

# IN THE CITY

26 SEP-15 DEC | P21 GALLERY

PRIVATE VIEW | 25 SEP 18.30-20.30

**SHERIF ADEL, YUSEF ALAHMAD, NORA ALY, MOHAMMED NABIL LABIB, MAAJOUN, NAYZAK, WAEL MORCOS, NOUR TABET, GHADA WALI, IBRAHEEM YOUSSEF, MOHAMMED ZAKARIA, AND DESIGN\_ATELIER\_**

Design\_atelier\_ and P21 Gallery are excited to present *In the City*, an absorbing graphic design and sound art exhibition which provides a rare glimpse into four Arab cities. Hosted at **P21 Gallery**, the exhibition will be a first of its kind in London to showcase a series of commissioned and pre-existing works from an eclectic line up of established and emerging Arab designers, illustrators, video, and sound artists.

*In the City* transports the audience through four enigmatic, but overlooked Arab cities – Alexandria, Algiers, Baghdad and Nablus – by recapturing and reimagining elements of those cities. The collection explores each city's panorama through their streets, landmarks, people, signage, and sounds. Every room contains elements borrowed from the city it represents, forming a variety of installations that will entice interaction between the audience and the work.

The cultural diversity of the Arab world is increasingly belied by reductive media coverage of the region. This exhibition seeks to reclaim that narrative by inviting the audience to look beyond the headlines, through the collective imaginations of Arabs themselves.

## A SELECTION OF THE WORK

**Ghada Wali's** *Film Ikhwany* (2013) is an expression of denying the 'Brotherhoodisation' of Egypt, which is portrayed as a pernicious epidemic through a series of film posters, stamps and publications including the reappropriation of posters of former President Mohammed Morsi playing different characters. **Nour Tabet's** pieces however do not tackle what Alexandria is becoming, but rather reflect on her frustration of what Alexandria is not; while in contrast, **Wael Morcos** pays homage to the city's past through striking typography and doodles. Comic artist **Sherif Adel** chooses a humorous approach as he explores Alexandria as an introvert through cats and a fast-food favourite shawarma. Similarly, **Mohammed Nabil Labib** experiments with Arabic typography and engages Egyptian urban life through *Calendar* (2011) by providing monthly insights through Egyptian slang.

Skateboarding is growing quickly across the region and subculture video artist and photographer **Mohammed Zakaria** explores this phenomenon in a two channel, multi-country, production. Synced with music by **Karim Sultan**, the video is accompanied by boards designed specifically for this exhibition by **Nora Aly, Ghada Wali, Yusef Alahmad, and Ibraheem Youssef**.

The theme of tourism and monuments is a presence in various works. **Nora Aly's** series on Nablus takes inspiration from the water springs around the city and imagines what Nablus would look like if it were to enjoy a thriving tourist trade. By contrast, **Maajoun's** *Six Names for Nablus* (2013) is the representation of Nablus as an unknown, enclosed space. The collective **Nayzak** juxtaposes Algiers and Baghdad by creating two fictional universes in *Day of Egression* (2013): one around a national holiday in Algiers, and the other around a treasure hunter that manages to crack open the *Al-Shaheed* monument in Baghdad. Staying on monuments, **Ibraheem Youssef's** piece *Martyrs Monument* (2013) attempts to convey the intense feelings of serenity and grandeur one may experience when viewing the monument itself in Algiers. **Yusef Alahmad's** pieces combine digital illustrations, patterns and acrylic paints with a variety of paper textures and Arabic typography to portray Baghdad through enchanting colours in contrast to the city's typically bleak representation.

Finally, the **design\_atelier's** installations are all about being playful. *Kharoof* (2013) questions the originality of underground Arabic music through a satirical interpretation of Paris record label Kitsuné. In a similar vein, *Table Dance* (2009-ongoing) showcases a blog post turned video installation of characteristic dance moves performed at Arab weddings and *haflat shabab* which are bachelor-style parties with exclusively male attendees.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS | BIOGRAPHIES

**SHERIF ADEL** is a Cairo-based cartoonist and dentist. He launched his webcomic blog in November 2011 under the name, *Barbatoze Comics*. He also publishes a weekly comic strip in the *Daily News Egypt*. Sherif enjoys telling stories through comics and is continuously trying to explore it's potential as a medium. [barbatoze.com](http://barbatoze.com)

