



Omar Najjar, Untitled, 2021, oil on canvas, 120 x 65 cm

Emotive Journeys

Houssam Ballan, Majd Kurdieh, Omar Najjar, Walid Ebeid

30 May – 15 June 2021

Opening reception: 30 May

Azad Art Gallery, Cairo

Fann A Porter Dubai and The Workshop are pleased to present *Emotive Journeys*, a group exhibition at Azad Art Gallery, Cairo, Egypt.

As part of an exchange exhibition and collaboration between Azad Art Gallery Cairo and Fann A Porter Dubai, *Emotive Journeys* brings together the work of Syrian, Palestinian and Egyptian artists including Houssam Ballan, Majd Kurdieh, Omar Najjar and Walid Ebeid. The exhibition presents a striking aesthetic sensibility and narrative expressed through paintings on canvas, paper and wood.

In Houssam Ballan's latest collection, he delves into entirely into the subconscious. Releasing himself from previous modes of logical thinking, he reinterprets and revisits past works through an entirely emotive lens.

This new series was created during Ballan's online art residency at CoCulture Foundation in Germany. Many of the paintings were created in collaboration with Beirut-based Syrian musical band, Tanjarat Daght ("Pressure Cooker"). Ballan and the band explore the decades-old concept of translating music through art, and vice versa. For instance, *Three Children At Play*, was created as an interpretation of a composed melody. The featured characters are seen in two older paintings of Ballan's, and are known as "Children of War"—ironically foreshadowing the war that would befall Syria. Here they return as an abstraction—their lines now musical notes, carrying out the rhythm of the song. Numerous other paintings illustrate rhythm and harmony—black depicting silence, and yellow sound.

Artist Majd Kurdieh's practice incorporates painting, drawing, and literature using recurring figures that stand to tell a story, usually carrying a strong moral and positive reinforcement that the artist projects into the world. Over the past several years, the artist has created a 'cast of characters', the two main ones being the Fasaheen (Arabic for 'tiny ones'). The stories told through the representation of these figures are not specific stories that the artist references but rather ones that could apply to any viewer, leaving room for personal interpretation. The Fasaheen, one boy (Fasoon) and one girl (Fasooneh), always smiling despite the fact their world is filled with hardships, are usually accompanied by other characters. The concepts of home, love, devotion and sadness ring strong in all his creations. Kurdieh is masterful in his ability to express our realities through the strokes of his brush and the power of his words.

Omar Najjar has a long interest in humanity and his bold brushstrokes and use of oil painting as a medium combine into a style of contemporary impressionism, the subject of which is usually everyday tasks that seem mundane but are given new dimensions in his work.

In his *Rhapsody* series, the paintings explore the collective act of orchestral music. Each piece of this new collection depicts orchestra players in action. Each individual has their role but to

complete the ensemble and allow the music to play, they must also listen to each other – both instrument and player. By focusing on the collective rather than the individual, Najjar is making a comment on life and how a healthy society functions. Although painting a static scene, Najjar’s use of broad brush strokes, blurred lines and swathes of colour convey movement, energy and even the sound of the notes. By revealing his process through imprecise markings, it is as if Najjar is letting his viewer into the feelings he has for the music and for the act of playing collectively in rhapsody. Rather than concentrating on the figures or the instruments, Najjar is painting the music itself.

The controversial and provocative paintings of Walid Ebeid range from poignant studies of the female figure to People We May Know in the Egyptian society. Tackling difficult issues like sexuality, immigration, politics and oppression, Walid brings attention to the sufferings, struggles, and hopes of humanity. His realistic oil paintings have broken a great deal of social and moral taboos and challenged different customs and traditions imposed by society, to defend women and the oppressed of all categories and social classes.

His searches and experiments went through several phases to reach his current phase, which he calls “realistic expressionism.” His artwork resembles him closely. His art reflects reality and the changes taking place around us and mainly focus on strange things that we may quickly lose interest in, but leave a lasting impact.

About Fann A Porter

Fann A Porter is a contemporary art gallery that represents a diverse selection of emerging international and regional artists, with locations in Dubai, UAE and Amman, Jordan. The gallery aims to nurture the burgeoning and dynamic contemporary art scene through quality exhibitions, non-profit events, auctions, and an active community program.



The gallery's exhibition program includes ten curated exhibitions a year, and features artists working across diverse media. Fann A Porter has established a series of dialogues and collaborations with curators, writers, museums, governmental entities, and institutions to affirm its commitment to support the long-term development of young contemporary artists from the Middle East.

In 2015, the gallery organized a charity auction Artists for the Kids of Syria under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Culture and in collaboration with the UAE Red Crescent. The charity auction helped raise over AED 500,000 to help the children in the refugee camps in Jordan. In 2019, the gallery launched Art for All Collective (AFA) to provide a platform to make quality art accessible through bespoke payment plans, a first of its kind initiative for the Middle East.

By hosting a regular public programming including exhibitions, talks, non-profit initiatives, and by participating in fairs, Fann A Porter has established itself in forefront of the region's exciting arts landscape.

Founded in 2009 by collector Ghada Kunash, the gallery was initially known as Vindemia.art, opened adjacent to and under the umbrella of Vindemia, an antiques and collectibles gallery at Jumeirah Beach Residence, Dubai. In 2010, the gallery partnered with Kempinski Hotel Mall of The Emirates, for a dedicated space for the art. In 2014, under the same trade license of Vindemia Novelties LLC, the art gallery was rebranded to Fann A Porter.

In 2016, Ghada Kunash opened The Workshop Dubai, combining her two ventures – Vindemia and Fann A Porter, a unique community space consisting of a café and design space, providing



visitors with a unique artistic and cultural experience. The Workshop Dubai, with its naturally bathed garden, is located in the heart of Jumeirah.

In 2020, with the vision to expand and provide a local platform, Ghada Kunash opened a second Fann A Porter outpost, in Amman, located at Manara Arts & Culture, a creative hub and social space in the heart of Jabal Al Lweibdeh.