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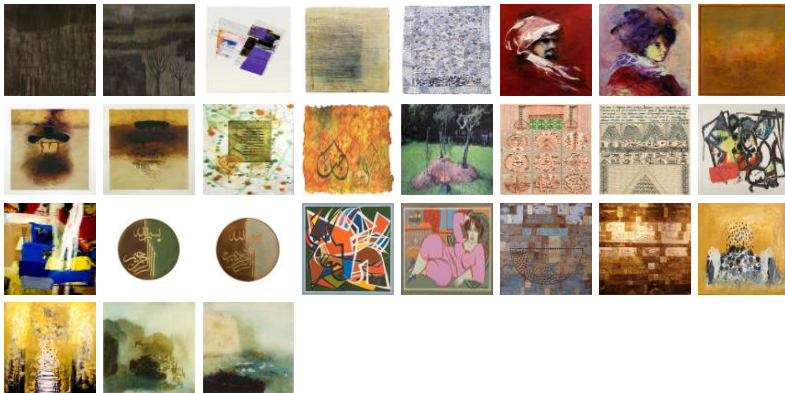
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### A WINDOW ON CONTEMPORARY ARAB ART 25 November 2008 - 11 February 2009



Tayseer BARAKAT

Untitled  
Dyes & ink on paper  
45x65 cm  
2007



"A Window on Contemporary Arab Art" is the first exhibition at Nabad, a gallery which aspires to become a positive influence on the local art scene. The opening of this exhibition comes as a culmination of this effort, bringing together a selection of distinguished Arab artists of different generations and diverse stylistic trends.

The participating Jordanian artists are renowned figures in the local art movement. One of the most prominent is Wijdan, whose style ranges from modern figurative compositions to traditional elements, in which she employs calligraphy in a purely expressive manner rather than decoratively. The second Jordanian participant, Mohanna Durra, is a pioneer in his field; he is considered the first Jordanian painter who introduced modernity to the Jordanian art movement, beginning in the late 1960s. His diverse styles demonstrate a wide variety of techniques and visual discourse. Durra paints portraits, human figures and architectural compositions with utmost economy to interpret depth and space. His strong, masterful lines pull the composition elegantly together with the least visual elements, making the works appear deceptively simple.

Also from Jordan are the works of the foremost Jordanian ceramist, Mahmoud Taha, whose reliefs and ceramic objects combine traditional aesthetics with skilled craftsmanship and an in-depth knowledge of his medium. He extracts the clay's latent energy to express a clearly cherished tradition. One of the participants of the following generation of Jordanian artists is Khalid Khreis, whose work is characterized by a constantly innovative and

expressive energy. Khreis concentrates on a network of lines that dissolves into transparent colour to achieve a visual language that is pure, extremely minimal and lyrical. Another Jordanian, Nabil Shehadeh, started his career in a classical abstract style. He later adopted a lyrical abstract language. Shehadeh's paintings are characterized by spontaneity and free brushstrokes, manifesting excellent control of colour. His paintings are thus visually harmonious and integrated.

There are major artists from Iraq whose abstract expressionism and inspiration from their heritage have influenced the contemporary Arab art scene. One of them is Rafa Nasiri, a highly experienced colourist with great mastery of his linear compositions, especially manifested in his use of Arabic characters, both in printmaking and in painting. Himat, a young Iraqi artist actively seeking to establish himself in a European environment, spontaneously infuses poetry into his quasi-realistic paintings in which he sometimes deconstructs a scene only to reconstruct it in order to render his own imaginary landscape.

The themes of Palestinian artist Khalil Rabah's works are inseparable from his country's current reality. His installations demonstrate scenes of life's anxiety and confusion, absence and presence, while searching to achieve joy in daily life. The second Palestinian participant, Tayseer Barakat, documents human anguish resulting from dispersion and diaspora through conceptual paintings and three-dimensional assemblages. Barakat uses natural materials, creating new visual experiences that evoke a mythical atmosphere. Jumana El Hussein represents yet another aspect of Palestinian art. Her mixed media works include oils, watercolours and graphic techniques, such as woodcut and lithograph. One can feel a sense of romanticism and poetry both in her shapes and symbolic content. In her first paintings of the urban architecture of Palestine, she does not record their physical aspect as much as she reformulates them in a poetic manner without shedding their architectural characteristics.

The poetry concealed in the paintings of Lebanese artist Hussein Madi is powerfully achieved, whether by his use of the female figure or of his Arabic characters, in such a way that combines the factual with the imaginative. The content in Madi's paintings is delivered within a geometric structure using coherent colours, thus evoking the dynamic concepts accumulated in his memory.

Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul paints works that are full of warm vitality, rendered through a calm, serene atmosphere and subtle, mysterious colours. His compositions delve into the hidden meaning of things in order to capture the essence. With energetic painterly strokes, he shifts the natural scene to poetic abstraction, evoking a visual transparency and light that is full of vitality.

Ayman El Semy from Egypt focuses on the concept of land and its loss through a visual narration of folktales. He fills the surface of his paintings with quivering effects that balance the composition with childlike, primeval drawings and scribbles. El Semy combines transparent geometric abstraction with a graphic symbolism that dissolves into a composition that is balanced and organically coherent.

Algerian artist Rachid Koraichi's works examine the visual artistic language concealed in Arabic calligraphy and popular manuscripts, searching for an Eastern Sufi culture and a technique that stems from a belief in experimentation and the combination of craftsmanship and art, as well as modern philosophy with art. The paintings of the second Algerian participant, Abdallah Benanteur, show nature dissolving into waves of colour with the fluidity of chromatic poetry. Although his works appear to reject rigid academic principles, they often contain human figures and elements from nature. He creates an indirect connection with Arab and Islamic philosophy of art by painting works that are firmly based in location and nature, using traditional elements. He establishes a dialogue with nature and succeeds in dissolving matter, concentrating on radiance and light.

"A Window on Contemporary Arab Art" at Nabad gallery represents a qualitative addition to the local fine arts scene and an auspicious beginning for this promising new gallery. Our warm wishes to Nabad for prosperity and success.

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