

SPOTLIGHT ON

# MIDDLE EASTERN ART

SUMMER IS A TIME WHEN MAYFAIR AND ST JAMES'S WELCOME A LARGE NUMBER OF MIDDLE EASTERN VISITORS. HERE IS OUR PICK OF THE BEST EXHIBITIONS THAT REFERENCE THAT PART OF THE WORLD

## LETTERS FROM HOME

Kashya Hildebrand was born in Pakistan to a Pakistani father and an American mother and is married to a Swiss husband – this global heritage has influenced her gallery's programme and it was her participation in the first Dubai art fair seven years ago that marked her role in bringing Middle Eastern art to London.

In 2002, Hildebrand's gallery was the first outside Iran to exhibit Farhad Moshiri's now-famous jars painted with lyrics from pop songs. In 2004, Moshiri curated an exhibition titled Welcome for Hildebrand's New York gallery, introducing the city to pop-infused critiques from like-minded Iranian artists.

The gallery was one of the first to showcase calligraphy as a contemporary art form and is currently showing *Illuminating The Word*. A selection of artists from Iran, Syria and Tunisia



encompass multiple styles to create an illuminated space where the power of the word holds centre stage. From the large canvases of Mir Yaghoub Sangtarash and Azra Aghighi Bakhshayeshi to the small, delicate works of Khaled Al-Saa'i, the Arabic script is explored in numerous ways – at times able to be read, at others completely abstract. Some works repeat a single letter form or word, while others bring to life entire phrases and poems. *Illuminating The Word* is at Kashya Hildebrand, 22 Eastcastle Street, until August 31. Tel: 020 3588 1195

**ABOVE:** Nja Mahdaoui, *Mahdia*, No. 3, 1995  
**LEFT:** Khaled Al-Saa'i, *City From Heaven*, 2014  
 Courtesy of Kashya Hildebrand



## ESCAPING WAR

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery manages a diverse roster of artists from the Middle East. It is currently showing Iraqi artist Sadik Kwaish Alfraji's *Driven By Storms (Ali's Boat)*. The installation describes a simple exchange between the artist and his nephew Ali, who expressed his longing to escape war-torn Baghdad in a handwritten letter. Alfraji was haunted by the image of a small boat that Ali included to illustrate his dream of floating away from the devastation of Iraq after the 2003 American-led invasion to the safety of the Netherlands, where the artist is based. Alfraji describes having a similar dream as a young man who longed to escape his neighbourhood during the



Sadik Kwaish Alfraji,  
*Ali's Boat*, 2014

Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s. Alfraji details his own visions of exile while depicting the fantasy world of a boy who seeks to leave behind the calamity of war. **Sadik Kwaish Alfraji: *Driven By Storms (Ali's Boat)* is at Ayyam Gallery, 143 New Bond Street, until August 29. Tel: 020 7409 3568**

## FAMILY AFFAIRS AT GAZELLI ART HOUSE

Something of a Dover Street landmark, contemporary art gallery Gazelli Art House was founded in Baku, but supports and presents a wide range of international artists. Founder Mila Askarova opened her first space in Azerbaijan in 2003. In 2012, the gallery opened in Mayfair and has never looked back, regularly hosting events and talks alongside exhibitions.

This month the gallery is presenting *Mother Mould*, a solo exhibition of new sculpture by Jane McAdam Freud. As the daughter of Lucian Freud and great-granddaughter of groundbreaking psychologist Sigmund Freud, McAdam Freud is highly influenced by her family history. Her sculpture explores sexuality and unconscious influence, among other theories of her great-grandfather. These new works contemplate "the mother as mould", in direct contrast to her previous exploration of "the father as muse",



Jane McAdam Freud,  
*Poetic Encounter*,  
2014-15

explored in *Family Matters* and *Lucian Freud My Father*.

*Mother Mould* explores further the theme of family through 16 large-scale sculptures composed of found objects enmeshed in wire. Evoking the idea of creation, these pieces pair the found and the made, the incidental and the intended. The resulting works uncannily suggest the mother as the source, containing, shaping and replicating forms.

**Jane McAdam Freud: *Mother Mould* is at Gazelli Art House, 39 Dover St, until August 15. Tel: 020 7491 8816**

## MORE MIDDLE EASTERN GALLERIES

### JANET RADY FINE ART

Now in its seventh year, Janet Rady Fine Art represents a wide range of cutting edge, contemporary Arab and Iranian artists, as well as international artists whose work references the Middle East, including Katie Boyadjian, Neda Dana-Haeri, Hojat Amani and Dodi Tabbaa.

**50 Jermyn Street.  
Tel: 020 7830 9327**

### BARAKAT GALLERY

This gallery exhibits the finest ancient art over its five floors. From Old Kingdom Egypt to Ming Dynasty China, and everything in between, the gallery celebrates the grandeur and diversity of art from the past. **58 Brook Street. Tel: 0207 493 7778**

### THE PARK GALLERY

Founded in 1992 by Robin Start, the Park Gallery specialises in modern and contemporary Middle Eastern art. Artists include Chafic Abboud, Mohamed Ajan, Adel Al-Quraishi and Huguette Caland.

**26 Connaught Street.  
Tel: 020 7262 2588**