

SELECTIONS

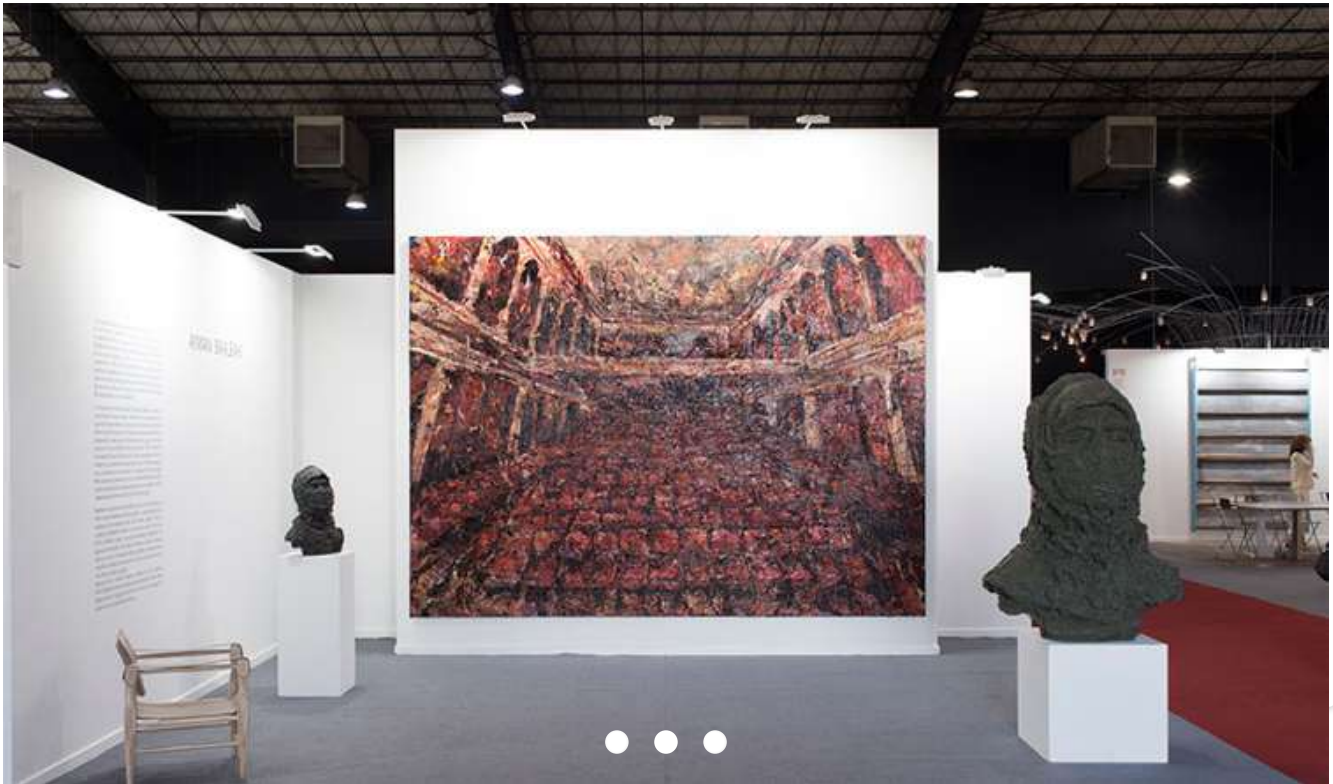
ARTS / STYLE / CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND

CURATED BY BEIRUT ART FAIR

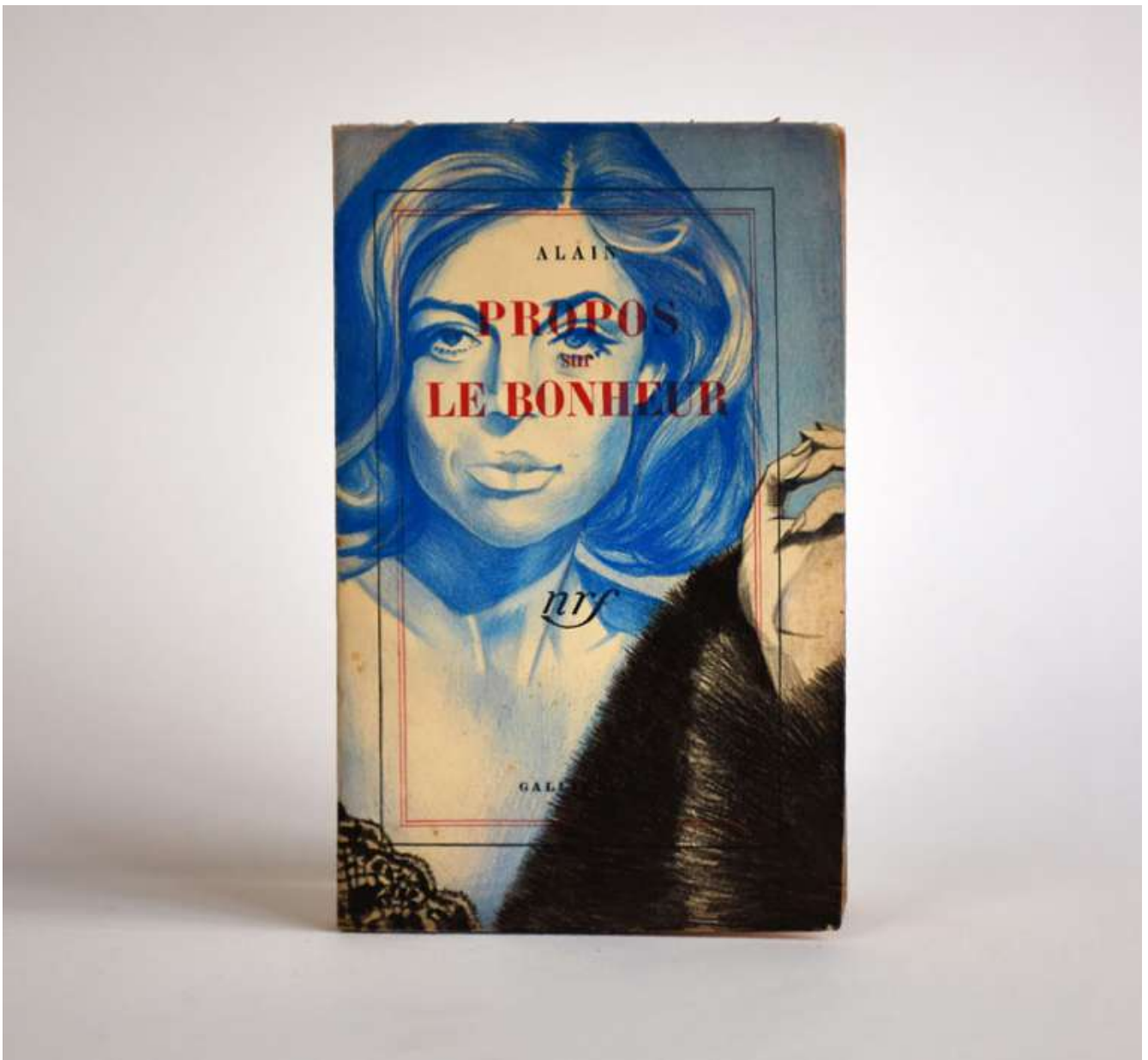


By Selections Arts Posted 26 September, 2019 In ART

In this special feature, we ask gallerists at the Beirut Art Fair 2019 to choose a single artwork from their booths and share the story behind it.



Backslash



France Bizot, Mrs Robinson. Drawing on « Propos sur le bonheur » by Alain. Éditions Gallimard 1928. Courtesy of Backslash, Paris

Talented French artist France Bizot started in 2017 a series of drawings based on books she collects. Each book is carefully chosen for its cover and title. Then the artist's imagination creates images, often with a hint of humor, related to the stories behind the stories. France Bizot (1959) graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs of Paris. In 2018, she won the top award at the Derwent Art Prize in London.

Galerie Anne-Sarah Bénichou



Massinissa Selmani, entitled L'horizon était là (2018).

Blank pages of a diary and a horizon line, open to the future. Selecting this conceptual work was mostly a way to recall the history of Beirut, addressing the painful memory of the war and the difficult years that city went through, while emblemizing a hopeful future through the open-endedness of a blank diary page. Massinissa Selmani's work is also an ode to the daily, the quotidian; to the symbolic action of turning the page and looking ahead, towards new horizons. That calendar's extract is dated September 2010; the coincidence with the anniversary of Beirut Art Fair, inaugurated that same year, was a nice wink to our gallery's first participation in this fair.

