



Untitled, 1996, © Jananne Al-Ani

19 views

CONTEMPORARY ARAB PHOTOGRAPHY

20 April - 25 June 2006

CENTRO ANDALUZ DE ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO
Monasterio de Santa María de las Cuevas
Avda. de Américo Vespucio nº 2
Isla de la Cartuja. 41071 - SEVILLA

Access

Avda. de Américo Vespucio nº 2
Camino de los Descubrimientos s/n

Transport

Buses: C1 y C2

Opening times

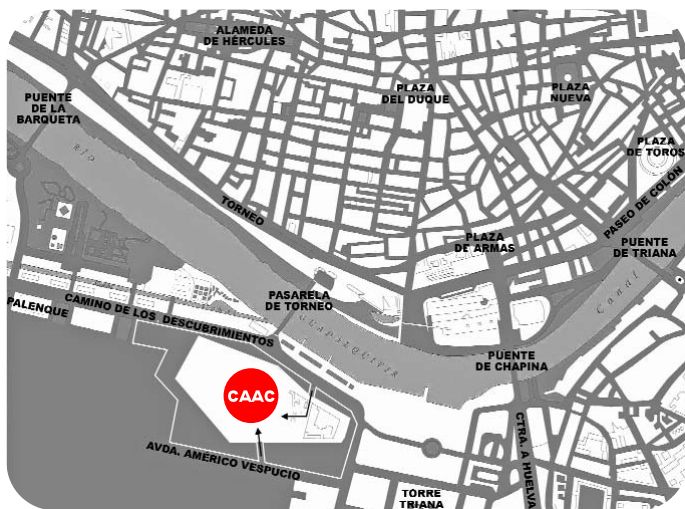
1 April - 30 September

Tuesdays to Fridays: 10 - 21 h.
Saturdays: 11 - 21 h.
Sundays: 10 - 15 h.

Closed: Mondays.
Ticket sales until half and hour before the museum closed.

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Organization:



Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

Conception & production:



Collaboration:



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Domestic Tourism, 2005, © Maha Maamoun

In the West we constantly receive information and images from the Arab world. Most of the time these images have negative connotations and have to do with conflict. Others, however, are images full of good intentions, sometimes close to an excess of political correctness, but that cannot be dissociated from a cultural point of view that observes something foreign to it with a mixture of fascination, incomprehension and fear. In both cases the “Arab” is always the “other”, the object portrayed, whereas the subject, the eye that looks and represents (and, therefore, values) is identified with the West.

This exhibition is an attempt to break free from this sometimes unconscious inertia by bringing together the work of nineteen contemporary Arab photographers (of which 11 are women) who, from different points of view, explore, analyse and show their own reality. These photographers’ images portray the fragmentation and complexity of contemporary Arab society and culture, with its traumas and hope, its fears and desires, ambiguities and contradictions – a society which, as these images show, is much more diverse than is often thought in the West.

On the other hand, we must not forget that all these artists have been brought up in a context marked by the progress of digital technology, in which the cult of the image and of technique has become global. Their proposals are, therefore, utterly contemporary, representing both thematic and expressive, as well as geographical and cultural diversity. Some of these artists have never left their home countries, while others have studied and worked in Europe or the US, and some were not even born in an Arab country, although, as they say themselves, their works cannot be dissociated from their cultural roots.

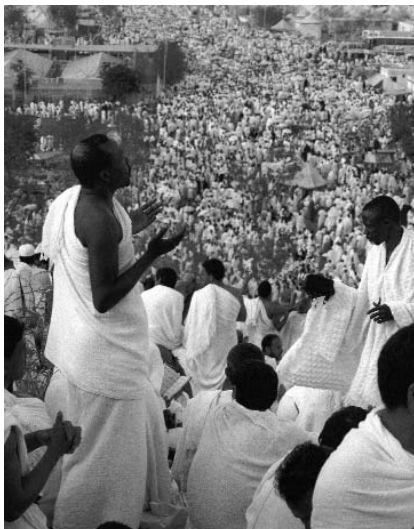
The images chosen for the exhibition **19 Views – Contemporary Arab Photography** vary widely in theme and style. There are pictures in colour and in black and white; small and large formats; snapshots taken in the street and studio images, many including a sort of metalinguistic reflection intentionally showing spotlights and other equipment; panoramic views of country or city as well as portraits in intimate, everyday spaces.

Some photographs are clearly intended to be naturalistic, thus allowing a sociological and anthropological interpretation, whereas others are more abstract and evocative, centering on intimate and introspective aspects or experimenting with different forms of expression and photomontage techniques, photographic series with a narrative intention or exploration of the texture of the image. There are photographs with a strong metaphorical and conceptual basis, while some are parodies and others much more spontaneous and direct, sometimes approaching photojournalism.

This, then, is a selection of images that use very varied expressive and discursive instruments. While not ignoring the geographical and cultural origins of their authors, their interest lies beyond just that and gives witness to the aspirations and obligations of contemporary Arab societies in a globalised world, marked by the cult of the image and the development of digital technology.

• **JANANNE AL-ANI | IRAQ, 1966.** She evokes in her images the way in which Arab women have traditionally been represented since the 18th century in the West, with the creation of an orientalism fomenting the prototype of the veiled woman.

