

## AGENDA

## LEBANON

## FILM

## 'Wild at Heart'

*The Garten, BIEL*

Sept. 21, 8 p.m.

01-204-080

Screened as part of Night Riders, Metropolis' open-air screening series of road movies, David Lynch's feature tells the tale of Lula's psychopathic mother — who goes mad at the thought of her daughter (Laura Dern) being with former convict Sailor (Nicolas Cage). Ignoring Sailor's probation, they set out for California, where they encounter all sorts of wildlife.

## PERFORMANCE

## 'Hishik Bishik'

*Metro al-Madina, Saroulla Building, -2, Hamra Street*

Sept. 12, 9:30 p.m.

<http://metromadina.com>

This immensely popular homage to the cabaret culture of early 20th-century Egypt celebrates Arab femininity, through the dance of Randa Makhoul and the vocal work of Yasmina Fayed and Lina Sahab.

## 'One Lebanon, United for Tomorrow'

*Martyrs' Square, Downtown*

Sept. 21, time to be announced

[www.facebook.com/onelebanon.unitedfortomorrow](http://www.facebook.com/onelebanon.unitedfortomorrow)

Created by Lebanese soprano Tania Kassis and British Ambassador to Lebanon Tom Fletcher, this event will gather many local artists in order to increase awareness of Peace and focusing on the importance of unity.

## DANCE

## 'Flamenco Workshop'

*Dawar al-SHAMS, Sami al-Solh Avenue, Tayyouneh*

Sept 14-15, 10 a.m.

01-391-290

In this session, renowned flamenco Yalda Younes will explain the rules of the "palo" style of dance. Registration free.

## ART

## 'Untitled, a Group Show'

*Galerie Tanit Beyrouth, facing EDL, Mar Mikhael*

Until Sept. 22

70-910-523

This collective exhibition displays works by such renowned photographers as Fouad EIKoury, William Eggleston, Nadim Asfar and Houa Kassar.

## 'Urban Zoo'

*Ayyam Gallery, Beirut Tower, BCD*

Until Oct. 10

01-374-450

The sculptures by Senegal-born Lebanese artist Nadim Karam are renowned for humanizing ferocious urban spaces.

## 'Eugenes'

*ArtLab Gallery, 1804 Rmeil Building, Gemmayzeh*

Until Sept. 28

03-244-577

Paintings by French artist Jean Freddy Rouy form this exhibition, showing the artist's singular characters and inspiration.

## Etel Adnan

*Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Karantina, Tannous Building*

Until Oct. 26

01-566- 550

With canvases ranging between 25 x 30 cm and 40 x 50 cm, Etel Adnan's paintings are almost always small in size, yet her direct, straightforward brush strokes and lucid swaths of color make her devoted investigation of painting truly fresh, poetic and unpretentious.

## JUST A THOUGHT

Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.

Scott Adams

(1957-)

U.S. artist and author

## INTERVIEW

## Dancing, smoking, kissing in Beirut

Raed Yassin's exhibition of tapestries makes for an intimate solo debut

By Jim Quilty

The Daily Star

**B**EIRUT: Raed Yassin and his family have lost a lot of houses over the years. Among the objects that have gone missing in the uprooting and re-rooting, and the memories attached to them, are various family photographs.

This is the stuff of Yassin's "Dancing, Smoking, Kissing," which opens at the Running Horse Art space Thursday evening. The artist's first solo exhibition in Beirut is comprised of 24 new works.

The media are factory-produced silk fabrics — the often-floral-patterned material used to manufacture ornate curtains and throw cushions — upon which vistas have been machine-stitched in silk thread. This second element is the artist's reconstruction of lost family photos.

At times there is a striking complementarity between individual media and the works printed on them.

A fabric with a colorful sine-curve pattern offers a good background for "By the sea," 60 x 90 cm. Used as the medium for a remembered photo of a party, a dense floral print brings a psychedelic air to "Dancing," 85 x 85 cm. The colorful dots on another fabric is matching motif for "Mama with balloons," 100 x 100 cm.

At times the stitching of recollected photos are thinner than that of the fabric beneath, giving an appropriately ghostly quality to the pieces.

A week before the show's opening, Yassin was in the process of hanging the works when he sat down to chat about his first solo exhibition in his hometown.

That day most Beirutis were wondering when the U.S. military would launch an airstrike on Syria, a distracting prospect.

"Remembering is interesting for me," he says. "I'm less interested in collective memory ... than in the collective unconscious. These are universal photos. If you're from any place in the world ... you could feel they are photos of your own family."

"Remembering is not always an absolute thing. The interesting part is [how the work is] not only built on memory but on fiction, imagination ... There's a thin line between remembering, fiction and imagination."

"It's really hard somehow to reconstruct these moments ... Maybe the choice of these fabrics came from trying to remember. How did our old house in Beirut look, before my father was killed in it? Before it was burned? That's also part of the remembering."

