



FOTOFEST INTERNATIONAL | www.fotofest.org

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For Immediate Release:

FotoFest 2014 Biennial

Contemporary Arab Programs Met with Acclaim

VIEW FROM INSIDE

Contemporary Arab Video, Photography and Mixed Media Art



FOTOFEST 2014 BIENNIAL
March 15 – April 27, 2014
Houston, Texas U.S.A.

www.fotofest.org



FotoFest 2014 Biennial Lead Curator Karin Adrian von Roques leads a tour of the View From Inside exhibition.
Photo by Anna Veselova.

HOUSTON, TEXAS - MAY 5, 2014 - The FotoFest 2014 Biennial, the much acclaimed Fifteenth International Biennial of Photography in Houston, Texas, closed on April 27, 2014. The 2014 Biennial exhibition, *View From Inside*, was an unprecedented presentation of **49 leading Arab artists from 13 countries across the Middle East and North Africa.** The Arab program has been received enthusiastically locally and abroad, referred to as “**perhaps the largest exhibition to date of contemporary Arab photography and mixed media**” art by Al Jazeera America, and was covered significantly by international media outlets.

Alongside FotoFest’s own Arab exhibition, **FotoFest organized 36 varied and dynamic programs featuring Arab art and artists**, including; a day-long Conference on **Contemporary Arab Visual Art; a Forum on Arabophobia; the Meeting Place Portfolio Review** for artists; a multi-week **Film Program with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the International Fine Print Auction; a Collectors Weekend; Arab music concerts; Poetry Events; an Educational Curriculum; and Tours for adults and students.**

The six-week Biennial, and its **125 participating exhibitions and associated programs** at museums, commercial art galleries, non-profit arts organizations, commercial and corporate spaces, **attracted over 275,000 visitors from across the region, the country and abroad**, asserting itself again as the United States’ largest and longest-running international photography event.

The FotoFest 2014 Biennial has been lauded for both the Arab exhibition, and its work to foster cultural exchange and advance the recognition of the region as a rising cultural center. FotoFest brought prominent Arab scholars, publishers, gallerists, including **Biennial Lead Curator Karin Adrian von Roques and 17 of the 49 featured Arab artists**, to Houston for the opening festivities and conferences in March. **FotoFest worked with a number of prominent galleries and cultural centers in the Middle East** and around the world including: **Athr Gallery** (Jeddah); **Ayyam Gallery** (Dubai/London); **Berloni Gallery** (London); **Cuadro Gallery** (Dubai); **Edge of Arabia** (London); **Edwynn Houk Gallery** (New York); **Empty Quarter Gallery** (Dubai); **Galerie L'Atelier 21** (Casablanca); **Sfeir-Semler Gallery** (Hamburg); **The Third Line** (Dubai); **Rose Issa Projects** (London); and **Taymour Grahne Gallery** (New York).

ARAB PROGRAMMING PARTNERS

Athr Gallery; ArteEast (New York); **Edge of Arabia; Ayyam Gallery; Contemporary Practices, Visual Arts from the Middle East; Arab Cultural and Community Center of Houston; Arab-American Educational Foundation** (Houston); **Inprint** (Houston); **Menil Collection** (Houston); **Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Rice University** (Houston); **Rothko Chapel** (Houston); and **Aperio, Music of the Americas** (Houston).

ARAB SPONSORS

FotoFest has received significant funding from Arab organizations in the Middle East, Europe, and Houston: **ART JAMEEL - Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives (Lead Sponsor); Middle East Trading Inc.; Ayyam Gallery; Athr Gallery; The Levant Foundation** (Houston); **Edge of Arabia; The Crane Foundation** (Houston); **Tamer (SA'ID & The Community); Berloni Gallery; Nijad and Zeina Fares** (Houston).

Accompanying the exhibitions, **FotoFest and Schilt Publishing, Amsterdam published a 340 page, full color book on Arab art, *View From Inside*, featuring work by all of the featured artists, along with essays by acclaimed Arab art scholars and curators: Karin Adrian von Roques** (2014 Biennial Lead Curator); **Dr. Claude Sui** (Chief Curator of Photography, Reiss-Engelhorn Museum); **Samer Mohdad** (2014 Biennial Exhibiting Artist and co-Founder of the Fondation Arabe pour L'Image, Beirut); and **Mona Khazindar** (Director General, Institute du Monde Arabe). The essays examine the history of photography in the Middle East and North Africa, the evolution of the medium's usage in the region and the current state of contemporary art in the Arab world. FotoFest Co-Founder and Artistic Director **Wendy Watriss** has written the introduction. The book is seen as the first serious reference on Contemporary Arab photography and video, and is being welcomed by researchers, scholars and curators. The *View From Inside* book is distributed by Ingram in North America, and Thames & Hudson overseas.

