

**Dubai's Renowned Artspace Gallery Proudly Presents an Exclusive Group Show Dedicated to
Middle Eastern Modern and Contemporary Art**

A diverse and moving exhibition of contemporary works by various artists

Dubai August 2011 - Artspace Gallery is pleased to be showcasing a selection of works by modern and contemporary Middle Eastern artists at an exhibition that is taking place from the 1st of August until the end of September 2011, with a focus on calligraphic works. To give you an idea of what will be on display during, we will be including works by Omar El-Nagdi, Alaa Ismail, Kamal Boullata, and Hussein Madi.

Omar El-Nagdi a sculptor, director, musician and philosopher was born in Cairo in 1931 and studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts Helwan University, in 1953. An Egyptian symbolist and master of color, his paintings show a preoccupation with symbolic design, through the use of expressive textures, tonal contrast and a need to offer serious communication which is deeply translated. His works of the 1960's and 70's were especially based on the forms of Arabic calligraphy, whereby compositions are formed entirely on the repetition of the Arabic numeral 'One', also indistinguishable from the first letter of the alphabet 'Alef'. Symbolizing the indivisible nature of the Divine together with incorporating Islamic traditions through composition, he is able to visually emphasize this concept. In this way, Nagdi's works go beyond mere decoration, so as to radiate a mixture of humanist and mystic sensibilities. His latest works use calligraphy in a contemporary style repeating sequential rhythms of Arabic letters in black and white and gold leaf.

He has participated in many exhibitions and Biennales in Egypt, Europe and the former Soviet Union where he was awarded a one-year scholarship to study ceramics in 1959. Nagdi obtained a diploma from the Venice-based Ruskin Artistic Appreciation Institute, Italy. El-Nagdi made his mark in establishing the Egyptian identity in modern Egyptian art and has been awarded numerous awards including first prizes in Alexandria Biennale in 1966, 1968 and 1974. His works are exhibited at museums in Egypt, Italy, France, USA, England & Korea and has had numerous solo and collective exhibitions around the world.

Iraqi born **Alaa Ismail** (1974) started practicing the art of calligraphy from a young age. He studied various artistic disciplines at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Baghdad, including decorative arts, Islamic architecture, glass painting and Islamic Art, graduating in 2003. Currently living in Damascus, Syria, Ismail has taught and lead many projects looking into the use of calligraphy within Arab art, as well as promoting the importance of classical Arab music. His paintings seek to use calligraphy in an expressive and gestural manner, displaying words of meaning and poetic significance. This marrying of bold textural strokes combined with Ismail's love of the Arabic word, successfully presents calligraphy in a colorful layered contemporary style.

Ismail has participated in the 4th Sharjah Calligraphy Biennale in 2010, shown as part of Iraqi Cultural Week in New York in 2009, and exhibited in numerous exhibitions in Iraq, Syria and Jordan. In 2010 he won first prize at the Al Burda Awards for modern calligraphy, an award presented by the Abu Dhabi Ministry of Culture.

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Kamal Boullata was born in 1942 in Jerusalem. He is a graduate of the Academy of Rome and the Corcoran Art Museum School in Washington DC. His works are primarily abstract and geometric in style, focusing on the ideas of division in Palestinian identity, and the utilization of forms to represent separation from the homeland. He recalls as a small boy sitting for hours in front of the Dome of the Rock, and meticulously sketching its patterns and calligraphic engravings. These patterns still echo endlessly throughout his work - "*I keep reminding myself that Jerusalem is not behind me, it is constantly ahead of me.*" His writings on Islamic and modern Arab art and culture have appeared in various academic journals and anthologies. His most recent books include *Belonging and Globalization: Critical Essays on Contemporary Art and Culture* (editor) and *Palestinian Art: From 1850 to the Present*. In 1993 he received a Fulbright Senior Scholar Fellowship to conduct research on Islamic art in Morocco and in 2001 he was the recipient of a Ford Foundation grant to research Post-Byzantine art in Palestine. After living for 25 years in the USA, he moved to France in 1997.

Public collections containing his work include the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; British Museum, London; Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman; Patronato de la Alhambra, Granada; Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah; New York Public Library, New York; Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman; Bibliothèque Louis Notari, Monaco; UNESCO, Paris; Collection of Modern Arab Art Museum, Doha; Arab Bank, Amman and the World Bank, Washington, DC.

Born in 1938 in Chebaa Lebanon, **Hussein Madi**, painter, sculptor and printmaker, is considered amongst the Arab world's foremost artists. Between 1973-1986, he lived between Rome and Beirut. In 1986 he decided to stay permanently in Beirut. Madi's art has been viewed by thousands of people around the world at such venues as the British Museums, the Venice Biennale and Tokyo's Ueno Museum.

Madi's joyful experiments in colour and form have resulted in a unique body of work that relates to modern artists like Matisse and Picasso as well as to the principles of divine harmony that inform the abstract designs of Islamic art. Whether in two or three dimensions, Madi's lines sing with a spontaneous freedom that belies the careful, even exacting, calculations that the artist invests in each work. The combination of meticulousness and sensuality is everywhere evident in Madi's work, inspired by his profound belief in "God's universal order, in which everything is different and yet composed of the same cosmic elements."

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About Artspace Gallery:

Launched in May 2003 at the Fairmont Dubai, Artspace Gallery invited Dubai and the region to acquaint themselves with Contemporary Middle Eastern Art. Having dedicated the past five years to

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promoting and establishing Contemporary Middle Eastern artists in the region, Artspace Gallery now boasts a portfolio of over 20 artists, and is located in the art district at The Gate Village, DIFC.

For more information and location:

Visit www.artspace-dubai.com or call +9714 3230820