

Canvas

ART AND CULTURE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND ARAB WORLD

THE POWER 50

2013



Published out of the Dubai Technology and Media Free Zone Authority.

AED 45 | QR 65 | BD/OR 7 | SR 90 | LBP 32,000 | US\$25 | £15.00 | €16



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SAM BARDAOUIL & TILL FELLRATH

Nothing beats a good story – a tight, thoroughly researched, well-presented narrative punctuated by historical facts, minute-but-essential details and new information all packed with a punch. Imagine saying all that through exhibitions, and consistently too, not to mention accompanying rich texts savoured by academics and enthusiasts alike. This is the stuff that Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath are made of. Among other things, the duo's curatorial strategy offers viewers new ways of looking at art, which in turn, contest prevailing perceptions. Now that's power: the ability to change minds. Take for example, their small-scale exhibitions, such as *Rock, Paper, Scissors* at Leila Heller Gallery in New York last July. Here, they juxtaposed the works of nine very different artists – including Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock (rock), Contemporary Iranian Hadiéh Shafie (paper) and 'Spiderwoman' Louise Bourgeois (scissors) – through an artistic take on the popular hand game. Then there is, of course, their groundbreaking *Tea With Nefertiti*, which debuted to strong critical acclaim at Doha's Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art last November. It is also the first museum show exported from the Arab world to tour internationally (visiting the Institut du Monde Arabe, the Valencia Institute of Modern Art, and Bozar: Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels this year). This curatorial powerhouse will also curate Lebanon's second Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale, presented through the works of Akram Zaatari. As Bardaouil and Fellrath travel the world excavating hitherto undiscovered information, they strengthen their roles as cultural diplomats with good stories to tell.



Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath. © Canvas Archives.



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JESSICA MORGAN

The Daskalopoulos Curator, International Art at the Tate, Jessica Morgan has organised some major shows during her time at the London institution: John Baldessari, Martin Kippenberger and Gabriel Orozco, among others. This year, she's gone East and brought a pioneering Lebanese Abstractionist to the Tate – Morgan has been an instrumental figure in bringing the Saloua Raouda Choucair retrospective to Europe, signalling the first time a Middle Eastern artist has been the subject of a major survey at the gallery. Morgan is on the Art Dubai Curatorial Advisory Board and on the Abraaj Group Art Prize selection committee. Her passion for Middle Eastern art goes back to her time as a curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Chicago, where, in 1997, she organised the first US survey of the work of Mona Hatoum – an artist considered to be one of the most important Contemporary practitioners from the region. Since joining the Tate in 2002, Morgan has also become a member of the Middle East and North Africa Acquisitions Committee, which aims to increase the institution's collection of Middle Eastern art spanning from 1960 to the present. Today, the Tate's holdings include works by Hatoum, Akram Zaatari, Hani Rashid and Walid Raad among others. Often spotted making the rounds at all the major regional art exhibitions and fairs, Morgan has her ear firmly to the Middle Eastern ground.