FotoFest is keen to extend the impact of these exhibitions and programs both internationally and domestically.

FotoFest will make recordings of both the **day-long Conference and the Forum on Arabophobia, available through its website** in May. FotoFest's Literacy Through Photography Education Program's **Biennial Curriculum** is available free of charge online and will continue to be made available to interested educators. This curriculum uses the artists and artwork from the exhibitions to teach students grades 3-12 about art, writing, and the Arab World and its cultures.



L to R: Maya El Khalil, Director of Athr Gallery, Jeddah, moderates a panel with artists Rula Halawani, Sama Alshaibi and Huda Lutfi at the FotoFest 2014 Biennial Conference on Contemporary Arab Visual Arts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Photo by Nash Baker.

FOTOFEST 2014 BIENNIAL ARAB ARTISTS (alphabetized by last name with country of origin)

| | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| Ebtisam AbdulAziz (UAE) | Lara Baladi (Egypt) | Georges Fikry Ibrahim (Egypt) |
| Khalil Abdul Wahid (UAE) | Hicham Benohoud (Morocco) | Noel Jabbour (Palestine) |
| Ammar Al Beik (Syria) | Ayman Yossri Daydban (Saudi Arabia) | Ahmed Jadallah (Palestine) |
| Manal Al Dowayan (Saudi Arabia) | Shady El-Noshokaty (Egypt) | Mohamed Kanoo (Bahrain) |
| Shadia Alem (Saudi Arabia) | Ayman El Semary (Egypt) | Mohammed Kazem (UAE) |
| Reem Al Faisal (Saudi Arabia) | Lalla Essaydi (Morocco) | Huda Lutfi (Egypt) |
| Sadik Alfraji (Iraq) | Mounir Fatmi (Morocco) | Maha Malluh (Saudi Arabia) |
| Tarek Al-Ghossein (Palestine/Kuwait) | Lamya Gargash (UAE) | Ahmed Mater (Saudi Arabia) |
| Boushra Almutawakel (Yemen) | Abdulnasser Gharem (Saudi Arabia) | Hassan Meer (Oman) |
| Khalifa Al Obaidly (Qatar) | Joana Hadjithomas and | Samer Mohdad (Lebanon) |
| Jowhara AlSaud (Saudi Arabia) | Khalil Joreige (Lebanon) | Youssef Nabil (Egypt) |
| Sama Alshaibi (Iraq) | Khaled Hafez (Egypt) | Ayman Ramadan (Egypt) |
| Karima Al Shomely (UAE) | Hassan Hajjaj (Morocco) | Steve Sabella (Palestine) |
| Sheikh Khalid Bin Hamad Bin | Rula Halawani (Palestine) | Faisal Samra (Saudi Arabia) |
| Ahmad Al-Thani (Qatar) | Nermine Hammam (Egypt) | Wael Shawky (Egypt) |
| Sami Al-Turki (Saudi Arabia) | Hazem Harb (Palestine) | Camille Zakharia (Lebanon) |
| Tammam Azzam (Syria) | Hazem Taha Hussein (Egypt) | |

UPCOMING FOTOFEST PROGRAMS

After the Biennial, FotoFest, led by new **Executive Director and Curator Steven Evans**, will continue its full-time exhibition programming in Houston as well as its international programs. FotoFest is planning **five to six exhibitions for its Inter-Biennial season beginning in the Fall**. In November 2014, FotoFest will again co-organize a portfolio review in Paris, **the annual Lens Culture FotoFest Paris**, a collaboration with online photography magazine Lens Culture and Spéos Paris Photographic Institute. Information on these and other programs will be available on the FotoFest website in the coming months: at www.fotofest.org.

The FotoFest 2016 Biennial, the Sixteenth International Biennial of Photography and Photo-related Art, will open in Houston in Spring 2016. Announcements on the dates and theme of the 2016 Biennial will be made through the FotoFest website later in the year.

For more information on FotoFest or the View From Inside exhibition, please contact Vinod Hopson, FotoFest Press, 713.223.5522 ext 26 or press@fotofest.org.

