



“While our practice has been shaped by the cultural production of the region in the '60s and '70s, it takes equal inspiration from musical practices that have existed and have been evolving for hundreds of years in the Middle East, and from a rich literary and poetic tradition that has a very long history of being written and performed. For two of our current projects, for example, we have been reading a 10th-century text about music by a group from Basra and Baghdad that went by the name of Ikhwān al-Safā'. We find it very hard to think of contemporary practices in isolation from a living history, and we are definitely working on the resonance and disjuncture between unfolding layers of time and experience.

We have been struggling for quite some time with the fact that, as a “Palestinian” or “Arab” artist, one is often expected to fulfill and perform a certain role. We have actively resisted this categorization, first and foremost in the very nature of the work we are producing, but also by refusing participation in frameworks where our concerns seemed to be secondary to where we are from. The precariousness that we experience in Palestine is the product of the oppressive global machinery of power, and is equally felt everywhere from Ferguson to Mexico City to Athens. We are more interested in stereotypes in the sense of how we view ourselves, as opposed to correcting or challenging the stereotypes the so-called ‘West’ have of us. It’s more a matter of projecting a different reading of the self, and the power one has in narrating their own story.”

**Tashweesh** is an audiovisual performance group from Ramallah, Palestine, which brings together installation artists Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme and musician Muqata'a.



“I've always been fascinated with the imaginative thinkers of the Islamic Golden Age (8th–13th century). Many of them were philosophers who regularly crossed all kinds of disciplinary boundaries, from poetry and music to medicine, chemistry and mathematics. In this way, they played the role of true ‘Renaissance men,’ having no limitations placed on their respective fields of interest. I have always wanted to emulate their liberated mode of thinking and free conception of ideas. For me, there is no contrast between how I make art or music—they come from the same source.

I regard pop culture as an important test subject through which to study human behavior. Within its superficial exterior, pop culture encapsulates very deep and complex connections to politics, economy and social production. We can trace how societies and their people are developing through its lens. For example, in the '60s and '70s, a lot of ideas that were initially imported from the West started mutating locally, creating a very interesting metamorphosis of ideas and culture. Technology is another interesting indicator: in times of conflict, regimes create and use it to gain more control, but more often than not, those same technologies backfire and start being used by those who oppose them. I find this boomerang effect very interesting. People in the Arab world misuse and abuse new technologies in a way that allows them to create new platforms, even artistically. After all, our role as artists is to reflect on the present while looking back at the past and projecting into the future simultaneously.”

**Raed Yassin** (Lebanese, b. 1979) is an artist and musician who lives and works in Beirut.

“My work is semi-autobiographic in nature. I would say that the major thread is a pervasive sense of narrative and the construction of opposing and/or tribal identities. For instance, *Genre-Specific Xperience* (2011) examined genre as tribe. *Asiatisch* (2014) was partly about the construction and dissemination of an oppositional and dimensionless Chinese identity from an ongoing colonial Western perspective. And so on.

Being a woman from the Gulf, I came across a few people who've referred to my music as sounding ‘arabesque,’ which I find amusing at best, as seldom have I taken more than a shallow toe dip in that pond. On the other hand, as far as gender goes, I've received a great volume of messages over the years addressing me as ‘man,’ ‘dude,’ ‘bro.’ There's always this presumption that music producer = male. That's why I chose to write music under my real name, in an attempt to highlight that I'm a woman. But even that doesn't work anymore, as I found out recently that a male producer has been using the pseudonym Fatima Yamaha. So I should probably start using a male pseudonym instead to complete the ‘dude’ picture. Might even get paid more, who knows?”

**Fatima Al-Qadiri** (b. 1981) is a Kuwaiti musician and visual artist who lives and works in Berlin.