Galerie Janinue Rubeiz



Hossein Valamanesh, *Where do you come from*, 2013, Maps on fabric, 81x139 cm, Edition of 3+1AP. Photo M.Klivanek

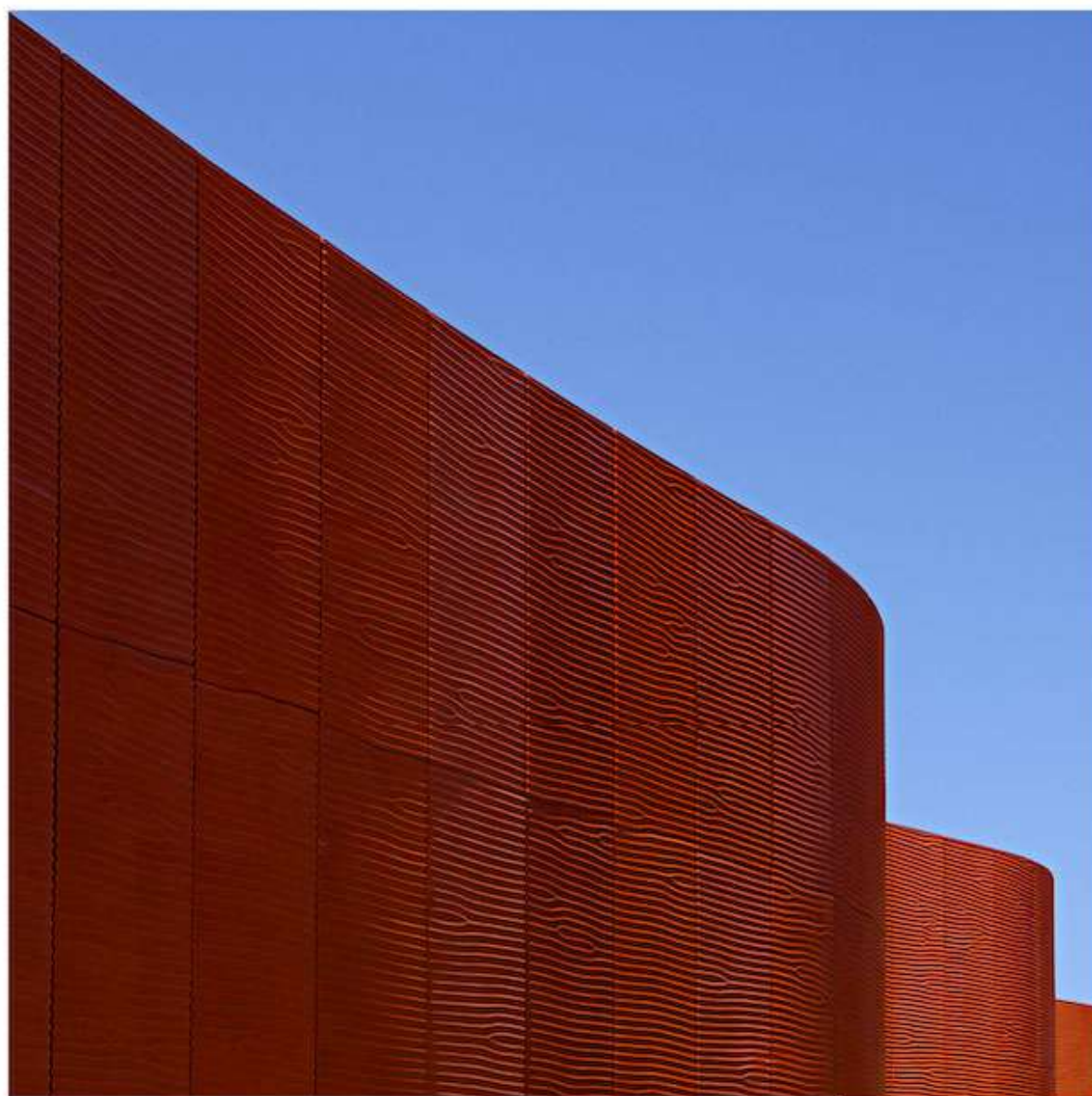
“ Where Do You Come From ?”

For many, travellers or not, born in Lebanon or not, one of the first questions people ask is ‘where do you come from?’

Is it because of the global look? Style? Languages spoken? Accents detected?

Iranian born artist Hossein Valamanesh, who has been living in Australia for over 45 years has produced many map based works- from shirts to writings with woven maps.- one of which is this upside down map of the world, made of two interwoven and enlacés maps, which is a sort of travel tales.