MAJOR SPONSORS - FOTOFEST 2014 BIENNIAL

The Brown Foundation Inc.; The Cullen Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; JP Morgan Chase Foundation; The City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance; Houston Endowment, Inc.; Doubletree Hotel by Hilton Houston Downtown; The Wortham Foundation; FotoFest Board of Directors; Judith and Gamble Baldwin; Mary Lawrence Porter; Texas Commission on the Arts; Sidley & Austin LLP; Salient Partners; Chris Olsen; HexaGroup; iLand Internet Solutions; The Deal Company; Brookfield Office Properties; Williams Tower Gallery

Special support for the FotoFest 2014 Biennial Catalogue and the FotoFest Book on contemporary Arab photo-related art is provided by The Eleanor and Frank Freed Foundation in Houston.

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FOTOFEST INTERNATIONAL

Founded in 1983, FotoFest International was established to promote international awareness of museum-quality photo-based art from around the world. FotoFest is a non-profit photographic arts and education organization based in Houston, Texas. The first FotoFest Biennial was held in 1986. It is the first and longest running photographic arts festival in the United States. It is considered as one of the leading international photography Biennials in the world.

As an international platform for serious photographic arts exhibitions, the FotoFest Biennial has become known as a showcase for the discovery and presentation of important new work and new talent from around the world. The Biennial takes place citywide in Houston with participation from the leading art museums, art galleries, non-profit art spaces, universities and civic spaces. The 2014 Arab exhibitions will take place in FotoFest's headquarters gallery and three to four additional FotoFest art spaces. The Biennial has an audience of 275,000 people from 34 countries. This audience includes a select group of 150 museum curators, gallerists, publishers, editors, photography collectors, directors of non-profit art spaces and international festivals from Asia, Europe, Latin America, Canada and the United States.

KARIN ADRIAN VON ROQUES

For the past twenty years, Karin Adrian von Roques' professional focus has been modern and contemporary art from the Middle East. Upon finishing her studies of Islamic Art in Bonn, Germany, she became interested in modern and contemporary art from Arab countries and pioneered academic exploration and exposure of outstanding artists in this field. She began a series of strategic programs to bring concepts central to the works of contemporary Arab artists to the attention of a broader public by means of museum and gallery exhibitions. Aware that contemporary art from Islamic countries takes place within a wider socio-political context and dialogue, Ms. von Roques has organized and participated in seminars, interviews, publications and auctions throughout the world to generate intercultural dialogue on the subject of Arab culture.

Ms. von Roques has been an art advisor and art historian to numerous museums and has worked as a special consultant for Islamic exhibitions such as *From Bagdad to Isafahan — Islamic Manuscripts and Miniatures*, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris, 1994–95. In 1997 she became the Founding Director of the Hesse Museum in Lugano, Switzerland focusing on programs about ethics and intercultural dialogue. She has curated more than twenty international museum and gallery exhibitions, among them: *Written Cosmos — Arabic Calligraphy and Literature throughout the Centuries*, Museum of Applied Arts, Frankfurt, Germany, 2004; *Languages of the Desert — Contemporary Arab Art from the Gulf States*, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Kunstmuseum) Bonn, Germany, 2005 (traveled to the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France, 2006; the Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2007; and Galleria Metropolitana, Barcelona, Spain, 2006); *The Present Out of the Past Millennia — Contemporary Art from Egypt*, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Kunstmuseum) Bonn, 2007; and *The Art of Writing — Contemporary Calligraphy from Three Cultures*, Art Forum, Kurhauskolonnaden, Wiesbaden, May 2011.

WENDY WATRISS

Wendy Watriss is a Co-founder of FotoFest and has served as Artistic Director and Senior Curator since 1991. She has developed over 60 international exhibits for FotoFest, including path-breaking exhibits on Photography from China 1934-2008; *AMERICAN VOICES* - Latino photographers in the U.S., Photography from Latin America 1865-1994; photography from Central Europe; contemporary Mexican photography; the visual history of Kurdistan with Susan Meiselas; contemporary Korean photography; early 20th century and contemporary Russian photography; multi-media/new technology installations; and subjects such as the Global Water Crisis, The Global Environment, Guantanamo; Artists Responding to Violence; and Contemporary U.S. Photography. In 2009, she was the invited curator for international exhibitions of the Guangzhou 2009 Photo Biennial at the Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China. From 1970-1991, Wendy Watriss worked as an award-winning international photojournalist and independent documentary photographer. She won the World Press Photo Award for Feature Stories and the Oskar Barnack Award - Leica in 1982; Interpress Photo in 1983; and Mid America Arts/National Endowment for the Arts in 1985.