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MAY 3, 2023

# KATYA A. TRABOULSI AT LEILA HELLER GALLERY

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# KATYA A. TRABOULSI AT LEILA HELLER GALLERY

Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai, UAE, announces the solo exhibition of multimedia artist Katya A. Traboulsi titled 'Perpetual Identities', which started on April 26th, 2023. Through her artwork, Katya explores identity as an indestructible force that rebounds inevitably, even during times of war. Her inspiration for the project stemmed from receiving an empty mortar shell sleeve as a birthday gift during the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, which she kept on her shelf without much thought. This object, responsible for countless deaths, had become a trophy celebrating the courage of fighters or the defeat of enemies. In 2014, Katya was moved to reflect on the shell and its morbid past and sought to create an installation project that would give it a new life in service of life itself.



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The physical and spiritual core of the 'Perpetual Identities' exhibition is the depiction of the shell adorned in 46 different symbolic cultural executions. Each of the shells is handmade and titled with a country's name, with most being produced by artisans from their respective countries. The dimensions of the shells are 75 x 20 cm, and their bases and tops are made of brass and/or iron. Despite being one of the most violent symbols of destruction in history, the shell now becomes a symbol of renewal and knowledge exchange. Its shape is reminiscent of an arrow that carries knowledge and civilization into the territory of the "Other." The 46 shells are a melting pot of designs, themes, and skills, bearing the glory of every person and inviting them to join in the universal sentiment of humanity.

Katya's artwork is inspired by historical events, and the artisans who participated in the project serve as a perpetual memory of that history, glorifying the heritage of their identity through their artistic talent. The mortar, an object of death forgotten on a dusty shelf, is now transfigured into a work of art that carries universal and immortal messages. Additionally, the exhibition will feature Katya's unique collection of painted rear doors of trucks titled 'Rej3a ya mama,' which serves as a reminder of the impatient wait for those who had to leave their homeland to return. Each truck tells a story of life, beliefs, and love through the graphics and text on its rear door. This project pays homage to the city of Tripoli in Lebanon and their truck drivers who connect regions and lives without distinction for religious or political differences.

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Iran, 2016, Hand painted wood, Brass base and top, Edition 5/6, 73 x 21 x 21 cm

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

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India, 2016, Hand carved alabaster, stone,  
Brass base and top, Edition 6/6, 76 x 21 x  
21 cm

Born in 1960, Katya A. Traboulsi is a Beirut based multimedia artist whose practice is characterized by the emotional intensity with which she confronts the effects of the Lebanese civil war. Both her painting and sculptural works are characterized by her bold use of colour, which disrupts the viewer's expectations of the dark subject matter they are confronted with. Her solo exhibition *Perpetual Identities* (2018) held at the Salah Barakat Gallery saw presented 46 handcrafted replicas of Lebanese war bomb shells adorned with colourful patterns, beads and sculpted forms, thus transforming these destructive military objects into beautiful, ornate vessels.

In 2013, Traboulsi published *Generation War*, a body of work that traces the story of photojournalists who witnessed the civil war during the 80s – an homage to their efforts and a political project that seeks to record the country's complex histories. Traboulsi lived and worked in Dubai from 1989 till 2016 before returning to her native Beirut. Her work has been exhibited internationally since 1986 in Paris, London, Dubai, Kuwait, North America, the Algerian museum of Modern Art and the International Armory Show in NYC.

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**Location:** Leila Heller Gallery

Duration: April 26 – September 1, 2023

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MAY 3, 2023

FAISAL SAMRA

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# FAISAL SAMRA

Long considered one of the Arab Gulf's foremost artists and a pioneer of conceptual art in the Middle East, Bahraini-born, Saudi national Faisal Samra incorporates digital photography, painting, sculpture, video, and performance in a creative repertoire that explores existentialist themes with the figure at its center. Since the mid-1970s, Samra has tested the conventional functions of media through meticulously structured works with experimentation and research as the guiding principles of his artistic practice. As his oeuvre has progressed and defied traditional modes of representation, he has rebelled against his own understanding of art, transitioning into new works that maintain three essential concepts: spontaneity, dynamism, and secrecy.

In 1974, Samra emigrated from Saudi Arabia to France to attend the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (ENSBA), Paris. While studying at the esteemed institution, he immersed himself in the work of modern and contemporary European artists. This initial period of Samra's development was distinguished by expressionist drawings and paintings that investigate the body in motion or at rest, establishing a conceptual basis for later videos, photographs, and installations, while also demonstrating his initial rejection of the prescribed forms of figuration.

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## Installation Shots

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Selections Viewing Rooms presents carefully curated online art shows aiming not only to shed light on contemporary art executed by living artists, but also for viewers to buy contemporary fine art, prints & multiples, photography, street art and collectibles.

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Cultural Narratives foundation is an extensive collection that is travelling the world by leading established and emerging talents aiming to reflect the culture of the region in their works.

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MOSQUITO EFFECTS BY MAHMOUD C

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Meem Gallery presents Mosquito Effects, new works of the artist Mahmoud Obaidi. Speaking truth to power has never l

Mahmoud Obaidi has shied away from in his work. The artist to the notion of injustice

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**MAY 2023**

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