Art Across Borders: Contemporary Art and Culture in the Middle East

Meg Novak
Kristin Razowksy

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ABOUT AS220

AS220

AS220, a non-profit center for the arts, was established in 1985 to provide "a local forum and home for the arts" that is unjuried and uncensored. The organization maintains nineteen artist live and work spaces, five galleries, and two performance spaces, and has established a powerful presence in the Downtown Arts and Entertainment District. AS220's permanent home on Empire Street is a 22,000 square foot facility located in an artist tax free zone. Over sixty artists exhibit work in the galleries each year, along with several hundred performance acts. AS220 is open some eighty hours per week, and is dedicated to its mission to bring the arts to all people.

The Art Across Borders exhibition and panel discussion was organized by AS220 Gallery Manager, Neal Walsh. For more information about the AS220 galleries contact (401) 831 9327 or neal@as220.org.

AS220
115 Empire Street
Providence, RI 02903
www.as220.org

This Art Across Borders exhibition and panel discussion have been made possible by a grant from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, an independent state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Art Across Borders would like to thank: Rachel Iverson, Jim Graafsgard, Haider Al-Amery, Ellen Hinchcliff, Alex Ackerman, Sinbad's, Art Holdings, Women Create!, Austin, Brenna, Ramsi Kysia, and all the other countless volunteers. This show could not have happened without the amazing support and help of all our friends. It is also with warmest regards and greatest respect that we thank the artists of Palestine and Iraq who trusted the vision of Art Across Borders.

Finally, we would like to thank Voices in the Wilderness and the International Solidarity Movement for the important work these groups do in Iraq and Palestine.

AS220 would like to thank: The Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, Cristina Di Chiera, SueEllen Kroll, Laura Mullen, IO Labs, Inc., Sara Agnies, Jean Cozzens, Natalia Karoway-Waterhouse, Matt Obert, Shawn Wallace and Kim Kazan.

PANEL DISCUSSION
Wednesday, September 3rd, 2003, 6 – 8 PM

EXHIBITION
August 21 – September 13, 2003
Monday – Friday 10 – 6, Saturday 12 – 5 and by appointment
All events free and open to the public

AS220
115 Empire Street
Providence, RI
**ART ACROSS BORDERS: Mission Statement**

It is our belief that art is a powerful means of raising cross-cultural awareness, creating a dialogue in place of a long history of misconceptions, and putting a human face to peoples that have been largely vilified.

It is based on this belief that we have organized Art Across Borders, an art exchange with artists in Iraq and the occupied territories of Palestine. In the late summer and early fall of 2002, organizers of Art Across Borders traveled to Iraq on a Voices in the Wilderness sponsored delegation. Along with much needed medical supplies and children's clothing, delegates also delivered hundreds of pounds of art materials donated by artists in Minneapolis, Minnesota as a gesture of solidarity.

In Iraq, organizers met with around twenty artists, including two pioneers of the Iraqi modern art movement, Mohammed Ghani and Noor Al-Rawil. In Palestine, work was collected from over thirty artists including, Mohammed Abu-Sall, one of the emerging talents from the Gaza Breij refugee camp who celebrates the cactus as a symbol of the tenacity and resistance of the Palestinian people.

The work exhibited in Art Across Borders reflects a diversity of style and subject matter from traditional Arabic calligraphy to experimentation with abstraction. Art Across Borders intends to continue the exchange of artwork, supplies and ideas through future exhibitions, including a potential US - Iraqi show in Baghdad.

**ORGANIZERS' BIOGRAPHIES**

**Meg Novak** is a 28 year old artist and activist. In 2001, she founded the Babylon Art and Cultural Center, a non-profit, collectively run gallery and performance space in Minneapolis, MN. She currently works as Babylon's visual arts curator and general director.

During the summer of 2002, Novak launched Art Across Borders, in an attempt to stimulate inter-cultural dialogue through art. Traveling first to Iraq and then to Palestine, she met and worked with artists and collected artwork to bring back the United States for exhibition.

Through Art Across Borders and the Babylon Art and Cultural Center, Novak continues to work to create opportunities for artists to use their work to raise cultural and political awareness. She also works toward building a network of artists who directly connect their work with social activism.

**Kristin Razowsky**, also known as Flo, is a 27 year old community activist of the Twin Cities, who works as a freelance journalist and photographer. For the past seven years, she has been focused on organizing work ranging from environmental issues to support work for Indigenous communities of the Americas. Within the Twin Cities, her work has revolved around issues of police brutality, grass roots community development and anti war organizing.

Razowsky's most recent work has focused on the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Having spent six weeks in Palestine between August and September 2002, Razowsky was able to function as project photographer and co-curator of the Palestinian aspect of Art Across Borders.

Being an American born Jew, Razowsky felt it imperative to join Art Across Borders as a means of broadening popular education about the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine.

**PANELISTS' BIOGRAPHIES**

**William O. Beeman** is Director of Middle East Studies at Brown University where he teaches in the Anthropology and Theatre, Speech and Dance Departments. He sits on the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association and has published numerous articles on the Middle East.

**Elliott Colla** teaches Arabic literature in the Department of Comparative Literature at Brown University. He is also a member of the editorial committee of The Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) which publishes Middle East Report.

**Samia A. Halaby** is a Palestinian artist and writer on Palestinian art. She was born in Al Quds (Jerusalem in 1936) before the establishment of the Zionist state. Her work is in many museum collections internationally and she has just finished the book "Liberation Art of Palestine."

**ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES**

Complete biographical information is not available for all the artists exhibiting in Art Across Borders. To learn more about some of the featured artists please visit our upstairs gallery and view the documentary video "We Remain All This Time".

The cover art is by Majd Shallar of Khanageen, Kurdistan (Northern Iraq).