

LETTERS

Khatt power: Keepin



The cover of Basma Hamdy's book

Egypt's visual landscape is a vital source of expression of popular Arabic culture. Designer Basma Hamdy teamed up with photographer Noha Zayed to document the country's calligraphic landscape in a book

Arab News | Cairo

“Calligraphy is so strongly associated with Islam. It's part of our culture. And we take pride in the Arabic language — not only from oral culture, but also from the written script. It's so rich, but it's concise. It's complex and simple at the same time. And there's a beauty to the script that I think is unique. Even someone who can't read Arabic can appreciate how it looks. And Arabs take pride in that.”

Basma Hamdy is an Egyptian designer, author and researcher. Here, she explains why she got involved in her latest book, “Khatt: Egypt's Calligraphic Landscape,” which was released last year. In it, Hamdy and photographer Noha Zayed explored the ways in which Arabic lettering (khatt) — whether it be artistic calligraphy or spontaneous urban scrawl — continues to thrive in Egypt. And why that is important. “We're losing that (pride),” she continues. “I struggle with my own kids, even. They don't want to learn to speak and write Arabic. It's more ‘cool’ to speak English.”

Basma Hamdy and photographer Noha Zayed explored the ways in which Arabic lettering (khatt) — whether it be artistic calligraphy or spontaneous urban scrawl — continues to thrive in Egypt. And why that is important



A photo titled

But the more we're Hamdy i khatt — “I see that dig over from her home: “Arabic c Egypt, bac up when th written by the billboa digitized a

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Emirati artist Farah Al-Qasimi's

Farah Al-Qasimi's photographs subvert ingrained expectations of how images are constructed and conventions from various sources, including documentary photography ar

Arab News | Dubai

Emirati artist Farah Al-Qasimi's first solo exhibition at a US institution opened on July 30 at the MIT List Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Working in photography, video, and performance, Al-Qasimi's work explores themes of gender, nationality and class. Her photographs subvert ingrained expectations of how images are constructed and understood and she is known for borrowing conventions from various sources, including documentary photography and Renaissance paintings.

Camouflage and concealment play a central role in the artist's work. In a recent series of portraits, Al-Qasimi obscures the faces of her subjects while capturing intimate images, despite the lack of a clear, engaging face. Various compositional strategies hide identifying features — behind plumes of smoke, a well-placed hand, or sumptuously patterned textiles and drapery — while she still manages to accentuate the opulent interiors her subjects inhabit.

Alongside a group of recent photographs, the exhibition will include a screening of Al-Qasimi's new film, “Um Al Naar (Mother of Fire)” (2019), which was recently un-



Farah Al-Qasimi's photo titled 'Napping on Carpet' (2016)

veiled at Art Basel Statemen The 40-minute video is s television documentary foll ghost-like entity in Islamic ering a confessional, reality logue, the jinn appears on ca patterned sheet. The video thoughts on centuries of I British colonial meddling in emirate of Ras Al-Khaimah

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