It is not easy to find your place of birth, or the city where you live, nor the places you travelled to. As the Persian poet Jalal Eddie Rumi said, “My place is Placeless” ...poems that have inspired many contemporary artists, from Shirazeh Houshiary to more recent works by Shahpour Pouyan. Poetry is what we need, in life as in art.



RED SAHARA, Milan, 2015. 80 X 80 cm

Among the works of Vicky Mokbel that I chose to present for Beirut art fair, one particularly touched me: Red Sahara, a mysterious and evocative name. Everything in this photograph projects me into an infinite journey. The solid materials of this architecture becomes curves which plays with the eye and the blue sky set in pictorial flatness. I know that Vicky travels all over the world looking for architectures to capture the details, she looks differently at the works of renowned architects, as here the one of Norman Foster made in Milano, when I'm in front of this work, the geometry of the lines, the graphic forms, become for me the reflection of an exalted sensuali



Hassan Sharif, M.A. Ibrahim's sculpture no1, 2008. Oil on canvas, 150 x 100 cm. Courtesy of gb agency.

I'd like to highlight the work *M. A. Ibrahim's sculpture No 1*, a painting from 2008, part of a body of work that Sharif created after co-founding in the same year The Flying House in Dubai, a place for encounters, an embodiment of the artists' will to expand the art scene in their region through dialogue and fearless experimentation. *M. A. Ibrahim's sculpture No 1* portrays an artwork by a fellow artist in an abstracted way that focuses on capturing the feeling and lushness of the work if not its actual appearance, which was secondary as Sharif sought to be inspired by his peers to continue creating his own universe but with them, from them, around them. In the words of the artist: "Some paintings have more than one shadow, some paintings constitute more than one thing, some things are larger than life-size, others are smaller. Through my paintings I emphasise the fact that my paintings are not an imitation of the things I see, but they represent my own concept about painting itself in present time."

Karim Gallery



Immigration, 2017. Acrylic on Canvas, 200 x350 cm

Khaled Takreti's "Immigration" embodies his distinctive popish art style to bring to the fore a historically recurring phenomena. In my opinion, Khaled's intelligent choice of retrieving the "Bokja" from our lost memory rekindles our empathy to the emotional and psychological state of an immigrant; the sense of urgency is felt; the pain of leaving behind memories and possessions transpires. Alternatively a curiosity of what are the personal effects in each Bokja is raised; and its cloth becomes the record of a culture. Bokja is a mark of an end and a new beginning simultaneously.

Lebanese Talents



The piece name is Beirut, 2019. Mixed Media on Canvas, 500 x 300 cm

The exhibit unfolds as a visual critique of the status quo, whereby art has shifted from an emotion-tinted thought investment to a signature-bound material investment in the era of name-and-fame par excellence. In this piece Mhanna painted the Lebanese Parliament trying to describe Beirut.



