

# Zena el Khalil

Zena el Khalil, born year of the Dragon, is a visual artist, writer and cultural activist based in Beirut, Lebanon. She has lived in Lagos, London and New York. Her work includes mixed media paintings, installations and performance and is a by-product of political and economic turmoil; focusing on issues of violence, gender and their place in our bubblegum culture. She has exhibited in the United States, Europe, Africa, Japan and the Middle East.

While living in NYC, Zena co-founded xanadu\*, an art collective dedicated to promoting emerging Arab and under-represented artists as a direct response to the 9-11 attacks which she witnessed. Currently, xanadu\* is based in Beirut where Zena is focused on curating cultural events and publishing poets and comic book artists.

During the 2006 invasion of Lebanon, Zena was one of the first largely followed Middle Eastern bloggers; her writings published in the international press, including the BBC, CNN, and Der Spiegel. The entire Guardian G2 supplement in July was dedicated to her blog, Beirut Update.

In 2008, she was invited to speak at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo and soon after, completed her memoir, *Beirut, I Love You*, now translated in several languages. Her publishers include The New York Review of Books and Saqi Books and Publishers Weekly gave her book a starred review.

In an attempt to spread peace, Zena is often seen running around Beirut in a big pink wedding dress. In 2012, Zena was made a TED Fellow and has since given a few TED and TEDx talks. You can follow her work on [www.zenaekhalil.com](http://www.zenaekhalil.com)

## EDUCATION

- 2002 MFA Fine Arts, School of Visual Arts. New York, NY, USA
- 1999 BGD Graphic Design, The American University of Beirut. Beirut, Lebanon

## SOLO EXHIBITION

- 2014 *from Mirfaq to Vega*, Giorgio Persano Gallery, Turin, Italy
- 2012 *It's Not The End of The World: Beirut, I Love You: A Work in Progress*, Fondazione Merz, Turin
- 2010 *Ou Ali Mama3ou Khabar*, Galerie Tanit, Munich, Germany  
*Ou Ali Mama3ou Khabar*, Espace Kettaneh Kunigk, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2009 *A'salam Aleykum!*, Paratissima 5.2 2009, The Waldensian Church of Turin, Turin, Italy  
*A'salam Aleykum!*, Meteorite in Giardino, Fondazione Merz, Torino, Italy
- 2008 *Maybe, One Day Beirut Will Love Me Back*, The Flawless Gallery, Berardi-Sagharchi Projects, London, England  
*But, I Can't Let Go*, Galerie Tanit, Munich, Germany
- 2006 *I Love You*, Espace SD, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2004 *Wahad Areese, Please*, Le Laboratoire, Espace SD, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2003 *Of Love and War*, Signature Art Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria
- 1999 *Three Druze Women*, Beirut, Lebanon

## SOLO PUBLIC EXHIBITION

- 2004 *Wahad Areese, Please: Still Looking*, Site-specific public performance, Beirut International Marathon, Beirut, Lebanon  
*Wahad Areese, Please: Still Looking*, Site-specific public performance, Hamra Festival, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2003 *Wahad Areese, Please*, Site-specific public performance, Beirut International Marathon, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1997 *Leolo*, installation, Beirut Film Festival, Beirut, Lebanon

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *New Positions*, Art Cologne 2015, Germany  
*Fine Acts*, TED, Vancouver, Canada  
*Art Love New York*, New York, NY. Curated by Nino Azzi
- 2014 *Artissima*, Giorgio Persano Gallery, Turin Art Fair, Italy  
*In Transit*, Brooklyn, New York, NY. Curated by Hala A. Malak

