

BIOGRAPHY – ZENA EL KHALIL

Zena el Khalil believes in the positive impact that art can have on the world. Born year of the Dragon, Zena is an artist, author, cultural activist and yoga instructor based in Beirut, Lebanon. She holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts in NYC, a Bachelor of Graphic Design from the American University of Beirut and a 200 RYT teaching certificate from the Yoga Alliance. El Khalil exhibits internationally, including New York, San Francisco, Miami, London, Paris, Tokyo, and Dubai. She has also held solo exhibitions in Lagos, London, Munich, Turin and Beirut and regularly participates in international art fairs.

Zena uses visual art, site-specific installation, performance and ritual to explore and heal the war-torn history of Lebanon and other global sites of trauma. Believing in the importance of community engagement with contemporary art, she also curates cultural events that create platforms for dialogue and exchange. Though her collective, the Ātman Institute, Zena curates events, workshops and concerts dedicated to healing and reconciliation, through the mediums of ceremony, sound and art.

Merging art and healing modalities, Zena has been conducting healing ceremonies across Lebanon in spaces that have historically endured trauma and violence, such as environmental disasters, massacres and even the torturing of human beings. With the intention of transforming these places and objects in them into generators peace and reconciliation in nature and with communities, these ceremonies include a process of meditation, chanting, dancing, whirling and a purifying fire ritual through which she create paintings, sculptures, sound and video art.

While living in NYC, Zena witnessed firsthand the World Trade Center collapsing and subsequently co-founded xanadu* (www.xanaduproductions.net), an art collective and gallery space dedicated to promoting emerging Arab and underrepresented artists as a means to create a much needed bridge with the NYC community. During the 2006 invasion of Lebanon, Zena was one of the first largely followed Middle Eastern bloggers (<http://www.beirutupdate.blogspot.com>); her heartfelt eyewitness writings were published in the international press, including the BBC, CNN, the Guardian and Der Spiegel. In 2006 in Beirut, she curated the first women emerging artist exhibition entitled *Shu Tabkha, Ya Mara? (What's Cooking, Woman?)* in partnership with the International Museum of Women and co-curated *Nafas Beirut*, an exhibit that opened one month after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006, featuring works made during the attacks. Through xanadu*, she also publishes young poets and comic book artists in Lebanon, also publishing the first four editions of *Samandal Comics Magazine*.

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 writing have also been included in the anthologies; *Lebanon, Lebanon* (Saqi Books), *Beirut Noir* (Akashic Books) and *Arab Women Voice New Realities* (Turning Point Books). While working on adapting her novel into a feature film, she won production awards from the Italian Ministry of Culture, European MEDIA Fund and the Torino Film Lab (Audience Award, Jury Award and Production Fund).

El Khalil is regularly invited to lecture about her work. Some events include, *The Guardian Hay Festival: Segovia*, Spain; *the Edinburgh International Book Festival*, UK; *the Hay-On-Wye Festival of Literature*, Wales, UK; the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), UK; The Leighton House, UK; New York University, Abu Dhabi and TED Conferences. Her work and projects have been covered by The New York Times, Le Monde, El Pais, The Guardian, The Financial Times, LA Times, La Stampa, Repubblica, and the Frankfurter Allgemeine, to name a few. She has also held several radio interviews with the BBC

and has been featured on Al Jazeera's arts program, "Artsworld".

Zena is also a graduate of the world's first Nāda Yoga teacher training program, the Heart of Sound, certified by the Yoga Alliance dedicated solely to the yoga of sacred sound and subtle vibration. She currently teaches sound based meditation in yoga studios as well as to refugees.

In 2012, Zena was invited to join the TED Fellowship program and in 2018 she was awarded a TED Senior Fellowship. In 2018 she was invited to serve as Artist in Residence at the American University of Beirut.

Zena is represented by Giorgio Persano Gallery, Italy. You can follow her journey on www.zenaekhalil.com or [@zenaekhalil](https://www.instagram.com/zenaekhalil).

