



Hamed Abdalla, Les Mères des Martyrs, 1956, 29.7 x 38.4 cm. Courtesy of Hamed Abdalla family collection.



LONDON.- To celebrate the organisation's 10th anniversary this year, [The Mosaic Rooms](#) present an ambitious programme of exhibitions and events running from spring 2018 to autumn 2019. Opening its doors to artists, writers and thinkers from the Arab world and Iran and showcasing artworks unseen in the UK, this season offers audiences an exceptional insight into overlooked aspects of the region's rich art and culture.

Founded in 2008 as a non-profit initiative of the A.M. Qattan Foundation, The Mosaic Rooms have become an internationally renowned multidisciplinary space, dedicated to contemporary culture from and about the Arab world. The organisation offers an important independent platform to emerging artists from the region as well as established figures who still remain little known internationally. Omar Al-Qattan, Chair of the A.M. Qattan Foundation and one of its founders says:

When we started the AM Qattan Foundation in the mid-90s, one of the things we felt very strongly about was the danger of Arab culture becoming totally crushed and overwhelmed by the narratives of political violence and religious ideology that were so prevalent in the media. So everything we've done since, including at The Mosaic Rooms, has been to try to offer alternative, more complex and nuanced ways for exploring and understanding the cultures of these regions which have been so much at the centre of attention yet so absent in their substance and humanity.

Over the past decade The Mosaic Rooms have welcomed illustrious guests including the Syrian poet Adonis, Moroccan poet Abdellatif Laâbi, Egyptian writers Ahdaf Soueif and Nawal El Saadawi, Palestinian writer Raja Shehadeh; and thinkers Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein and Daniel Barenboim within the framework of the annual Edward Said London Lecture series which this year featured journalist Amira Hass in March. The organisation has provided an unparalleled space for challenging key political topics and shining a light on the experiences of people living in the Arab world and its diaspora. Highlights range from first London/UK solo exhibitions by Syrian artist Marwan featuring his renowned 99 Heads series referencing Sufism and the 99 names of God; internationally exhibited Palestinian artist Larissa Sansour examining contemporary politics of present day Israel and Palestine; Tunisian artist Nadia Kaabi-Linke uncovering the history of The Mosaic Rooms, to Iraqi artist Hanaa' Malallah and UK artist duo kennardphillips' first collaborative exhibition exploring the occupation of Iraq.

Overseen by Rachael Jarvis, director of The Mosaic Rooms, the season is made up of six exhibitions split into two alternating strands: a series focussed on seminal Arab and Iranian modernist artists from Egypt, Morocco and Iran curated by Morad

Montazami and a series of group shows presenting contemporary art from these three countries organised in partnership with regional institutions and curators.

A solo exhibition dedicated to the influential Egyptian modernist painter Hamed Abdalla (1917-1985) launches the season this spring. Entitled A R A B É C É D A I R E, a play on the French word 'Abécédaire' meaning a visual alphabet primer, the exhibition focuses on Abdalla's personal archives and library. Abdalla's work centred on his development of the word-form, written words expressed in paint, blending abstraction and anthropomorphic forms.

This summer The Mosaic Rooms collaborate with Cairo's well-known Townhouse gallery to present What do you mean, here we are?, a group exhibition featuring the work of contemporary artists such as Mona Hatoum, Susan Hefuna, Basim Magdy and Wael Shawky. Townhouse remains an important space for engaging with the arts in Cairo. Through a series of artworks and archival material the exhibition tells the story of Townhouse's evolution from a modest start in the backstreets of downtown Cairo to its emergence at the centre of the regional art scene and across more recent periods of turmoil and re-configuration.

The modernist exhibition strand continues this autumn with a focus on the provocative Iranian artist Bahman Mohassess (1931-2010) presenting previously unseen works. Mohassess bridged Iranian history and western modernism, conducting a unique intercultural dialogue with the Surrealists, Alberto Giacometti and Henry Moore. This exhibition includes a selection of work from the artist's diverse practise.

Early next year an exhibition explores the dynamics of artistic production in Iran curated by Azar Mahmoudian. Focusing on artistic interventions, self-organised art initiatives, and selfpublishing, this group exhibition will feature newly commissioned and existing artworks that examine the role of art in creating new social models.

To complete the modernist series in spring 2019 The Mosaic Rooms present works by the Moroccan artist Mohammed Melehi (b. 1936) entitled New Waves from Casablanca. This display looks at abstract painter Melehi's career at the influential Casablanca art school. Melehi's own work is inspired by Moroccan traditional and popular craft, whilst also connecting to the hard edge painters of the 50's and 60's. Paintings by Melehi, canvases of bright flat colour with his characteristic wave motif, will be shown alongside work by other influential figures from the school.

Bringing the 10th anniversary programme to a close in September 2019, The Mosaic Rooms in collaboration with Morocco-based Kulte Gallery organise RAW QUEENS, a group exhibition curated by Yasmina Naji. The exhibition explores art, feminism and decolonisation and features work by artists including Fatima Mazmouz and Meriem Bennani. From the Chikha, a wild and raw feminine figure of Moroccan popular culture, to the overarching image of Moroccan middle-aged women, the artworks question the roles associated with women as much as the meaning of history and social relationships in contemporary Moroccan society.