- 2013 *ART 13*, Olympia Grand Hall, London UK  
*Beyond the Cloth: The Kaffiye Project*, White Box, New York, NY  
*TED Fellows Retreat*, Vancouver, Canada
- 2012 *Arab Express*, Mori Art Museum, Japan  
*Le Corps Decouvert*, Institute du Monde Arabe, Paris, France  
*Art Is The Answer*, Villa Empain & the Boghossian Foundation, Brussels  
*Sovereign Asian Art Prize*, Singapore & Hong Kong
- 2011 *Subtitled; With Narratives From Lebanon*; Royal College of Art. Curated by Juliana Khalaf. London  
*Beirut ReBirth*. Beirut Exhibition Center. Lebanon. Curated by Janine Maamari. *Freedom To Create Prize*. Ana Tzarev Gallery, NYC. Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai. National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo.  
*Strike Oppose*. Barajeel Art Foundation. Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE  
*Political Patterns*, ifa-Gallery (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen), Berlin and Stuttgart, Germany. Curated by Sabine Vogel.
- 2010 *Zoom Contemporary Art Fair*. Miami, USA.  
*Freedom To Create Prize*. Cairo Opera House, Egypt.  
*All About Beirut*, White Box, Munich, Germany. Curated by Joy Mardini  
*About The City*, Castello di San Michele, Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy. Curated by Daniele Ratti
- 2009 *Golden Gates*, 46 Rue de Sévigné, Paris, France. Curated by Daniela da Prato  
*Beirut Live*, Vibe Live, London, UK  
*Hopes And Doubts*, Fondazione Merz, Torino, Italy. Curated by Costantino D'Orazio
- 2008 *Hopes And Doubts*, The Dome, Beirut, Lebanon. Curated by Costantino D'Orazio  
*Together*, National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan
- 2007 *The Resilient Landscape*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Paddington, Australia  
*More Light Than Death Could Bear*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon  
*Red Cross Royal Gala Ball*, The Old Billingsgate, London  
*Ana 'Njassa Al Fan (I Pear Art)*, Dialogpunkt Deutsch Tripoli, Lebanon
- 2006 *Pure Pop*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon  
*Re\*Birth Lebanon*, Dazed and Confused Gallery, London  
*I Love Beirut*, Adam Street Private Members Club, London  
*Nafas Beirut*, Espace SD, Beirut, Lebanon  
*Shu Tabkha, Ya Mara? (What's Cookin', Woman?)*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon  
*Imagining Ourselves*, International Museum of Women, San Francisco, USA
- 2005 *He Rests, He Has Traveled*, Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, UAE
- 2004 *Garbagilla*, Sculpture collaboration with Greenpeace, Martyr's Square, Beirut, Lebanon  
*First Annual Comic and Animation Forum*, American University of Beirut, Lebanon *Introducing Palestine*, AFSC Friends House, Pasadena, California, USA  
*The Wedding Project*, 65 Hope Street Gallery, Brooklyn, NY  
*See Williamsburg*, 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Central Williamsburg Arts Festival, Brooklyn, NY  
*Eat Me*, 65 Hope Street Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2003 *24e Salon d'Automne*, Musee Sursock, Beirut, Lebanon  
*The Vending Project*, ArtLink-Yanaka, Tokyo, Japan  
*Bayshore Festival of the Arts*, The Firehouse Gallery, Bayshore, NY  
*Open Studio NY 11211*, Brooklyn, NY  
*Falastine: Artists Against Occupation*, Ofuroya: Contemporary Art Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2002 *ArtToy*, Gallery Mouri, Ginza, Tokyo, Japan  
*Open Studio Exhibitions*, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY  
*The Armory Show*, New York, NY  
*Extra Virgin*, SVA MFA Thesis Show, Visual Arts Gallery, New York, NY
- 2001 *Open Studio Exhibitions*, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY  
*SP-Xiles*, Small Press Expo, Brooklyn, NY  
*Integrated Aesthetics*, Integrated Aesthetics, Brooklyn, NY

#### LECTURES, PANEL DISCUSSIONS, JURIES and WORKSHOPS

- 2015 *TEDxHyderabad*, TEDx Talk, India  
*From Mirfaq to Vega: The Long Journey Home*, American Druze Convention, Florida, USA  
*Career Day*, International College, Beirut, Lebanon  
*From Mirfaq to Vega*, Lebanese University, Deir el Qamar

