

Lebanon as a State of Mind (Act 01)

Posted December 5th, 2010



Launch of the Lebanese Pavilion at Venice Biennale. © Samer Mohdad / Arab Images

On October 21st 2010 Lebanon has been officially invited to participate in the 54th International Art Exhibition in Venice. The Venice Biennale is the most important and prestigious of all the contemporary art biennales and offers the best possible international exposure. More and more countries in the region are investing in infrastructures and institutions for contemporary art production and distribution to gain cultural dominance through art for an ever-bigger international exposure for political, economic and cultural gains. At the last Venice Biennale there was a record 77 national pavilions.

From the 1st of June 2011 till November of that year, Lebanon will be participating in the Venice Biennale after an absence in 2009. The organisational team led by Pr. G. H. Rabbath, the appointed curator of the Lebanese Pavilion, with the help of the Ministry of Culture, the Italian embassy, the Italian Cultural Institute, Arab Images Foundation, Menassat.org <<http://Menassat.org>> <<http://Menassat.org>>, is planning activities and events whose main goal is to reach a wider audience in Lebanon, and create a greater public interest for contemporary art production in Lebanon using the Venice Biennale as platform and framework. Monthly activities led by artists residing in Lebanon or invited to Lebanon will be aiming at a bigger interactivity with the Lebanese public. New Media, and mobile technology solutions will aim at creating collaborative interaction between artist and viewer in Lebanon and neighboring countries.

On December 3rd, the Lebanese Pavilion was officially launched at the Italian Embassy in Lebanon where an installation and performance by Cornelia Krafft was offered to the public. A light installation on the floor, a video projection, and scene fragments from her last performance '777' will be performed. 777 was loosely inspired by *The Seven Deadly Sins*, the Brecht/Weill commission of 1933.

A number of artists participating in the coming event in Lebanon and the Venice Biennale will continue the narrative started on the 3rd of December, during the many months leading to June 2011.

Lebanon can only be a 'state of mind', an idea to inherit from someone who came before; an idea to relate to, and address to another that would come after. Maybe that's what a country is all about, not just some constitution written by a few, or a historical meta-narrative that some would set up for the rest, but a story written by all. And maybe, when it's done just right, that's what makes it art, or maybe something more...

BIOS

Cornelia Krafft was the 2009-2010 Whittlesey Chair at the FAAH Department for Design in Theater & Performance Art at the The American University of Beirut, and will continue her work there this coming season.

She was Senior Artist and Assistant Professor of Stage and Film Set Design at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. She has exhibited as an installation and performance artist, produced museum and stage designs, and lectured widely in Germany, Austria, Italy, Norway, and Australia.

G. H. Rabbath Ph.D. is a writer and associate professor in human sciences based in Beirut. His main interests include the relations between scientific discovery and contemporary art practices and the dynamic logical and predictable shift of art's locus in contemporary artworks, as well as the performative exploration of the 'illusion of decisive agency' that still motivates artistic practice and blurs the limits between explicit and non-explicit symbolic levels in contemporary artistic production. In 2009 he published '*Can One Man Save the (Art) World*'. In 2010 he curated M. Obaidi's latest show in Art Dubai 2010 and published '*Mr Obaidi and the Fair Skies® Corporation*'. He is working on his next book '*Ten Days*'. G. H. Rabbath has been appointed by the Ministry of Culture to curate the Lebanese Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011.