



waterhouse & dodd

riding the wave

As interest in Middle Eastern art continues to intensify, some galleries are better placed than others to play a leading role in this increasingly busy arena. Few are moving and shaking the scene more than Waterhouse & Dodd, who, this autumn, launch one of the most important selling exhibitions of Contemporary Middle Eastern art London has yet seen.

From left to right:
Shirin Neshat. 'I Am Its Secret'. 1993. Fujicoulor crystal archive print. Edition of 250. 49.5 x 33.5 cm; Laila Muraywid. 'A Travers les Décombres'. 2008. Unique painted photograph. 60.5 x 50 cm; Maliheh Afnan. 'Veiled Testament'. 2007. Mixed media, ink and gauze on paper. 83 x 113 cm; Naveed Nour. 'Silent Voice'. 2008. Photograph printed on canvas. Edition of nine. 67.5 x 56 cm; Shirin Neshat. 'Nosrat'. 2008. C-print photograph with handwritten calligraphy in ink. Edition 4/5. 183 x 126 cm; Stephanie Carlton Smith. 'Twin'. 2008. Alabaster and glass rods. 48 x 49 x 26 cm; Fereydoun Ave. 'Four Sacred Elements I'. 2008. Collage and mixed media on paper. 51 x 33 cm; Fereydoun Ave. 'Pulmonaria II'. 2008. Collage and mixed media on paper. 66 x 103 cm; Fereydoun Ave. 'Four Sacred Elements II'. 2008. Collage and mixed media on paper. 51 x 33 cm.



Facing page:
Ray Waterhouse with a
work by Naveed Nour. 'A
Nation Ruled by Men'.
2008. Photograph printed
on canvas, edition of
nine. 73.5 x 56 cm.

TEXT BY SAMANTHA WYNDHAM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN HAMMOND

The famous military motto 'Who dares wins', also applies to those working in the art business. This is particularly so at a time when the art market is constantly changing and an economic downturn throws uncertainty into the mix. Whilst riding the waves of innovation can be a risky affair, there is no doubt that sitting tight and refusing to adapt to changing circumstances is highly unlikely to bear long-term fruit.

Located in the heart of London's fashionable Mayfair, Waterhouse & Dodd has the reputation of being one of the most dynamic art galleries in London today. Its history reflects the indefatigable energy of its proprietors, Ray Waterhouse and Jonathan Dodd, who have always sought out new challenges and different audiences. This innovative approach will never be more apparent than during this autumn, when the gallery is presenting two major shows of Contemporary Middle Eastern art.

Inventive Initiations

Founded in 1987, the gallery initially specialised in 19th-century English art, before expanding into Impressionist and Modern painters, areas in which it extended its already formidable expertise. In 2001 Waterhouse & Dodd opened its Contemporary department and with such a wide portfolio, the gallery exhibits at all major world fairs, including Maastricht, New York and Palm Beach. Waterhouse, a well-known figure

in the international art scene, also plays a key role in his subsidiary firm, Fine Art Brokers, which is one of the world's leading art advisory companies. Working with clients from all backgrounds and with varying tastes and understanding of art, he has advised on the creation of numerous important private collections in Europe and America, written widely on the subject of art collecting and presented innumerable lectures on investing in art in Asia, the Middle East, the UK and the US.

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A friendly and approachable manner is combined with extensive knowledge and experience of the art market. In 2000 Waterhouse advised an American client to buy a painting by Henri Matisse for \$7.5 million. Having provided full condition and market reports, and arranged the export license, shipping and delivery, the client was happy to purchase the picture unseen until it arrived

at his residence in the US. Seven years later, and on the advice of Fine Art Brokers, the work was sold in July 2007 for \$21.7 million, a world record for a Matisse. Quite a result by any standards and evidence of the vision that has helped Waterhouse & Dodd carve a very special niche for itself.

Inductions to Middle Eastern Art

Waterhouse was first introduced to Contemporary Middle Eastern art while working with Kuwait's Sheikha Paula Al-





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Sabah on her extensive art collection. Inspired both by her enthusiasm and a tour of the British Museum’s ‘Word into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East’ exhibition in Dubai, Waterhouse saw an exciting opportunity. Over the last three years, the gallery has exhibited widely in the Middle East, taking 20th-century artists, including Bonnard, Miró, Picasso and Warhol and Contemporary works by, amongst others, Damien Hirst and Shirin Neshat, to art fairs in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The decision to mount a show of Contemporary Middle Eastern art in London was a natural extension of this activity.

“The concept of the exhibition was to show our commitment to Middle Eastern art, both to artists in the Middle East and also patrons of arts in the region,” Waterhouse says. “We conceived of it as a fairly low-key show to begin with, but it has had such a fantastic response that it has developed out of all recognition to what we originally thought of, and now we’ve got some of the world’s leading artists taking part.” With over 40 recent works by 15 artists, including celebrated names such as

Above: Charles Hossein Zenderoudi. Untitled. 1978. Gouache on paper. 70 x 100 cm.

Facing page: Farhad Moshiri. ‘Untitled’. 2003. Oil and gold leaf on canvas. 181 x 145 cm.

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Maliheh Afnan, Wijdan, Nja Mahdaoui, Farhad Moshiri, Shirin Neshat, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Parviz Tanavoli and Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, the exhibition will cover paintings, sculpture, works on paper, and photography. In addition, the inclusion of several exciting and newly emerging artists - and a simultaneous solo show of photographs by Moroccan artist Lalla Essaydi - means that Waterhouse & Dodd will be presenting a spectacular array of Middle Eastern art from Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Tunisia.