- 2014 *TEDxLSE*, TEDx Talk, London School of Economics, UK
- 2013 *Friday Late*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK  
*Artist In Residence & Keynote Speaker*, American Community School, Surrey, UK  
*Institute Talk & Artist in Residence*, New York University Abu Dhabi, UAE  
*Arab Spring, Arab Fall*. Speaker, TED Fellows Retreat, Canada
- 2012 *TEDxAmsterdam Women*, TEDx Talk, The Netherlands  
*TED: Technology, Entertainment & Design*, Fellow Talk, Long Beach, LA, USA
- 2011 *Torino Film Lab: Framework Program*. Turin, Italy  
*Subtitled; With Narratives From Lebanon*; Panel Speaker, Royal College of Arts, UK
- 2010 *SOAS, School of Oriental and African Studies*; Guest Speaker. London, UK  
*The Leighton House, Nour Festival of Arts*; Guest Speaker. London, UK  
*Torino Film Lab: Interchange*; awarded workshop participant. Turin, Italy  
*Inaugural AUB Alumni Literary Festival*; Invited Speaker, American University of Beirut, Lebanon  
*Patchanka*; Invited Speaker, Chieri, Italy  
*Salone Del Libro*, "In Conversation with Francesca Paci and Marco Philopat", Italy  
*Beirut 39*, Moderator for Panel Discussion, "Rock The Casbah: Responsibility, Commitment and Art. Zena el Khalil in Conversation with Randa Jarrar, Abdelkader Benali, Hussein Jelaad and Youssef Rakha." Beirut, Lebanon
- 2009 *The Guardian Hay Festival: Segovia*, Segovia, Spain; Invited Speaker, "In Conversation with Guillermo Altares."  
*Edinburgh International Book Festival*, Edinburgh UK; Invited Speaker, Panel Discussion with Samson Kambalu. Moderated by Peter Guttridge.  
*Hay-On-Wye Festival of Literature*, Wales, UK; Invited Speaker, "Risk", Panel Discussion with Hala Jaber and Conor Foley. Moderated by Liz Thompson.  
*University of Westminster*, London UK; Invited Speaker, Panel Discussion with Carol Lee. Moderated by Nick Johnstone.
- 2008 *Nobel Peace Center*, Oslo, Norway; Invited Speaker, "Freedom of Expression- How Free Is the Internet", Panel Discussion with Jimmy Wales, Jonathan Zittrain, Parvin Ardalan, Oystein Alme, Knut Aasrud, Hilde Tonne, Jon Bing, Moderated by Tore Tennoe.  
*20/20 Lecture Series*, Department of Architecture and Design, American University of Beirut, Lebanon; Invited Speaker.  
*Resistance Media & Society*, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon; Invited Speaker.
- 2005 *Final Project Presentations of Candidates for Bachelor of Graphic Design class of 2005*, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon; Guest Juror.  
*Final Project Presentations of First Year Landscape Design students, Class of 2008*, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon; Guest Juror.  
*Biatouna Baytouna*, Biodiversity & Environmental Art workshop with Lebanese high school students. Final presentations were exhibited and juried at the UNESCO in Beirut. Project co-sponsored by: UNDP, Ministry of Environment of Lebanon, IBSAR, American University of Beirut, and A Step Away; Lecture and Workshop.  
*Eco Art: Taking Art Out of the Museum & the Rise of The Feminist Movement*, First Year Landscape Design students, Class of 2008, American University of Beirut, Lebanon; Lecture.
- 2004 *Final Project Presentations of Candidates for Bachelor of Graphic Design Class of 2004*, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon; Member of Jury.
- 2002 *The New Generation of Art From Palestine*, Williamsburg Art and Historical Center, Brooklyn, NY; Member of Panel.
- 2001 *Art and Society; An Intervention into Beirut*. Lebanese American University, Lebanon; Lecture and workshop.  
*Final Project Presentations of Candidates for Bachelor of Graphic Design Class of 2001*, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon; Member of Jury.
- 1998-2000 Rudolph Steiner School for Special Students, Jal el Dib, Lebanon; art and photography coordinator and instructor.

#### AWARDS/HONORS

- 2015 New Positions, Art Cologne, Participant
- 2012 TED Fellow  
 Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Finalist
- 2011 Torino Film Lab, Winner of Jury Award and Audience Award

- Freedom To Create Prize, Commended
- 2002 Masters of Fine Arts Tuition Grant, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY
- 2001 Masters of Fine Arts Tuition Grant, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY
- 1994 Gold Medal, "The Duke of Edinburgh Award", London, England
- "Service Above Self", The Rotary Club, Surrey, England
- 1993 National Honors Society, London, England
- International Honor Thespian Award, London, England

#### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- 2015 *Beirut Noir*, Akashic Books, Edited by Iman Humaidan
- 2012 *Nowhere Near A Damn Rainbow: Unsanctioned Writing from the Middle East*. The Poeticians Volume 1, Edited by Hind Shoufani
- 2011 *Arabesque 2: Graphic Design From the Arab World and Persia*, Ben Wittner & Sascha Thoma
- 2009 *Arabesque 1: Graphic Design From the Arab World and Persia*, Ben Wittner & Sascha Thoma
- New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Edited by Hossein Amirsadeghi, Salwa Mikdadi and Nada Shabout, Thames & Hudson, 2009
- My City: Beirut, I Love You*, by Zena el Khalil, *Canvas Magazine*, April 2009
- 2008 *Beirut, I Love You: A Memoir*, by Zena el Khalil, Saqi Books
- Hopes And Doubts*, Exhibition catalog, December 2008
- Maybe One Day Beirut Will Love Me Back*, Exhibition catalog, October 2008
- 2007 *Project Talib - Intercultural Type Research*, EPS51, 2007
- Zoom In / Zoom Out*, Edited by Partizan Publik, Amsterdam, 2007
- 2006 *Lebanon, Lebanon; From Beirut, With Love*, Edited by Anna Wilson, Saqi Books
- Shu Tabkha Ya Mara? (What's Cooking, Woman?)*, Exhibit catalog, 2006
- Imagining Ourselves*, Anthology produced by the International Museum of Women

#### CURATING EXPERIENCE

- 2009 Co-Curator: *Ricordando Cesare Roccati*, Fabbrica delle E di Libera, Turin, Italy
- Curator: *Beirut Live*, Vibe Live, London, UK
- 2008 Co-Curator: *Hopes and Doubts*, Beirut, Lebanon & Turin, Italy
- Co-Curator: *8.8.8*. Experimental Music and Visual Art, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2007 Co-Curator: *Khatt Fonts: Matching Amsterdam - Beirut*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon
- Curator: *More Light Than Death Could Bear*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon
- Co-Curator: *Ana 'Njassa Al Fan (I Pear Art)*, Dialogpunkt Deutsch Tripoli, Lebanon
- 2006 Co-Curator: *Nafas Beirut*, Espace SD, Beirut, Lebanon
- Curator: *Shu Tabkha Ya Mara? (What's Cooking, Woman?)*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2004- Director and Chief Curator, xanadu\*, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2003-5 Director and Chief Curator, xanadu\*, New York, NY
- 2003 Co-Curator: *Palestine: Art of Resistance*, Tribes Gallery, New York, NY
- 2002 Co-Curator: *Williamsburg Bridges Palestine*, Williamsburg Art & Historical Center, Brooklyn, NY

#### SELECTED PROJECTS

##### xanadu\* CO-FOUNDER, 2003-Present

Mission: xanadu\* supports young/emerging/underrepresented artists, writers and musicians by providing a platform to create, produce and execute their work. Its mission is manifested through art exhibitions, lecture series, poetry readings, performances, publications and chess education. xanadu\* is currently based in Beirut, Lebanon, with a small extension in New York City. The asterisk translates to "a beautiful place". [www.xanaduart.com](http://www.xanaduart.com)

##### The Maya Ghannoum Project, FOUNDER, 2007-Present

The goal of the Maya Ghannoum Project, started in 2007, is to support young writers, poets, illustrators and comic book artists by helping to produce and publish their work.

<http://xanaduart.com/mgp/publishing-mgp.html>

Imagining Ourselves: A Global Generation of Women. International Museum of Women, GLOBAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER 2005-2006

Imagining Ourselves launched on International Women's Day, March 8, 2006. It reaches out to a new generation of women—the one billion women between the ages of 20 and 40—answering the question, “What defines your generation?” Through an online exhibit, a series of global gatherings, and a new book, Imagining Ourselves provides resources and opportunities for women to create change in their lives, in their communities, and in their world. [www.imow.org](http://www.imow.org)

I was responsible for trend assessment and advice on creation of content, as well as editorial feedback for the Virtual Exhibit, solicitation of partners and organizations in assigned regions, active international marketing and outreach programs, organization of global gatherings and other events related to the Imagining Ourselves project. I was also responsible to communicate the needs of the Lebanese community in relation to the IO project.

**Al Jisser: CO-FOUNDER, 2001-2003**

The mission of Al Jisser is to bring Arab artists to international attention. It was founded in New York City in April of 2001 by a group of individual artists. Our first project was “Williamsburg Bridges Palestine” in 2002 held at the Williamsburg Art and Historical Center. [www.aljisser.org](http://www.aljisser.org)