

Opening
11 March,
RE: Orient
Examines Three
Decades of
Political and
Cultural Transition



Martyr's Epic by Kadhim Haydar

RE: Orient

BARJEEL ART FOUNDATION'S SIXTH EXHIBITION
INVESTIGATING MODERNISM IN THE ARAB WORLD FROM THE 1950S -1970S

SHARJAH, United Arab Emirates, 11 March 2013

Covering three decades of political and socio-cultural transition across the Arab region, the focus of the Barjeel Art Foundation's upcoming exhibition RE: Orient, Investigating modernism in the Arab world, 1950s – 1970s provides an inquisitive inquiry into art production in this era. Marking the sixth exhibition of the Barjeel Art Foundation, RE: Orient features selected works from the collection of founder Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi.

Opening on 11 March, RE: Orient examines a dynamic period in art history of the Arab region and represents an open-ended conversation that challenges narrow perceptions of Arab societies often tied to Western perspectives of 'the Orient'. Highlighting modern works by key artists with roots in the Arab world, the exhibition presents this critical period of art production as an active international exchange of ideas where artists fused traditional artistic approaches with elements of avant-garde movements including Surrealism, Cubism, and Fauvism.

RE: Orient includes works by recognized modern masters including Ahmed Cherkaoui, Louay Kayyali, Ahmed Moustafa, Fateh Moudarres and Paul Guiragossian, providing a platform to review, replenish and reorient the discussion about the development of modern Arab art since the 1950s.

"The period from the 1950s – 1970s represents a pivotal period of socio-political transition from a Colonial era to the rise of a pan-Arabism. RE: Orient is an inquiry about

the development of art in this 30-year period, the subjective approaches of its artists, and how the conversation and research on this period is still underway," commented Mandy Merzaban, curator of the exhibition and collections manager of the Barjeel Collection.

"The 'RE:' in RE: Orient references the 'reply' to an original message, it in a sense continues the conversation about past and present notions of otherness and the contrived categories which confine artists through narrow interpretations of identity and politics. It also shows how artists in the Arab world were actively participating in a global dialogue on modernism."

Close to half of artworks included in RE: Orient were created by Arab artists in the earlier stages of their careers – aged 35 or younger – showcasing their fundamental influences that shaped the opus their individual practices. From collaborations between artists, writers, journalists and poets, this era reflected a defining moment in the art and cultural history of the region. A number of the artists, primarily from Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, were founders of artists' associations and collectives responsible for creating exhibitions and increasing awareness of modern art from 1950–1970.

RE: Orient is the Barjeel Art Foundation's most significant exhibition for 2013, running until December.

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