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Checking Out ZOOM, the First Art Basel Satellite Fair to Focus on Middle Eastern Artists

By [Paul Laster](#) on Dec 2nd, 2010 12:18PM

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Orit Ben-Shitrit, "Half Tamed Beast," 2010, dance performance at Artis, New York/Tel Aviv

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Taking a bold step, the [ZOOM Contemporary Art Fair](#) became the first Art Basel Miami Beach satellite fair to solely present art from the Middle East and its Diaspora. Opening last night at the South Seas Hotel in Miami Beach and remaining through December 5th, ZOOM features artwork from 20 international galleries and institutions, based in 11 different countries.

Presenting exhibitions, talks, performances, film and video programs and book signings, ZOOM brings a cross section of the burgeoning Middle East art scene to critics, curators and collectors gathered in Miami this week.

ZOOM director Angeliki Georgiou worked with advisors Sam Bardaouil of Art Reoriented and Shamim M. Momin from Los Angeles Nomadic Division (LAND) to distinctively organize a fair that mixes Arab Israeli, and Islamic artists, as well as galleries and institutions from the Middle East and America. "Rather than separating our exhibitors -- galleries and non-profits -- based on their organizational structure," explains Georgiou, "ZOOM blurs the lines between the two practices and presents a multifaceted visual dialogue, which puts artists in the spotlight. ZOOM's curators chose the artworks based on their artistic merit rather than through a neo-Orientalist umbrella of geo-cultural identity."

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Standout presentations include Iranian artist and filmmaker Shoja Azari's video installation "There are No Non Believers in Hell," which imagines iconic, Western old master paintings going up in flames at New York's Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery; Saudi doctor-turned-artist Ahmed Mater's silkscreens from X-Rays at London's Edge of Arabia; Iranian-American artist Sara Rahbar's edgy photographs and altered objects that deal with issues of identity at Carbon 12 Gallery from Dubai; and Israeli-American video and performance artist Orit Ben-Shitrit's video installation, "Men Die and They Are Not Happy," about the struggles between violence, power and societal constructs at Artis from Tel Aviv and New York and her poolside dance performance, "Half Tamed Beast," which exposes identity issues and psychological struggles of immigrants from the Middle East.



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