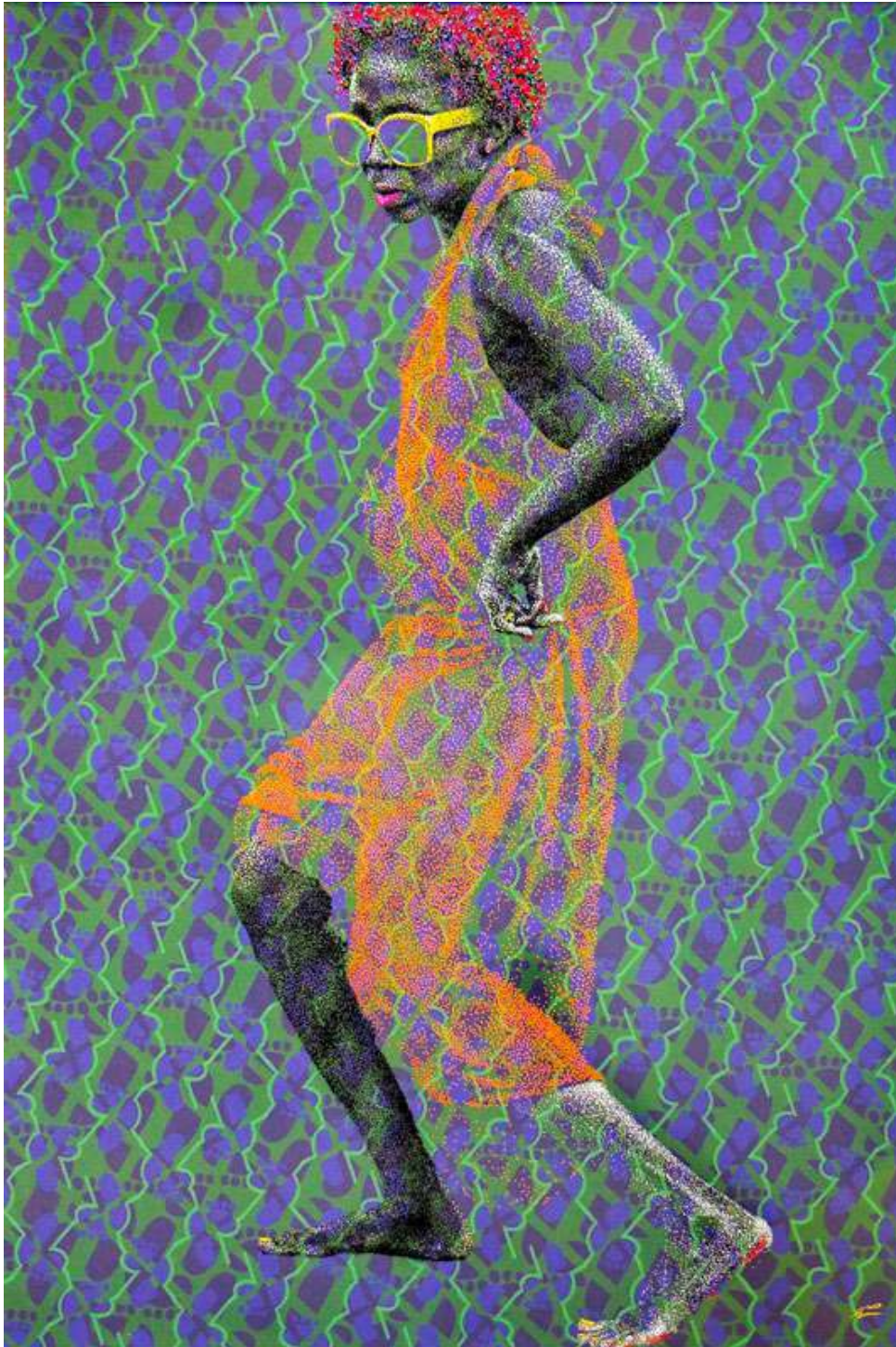
Hatem Imam, *Glycine III*, 2019. Oil on primed linen, 180 x 240 cm

Although Lebanese artist Hatem Imam's practice is varied, including print-making, graphic design and installation, this series of paintings represent his return to the medium after almost fifteen years. Titled *Glycine I* through *III*, they reference the amino acid produced by the brain during REM sleep in order to temporarily paralyze the body so that we do not physically act out our dreams. The paintings evoke the abstraction of a dream state, creating a soft but hectic depth with oil in different consistencies - the looser paint seems to fall up, against gravity, while the stronger organic forms are uneasily restrained on the surface.