**YUSEF ALAHMAD** is a designer/illustrator from Alkhobar, Saudi Arabia. After completing his BFA in Graphic Design & Fine Arts in Arlington, Virginia, he moved to San Francisco, California to pursue an MFA degree in Graphic Design at the Academy of Art University. Right now, he is a part time student and a full time freelancer. [yusefalahmad.com](http://yusefalahmad.com)

**NORA ALY** is a graphic designer born and bred in Cairo, Egypt. Cairo's diversity and ancient culture has perpetually been an inspiration to her and her work. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design, from the German University in Cairo. During her studies, Nora worked as a teaching assistant, teaching Arabic font design, typography, information system and Graphic Design courses. In 2009, she participated in *Grafist*, a workshop that was held in Mimar Sinan, faculty of Fine Arts, in Istanbul, Turkey amidst an internship at a local advertising agency that lasted for four months. In 2011, she attended the *In Der Nahe/From Here* workshop in Zurich, Switzerland that took place at F+F School of Art and Media Design. Nora has worked at Madeo, a web design/branding agency, and Kairo, an advertising/branding agency. She specialises in infographics - her work has been awarded the Silver Prize at the *dubailynx* (2013), and published on [correspondents.org](http://correspondents.org). Currently, Nora is interested in further exploring and developing her skills in Arabic typography and font design. [behance.net/noraaly](http://behance.net/noraaly)

**MOHAMMED NABIL LABIB** was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt. He graduated from the faculty of Fine Arts, majoring in painting and then moved onto work in design. Passionate about Arabic typography and urbanism, Mohammed explores visual culture from different art disciplines by creating original contemporary design that reflects global insights. He has worked with cultural organisations in Cairo, Beirut, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Marrakech, Chicago, Paris, Berlin and Tokyo. His work has been featured in the *IMUIP Biennia international Poster Biennial in Istanbul* (2012), *Visual Arabia* (2012), *Right-to-Left exhibition in Berlin* (2012), and published in *Arabesque 1 and 2*, and *Holidays & Ceremonies Design*. [m-nabil.com](http://m-nabil.com)

**MAAJOUN** is a visual communication and type design studio. After their successful collaboration on the design of *Shimal/ Noord* (Arabic travel guide to the Netherlands) with the Mediamatic Foundation in Amsterdam in 2010, designers Lara Balaa and Khajag Apelian returned to Beirut to start a joint practice under the name *maajoun*. Despite its young age, *maajoun* has worked on a wide variety of projects ranging from web to identities and print, including a series of book cover guidelines for regional publishing house *Hachette Antoine* and the Arabic adaptation of Disney's logos. Besides its work in editorial and type design, the studio is known for designing cultural event identities and communication matter. Within the design scene, *maajoun* is recognised for its participation in local and international exhibitions and events such as *Pecha Kucha Night* (Beirut, 2011), *Graphorisms* (Barcelona, 2011), *AIGA's International Small Talk Films* (Chicago, 2012), *Typolyrics* (Yerevan, 2012), *Show Us Your Type Beirut* (2012), and *Beirut Design Week* (2012, 2013). [maajoun.com](http://maajoun.com)

**WAEEL MORCOS** received his BA in Graphic Design from Notre Dame University (Lebanon), and joined the branding and design department of SAATCHI Beirut where he spent three years developing identities, bilingual typographic solutions and working in print and exhibition design. Meanwhile, his interest in Arabic typography and its modern development got him involved in the *Typographic Matchmaking* projects where he teamed up with Dutch type designers to collaborate on designing bilingual typefaces. Wael uses language to investigate the formal qualities of words and their complex meanings. He is also interested in the moments where communication fails and uses its shortcomings to mine new ways to reach out and to tell stories. His work has won several international design awards including the *Dutch Design Award* and the *Core77 Award*, and was the finalist for the *Adobe Achievement Award*. Wael's work has been exhibited in several design exhibitions including the *Graphic Design Museum* in the Netherlands, the *Haus der Kunst* in Munich and the *Bastakiya Art Fair* in Dubai. He recently represented Rhode Island School of Design at the *INDABA Design Conference* in South Africa and at the *AIGA NYC Fresh Blood* event. Wael recently received his MFA in Graphic Design from the Rhode Island School of Design and is currently living and working in NYC. [waelmorcos.com](http://waelmorcos.com)

