallery (Warsaw), Fotomuseum Winterthur (Zurich), Darat al-Funun (Amman), Aleppo international photography festival (Syria), Fotofestival Mannheim-Ludwigshafen- Heidelberg (Germany), Kunsthalle Wien (Vienna), ZKM museum (Germany). Her work received a grant from AFAC (Arab Fund for Art and Culture), Al-Mawrid Al-Thaqafi and the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores de Mexico. She was artist resident at NIFCA (Nordic Institute for Contemporary Arts), HIAP (Finland) and at fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa (Venice). Mirza is also an official collaborator to the photographic agency Pictoretank, a member of Vol de Nuit artistic committee and a regular collaborator to Zoukak cultural association.

### **Yara El-Sherbini**

Yara El-Sherbini (b. 1978) lives and works between London and California. Her playful practice spans a variety of media, ranging from sculpture, and interventions, live art, and video. She uses humour to engage audiences into questioning social and political systems of power and influence, exploring the invisible processes of knowledge production. El-Sherbini received her MA from the Slade, UCL, and her BA from

the University of the West Of England. Recent artist in residency programmes and exhibitions include *Wide Open School* at the Hayward Gallery (UK), and *The Global Contemporary* at ZKM (Germany). *The End Of Conflict in The Middle East* was commissioned by the V&A, as part of the National Art Library's new initiative to archive Contemporary and Modern Arab, Turkish and Iranian art and design. El-Sherbini's work has shown at the New Art Exchange (Nottingham), LWL – Industrial Museum (Germany), Arnolfini (Bristol), ATHR Gallery (Jeddah), Modern Art Oxford, Mostyn Art Gallery, (Wales), BALTIC (Gateshead), Delfina Foundation (London), QUAD Gallery (Derby), ArtHouse (Australia), IKON Gallery (Birmingham), National Portrait Gallery (London), Tate Britain (London), Norwich Castle Museum, CCCB Museum (Barcelona), National Maritime Museum (London), Futersonic (Manchester), Sultan Gallery (Kuwait), Centre d'Art Contemporain (Geneva), Whitworth art gallery (Manchester) Battersea Arts Center (London), Palazzo Papesse (Siena), The David Roberts Art Foundation (UK), and Lombard-Fried Projects (New York).

### Kashya Hildebrand

The gallery's artists challenge pre-conceived notions of nationality and cultural identity, creating an environment in which established norms become blurred and characterisations from seemingly contrasting cultures occupy the same visual space. This juxtaposition leads to a simultaneous renunciation and acceptance of the traditional and the contemporary, creating an environment that is in constant flux. Religion, politics, nationality and culture are treated as the foundation of identity, depicted and disseminated to varying degrees. Through painting, collage, sculpture, photography and installation work the artists convey the contestations of the contemporary political landscape.

### MORE INFORMATION

Exhibition: RCD>PLY>RWD>FFWD>STOP>EJ  
Curator: Aya Haidar  
Artists: Ibrahim Abumsmar, Doa Aly, Hazem Harb, Khaled Jarrar, Randa Mirza, Yara El-Sherbini, Ayman Yossri Daydban  
Location: Kashya Hildebrand, 22 Eastcastle Street, W1W 8DE, London, UK  
Telephone: +44 (0)20 3588 1195  
Dates: 14 October – 22 November 2014  
Private Preview: In presence of the curator and select artists, Monday, 13 October 2014 6 – 8pm  
Hours: Monday – Friday 11am – 6pm, Saturday 12 – 6pm  
Web: [www.kashyahildebrand.org](http://www.kashyahildebrand.org)

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