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Houssam Ballan, Untitled, 2018, oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm

NARRATIVES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

22 February – 22 March 2019

BBA, Berlin, Germany

As part of an international cultural exchange with BBA in Berlin, Germany, Fann A Porter is pleased to present *Narratives from the Middle East*, a group exhibition of work by Majd Kurdieh, Houssam Ballan, Omar Najjar, Fadi Attoura, and Mariam Abbas. These four emerging Middle Eastern artists will be exhibiting in the Berlin gallery from February 22 – March 22,

2019. With a joint objective of extending a wide platform to underrepresented artists, the two galleries are participating in such an exchange to ensure that the artists are represented in markets abroad and also to enhance awareness, understanding and appreciation of cultural specifics and the contemporary artistic language of both countries.

Through a range of mediums – from paper to canvas – the Fann A Porter artists were selected for their ability to capture human experiences as well as offer a tangibility to the idiosyncrasies of life.

Omar Najjar, a young Palestinian (born 1992, Jordan), is known for his innovative style that he describes as “structured chaos.” He uses bold and broad brushstrokes, which take their roots in impressionism and chooses oil, pastels and charcoal for his medium. His quotidian subjects emphasise his techniques and places the viewer in a position of intimacy.

Emirati **Mariam Abbas** (b. 1985, United Arab Emirates) portrays subjects related to her hometown of Dubai. With astounding attention to detail, Abbas uses pencils and charcoal to compose delicate and intricate designs. For this series, she chooses old Arabian urban spaces in order to highlight their unexpected beauty and significance amid a rapidly changing environment.

Houssam Ballan (born 1983, Syria) is a figurative artist, who rather than painting representative portraits, works with the idea of painting the inner landscape of his subjects and capturing their subconscious. His works are sometimes blurred and contain minimal detail, referencing the inconsistencies of memory and therefore capturing the reality of human experience.

Majd Kurdieh (born 1985, Syria) has a whimsical and fantastical style for which he has created an entire cast of characters to tell the compelling and sometimes tragic story of his life and homeland. The protagonists in this story are Fasaen (Arabic for ‘tiny ones’) and they are always smiling despite their world being filled with hardships. They are usually accompanied by other characters and poetic phrases written in Arabic. At first glance, the works seem cartoonlike and simple, however, upon further investigation, it is clear that the

artist is using this device to unpack the complex experience of living through civil unrest and also to convey strong messages of hope and action.

Fadi Attoura (born 1978, Syria) unifies the carefree, childlike spirit that he picks up on from his surrounding environments and the formalism of Op art, drawing influence from the geometric forms and motifs of early mosaic designs.

“These works come together to present a snapshot of contemporary artistic output from across the Arabic speaking world and it is our great pleasure to present them together to European audiences in the hope that through art, we can connect with new audiences and tell their stories on an international level,” said Ghada Kunash, founder of The Workshop.

This exhibition is part of the gallery’s ongoing efforts to participate in cultural exchange around the world. It is also inspired by the forthcoming Expo 2020, which will celebrate human ingenuity and collaboration taking place under the theme of ‘Connecting Minds, Creating the Future’. In line with this mission, this exhibition is will foster creativity across borders, enhancing opportunities and facilitating cultural understanding between the UAE and Germany.

About BBA:

Established in 2015 and run by an all-female team of artists, BBA is a contemporary art gallery in the centre of Berlin, close to famous Alexanderplatz. BBA Gallery represents critically informed and poetic visions in strong, visually-compelling styles that cover a wide spectrum of media. Giving promising fellow creatives a chance to be seen and recognised for their artistic works is fundamental to the BBA ethos.

BBA Gallery has created and taken part in cooperations with galleries and artistic projects from all over the world. Renata Kudlacek and Nele Ouwens, the founders of BBA Gallery, both passionately believe that artworks are vehicles for thoughts, feelings and concepts, that - if they are provided with the right context - are a powerful intellectual, emotional, cultural and political stimulus.



BBA stands for Berlin Blue Art. Berlin Blue is a very dark blue that shifts towards black, the color of a night sky and was invented in Berlin in 1706. It was the first modern pigment to be developed. It is used to draw blueprints and plays an important role in medicine as an antidote for poisonings.

About Fann A Porter

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

Fann A Porter is based at The Workshop Dubai, a unique concept store consisting of an art gallery, cafe and design studio.

About The Workshop:

The Workshop is a place to create, collaborate, interact, and showcase. A “shop in shop” spirit where you can exhibit and buy art, furniture, lighting, antiques, designer items, and much more. One space that offers a unique experience and atmosphere for designers, artists, architects, music lovers, bookworms and shoppers to come and have a good time and feel at home. With a coffee corner and a quite outdoor area in the heart of authentic Jumeirah area in Dubai.

For more information and for interviews with the artists, please contact the gallery on +971559480363, or email fann@theworkshopdubai.com.