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# Mizna

Prose, Poetry, and Art Exploring Arab America

A man's profile is shown in a three-quarter view, looking towards the left. He has a mustache and is wearing a necklace made of dark, dried, cup-shaped objects, possibly dried flowers or leaves, which are layered and draped around his neck and shoulder. The background is plain white.

EATING THE  
OTHER

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VISUAL ART BY

## Raed Yassin

Raed Yassin graduated from the theatre department of the Institute of Fine Arts in Beirut in 2003. He is a visual artist, curator, and musician (double bass, tapes, turntables, and electronic music). The artist has exhibited and performed his work across Europe, the Middle East, the United States, and Japan. He was awarded the Fidus Prize for *The Best of Sammy Clark* at Beirut Art Centre's Exposure (2009) exhibition and the Abraaj Capital Art Prize (2012). Born in 1979 in Lebanon, Yassin currently lives and works in Beirut.

*My work is an examination of my own personal narratives, as well as those of the collective history that surrounds me, through the lens of consumer culture and mass production.*

*For a long time, I have been an aficionado and collector of all things "pop" in the Middle East, especially Egyptian commercial movies and popular music. To my mind, these works represent the collective cinematic and musical memory shared by the majority of people in the Middle East—and subsequently the nostalgia evoked by the latter—and in turn they lead me to the re-interpretation of sensibilities and memories on a local level.*

*It is this approach—reaching for private experience through the collective, public cultural fare—that best characterizes my work over the last decade. I am also concerned to a large extent with the materiality of the media used, more specifically its time-based qualities, and as such I am eager to use its glitches as part of both the aesthetics and concept of the work.*

*My recent works walk a thin line between historical truth and fiction, and trace the effects of subjectivity on the individual and collective level. Increasingly, I have come to insert myself into the work, both as a performer and as one of the commodities of consumer culture and the contemporary art world. My person and my persona, as well as various elements of my personal life, serve to create a life-story, into which I weave external elements derived from pop stars such as Sammy Clark and Mahmoud Yassin.*

*The focus on nostalgia is part of my intention to create a bridge that allows for a different understanding of the Middle Eastern region, as viewed through the prism of popular culture. The absorption and re-integration of images and ingredients from popular culture constitute my material of choice. My aim is to create a language that shifts back and forth between the personal and the popular, in order to create an alternative reality that links the realms of fact and fabrication.*

—Raed Yassin

*Self-Portraits with Foreign Fruits and Vegetables* (2011) is Yassin's attempt to express the futility and melancholy associated with forcing oneself to assimilate to a culture other than one's own. In an array of varying postures and positions, the artist poses naked with a different fruit or vegetable. These fruits and vegetables are, in his eyes, the success story of his dilemma. For despite their foreign origins, they have managed to fit into the European diet and go unnoticed at the dinner table. They are the successfully naturalized foreigner, the role model that the artist seeks to become.

The photographs that appear on the following pages appeared in *The Politics of Food* and are selections from Raed Yassin's 2011 series *Self-Portraits with Foreign Fruits and Vegetables*. They are archival inkjet prints on archival fine art paper. They are reproduced here courtesy of Kalfayan Galleries.



