

Art in The World Will Come to Beirut in September

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Beirut Art Fair will celebrate its 10th anniversary this September, with a focus on emerging artists from around the world.

Running Sept. 18-22 at the Seaside Pavillion, the fair will assemble some 50 galleries from 18 countries, 30 of them newcomers.

"In parallel with the gallery booths, we plan a diversity of artistic experiences," BAF founder Laure d'Hauteville said in an interview with art historian Marie Tomb. "This 2019 edition aims to draw stronger-than-ever bridges between countries and continents ... We plan to broaden our horizons and present an even wider panel of renowned and promising artists to an ever-growing international public."

Joanna Abou Sleiman-Chevalier, BAF's new artistic director, said she hopes to take visitors on a unique experience unlike other international art fairs.

"I was traveling from fair to fair in order to pick up new interesting artists and galleries," she said at a news conference. "We're trying to show artists that are not necessarily seen in every big fair. Galleries like Kamel Mennour, who are very well known and do all the fairs ... will bring emerging artists [to BAF].

"It's not only about [numbers] but about quality," she added, "all these artists who are very interesting but don't get the chance to show their work."

As part of this focus, the new Project space will offer selected galleries a platform to spotlight promising young artists, all endorsed by the fair's selection committee.

The 2019 edition will center on three exhibitions, produced in partnership with BAF.

"A Tribute to Lebanon" explores Western pieces inspired by Lebanon, from the 18th century to today, through artworks and historical objects from the collection of art patron Philippe Jabre.

Curated by collector Gaby Daher and designed by architect Jean-Louis Mainguy, the show promises more than 100 rare and exceptional objects linked by the theme of travel – including dolls, postcards, photo and watercolor albums.

Artworks include Orientalist paintings of Lebanon's mountains, Beirut and Tripoli, as well as rare works by 20th-century artists. Many of these works are being exhibited for the first time, including pieces by Andy Warhol, David Hockney, the Civil War-era paintings by A.R. Penck and photos by Don McCullin.

"I discovered through the pieces that I had to write on that the look

the Orientalist artist had on Lebanon helped a lot in the independence of the country," said Fifi Abou Dib, who is compiling a catalogue for "A Tribute to Lebanon." "Whether they were sailors, writers, diplomats, scientists, there was always love in every piece they delivered in Lebanon."

Curated by Abed Al Kadiri, BAF's second expo "Lebanon Modern: Unexpected Trove – The Unseen Works of Hussein Madi," will debut a series of the Lebanese artist's landscape paintings.

Produced between 1965 and 1970 during his early years in Rome, these 47 canvases, now part of the Mazen and Loulia Soueid collection, recently resurfaced after spending 50 years in the hands of an Italian collector.

"It was pure coincidence that I discovered 47 paintings," Mazen Souaid said. "Madi, when he first showed up in Rome in 1964, was a struggling art student who couldn't even afford his own paints.

"I think it's important that this show is happening at the same time as we're seeing how foreigners saw Lebanon," Soueid said. "This is the inverse, how a Lebanese artist saw foreign lands and it should be a complementary show with great cultural exchange."

The video art program "The Sensitive Sea" presents a visual dialogue of the Lebanese and Western scenes around a common theme, the sea, as a bridge linking two cultures across the Mediterranean.

Curated by Madeleine Filippi and Sophie Lanoe, the show is comprised by work by six artists, all reflecting the sea's political, economic and cultural facets.

To celebrate BAF's first decade SGBL's Revealing, will show works by 10 artists from the MENA region, selected following an open call answered by over 400 applicants.

"There is no unifying theme to the platform," Revealing curator Rachel Dedman said in her statement. "However each artist's work reflects – and in many case addresses – the range of personal, political and socio-economic conditions in which we live today across the MENA region.

"In this sense, Revealing by SGBL bears witness to some of the urgencies and issues governing society, and the interests shaping artistic practice."

Parallel events to BAF include talks, book signings, special tours and the fair's precursor event, Beirut Art Week, taking place Sept. 17-24 in downtown Beirut, will be displaying a number of artworks in public spaces.

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