"There are stories my parents told me of some lost photos of them that I never saw. Sometimes I try to reconstruct those photos from their stories."

"With Imad Hamdy and his Twin Brother," 75 x 110, is one such work, depicting Yassin's parents with the famous Egyptian actor.

"I always heard this story from my mom that they were on the boat to Alexandria and there was Imad Hamdy and his twin brother." He recalls. "This photo was taken, but it was lost when they lost their house. That [was] before I was even born, so it's a constant process."

"This reconstruction, it's a way not to rewrite the family history but to rewrite some intimate feelings, attachments," he says.

Yassin laughs. "The funny thing is



"Dancing," 2013, silk thread embroidery on embroidered silk cloth, 85 x 85 cm.

that I don't remember how the idea for this project came to me."

These machine-crafted works are reproducible, a feature they share with the photos that inspired them.

Each work, Yassin says, is an "edition of embroidery, not the background fabric. I cannot guarantee the same fabric but I can guarantee the same embroidery because each is printed from computer files."

"I'm using the term 'edition' because of the connection to photography. All these works are based on lost family photos, and I want to retain [that] connection."

"The cloth is very good quality ... I wanted something that people could connect to, that they might see would fit with their furniture."

He grins. "I'm trying to sell more. If somebody sees something and says, 'Okay that goes with my curtains, so maybe I'll buy this thing,' I won't mind."

"It's the first time I work in this medium. I'm really interested in the fabric, the craftsmanship ... Both [my father and mother] were tailors, so I was also attached to this medium."

"I love floral patterns," he says, grinning briefly. "Many of my shirts have floral patterns."

Yassin's work runs the formal gamut from music and performance to video and visual art, making it difficult to compare individual projects. Yet the pieces in "Dancing, Smoking, Kissing" are reminiscent of one recent series, the vases he created for "China" — exhibited a couple of years back at ArtDubai's "Spectral Imprints" show.

These seven vases depict set battles from the Lebanese Civil War, depicted in a manner reminiscent of Persian miniatures and reproduced in porcelain.

The tapestries in "Dancing smoking kissing" also depict scenes from the artist's formative years. Yet any off-hand comparisons between the two



"In Baalbek," 2013, silk thread embroidery on embroidered silk cloth, 110 x 85 cm.

series are undermined by subtle differences between them.

Before "China" was unveiled, Yassin explained that his intention with this work was to take "the war" — which was repeated cultural reproduction has sacralized — and reduce it to household decoration.

At the core of "China" is a delicious irony. The seven works were expensive to make, but only because they are one-of-a-kind objects; in the world of Chinese porcelain, their manufacture is actually that of cheap mass production. Were the demand great enough, Chinese mass production would make

them dirt cheap.

The "sacred," apparently precious, is made mundane, throwaway.

The fabrics used for "Dancing, Smoking, Kissing" are machine-produced. The fact that they depict personal memories naturally makes the vistas stitched into them intimate, rather than ironic. It is as if the ghostly images of the artist's childhood have been impressed upon the media.

This impression is reinforced by the fact that it is not the actual "document" of these events that have been reproduced, but rather the artist's recollections of the photographs.

Yassin is reticent about comparisons. "Maybe let's say it's coincidence," he says. "In 'China' I was really insisting on doing work that looks decorative. It was not like that here."

"Earlier this year I did ['The Impossible Works of Raed Yassin'], which was totally immaterial. So I was bouncing between doing something very materialistic, manufactured, and the immaterial."

"But the new work also had an immaterial point of departure, connected not only to 'China' but also to 'Impossible Works,' not because the tapestries are impossible but because ... I wanted people to imagine the past works. This time instead of the audience imagining, I'm imagining. It's like remembering, mixing the imagination with memory, all this to produce this work."

"So somehow, if the medium is very different — if it's a porcelain vase or just an idea, or fabric — I think it is somehow connected."

The attrition of loss is, for Yassin, an ongoing process. "These photos were lost in different stages," he explains. "It's so easy to lose stuff in Lebanon."

"I'm not saying that Lebanon ... is very special. Maybe I used to believe that there is something interesting in [Lebanon's] production — in the art and cultural responses to 'Lebanon' as an absolute state of mind."

"I don't believe this anymore. It's becoming more and more ridiculous, this 'absolute state of mind,'" he laughs again, "as a country and as a situation."

"I think we are in the worst times of this place ... I don't think that — as everybody was saying — the problem is with our surroundings. I don't believe anymore that because there's Israel and Syria," he chuckles, "the worst neighbors to have. Now I believe there's something in the DNA of Lebanese people that's really fucked up."

"I really don't know," he laughs. "It's serious actually. It's sad. I'm seeing myself with no other options. If I have an easy option, if I have a second passport, I'd be living someplace else. I know that's possible."

