

## AGENDA

## LEBANON

## MUSIC

**Naseer Shamma**  
**'Ramadan Nights 2009'**  
Babel Theater  
Through August 30,  
9:30 p.m.

+961 1 744033  
Babel Theater's Ramadan Nights program continues with an evening of soulful music by Iraqi oud virtuoso Naseer Shamma.

**'Darwish'**  
Al Madina Theater  
August 29-30, 9:30 p.m.

+961 753 010/1  
Issa Ghandour and The Madina Band A perform such hits from Sayyed Darwish as including 'Al Shayyaleen,' 'Ya Nas' and 'Zourouni.'

## PHOTOGRAPHY

## Rule of Three

The Running Horse Art Space, Karantina  
Until September 19  
+961 3 710 225  
Ziad Nawfal curates a show from photographer Youmna Habbouch, a dynamic series of triptychs drawing parallels between familiar scenes.

## ART

## 'The Dictators'

FFA Private Bank, BCD  
Until September 30  
+961 1 985 195  
Subtitled "Studies for a monument," this exhibition of paintings by Marwan Sahmarani will be inaugurated with a discussion on the artist's work led by Fadi Mogabgab.

## 'Earth of Endless Secrets'

Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Karantina  
Until October 31, 6 p.m.  
+961 1 397 018  
In conjunction with the Beirut Art Center, the Gallery presents a major solo exhibition for the Beirut-based artist Akram Zaatar. Grappling with the issues that characterize post-war Lebanon, Zaatar's practice involves the collection of testimonies and documents.

## 'Prisoner of War'

Beirut Art Center, Jisr al-Wati  
Until October 3, 8 p.m.  
+961 1 397 018  
Architect Bernard Khoury presents an exhibition that appropriates iconographic works from Lebanese and international artists to question representations of war, identity and memory.

## 'Group Collision'

Aida Cherfan Fine Art, Downtown  
Until September 30  
+961 1 983 111  
A selection of works from the gallery's collection is on show for the summer. Among the local and international artists represented are Flavia Codsì and Puccion Pucci.

## 'Madness of Colors'

Galerie d'Art Surface Libre  
Until September 26  
+961 4 716 600  
Abdallah Dadour's mixed media painting is the product of numerous years' work, which consists of him manually preparing the mixture of pigments, oils and diluents.

## Just a thought

Imitation, if it is not forgery, is a fine thing. It stems from a generous impulse, and a realistic sense of what can and cannot be done.

James Fenton  
(1949-)  
British poet

## REVIEW

## Physical injury within the body politic

'Amir Ali's Medical Profile' makes Azad Art Gallery a synecdoche of three decades

**Bavand Behpoor**  
Special to The Daily Star

TEHRAN: "The exhibition is disgusting," visitors would say, then add, "It is probably the most powerful thing he has ever done." Of course, he hadn't done it. It had been done to him. In certain cases, he had himself exposed to it. To be brief, there was no doubt that "Amir Ali's Medical Profile," Amir Ali Ghasemi's recent exhibition at the Azad Art Gallery, was powerfully disgusting.

Most gallery patrons, this one included, take no pleasure in being disgusted. This patron expects not so much to be "moved" from an artistic encounter but to see a clever "move" on behalf of the artist. There would have been little sense in this exhibition – and

|| The presentation of the works is sincere but careful and well thought out

probably less art – if it were less clever than moving.

For the most part, "Amir Ali's Medical Profile" is simply an objective document of the artist's medical history. This is done with a clinical accuracy that endows the work with a solemn bitterness. No matter how much self-pity is mingled in them, the works – ranging from videos to photographs, to narrative texts and interactive installations – all testify to an "objective" and "undeniable" agony experienced through the processes they portray.

The physical conditions range from "facial irritations caused by being exposed to sev-



The show is an objective document of the artist's medical history.

er air pollution and floating dust," to a picture of a broken left thumb, to a tin of Salbutamol spray, from "nine metal objects in platinum including

one main part with nine holes and eight screws installed on the right leg bone during 1993-4" to "wounds and irritations on the left art caused by reactions

to smoking and consuming hot potato chips, July 16, 2009."

The presentation of the works is sincere but careful and well thought out. The interac-



The artist portrays the excessive vulnerability of this "single" human body.

## Iraqi Picasso forger foiled by poor spelling

BAGHDAD: A Picasso painting that Iraqi police proudly announced they had found this week appears to be a fake, officials at the Louvre in Paris and the National Museum in Kuwait have told AFP.

Officers had said that the painting was stolen during Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, but a source at the museum in the emirate said they had never housed such a work. "The National Museum had no Picasso paintings before the Iraqi invasion," the official said on condition of anonymity.

A tag on the back of the painting, one riddled with misspellings, names the work "The nakede" (sic) and says it was "sold by the louvre to the musum" (sic) of Kuwait 1979, with the words Louvre and Kuwait in lower case. The canvas back also carries a stamp of the Eiffel Tower, saying "Louvre musum" (sic). Investigators believe these suggest the work is a forgery.

