

Behind the Scenes

Beirut Art Fair's tenth edition unveils a collection of long lost paintings by Hussein Madi, zones in on the Jordanian art scene and delivers a bevy of international galleries

Words: Nadia Michel

Q&A

with BAF Artistic Director Joanne Abou-Sleiman Chevalier

How would you describe the international art community's current impression of Lebanon's art scene?

Fantastic. The Lebanese distinguish themselves in the movie industry, the art world, as architects and fashion designers. These days, there's plenty of international press about the dynamic and creative forces that exist in Lebanon.

This year's edition has 50 galleries from 18 countries. Is there a common theme that unites them?

Discovery is the common theme. We are aiming to show artists that people don't have the opportunity to see at other international fairs and artists who, I hope, will be big names in the future.

As a curator, how do you define 'good art'?

I don't know what 'good art' is. I could talk about vision, singularity, what an artist is trying to unveil and their social or political involvement. These are some of the criteria that make a difference. Beyond that, the key word is 'grace'.

Can you briefly describe the process of selecting galleries for BAF?

The galleries selected need to have an editorial line. Even if we don't necessarily share the same vision as the gallery owner, we take into account the coherence of their selection. On the other hand, the committee will consider the quality of the work, and we never accept an artist based upon one painting or sculpture, we really need to understand their approach.

How has Beirut Art Fair changed in the ten years of its existence, from your curatorial point of view?



Beirut started off as a small fair with a local impact, to a Middle Eastern fair and now it's on the map of international fairs. As for this year, we have museum groups and collectors coming from Europe, the US, Armenia as well as the MENA region. Our aim is to become the definitive platform for regional galleries and for artists that don't have the opportunity to show outside their country.

You've been to a lot of art fairs around the world. How makes BAF unique?

Lebanon has great selection of galleries, collectors, museums and artistic studios. All these different propositions give Beirut Art Fair a huge advantage, and this works to highlight all that is happening artistically in Beirut. When it comes to our gallery selection, we offer a different proposition than you won't necessarily see by going to FIAC, Art Basel, or Frieze. We also provide a unique opportunity for a new generation of gallerists to promote their artists by giving them access to an international platform. @



BEIRUT ART FAIR
September 18th-22nd at Seaside Arena,
Beirut Waterfront