



'When I opened the gallery, at a young age, I felt like I had lots to explore and I was the new kid on the block'



'Satellite (in the footsteps of the prophets)' Nikolaj Larsen, artist in residence Al Mamun Foundation 2006/7



'The Running Horse, is a metaphor for a movement in perpetual evolution. If you close your eyes, you could see it run free, and I bet it would make you smile'

lots of art fairs worldwide.

Art fairs have been a great success so far, with fantastic sales records and placement of our artworks in museums and institutional spaces. They are a core part of our activity, an engaging way to meet people and collectors and discover new cultures. Art Dubai in March 2012 was a fantastic success and the gallery was exposed to a more international audience. Also there was Gwangju in South Korea that we did in September and Art Taipei in Taiwan for this November. The international audience getting to know us is ever more open and advocates the art we show in the long term. Also our artists are taking part in events such as Nuqat and the JAMM auction at CAP Kuwait.

What are your thoughts about the new MENASA Beirut Art Fair that took place this year? Did it help galleries, do you think?

I think many local galleries took part so it also engages the public. The public seemed more captured by the whole experience, I felt they were more curious and some came to the fair with this urge to buy – its good for the public to experience a fair in their own country.

Do you think it is important for Lebanese galleries, such as The Running Horse, to be active on the international arts scene?

All galleries have different aims and work structure and they are not defined by their provenance. My aim is to establish The Running Horse as an active space and concept, be as active as can be on the international scene and be referenced with the TRH team and artists as a trademark.

Tell us more about your visit to the South Korean Art Fair at Gwangju, this year.

The visitors at Gwangju in were some of the most interesting I've met so far. They were very polite and respectful and whatever their background, they were curious and asked the most pertinent questions. They took the time to take in an artwork, without necessarily judging it at first sight. It's also important to note that South Korea is extremely active in promoting culture and hosts four art fairs a year, and when we were there, attended two biennials (the Gwangju Biennial and the Media Biennial), where all kinds of artists from the Middle East and around the world were shown.

Are art buyers and collectors in Beirut, different from those abroad, would you say?

I wouldn't classify the collectors or art buyers I work with. Art is subjective and we all buy art for different reasons and following different inclinations. The emotional transaction that

occurs when you see an artwork and that leads you to buy it. It's always based on instinct. I guess this applies to most of the people who have been buying from the gallery. A funny experience was when we did Slick, Paris, in 2010. The fair was broadly themed under 'Orient' and this meant that there was an opening for the various exhibitors from North Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

That year, I had exhibited works by three artists. Hiba Kalache, Rasha Kahil and Alfred Tarazi. Respectively - drawings, altered nude photographs and politically-inspired composition prints. The booth created a real buzz in the fair and attracted a lot of people who were drawn to the artworks - enticed by the nudes - but the minute they saw the name of the gallery and its provenance, they couldn't understand how artists from Lebanon could produce those works. It was as if they could only refer to their idea of the 'Middle East' with political works.

What we often encounter with interpretation of Eastern culture in the West. It was really funny to watch at first, but exasperating by the end of the fair. I suppose that the cultural interaction is part of this experience, and the process of confronting cultures! **HBA**

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