



Māimouna Guerresi, *Red Oracles*, 2007. Video stills from dvd, 00:06:10 min.

BARAKAT: The Gift

Curated by
Gaia Serena Simionati

Contemporary Art from the Middle East and Africa
June 3 – September 11, 2010

Egypt
Hamdi Attia
Moataz Nasr

Iraq
Halim al Karim

Senegal
Māimouna Guerresi

Iran
Shadi Ghadirian
Navid Azimi Sajadi
Sara Rahbar

Lebanon
Nabil Nahas

Turkey
Baris Saribas

Barakat: The Gift, a group show conceived by the prominent Italian curator and art critic Gaia Serena Simionati, consists of paintings, sculptures, videos, sound installations, photos and works on paper from nine noted contemporary artists from the Middle East and Africa. Dr. Simionati believes that rather than dwelling on the theme of separation, the language of art should communicate in ways that defy verbal, ethnic, religious, gender and age barriers.

The nine artists invited to participate were specifically chosen for their strength and poetic approach to the theme of communication between different cultures, acceptance, identity and transformation. Their work includes spiritual or ironic socio-political content expressed both in verse and textures that resonate with the curator's own inclinations. Many of the works on view are shown for the first time in New York.

The show focuses on the word **Barakat**, meaning **Blessing** in Arabic and in a broader sense it translates to "Gift". **Barakat** acts as a bridge since it has different connotations in the Iranian, North African, Jewish and Arabic cultures. In addition, in France, the term has taken on a new meaning, that one of Luck due to the increasing Arab influence.

In Arabic, *Baraka* stands for "a gift from God" in spiritual terms. It is a gift one can choose to either improve upon or ruin oneself and the world in which one is immersed. The selected artists chose to interpret the idea of an ironic and spiritual gift, but there is the proposition of both acceptance and diversity as well. There is an acknowledgment between various cultures of the Great Gift. This is not a form of oppression; Barakat brings in the end luck and fortune. It leads to a transformation toward a better world, one made of intercultural understanding.

A fully illustrated English/Italian catalogue written by Gaia Serena Simionati with an essay titled YES, WE CAN. INSHALLA! accompanies the exhibition. The catalogue was produced in Verona, Italy by the art publisher Adriano Parise. It includes an interview with Hamdi Attia conducted by the curator Abdellah Karroum.

This exhibit has been made possible in part through the generosity of Paolo Ingegnoli of Leggiuno and the Gallery Olkay Art with the help of Baris Saribas and Selin Maldonado.

For further information please contact the gallery at andrea@stuxgallery.com
and/or Gaia Serena Simionati at gaiart@fastwebnet.it