CV – ZENA EL KHALIL

Born: April 27, 1976 || Web: www.zenaelkhalil.com || hello@zenaelkhalil.com || Instagram: [@zenaelkhalil](https://www.instagram.com/zenaelkhalil)

EDUCATION:

- 2019 200 RYT Hatha Yoga, Certified Instructor, Indea Yoga, India (forthcoming)
- 2016 200 RYT Naada Yoga, Certified Instructor, Heart of Sound, Rishikesh, India
- 2002 MFA Fine Arts, School of Visual Arts. New York, NY, USA
- 1999 BGD Graphic Design, The American University of Beirut. Beirut, Lebanon

AWARDS/HONORS:

- 2018 Artist in Residence, Center for Arts and Humanities, American University of Beirut
TED Senior Fellowship
- 2015 *New Positions*, Art Cologne, Participant
- 2013 Artist in Residence, New York University, Abu Dhabi, UAE
- 2012 TED Fellowship
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

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

- 2019 (forthcoming). Napoli, Italy.
- 2017 *Sacred Catastrophe : Healing Lebanon*, Beirut. Curated by Beatrice Merz & Janine Maamari
- 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, Italy
- 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, 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*, 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

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

- 2017 *Stories of Stories*, Lebanese American University, Byblos. Curated by Joumana Ibrahim
Dubai Art Fair, Giorgio Persano Gallery, UAE
- 2016 *Abu Dhabi Art Fair*, Giorgio Persano Gallery, UAE
- 2015 *New Positions*, Art Cologne 2015, Germany
Fine Acts, TED, Vancouver, Canada
Art Love New York, New York, NY. Curated by Nino Azzi
Abu Dhabi Art Fair, Giorgio Persano Gallery, UAE
- 2014 *Artissima*, Giorgio Persano Gallery, Turin Art Fair, Italy
- 2013 *Beyond The Cloth: The Kafiye Project*, WhiteBox, New York. Curated by Hala A. Malak

- TED Fellows Retreat, Whistler, Canada
ART 13, Olympia Grand Hall, London UK
- 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, London. Curated by Juliana Khalaf
Beirut ReBirth. Beirut Exhibition Center. Lebanon. Curated by Janine Maamari
Freedom To Create Prize. Ana Tzarev Gallery, NYC
Freedom To Create. Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai
Freedom to Create. National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo
Strike Oppose. Barajeel Art Foundation. Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE
Political Patterns, ifa-Gallery, 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, Annual Central Williamsburg Arts Festival, Brooklyn, NY
Eat Me, 65 Hope Street Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2003 *24e Salon d’Automne*, Musee Surock, Beirut, Lebanon
The Vending Project, ArtLink-Yanaka, Tokyo, Japan
Bayshore Festival of the Arts, The Firehouse Gallery, Bayshore, NY
Falastine: Artists Against Occupation, Ofuroya: Contemporary Art Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2002 *ArtToy*, Gallery Mouri, Ginza, Tokyo, Japan
The Armory Show, New York, NY

SELECTED PUBLIC SPEAKING / WORKSHOPS:

- 2018 The Druze: Celebrating 1,000 Years of Diversity, Panel Speaker, American University of Beirut
Nāda Yoga Workshop, TED Conference, Vancouver, Canada
- 2017 *Can Art Change the World*, Lebanese American University, Byblos, Lebanon
Can Art Change the World, American International School, Lagos, Nigeria
Nāda Yoga Workshop, International Yoga Festival, Rishikesh, India
- 2015 *TEDxHyderabad*, TEDx Talk, India
- 2014 *TEDxLSE*, TEDx Talk, London School of Economics, UK
- 2013 *Friday Late*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 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, TED Talk, Long Beach, LA, USA
- 2011 *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
Inaugural AUB Alumni Literary Festival; Invited Speaker, American University of Beirut, Lebanon
- 2009 *The Guardian Hay Festival: Segovia*, Segovia, Spain; Invited Speaker
Edinburgh International Book Festival, Edinburgh UK; Invited Speaker
Hay-On-Wye Festival of Literature, Wales, UK; Invited Speaker
- 2008 *Nobel Peace Center*, Oslo, Norway; Invited Speaker, "Freedom of Expression- How Free Is the Internet", Panel Discussion with Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