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**NAYZAK** is a three-man collective, which was first conceived as an idea in the minds of its founders in 2011, but was not fully realised until earlier this year, 2013. Founded by two designers (Ahmed Mounir and Mahmoud El-Dallash) and one game developer (Ahmed Saker), the studio produces visual and interactive experiences, ranging from what would conform with the standard definition of a structured design (a brand identity or a video game for example), to completely 'experimental' amorphous explorations. [nayzakstud.io](http://nayzakstud.io)

**NOUR TABET** was born in Lebanon in 1986, towards the end of the civil war, which is probably why she has always been intrigued by art emerging from conflicts. She is constantly re-evaluating her definition of graphic design. But one thing will remain certain: she believes that design is a mighty force that alters the ways people speak, think, feel, react and interact. She is trilingual and loves the adrenaline rushes from being in foreign milieus. She holds a BFA in Graphic Design from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. Nour currently lives in Baltimore and is pursuing her MFA in Graphic Design at the Maryland Institute College of Art. [nourtabet.com](http://nourtabet.com)

**GHADA WALI** is an Egyptian Artist, Illustrator and Graphic Designer based in Cairo. She currently works at MI7, a leading local Advertising agency working with several multinational brands, and has also worked at JWT and Fortune Promoseven. Besides her full-time work, she took the vow to contribute to the building of the future Graphic Design in Cairo, through the newly launched Graphic Design programme at the American University in Cairo where she is a teaching assistant. Believing in the power of design, she continues to stretch her production of modern design work independently through projects that help in saving cultural heritage and identity and by combatting false beliefs by providing awareness to political issues and humanitarian causes. Her work has been featured in the *F+F Schule Fur Kunst Und Mediendesign* exhibition in Zurich. [ghadawali.com](http://ghadawali.com)

**IBRAHEEM YOUSSEF** is an Egyptian/Canadian designer/illustrator currently based in Boston. He creates internationally recognised, thought provoking creative experiences that live around the globe. He studied at the College of Fine Arts in Zamalek, and the Ontario College of Art & Design in Toronto. Ibraheem strives on collaboration and is driven by obsession - a trait, alongside curiosity and perfectionism, which are found in his craft and production. My Artwork has been featured in press from around the globe. His work has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Der Spiegel*, *El País*, *Universal/NBC*, *Wired Magazine* and many more. His work has been exhibited *Bad Dads*, San Francisco (2010), *Is this thing on?* at Gallery 1988 in Los Angeles (2010), *Profilers* at Gallery KOP in Breda (2011), *Cairo 20x20* at The Mascot in Toronto (2011), *The Gang is all here* at Bottleneck Gallery in New York City (2012), *the Electronic Arts Deadspace3* show at LDBAVLFDM in Paris (2013) and more. [ibraheemyoussef.com](http://ibraheemyoussef.com)

**MOHAMMED ZAKARIA** was born in Doha, Qatar in 1986 and currently lives in Amman, Jordan. Mohammed's works are mainly in the format of photography and video. His passion for the image and the moving image developed in 2002 while filming and making skateboarding videos with his friends in Amman. His most recent works include a skateboard activism project in Tunisia post revolution, two skateboard art exhibitions that he curated in Amman, a number of experimental films where he took on the role of cinematographer and editor, and as part of a collective video art exhibition at the National Gallery of Fine Arts in Amman. [phillyskateboards.com](http://phillyskateboards.com)

**DESIGN\_ATELIER\_** is Kalimat's new design studio and a new vehicle for putting ideas in practice. The atelier is a small, collaborative studio based in London that undertakes design and cultural projects with various organisations and individuals, specialising in non-profit and independent initiatives. The atelier considers every project within its own context, and look at design as research by exploring multiple disciplines to inform their work. DANA ABDULLA is the Creative Director and Editor of Kalimat, a designer, writer and researcher working on her PhD in Design at Goldsmiths, University of London, MARIA PORTUGAL is a designer and researcher currently working on her PhD in Design at Goldsmiths, University of London, and KARIM SULTAN is an electronic music producer, oud player, sound designer, and arts and culture. [kalimatmagazine.com/atelier](http://kalimatmagazine.com/atelier)

