

# Canvas

ART AND CULTURE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND ARAB WORLD

9<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY



The provocative nature of **Adel Abdessemed's** *oeuvre*, **Taner Ceylan's** hyperrealist paintings, **Siah Armajani's** intellectually engaging practice, the Foster + Partners-designed blue chip gallery **Sperone Westwater** PLUS **Artists Who Collect II**.

Published out of the Dubai Technology and Media Free Zone Authority.

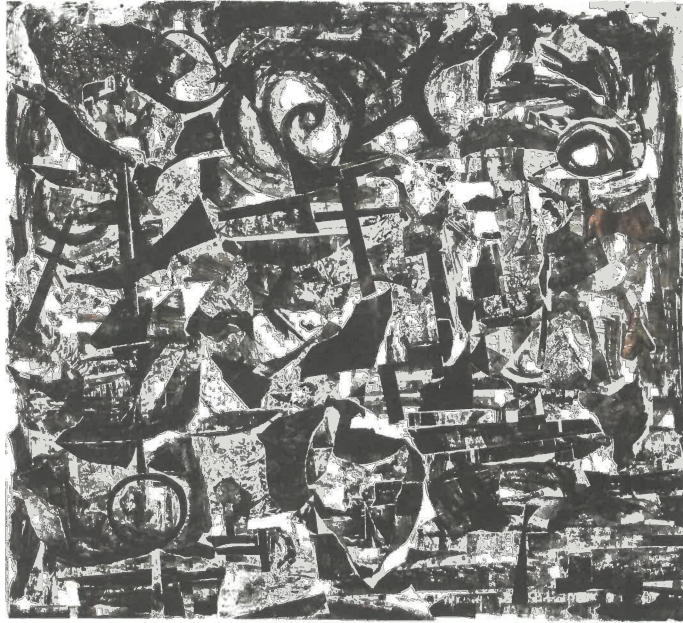
AED 45 | QR 65 | BD/OR 7 | SR 90 | LBP 32,000 | US\$25 | £15.00 | € 6

ISSN 1814-7062



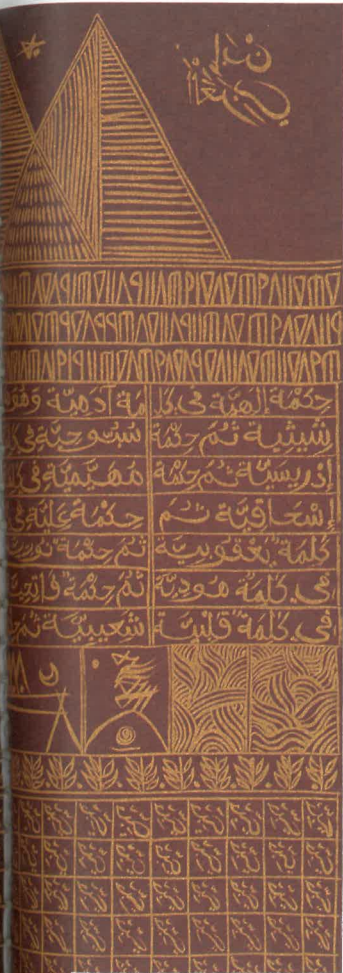
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#### 4. KHALID AL-BANNA. UNDER THE SKY.

A melee of symbols and images, this abstract collage by Al-Banna is a reflection on the enduring aftermath of the 11 September attacks. Featuring the Muslim crescent and the Christian cross, the work depicts a struggle between religions and examines the stereotypes inflicted on people of the Muslim faith as a result of the event. "As Muslims, we refuse to accept the barbaric actions of a certain group of extremists such as those who committed the 11 September attacks," says the Emirati artist, "but I found myself questioned and treated like a terrorist when I travelled to the USA just because I am Muslim." An eye in the upper middle portion of this large artwork refers to anyone who has felt, and continues to feel, lost in the midst of this war between religions.



#### 3. RACHID KORAÏCHI. IBN ARABI.

This Algerian artist's practice is deeply engaged with his Sufi faith, so much so that he created a series honouring the lives and legacy of 14 Sufi masters. Six banners infuse mystical symbols and calligraphy and are part of the *Les Maîtres Invisibles* (*The Invisible Masters*) series, which won Koraïchi the 2011 Jameel Prize. It includes this piece, a work that pays tribute to the Sufi leader, poet and philosopher Ibn Arabi. The artist made these works with the intent of showcasing the spiritual and tolerant principles of Islam by celebrating the writings of Muslim thinkers, in sharp contrast with the perceptions and misconceptions plaguing the religion today.



#### 5. KADER ATTIA. BIG BANG.

The title of this artwork by the Algerian artist works in sharp contrast with its appearance: the Star of David is intertwined with the crescent, a symbol representative of Islam, in a massive silver ball. This dichotomy between the title's reference to the theory of evolution and the religious symbols it physically incorporates is arresting and invites both spiritual and scientific reflections. *Big Bang* looks like a planet, a meteorite in motion and a disco ball all at once and is a representation of Attia's preoccupation with the divide between the two religions. The strain between Judaism and Islam threatens to blow up, just as the explosion that created the universe occurred as a result of a hotbed of coexisting dense energy.



#### 6. YZ KAMI. ENDLESS PRAYERS XVII.

A part of a series of the same name, this work was made by gluing cut-outs of text covered in prayers to a canvas. Their circular arrangement gives way to the shape of a cross and the overall work is reminiscent of the mosaic floors of churches. A celebration of religions, the series sees a host of works arranged in ways that also reflect the form of mosque domes, while spiral patterns are a nod to the spinning rituals of the Sufi whirling dervishes. "I have always had an intense interest in comparative religions, in religion in general, and I am always preoccupied by it," says Kami. "Although I am myself a Muslim, my interest is in the three Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – and also in Asian religions like Buddhism."