

ROSE ISSA PROJECTS

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THE FUTURE OF TRADITIONS

WRITING PICTURES: CONTEMPORARY ART FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

Brunei Gallery, SOAS, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Sq, London WC1H 0XG

Exhibition runs: 12 January–25 March 2023

Opening Hours: 10.30am- 5pm Tuesday–Saturday, Thursdays until 8pm. Entry free and open to the public.

PRIVATE VIEW: WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY 2023, 6-8 PM.

STUDY DAY: SATURDAY 14 JANUARY, 10AM–1PM. Brunei Lecture Theatre, SOAS, University of London.

With participating artists: Fathi Hassan, Naser Al Aswadi, Christine Khondjie, Katayoun Rouhi, Joumana Medlej, Hanieh Delecroix, Nayla Romanos Iliya and others.

Guest Curator: Rose Issa

Co-curator: Bob Annibale

This exhibition is about three generations of artists from Iran and the Arab world, from the early pioneers of a vernacular Lettrism movement in the 1960s till now. These artists, from different backgrounds and possessing diverse styles, take inspiration from their own culture; they use the morphology of letters and phonemes, the rhymes and rhythms of calligraphy, abstracting words and numbers into pictures and thoughts into images.

Inspired by the book *Signs of Our Times: From Calligraphy to Calligraffiti* (2016), the exhibition includes artists whose concerns, whether conceptual, socio-political or simply aesthetic, have made a distinctive contribution to world art. From the thirty-seven artists represented here, only a very few are traditional calligraphers. The exhibition is a glimpse into a variety of contemporary art approaches using Persian and Arabic scripts, while introducing the work of some younger-generation women artists. You can notice several instances of *La'* (No) as to NO to injustice and double standards; or the word *Salam* (Peace), made of swords.

Using richly varied vocabularies of art, whether paintings, sculptures, ceramics, or creating 'artist books', they offer a fresh perspective on the creativity that the region has inspired.

For historical references we have incorporated selected manuscripts from the treasures of the Special Collections of the SOAS Library – from 9th-century Kufic parchments to 16th-century Safavid poetry or 18th-century specimens of calligraphic Mashq in a concertina book. These precious items from the past are now in dialogue with the contemporary works in this exhibition.

Participating artists: Etel Adnan – Maliheh Afnan – Farhad Ahrarnia – Siah Armajani - Nasser al Aswadi – Manal al Dawayan – Halim al Karim – Shakir Hassan al Said – Mouneer al Shaarani -- Chant Avedissian – Said Baalbaki – Mahmoud Bakhshi – Jacqueline Bėjani – Khaled Ben Slimane – Kamal Boullata – Hanieh Delecroix – Jumana el Hussein – Mohammad Ehsaey – Ali Omar Hermes – Parastou Forouhar – Bita Ghezelayagh – Fathi Hassan – Susan Hefuna – Farnaz Jahanbin – Christine Khondjie – Rachid Koraichi – Nja Mahdaoui – Hassan Massoudy – Joumana Medlej – Farhad Moshiri – Ahmed Moustafa – Ahmad Nasrollahi – Enayatollah Nouri – Mahmoud Obaidi – Mehdi Qotbi – Nayla Romanos Iliya – Katayoun Rouhi – Amir Hossein Shahnazi – Walid Siti – Hossein Valamanesh

An illustrated catalogue, co-edited by Bob Annibale and Rose Issa, accompanies the exhibition.

Special thanks to the artists and the collectors for lending the works.

For press images please contact: info@roseissa.com