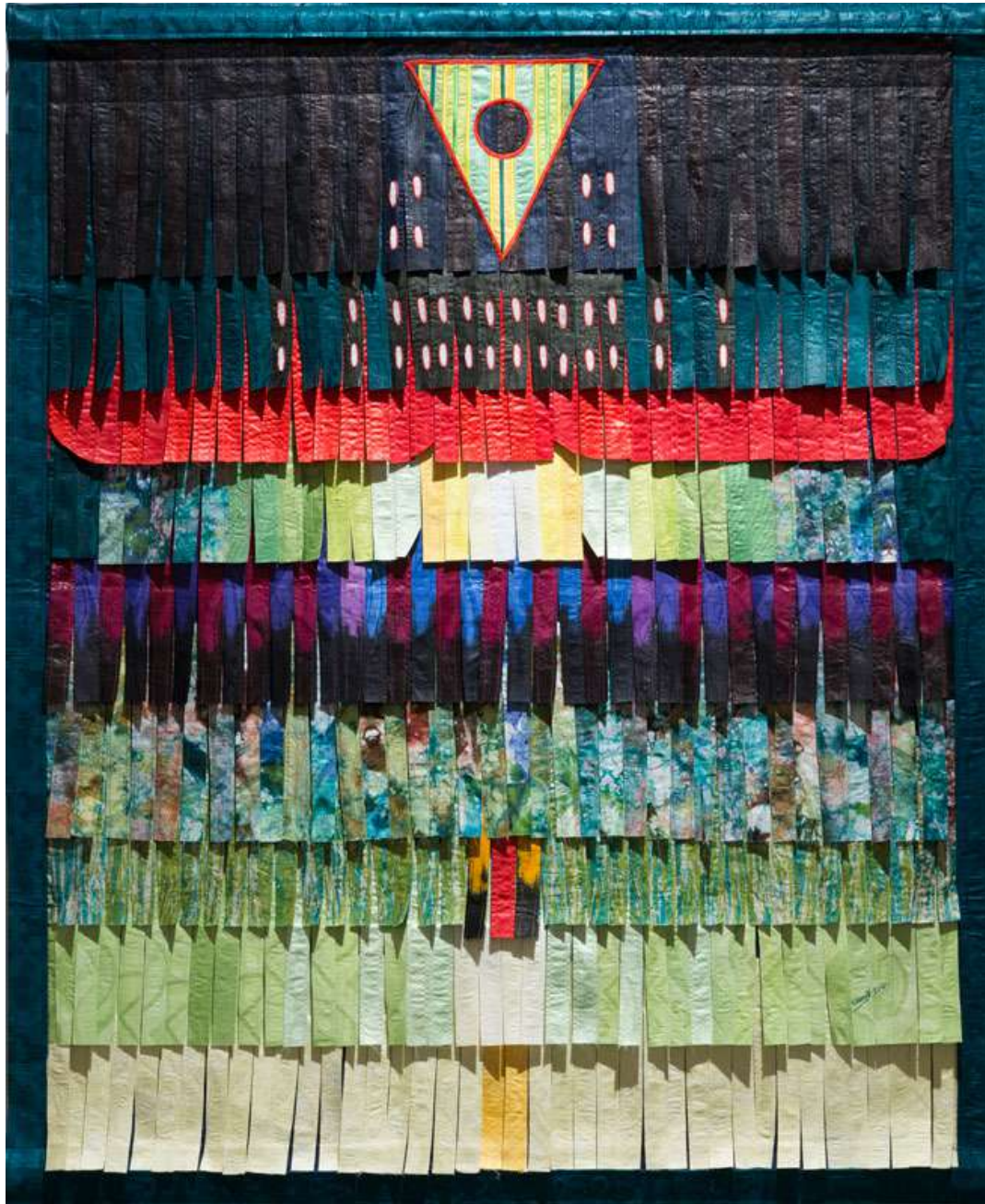
Carnival of Darwich, 2019. 150 x 180 cm

By his work, Raouf Rifa'i has managed to circumvent his usual modes of satisfaction, to divert the indefinite cycles to irrigate its plastic creations. It is also in this that Raouf Rifa'i's work is not only ironic: it also belongs to the category of the act, always in the psychoanalytic sense. But an act in psychoanalysis is that which depends only on the enunciation of the one who assumes responsibility for it: the act is this unique event, which is torn from any established norm, suspends momentarily the round of speeches, and finally objects to the knowledge not only of the other but of everything else, that is, ours as well.



Evans Mbugua, Chakacha, 2019. Oil on plexiglass and photo paper, 150 x 100 cm

Working in oil paint on plexiglass, Evans Mbugua's composes his works from a series of dots, creating layers that, in the finished works, result in shapes coming in and out of focus as the viewer moves towards or away from the piece. Humans are at the centre of his practice because they are at the centre of his interest. The art collectors invited by Beirut Art Fair are involved by Mbugua's "Body Talk" series: *"These works celebrate and elevate Evans' characters with brightness and reflections while simultaneously revealing their human fragility"* said a collector from Luxemburg.



Abdoulaye Konaté, Composition en vert (triangle et cercle noir), 2017, Textile, 151,5 x 126,5 cm

Konaté's joyful compositions bring us in a universe filled with symbols, in an atmosphere charged of significances. Even if the political issue is cast aside, his language is unchanged, always strong, substantial, stripped of every unnecessary decoration, forged to speak of Human and Nature through a simple medium, such as the colour. The language of colours is made of extrinsic impressions but also internal affections. In *Composition en vert (triangle et cercle noir)*, green is the main subject. The color of hope. Dominant shade of Nature. Color of the pigment thanks to which plants draw the light energy of the Sun, and therefore, the color of Life.

Beirut Art Fair was held from 18 – 22 September, 2019.