



News

IBRAAZ FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

Ibraaz

28 February 2013

Ibraaz is pleased to announce an interview with, and a short film produced by, **Caveh Zahedi** (*The Sheikh and I*, 2012). In Projects, we present the instruction manual to **Tom Bogaert's** *Minecraft Mausoleum*, a project that presents an interactive model of a mausoleum for Syria's president Bashar al-Assad. Elsewhere, readers will find an essay by **Anthony Downey** published in collaboration with ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, an essay by **Amal Khalaf** on Bahrain's Pearl Roundabout, and a conversation between **Elisabeth Jaquette** and **Hady Kamar, Taha Belal** and **Jenifer Evans**, the latter trio being the founders of Nile Sunset Annex, Cairo's first artist-run gallery space.

Essays



FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Anthony Downey

Clashes between so-called extremists and secularists have intensified across Tunisia following the assassination of leftist opposition leader Chokri Belaid on 6th February 2013. This has left many Tunisians asking what their revolution in 2011, the first in the region, has actually accomplished. In light of these events, it may seem inopportune even insensitive to talk about culture. However, I would suggest that this is precisely the time to talk about it, inasmuch as it is the culture of the country – and the right to speak out and openly disagree – that is at stake.

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THE MANY AFTERLIVES OF LULU

Amal Khalaf

Squaring the circle is a problem handed down from the Ancient Greeks. It involves taking the curved line of a circle and drawing a perfect square from it. In the nineteenth century, the problem was proved unsolvable and the phrase to 'square the circle' came to signify an attempt at the impossible. But in 2011, within days of the most sustained protests in Bahrain's recent history, a circle was named a square. The Pearl Roundabout or *Dowar al Lulu*, famous as the site of the Gulf's 'Arab Spring', became Bahrain's 'Pearl Square' or *Midan al Lulu*.

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THE MANY AFTERLIVES OF LULU

The Story of Bahrain's Pearl Roundabout

Amal Khalaf



FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Artistic Practices, Collective Action and Civil Society in Tunisia

Anthony Downey



BEYOND THE FORMER MIDDLE EAST: AESTHETICS, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

Anthony Downey



NILE SUNSET ANNEX

An Artist-Run Gallery Space in Cairo

Elisabeth Jaquette



THE ART OF SUBVERSION

Caveh Zahedi in conversation with Stephanie Bailey

Interviews

THE ART OF SUBVERSION

Caveh Zahedi in conversation with Stephanie Bailey



Caveh Zahedi is an Iranian-American filmmaker whose work is positioned uncomfortably between what is acceptable and what is not. *The Sheik and I* (2012), the artist's most recent feature film, is also his most controversial work to date. Commissioned by the Sharjah Art Foundation as part of the 2011 Sharjah Biennial, *Art as a Subversive Act*, it was quickly banned precisely for its 'subversive content', unleashing a barrage of criticism – and legal battles – against the filmmaker.

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Projects



MINECRAFT MAUSOLEUM

Tom Bogaert

Syrian president Bashar al-Assad is known to be a computer geek. He used to be chairman of the 'Syrian Computer Society' and opened up his country to the internet in 2001. In the face of the general enthusiasm for online tools in the 'Arab Spring', *Minecraft Mausoleum* utilizes 'Minecraft' – an online building game – as context and medium to present a model of a Mausoleum for Syria's president Bashar al-Assad.

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I WAS BLACKLISTED BY THOM POWERS

Caveh Zahedi

When Caveh Zahedi submitted his controversial film work *The Sheik and I* to the Montclair Film Festival in 2012 he did not expect the reaction by the festival's chief programmer, Thom Powers. After watching the film, Powers not only went on a campaign to block the film from showing at Montclair, but also contacted other journalists and festivals warning them against screening or writing about it.

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News

NILE SUNSET ANNEX

Elisabeth Jaquette

Enter a building on the Nile Corniche, walk up four flights of stairs, ring the doorbell of the apartment on your right, walk through the living room, and you will find yourself at Nile Sunset Annex – the newest gallery in a wave of new independent art spaces founded in Egypt in 2012. Nile Sunset Annex is a self-funded, experimental artist-run space founded by Hady Kamar, Taha Belal and Jenifer Evans.



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Upcoming

This March, Ibraaz will pilot its 2013 Public Programme in partnership with **Art Dubai**. Ibraaz Talks, a series of curated conversations with artists participating in Art Dubai 2013, will address the formal and conceptual issues that affect how artists, writers and curators work across the region today.

Ibraaz is also currently working in partnership with the Global Futures Annual Conference, organised by the Winchester School of Art and taking place on the 7th-8th June. We will also support a conference, organised by the London Middle Eastern Institute and SOAS, on the subject of Global Art Discourses: Contemporary Art from the Middle East, which is scheduled for 5th-6th July. We will keep our readers and supporters updated on these developments over the coming weeks.

Ibraaz will also be publishing, amongst other items, interviews with **Robin Kahn**, **Michael Rakowitz** and **Ayah Bdier**, as well as launching a new reviews section exploring events, exhibitions and conferences.

Finally, in preparation for the launch of Ibraaz Platform 005 this May, the full platform remit has been published on the Ibraaz website. Exploring globalising tactics in North Africa and the Middle East, the question has been put forth to artists, writers and thinkers on and around the subject. We are pleased to be currently working on responses and essays from, amongst others, Haroon Mirza, Raed Yassin, Mirene Arsanios, Hans Haacke, and artist coalition group GulfLabor.

Image captions from top to bottom; (left) *la liberté appartient au peuple : freedom belongs to the people*. © Hela Ammar; (right) Pearl roundabout taken in January 2010. Photograph © Sheyma Buali; Detail from Caveh Zahedi becomes addicted to prostitutes in *I Am A Sex Addict*, 2006. Photograph by Lisa Freeman. Courtesy of the artist; Tom Bogaert, screenshot from *Minecraft Mausoleum*. Courtesy of the artist; Caveh Zahedi, screenshot from *I Was Blacklisted by Thom Powers*. Courtesy of the artist; Opening of Nile Sunset Annex's first exhibition, featuring the work of Faten El Disouky (center), January 2013. Courtesy of Laura Cagusi and Hady Aboukamar.

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