

Art & Design

Artists Look Beyond the Arab Spring

By BARBARA POLLACK

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Egypt's street artists, with their in-your-face approach, aim for an immediate public response. Other Arab artists are more conceptual about their art projects, referring to current events obliquely. "Here and Elsewhere," on view at the New Museum, at 235 Bowery, Lower East Side, from July 16 through Sept. 28, features 45 artists from Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Dubai, Ramallah and Sharjah, among other cities. "There are artists looking at conflict and wars, but we did not want to restrict this to the Arab Spring," said Massimiliano Gioni, the museum's associate director, who worked with a team of curators. "This is not a show in which the artists are forced to illustrate historic changes."

Inspired by the 1976 film "Ici et Ailleurs," by the French directors Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, and Anne-Marie Miéville, a meditation on the ethics of filming the Palestinian struggle, this exhibition is preoccupied with whether images can tell the truth, "particularly when you have an overexposure through media or a simplification due to media," Mr. Gioni said. "Perhaps the role of the artist is to make the narrative of history much more complex."

Photo



An untitled work from 2011 by Anna Boghiguian. Credit Anna Boghiguian/Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut, via Hamburg

ANNA BOGHIGUIAN Born in Cairo in 1946, Ms. Boghiguian, a painter, draws on a range of influences, from Queen Nefertiti to Tahrir Square to German Expressionism. Her disturbing drawings and watercolors evoke a stream of consciousness, channeling the frustration and desperation that fueled a revolution into surrealistic self-portraits and disturbing street scenes.

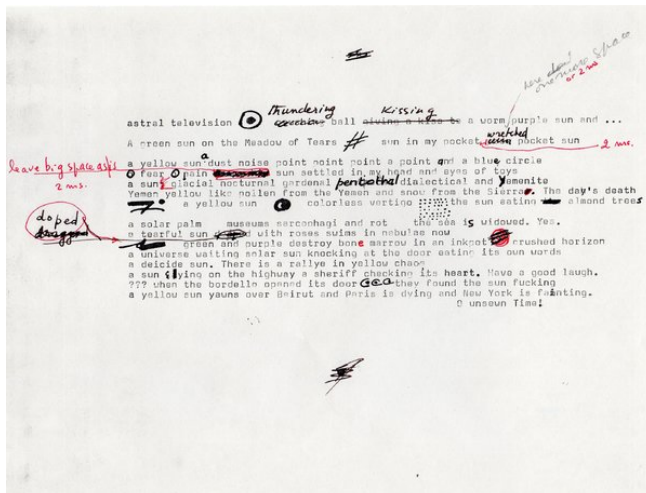
Photo



A 2011 photograph by Fakhri El Ghezal. Credit Fakhri El Ghezal

FAKHRI EL GHEZAL This Tunisian photographer responds to the ouster of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 with images that blur the distinction between public and private archives. He shows aspects of his identity through pictures of collections of family photographs. But, far more pointed and satirical are his views of the empty frames and the blank spaces that once held the omnipresent visage of the former ruler.

Photo



Etel Adnan's "Arab Apocalypse (Manuscript)" (1989). Credit Etel Adnan/Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg

ETEL ADNAN A Lebanese-born poet, essayist, philosophy professor and visual artist, born in 1925, she is the éminence grise in the show. Now living between Paris and Sausalito, Ms. Adnan produced a book of poetry, "The

Arab Apocalypse,” regarded as one of the most important literary responses to the Lebanese civil war. Combining text with marks and symbols, it offers a vision of redemption in the face of massacres and tragedy.

Photo



A still from Lamia Joreige's video installation "Objects of War." Credit Lamia Joreige

LAMIA JOREIGE This Lebanese artist and filmmaker demonstrates how difficult it sometimes is to distinguish fact from fiction. Her video installation “Objects of War” brings together interviews with ordinary citizens and the personal objects that evoke memories of the successive wars in Lebanon. “These testimonials, while helping to create a collective memory, also show the impossibility of telling a single history of this war,” she said.