**P21 GALLERY** is an independent, London-based non-profit organisation established to promote contemporary Middle Eastern and Arab identities by focusing on their art and culture with distinct focus on Palestine. The two-storey venue in central London has been identities recently designed by the award winning Egyptian architect, Professor Abdul Halim Ibrahim, as a place where contemporary artistic statements are experienced and appreciated by a global artistic community. The facilities at P21 are planned to maximise the potential of contemporary art as a discourse, through multimedia exhibition spaces on two levels with supporting facilities for public functions in addition to workshops for training and education. In addition, the P21 Gallery hosts a reference library, meeting rooms, a lecture hall, as well as a specialised café. In short, it provides for a much needed meeting place in the heart of London. [p21.org.uk](http://p21.org.uk)

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## ABOUT THE PARTNERS

**THE ARAB BRITISH CENTRE** is an independent non-political non-religious charitable organisation which works to improve the British public's understanding of the Arab world. We organise and promote cultural and artistic events relating to the Arab world, and host a regular programme of activities including Arabic calligraphy classes and Arabic language classes. We also house permanent and temporary collections of contemporary art, have a specialised library open to the public, hold talks on a variety of topics, and recognise individuals and organisations working in similar fields through our annual Arab British Culture & Society Award. [arabbritishcentre.org.uk](http://arabbritishcentre.org.uk)

**BAGHDAD CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2013** is a project by iraqi governmental institutions and non-governmental organisations lead by Minister of Culture Dr. Saadoun al-Dulaimi. The Baghdad Capital of Culture 2013 initiative seeks to integrate Iraq and other Arab countries and revive the city as a leading player in the field of culture, thinking, and knowledge. The initiative includes building cultural infrastructure, the rehabilitation projects of a cultural and folkloric institutions, publishing literature, the film production. Among its achievements are: Constructing the Opera House and Cultural academy, rehabilitation of the Hurriya House for printing and publishing, reconstruction of al-Marafa House for the Mandaeans, building the Iraqi Digital Library, rehabilitation of the National Museum for Modern Art, establishing Basra Theatre, rehabilitation of Al-Madan, Arc of Ctesiphon, various public art commissions, equipping institutions with suitable materials such as printers and interpretation equipment and much more. [baghdadc2013.gov.iq](http://baghdadc2013.gov.iq)

**THE IRAQI CULTURAL CENTRE (ICCL)** is dedicated to nurturing and promoting cultural ties between the peoples of the United Kingdom and Iraq, both through British exposure to Iraq's cultural history and achievements, and through exposure of Iraqi artists and scholars to British trends, institutions, and professional counterparts. ICCL is mainly concerned with promoting and developing cultural links with British cultural institutes, universities and research centres to help increase cultural awareness and build positive cultural and educational relations. Our goal is to promote a better understanding of Iraqi culture by providing a wide range of activities to the British public. For this purpose, ICCL organises lectures, workshops, seminars, courses, exhibitions and performances. [iraqiculturalcentre.co.uk](http://iraqiculturalcentre.co.uk)

**KALIMAT MAGAZINE** is a non-profit, independent, media production organisation that features bold, engaging political, design, film, fashion, literature, musical and new media content. Launched in 2010, the magazine is a social, cultural and political publication committed to providing an outlet for open expression within the Arab region and its diaspora. At the same time, it is a visual communication tool that serves to educate both those who read it and work to create it. [kalimatmagazine.com](http://kalimatmagazine.com)

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The exhibition is supported by the **Arab British Centre, Baghdad Capital of Culture 2013, the Iraqi Cultural Centre** and **Kalimat Magazine**. *In the City* will include an extensive public programme of talks and events. For further details, please visit [kalimatmagazine.com/inthecity](http://kalimatmagazine.com/inthecity)

**VISITOR INFORMATION:** 26 September-15 December 2013 | Open Wednesday-Sunday 12.00-18.00 | Closed 16 & 17 October

**LOCATION:** 21 Chalton Street, London, NW1 1JD | Nearest underground: King's Cross/St. Pancras and Euston Station  
Tel: 020 7121 6190 | Web: [p21.org.uk](http://p21.org.uk)

**PRESS INFORMATION:** Safa Sharifi | [safa@kalimatmagazine.com](mailto:safa@kalimatmagazine.com) | 075 8888 7113

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