Contemporary Arab Representations

The Middle East is a region that is often overlooked in present-day exhibitions, and when it is not, the focus is mainly on traditional culture. The image that is presented thus denies the fact that contemporary Arab culture is a pilot region, a political and cultural laboratory that is highly complex. It is because of this complexity that Catherine David does not focus exclusively on ‘contemporary art’ in her new project, but also envisions the whole of cultural production, whether literature, philosophy, or journalism, as well as the images and the patterns of thinking that currently exist in the Arab world. This is what lies behind the project’s title: Contemporary Arab Representations.

Contemporary Arab Representations includes seminars, performances, publications, and presentations of works by different authors – visual artists, architects, writers, and poets – with the aim of encouraging production, interaction, and exchange between the different cultural centres of the Arab world and the rest of the world. The project aims to tackle heterogeneous situations and contexts that may sometimes be antagonistic or conflicting, and thus to acquire more specific knowledge about what is currently going on in certain parts of the Arab world, to look at the complexity of aesthetics in relation to social and political situations, and to encourage people to think more deeply about the role currently played by cultural practices in our own countries.

Beirut/Lebanon 'Beirut/Lebanon' was the first in a series of presentations. At present, Lebanon and the Middle East are essential to an understanding of contemporary culture: the post-war situation they are living through is complex – the Ta’if Accords do not guarantee defined or conflicting, and thus to acquire more specific knowledge about what is currently going on in certain parts of the Arab world, to look at the complexity of aesthetics in relation to social and political situations, and to encourage people to think more deeply about the role currently played by cultural practices in our own countries.

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