Of no less significance in the choice of artists chosen by this gallery is the fact that many of them combine the visual, literary, historical and craft traditions of their various countries of origin in their Contemporary works. Some have also tackled the difficult political and social issues associated with the Middle East. As



Waterhouse explains, “We want the gallery to focus on some of the issues that the artists are interested in, not just exhibit decorative art. We are definitely not interested in having artists who simply interpret Western art ... we want artists who, in our view, represent the culture of the

Middle East.” Jemimah Patterson, who has been personally responsible for liaising with many of the artists involved, confirms this view: “We’ll be showing pieces from Laila Shawa’s ‘Walls of Gaza’ series, for example. We will be sensitive with our selection, but we certainly won’t shy away from approaching some of these issues.”

The Right Route

With help and advice from curators, consultants and academics, both in the UK and the Middle East, Waterhouse & Dodd were amazed by the response to their decision to shift the emphasis of their gallery towards Middle Eastern art. In some cases, artists were recommending other artists, and well-known painters began to approach them independently. Waterhouse has noticed a dramatic increase in the number of collectors and is convinced that the market is continuing

to grow, “partly through the auctions that are taking place, and partly by spreading the word, frankly, through *Canvas* as well.” Such is his confidence and enthusiasm that he is hoping to take Middle Eastern Contemporary artists to art fairs in Los Angeles, New York, Palm Beach and San Francisco in the near



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future. While exhibiting images by Lalla Essaydi at a recent fair in the Hamptons, he was, “astonished at how well they were received, because the whole aspect of Islam continues to have difficult connotations in the States.”

Of course, there are other challenges in exhibiting, representing and selling Middle Eastern art. Waterhouse is particularly concerned that the prices achieved at auction houses are often higher than they are in retail galleries, sounding a note of caution - “I hope artists are not influenced too much by the prospect of making a lot of money from their art, as opposed to actually expressing their artistic concerns.” He is convinced that for continued and sustainable development, Middle Eastern art needs supportive galleries, not just twice-yearly auctions, and he has planned the exhibitions in his gallery to coincide with both sales of Islamic art at Sotheby’s and London’s most important Contemporary art fair, Frieze. Patterson has also identified a challenge specific to the current market in Middle Eastern art: “We had a tough job deciding which artists to show, with so many connected with the region now producing top quality work. The hard part is choosing artists whose work combines readily with one another in the gallery space. Sometimes this means aiming for complementary styles, but going for dramatically different works can also create a striking impression.” In the dynamic atmosphere of Waterhouse & Dodd, this challenge has merely helped to instigate plans to expand this autumn’s exhibitions into a regular series, thereby enabling the gallery to show more Contemporary artists from the Middle East in the future.

Waterhouse & Dodd began their association with the Middle East while taking Modern paintings and works by Contemporary British artists out to art fairs in Abu Dhabi and

Dubai. They have encountered a refreshing spontaneity in Middle Eastern collectors, “an ability to look at the visual image just for what it is,” as Waterhouse puts it, “whereas

Westerners are so often confused with heritage and garbled forms of art history.” Patterson recalled that, while on their stand at artparis-AbuDhabi, people were “incredibly forthcoming with questions, particularly the women towards me, to have a discourse about the work we were looking at, which was just so encouraging.” At the same show, Waterhouse recalls meeting a senior member of the Abu Dhabi royal family: “I said, ‘It’s an honour to be here, sir, and to bring our paintings.’ ‘The honour is all mine,’ replied the royal host. That’s a charming thing to say, but actually it really struck home. Our welcome in the Middle East has been tremendous. We wanted to help reciprocate it, and the exhibitions we are now organising are just one part of that very important process.”

ROUTES

An exhibition of Contemporary Middle Eastern art
7 - 25 October 2008

The first of an annual series, ‘Routes’ will be one of the most extensive and prestigious commercial exhibitions of Contemporary Middle Eastern art ever assembled in London. The 15 artists are Hamra Abbas, Maliheh Afnan, Afsoon, Fereydoun Ave, Nja Mahdaoui, Farhad Moshiri, Laila Muraywid, Shirin Neshat, Naveed Nour, Fereydoon Omid, Monir Shahrودي Farmanfarmaian, Laila Shawa, Parviz Tanavoli, Wijdan and Charles Hossein Zenderoudi. All the works range in price from US \$1000 - 500,000.

CROSS ROADS

Photographs by Lalla Essaydi
13 - 25 October 2008

This is a selection of photographs from Lalla Essaydi’s ‘Converging Territories’ and ‘Les Femmes du Maroc’ series, many taken in a house used by her family to incarcerate women for disobedience or transgressions against the rules of Islam. Her inaugural UK exhibition, Essaydi evokes the Western fascination with the harem in compositions reminiscent of 19th-century Orientalist paintings, emphasising her desire to “go beyond simple critique to a more active, even subversive engagement with cultural patterns, in order to get beyond stereotypes and convey my own experience as an Arab woman.”

Routes and its accompanying exhibition Cross Roads are sponsored by Europe Arab Bank. For more information, see page 18.

Facing page: Naveed Nour. ‘Silent Voice’. 2008. Photograph printed on canvas, edition of nine. 67.5 x 56 cm.

Further information about the exhibitions call +44 2077347800 or visit at www.artroutes.com