- 2018 *Sacred Catastrophe: Healing Lebanon*, Exhibition catalog published by Hopeful Monster (forthcoming)
- 2017 *96% Love 4% Beirut :: Zero :: Śūnya*, limited edition artist book, Zena el Khalil
Arab Women Voice New Realities, Edited by Roseanne Saad Khalaf and Dima Nasser
- 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 1 & 2: Graphic Design From the Arab World and Persia*, Ben Wittner & Sascha Thoma
- 2009 *New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21st 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, Published by Saqi Books
Hopes And Doubts, Exhibition catalog. Published by Fondazione Merz
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

ART CURATING EXPERIENCE:

- 2016 Curator: *Reading for Peace*, Abandoned Ibrahim Shaker Palace, Aley, Lebanon
- 2009 Curator: *Ricordando Cesare Roccati*, Fabbrica delle E di Libera, Turin, Italy
Curator: *Beirut Live*, Vibe Live, London, UK
- 2008 Co-Curator with Ramzi Hibri: *8.8.8. Experimental Music and Visual Art*, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2007 Co-Curator with Dr. Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFarès: *Khatt Fonts: Matching Amsterdam - Beirut*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon
Curator: *More Light Than Death Could Bear*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon
Curator: *Ana 'Njassa Al Fan (I Pear Art)*, Dialogpunkt Deutsch Tripoli, Lebanon
- 2006 Co-Curator with Sandra Dagher: *Nafas Beirut*, Espace SD, Beirut, Lebanon
Curator: *Shu Tabkha Ya Mara? (What's Cooking, Woman?)*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2004- Director and Curator, xanadu*, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2003-5 Director and Curator, xanadu*, New York, NY
- 2003 Co-Curator with Samia Halaby: *Palestine: Art of Resistance*, Tribes Gallery, New York, NY
- 2002 Co-Curator with Samia Halaby: *Williamsburg Bridges Palestine*, Williamsburg Art & Historical Center, Brooklyn, NY

SELECTED PROJECTS:

The American Druze Foundation Endowment of Druze and Arab Studies

I contributed to the establishment of the Endowment of Druze and Arab Studies at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS) at Georgetown University. This is the first endowed research fund in the world dedicated primarily and essentially to producing new –or enhancing existing– academic knowledge about the Druze at a premier US institution of higher learning, with a top-ranked graduate program in contemporary Arab studies and a renowned doctoral program in Middle Eastern/North African history. The practical objectives of the endowed fund are to encourage academic and cultural initiatives that investigate, interpret, document and promote knowledge about the Druze in the arts and social sciences.

The Ātman Institute, FOUNDER, TEACHER, CURATOR 2016-Present

Mission: The Ātman Institute is a collective dedicated to the production of events, concerts, exhibitions, workshops that focus on creating a culture of peace through empathy, exchange and self-awareness. Projects have included Nada Yoga workshops, Indian Classical Music concert, and yoga and art workshops for refugees. I have invited teachers from India to give workshops and lectures in Lebanon. I was appointed by the UNHCR in Lebanon to curate workshops and concert for World Refugee Day in 2016.

xanadu*, 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”. <http://xanaduproductions.net>

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://xanaduproductions.net/mgp/publishing-mgp.html>

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

Imagining Ourselves launched on International Women's Day, March 8, 2006. It reached 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 provided resources and opportunities for women to create change in their lives, in their communities, and in their world.

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. www.imow.org

Al Jisser: CO-FOUNDER & CURATOR, 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. Our first project “Williamsburg Bridges Palestine” (2002) was held at the Williamsburg Art and Historical Center. I was co-curator along with Samia Halaby and we exhibited works from 50 Palestinian artists. Included works by Emily Jacir, Annemarie Jacir, Alexandra Handal, Raeda Saadeh, Sleiman Mansour, Mustafa al Hallaj, Hasan Hourani and Rana Bishara. www.aljisser.org