An official with the Louvre Museum said it has never had a Picasso in its collection and does not sell its works because they are state property. The official

spoke on condition of anonymity according to museum policy.

"Our collection stopped in the middle of the 19th century," another Louvre official told AFP, "and we never had a Picasso... The Eiffel Tower is not featured on our official stamp."

The London-based Art Loss Registry said it has no record of any paintings missing from the Kuwait National Museum, and no record of this particular painting as missing at all.

The Picasso Museum in Paris and France's National Museum were searching their archives for signs of the painting – which

appears classical in style and lacks any obvious characteristics of the Spanish cubist and sculptor, who died in 1973. The work was recovered between 40 and 90 kilometers south of Baghdad earlier this week.

"We formed a security force to chase the suspect. Then we arrested the man, who had the painting with him," said an official from Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's office during a Wednesday press conference.

The official claimed the painting had been stolen during the invasion of Kuwait and that the suspect, who is being held in jail in Babil Province, had it in his possession since 1998.

"He was trying to sell it to a group who are interested in international paintings, for more than \$450,000," the officer said. "It is worth more than \$10 million, according to the estimations of specialists."

A local judge in Hillah, Aqeel al-Janabi, said Thursday the painting will be sent to Baghdad after an investigation but refused to provide details.

In a video released by the Hillah police, the man detained for trying to sell it, 33-year-old Maitham al-Issawi, said it belonged to his father, who gave it to him before his death. His father had been an army officer who took part in the invasion of Kuwait, which led to the 1991 Gulf war.

In the video, officers hold up the canvas, which has fold marks on the front.

Police have said the painting bears Picasso's signature but would not comment further Thursday. – AFP, AP



A label on the back of the painting describes the work as "The Nakede" (sic) and signed by Picasso.

## Keeping up Ramadan appearance in Old Jerusalem

**Patrick Moser**  
Agence France Presse

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: The sun sets over a city two peoples claim as their capital. Rajai Sandouka lights a fuse and steps away from his rusty 1918 cannon whose blast, according to a ritual that dates back to Ottoman times, marks the end of the day's Ramadan fast.

A 48-year-old actor and puppeteer, Sandouka takes pride in the ceremonial job that has been in his family for about a century and which he hopes his son Nabil, now 24, will one day inherit. "All across the Old City people are happy when they hear the blast and know it is iftar," he says, referring to Ramadan's evening breakfast.

Within seconds of the bang, muezzins can be heard chanting the call to prayer from Jerusalem's minarets. Streets are barren as Muslims sit down for iftar.

Sandouka says he is the last to sit down for the meal – he first has a 15-minute drive home after performing his daily Ramadan duty. "I'm keeping a

tradition alive," he says.

The tradition is steeped in the sands of Egypt where, story has it, Ottoman governor Khosh Qadam accidentally fired a cannon he was given as a gift 200 years ago. The resulting bang echoed through the streets of Cairo.

Sandouka's battered cannon is positioned at the top of a Muslim cemetery nestled next to a bustling East Jerusalem shopping street, overlooking the walls of the Old City.

The ageing military hardware bears a plaque identifying it as a 75mm artillery piece manufactured by Bethlehem Steel, a Pennsylvania company, in 1918.

Jordan donated the gun after the one dating from the Ottoman period, which Sandouka's grandfather used to fire, was retired and transferred to the museum of Islamic art at Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, about 500 meters away.

Sandouka recalls how a man would signal from Al-Aqsa Mosque when it was time to fire the gun. The signal would then be relayed to Sandouka's grandfather by another man standing

atop the Old City walls.

Now, Sandouka simply consults a card that shows the times of sunrise and sunset during Ramadan, and checks his watch.

Eventually, he lights the fuse, sending a rocket into the sky with a thunderous boom that reverberates through the narrow streets. The explosives he uses now consist of tightly packed fireworks shot from a tube attached to the side of the gun.

"It is no longer possible to get gunpowder," says Sandouka. The factory in the West Bank city of Ramallah where he used to buy his gunpowder shut down several years ago.

While the municipality pays him the equivalent of \$530.00 to perform the daily Ramadan ritual, Sandouka says Israel has not made it easy for him to keep alive a tradition that has died off in other cities in Palestine's occupied territories but is still followed in several Arab countries.

"I've been doing this for 30 years. All of a sudden, two years ago, they said I should take explosives training. They think of that after all these years."

tive shelves – filled with objects considered irritating or disgusting to the artist – do not qualify for a kind "presentation." They "perform."

As a kind of self-portraiture, on the surface at least, the work is far from narcissistic. The artist happily engages in a brutal destruction of a social image we normally expect to be "healthy," "lively" and "coherent."

Fortunately, this is not what the work is all about: It does not try to seek compassion as documentary or journalistic photography might do. There is nothing to be done about what is portrayed. There is nobody to blame but life. All that is gathered in this one person could have happened separately to anyone of us and it actually has. It is not a call for help: In certain cases, the artist has voluntarily exposed himself to a risk, turning photographs into documents of performances, which, instead of probing the limits of physical tolerance, portray the excessive vulnerability of "this" single body.

