

ARABICITY/OUROUBA

MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE ART GALLERY

1765 N STREET NW, WASHINGTON D.C. 20036 USA

14 SEPTEMBER - 22 NOVEMBER 2019

CURATED BY ROSE ISSA

When twenty-two polymorphous countries share the same language, geographical and historical sphere, and most share the same religion, is there a common cultural link? This inaugural exhibition *Arabicity (Ourouba)*, by guest curator Rose Issa, is a response to this question; it explores Arab concerns conceptually, aesthetically and socio-politically. Whether from within or outside the Arab world, it shows how Arab artists resist stereotyping, challenge the confines of their identity, reshape the parameters of their traditions and bring visual poetry to life.

Arabicity (Ourouba), also highlights the different routes and roots that artists from the Arab world choose. They express their response to the personal, national, regional and international issues affecting the Arab world – why we do what we do and accept what is done to us; how we can resist clichés, injustice, opportunism and sometimes opportunities. In a variety of media, it explores the existential and the sense of impermanence.

The exhibition hopes to shed some light on the rich but fragmented narrative of Arab contemporary art: recognising the artists' vision and acknowledging the tightrope they cross skilfully and subtly in order to express themselves and transcend nationalism. The subject matter is not so much about politics nor polemics, but a multi-layering of Arab contemporary history, visually, because art has the ability to describe the complexity of the world.

Works are on loan from several collectors in London, Zurich and Beirut.

A special thanks to Shamiyana Collection and the artists for their loans and financial support.

This exhibition is accompanied by the publication, *Arabicity*, Saqi Books, co-edited by Juliet Cestar and Rose Issa, with contributions by Dr Georges Corm, Michket Krifa and Etel Adnan.