"But I don't think sometimes that you can afford this. Also, when you get older and older, chances get less and less. I don't know ... Can it get worse than this? Yes, of course. And when it does get worse than this, then we might be forced to leave. That's another matter."

"Why am I doing this [exhibition], now? Why didn't I just cancel and send the woks to my gallery in Athens, just ship them and do the solo there? Because I think it's too easy to surrender. Now it's a good time for remembering," Yassin says.

"It's also ... something to do with survival maybe? I literally don't know how to do any other thing," he chuckles again.

"Maybe that's problematic."

"Dancing, Smoking, Kissing" is up at the Running Horse Art space exhibition is up until Oct. 25. For more information see <http://therunninghorseart.com> or ring 01-562-778.

## From Cheney to Haldeman: Documentary brings together men behind U.S. presidents

By David Bauder

Associated Press

**NEW YORK:** The only man to have held both jobs says in a Discovery documentary airing Wednesday that the White House chief of staff generally has more power than the vice president.

"I was speaking from an historical perspective," Dick Cheney is quick to clarify in an interview. Cheney, chief of staff under President Gerald Ford, was widely perceived as an involved and influential vice president under George W. Bush.

Discovery's film, "The Presidents' Gatekeepers," airs for two hours each Wednesday and Thursday. Dozens of little-known stories about historical events big and small are told while outlining the duties of the appointed official most responsible for seeing whether a president's agenda succeeds or fails.

Joshua Bolten and Rahm Emanuel discuss the terrorist threat that kept them in the White House situation room as Barack Obama was inaugurated to replace Bush. Assistant Chief Larry Higy reveals that the voice-activated tape recorder that led to Richard Nixon's downfall was installed because the president was too clumsy to figure out a manual one.

Lyndon Johnson's fear that he wouldn't survive a second term because of his health was a big factor in his deci-

sion not to run in 1968, Marvin Watson explains; Johnson died two days after a second term would have ended.

All 20 of the presidential aides sought for interviews agreed to participate, along with former presidents Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush, said filmmaker Jules Naudet, who made the documentary with his brother Gedeon and executive producer Chris Whipple.

They enlisted former Ford aide David Hume Kennerly to win the cooperation of Cheney, who sat for seven hours of interviews, and his one-time boss Donald Rumsfeld. When former Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush aide James Baker, considered the "gold standard" of modern chiefs, became the third interview, the rest fell into place.

"The chiefs love the fact that for the first time, it's about them and not about their presidents," Naudet said.

To a man, they agreed it was a meat grinder of a job, with constant pressure and endless hours. The typical chief lasts less than two years. It's miserable to go through, Emanuel concludes, but every chief would do it again if asked.

Before being brought down like his boss in Watergate, H.R. Haldeman set the modern standard for a strong, centralized authority at the White House, said Cheney, a low-level Nixon aide then in his 20s.

"He spent a lot of time thinking about it," Cheney said, "and quite frankly I

think most of us subsequently, without ever saying that's what we were doing, sort of gravitated to [his] model."

Ford initially supported a "spokes in a wheel" management theory where several aides report directly to the president. That may have worked in a congressional office, but not in the White House, Cheney said. Somebody needs to set the president's schedule, make certain he sees all the necessary correspondence and has everything on hand when a decision is to be made.

"You have to have somebody disciplined running the calendar because the president's time is the most valuable thing there is," Cheney said. "If you don't have anybody in charge, none of that happens."

Then there are the duties no one can anticipate: When Ford lost his voice in the last days of the 1976 campaign, it was Cheney who had to read the president's concession over the phone to Carter the morning after the election.

Ford later poked fun at Cheney for accepting the vice presidential nomination, saying his time in that job under Nixon was the worst eight months of his life. Cheney said Bush promised "that he wanted me to be an important part of the team, not just doing funerals and fundraisers. He kept his word."

The chiefs share a bond that often transcends politics. Bolten invited many of the former chiefs, including Cheney, to an advisory lunch with Emanuel



Cheney was widely perceived as an influential vice president under Bush.

shortly before Obama took office.

The documentary doesn't follow chronological order, and it darts between serious stories like Andrew Card's recollections of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and George H.W. Bush's mock "award" to aides who fell asleep in meetings. The idea was to reach beyond political junkies, said Whipple, a former ABC News producer who interviewed each chief.

"What we planned to do from the very beginning was to imagine that the chiefs of staff were there with you, sharing a cup of coffee or a glass of

wine and telling you their stories," Naudet said. "We didn't want it to feel like a traditional documentary."

The Naudet brothers are known best for "9/11," the gripping documentary they made after unexpectedly finding themselves in the center of the attacks while filming a piece on firefighters that morning.

It feels a little odd to them that "The Presidents' Gatekeepers" premieres exactly 12 years after that awful day.

"I feel like I'm always brought back to that date," he said. "It always follows us around."