• **REEM AL FAISAL | SAUDI ARABIA, 1968.** Using an extensive documentary collection, she creates a report on the pilgrimage to Mecca, with all the rites, spirituality and daily life this involves. She documents public space and the collective reality of millions of pilgrims, while also attempting to capture the intimacy of such different people of diverse cultures coming from all over the world to share their faith and spirituality.



• **ANAS AL SHAIKH | BAHRAIN, 1968.** He composes his photographic collages with a mixture of memories of childhood and events of war engraved on the collective memory, that he uses to censure the impotence of the common people to decide for themselves.

• **JIHAN AMMAR | IRAN, 1970.** Intimist reports based on the personal history of the subjects, at times members of her own family. The middle-class and especially weddings are recurrent themes in the work of this photographer who creates psychological portraits and points out the cultural diversity of Middle-Eastern societies.

• **NADIM ASFAR | LEBANON, 1976.** Photographic reports in the form of an intimate diary. He makes an almost cinematographic documentary of the groups of friends, places, movements and atmosphere of his life in Beirut.

• **LARA BALADI | LEBANON, 1969.** More attracted to the imaginary than to documentary narration, Baladi’s photographic collages consist of universal characters of fairy tales or mythology, or feminine archetypes of collective popular imagery, as well as personal experiences deriving from her stays in several Arab countries, as well as Europe, Japan and the USA.

• **HICHAM BENOHOUD | MOROCCO, 1968.** The artist is himself the subject of experimentation in his disturbing self-portraits through which he unashamedly releases his anguish, fears and doubts.

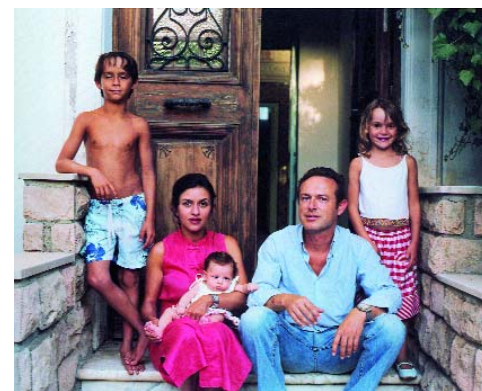
• **BRUNO BOUDJELAL | FRANCE, 1961.** Has carried out a ten-year photographic documentary of his father’s homeland of Algeria: “Unquiet Days. Algerian Chronicles of a Return” 1993-2003, in which he narrates the civil war in its darkest moments.

• **NABIL BOUTROS | EGYPT, 1954.** More attracted by photography’s power to evoke than to describe, he explores the daily life of Egyptians, their dynamics, traditions and modernity. His view of the Copts, one of the oldest Christian communities in the world, is outstanding.

• **YASMINA BOUZIANE | MOROCCO.** Her series of self-portraits in the style of European orientalist photographs of the early 20th century brings out the survival of the colonial stereotype in the representation of the Arab woman, ironically illustrating the role photography can play in the reconstruction of history.

• **JELLEL GASTELI | TUNISIA, 1958.** At the other extreme from orientalist recreation, Gasteli’s series “Plural” portrays generations of Tunisians born to parents of different cultures, reflecting on the contradictions of a double cultural inheritance.

• **BRUNO HADJH | ALGERIA, 1954.** Hadjhi’s interest in the notion of a global village leads him to examine the mutations in Algerian society since the civil war, centering especially on the change undergone by the new generations in that country.



Neil, Semia, Imane, Sami, Inji A, 2005, © Jellal Gasteli

• **FARIDA HAMAK | ALGERIA, 1950.** She explores the notion of “traces” as memory, raising the question of identity and what it becomes after the war. As a reporter she does not show the conflicts face on, but inquires into their consequences and how they are definitively inscribed on places and people.

• **SUSAN HEFUNA | EGYPT, 1962.** As both Egyptian and German, she explores cultural differences with the detachment of the photographer of the foreign, while capturing what is familiar in each culture. Her old pinhole camera emphasizes this detachment in imperfect, almost abstract, black and white photographs in which the shuttered window, through which one sees without being seen – a symbol of simultaneous communication and isolation – is a recurrent motif.

• **DALIA KHAMISSY | LEBANON, 1973.** A reporter on political and social themes, she has dealt with the taboo subject of single mothers in Lebanon and also the refugee camps on the Jordan-Iraq border for those fleeing the 2003 Iraq war and whose existence had been silenced by the Jordanese authorities.

• **MAHA MAAMOUN | USA, 1972.** Cairo is her source of inspiration, in which she looks with humour on the way travel agencies sell tourist destinations.

• **YOUSSEF NABIL | EGYPT, 1972.** Using the old technique of colouring black and white photos, he scenicifies, as in an illustrated novel, the still taboo subject of the intimate stories of tenderly embracing male couples. Beneath their simple appearance, his images speak of life, but also of death, which has obsessed him since childhood.

• **RANDA SHAATH | USA, 1963.** Documenting the urban complexity of Cairo and its people’s daily lives, such as that of the roof and terrace dwellers in this megalopolis.

• **KARIMA SOMALY | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES.** Aware of the force of the message that images can carry, she shows gagged men and women, behind which suffering and hidden truths are revealed.