While nothing is fictional here, the narrative texts documenting the events are extremely performative. The artist considers them not merely a part of the exhibition, but its end: "I wanted to write them," the artist said, "so I made up this exhibition."

While attempting in their way of writing to portray the harshness of a situation, these texts carefully limit themselves to the medical history they narrate. They content themselves to say, "It happened and it was so bad."

At the same time, they convey the sense that there is something inhumane about this simple and apparently neutral way of saying it. It is as if the artist/author is addressing a coroner at a court

session where every bit of human attention is exchanged with bits of evidence.

All this would have not been as meaningful if presented in a different location and to a different audience: It would have not been the same exhibition outside Tehran and the Azad Art Gallery, an art gallery famous for its courageous management which dares to host most politically charged contemporary art exhibitions of today's Iranian art scene.

It is in this troubled city, with a boiling political atmosphere that the true meaning of the exhibition unfolds: It is not a work of someone like Paul McCarthy, a master of disgust, humiliating the healthy-wealthy modern subject of a consumerist capitalist society. Quite the contrary, it is an exposition of sheer vulnerability of a human body

|| It would not have been the same exhibition outside Tehran

that only finds the freedom of criticizing infliction of pain upon bodies when it is presented in a greater generality. Thus, it is not an exhibition only about "now" and "here": It is about 30 years of history that the artist and his generation have experienced which has left them alone with a sort of "dada disgust."

It is about a "wrong life that cannot be lived correctly," as Adorno would have put it, which we tried to live.

More information on, and images from, "Amir Ali's Medical Profile" can be found at the artist's personal website: <http://www.amiralighasemi.com/> and [www.azadartgallery.com](http://www.azadartgallery.com).

## Play it forward Record label hosts concert



Photo by Sam Tralleg

BEIRUT: Independent music collective and record label Forward Music kicked off their end of summer celebrations with a stirring performance from Beirut's own Soumaya Baalbaki Thursday night. Offering a heady mix of traditional Lebanese and Egyptian songs refreshed with a twist of tango, Baalbaki charmed a packed Masrah al-Madina Theater in the first of a series of six concerts featuring the Beirut label's recording artists. Dressed in red, Baalbaki looked every inch the starlet as her voice soared and weaved through an August breeze of evocative melodies. Backed by a minimalist accompaniment – oud, bass guitar, accordion, keyboard, percussion, violin – her dusky vocals shone alongside back-lit tango dancers, their shadows cast against a screen in tantalizing anonymity. The summer concert series continues through Ramadan. For more information on the remaining shows at the Madina, visit [www.forwardmusic.net](http://www.forwardmusic.net). – The Daily Star

## HOROSCOPE

Aries (Mar. 21 – April 19)	Taurus (April 20 – May 20)	Gemini (May 21 – June 21)
You are likely to feel overlooked or ignored today. Your efforts are less effective than usual – either push twice as hard or take the day off and wait for improvement. You'll be back in style in no time.	You use charm and humor to get your point across, and your attitude leaves a favorable impression on others. Serious and demanding work should be put off for another time.	You appear to be seeking the unconventional in your style and appearance. Willingness to do the unexpected is exciting to you. Working with groups of children may be in your near future.
Cancer (June 22 – July 22)	Leo (July 23 – Aug. 22)	Virgo (Aug. 23 – Sept. 22)
Look to others for inspiration today, as they may be a fountain of new and original approaches to life and circumstances. Avoid confrontation – their intention is to help.	Trying to stay on top of things at this time may have you stressed. Too-hot pursuit won't bring you any closer than sitting back and diving back into the fray refreshed with a new vision.	This is an excellent time for home improvements, particularly those which enhance your living space. Decorate or rearrange furniture in order to create a more harmonious arrangement.
Libra (Sept. 23 – Oct. 22)	Scorpio (Oct. 23 – Nov. 21)	Sagittarius (Nov. 22 – Dec. 21)
You find yourself blurting out some inopportune remarks to people who have been supporting you recently. It's a good idea to stick to home-ground when evening approaches.	A significant conversation, learning from another person, and getting your own ideas across to others is likely. Communication of all kinds plays an important role in your life now.	You are optimistic and possibly extravagant now. You are less cautious than usual, feeling that nothing can go wrong. The tendency to overindulge or go to excesses is exaggerated at this time.
Capricorn (Dec. 22 – Jan. 19)	Aquarius (Jan. 20 – Feb. 18)	Pisces (Feb. 19 – Mar. 20)
Welcome and even unwelcome surprises could be around the corner, so pay attention. Those footsteps you hear might bring appreciated aid or avoidable trouble.	This is the ideal time to contact people who mean a lot to you, but whom you haven't seen for a long time. Some resentment needs to be cleared up and apologies may need to be made.	This is a good time to spread your wings – perhaps travel, vacation, or get involved in something new. You find yourself easily socializing and meeting new people. You are in a relaxed mood.