

HALAQAT OPENING FESTIVAL 4-7 December 2021 EXPLORING CULTURAL LINKS BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE ARAB WORLD

The Arab world and Europe. Hearing the names of these two regions almost automatically evoke a wide and diverse range of thoughts, connotations or emotions. Both regions are rapidly changing, each with specific and varied local social, economic and political realities, but above all with many connections, historical and present.

With Halaqat - which in Arabic means multiple links and circles -, the Goethe-Institut Brussels and Bozar - Centre for Fine Arts Brussels aim to strengthen these entanglements and build bridges between both regions. Together, they take up the challenge of exploring what these regions exactly stand for, and moreover, what the relationship and exchange between the two is about. On 4 to 7 December together they present in the premises of the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels the Halaqat Opening Festival.

Halaqat Festival: Exploring cultural links between Europe and the Arab world

The Goethe-Institut and Bozar are launching the project Halaqat.

Diverse voices of emerging and renowned artists, cultural actors and experts are brought together to approach a number of themes from their own perspective. Going beyond the idea of a simple invitation, **Halaqat** aims to stimulate the artists from both regions to create art together. With 'Politics of Spaces and Bodies' as their leitmotiv, they tell stories of power, limitation and impact over spaces and bodies, a theme that remains highly topical.

What is the place of public and private space in both regions and in the different countries? And how do people deal with this? How will we soon experience physical and digital space? The notion of bodies, in turn, relates to issues of gender, power, bodily contact, mobility and the role of body language. Can we continue to cooperate and listen to each other in this time of pandemic - when mobility is not only limited by visas, but also by all kinds of sanitary measures? These are just some of the topics that **Halaqat** will be addressing in the coming months, without claiming to have a definitive answer or solution. Each question might give way to a new issue or chapter, which Europe and the Arab world will continue to write together, towards a future influenced by artists from both regions.

Goethe-Institut and Bozar present at Bozar and all over Brussels: public discussions, film screenings, concerts and performances and visual arts exhibitions. A festival in the autumn of 2022 will conclude this inspiring **Halaqat** project.



24 November 2021

Halaqat is implemented by the Goethe-Institut in collaboration with Bozar - Centre for Fine Arts Brussels



Co-funded by the European Union:



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Halaqat Opening Festival, 4 - 7 December

The **Halaqat Opening Festival on 4-7 December 2021 at Bozar** marks the start of this year-long profound exploration. Over the course of three evenings, the festival puts forward a diverse range of artists entering into dialogue among themselves and with the audience, allowing visitors to immerse in intriguing European-Arab cultural collaborations and unique exchanges.

First up is music. The Halaqat Impro Session presents a musical encounter between four Arab and two European musicians who met for the first time just five days earlier at the first Halaqat residency at Werkplaats Walter. And how about cinema? Three recent thought-provoking documentaries from the Arab world cast a personal, surprising, innovative and emotional light on universally relevant topics. On the second film night, we make time for an in-depth discussion on the representation of the Arab world through the lens of cinema.

In parallel to the public events, we will gather 26 cultural experts - representatives of big and small institutions, artists, curators, independent practitioners - from Europe and the Arab world to discuss the challenges of cultural collaborations between both regions and draft lessons for the future.

Detailed programme of the Halaqat Opening Festival 4-7 December 2021:

4 December, 7:00 pm: Concert: Halaqat Impro Session - in collaboration with Werkplaats Walter and the Amman Jazz Festival and in the framework of the 4th Stream Festival

6 December, 6:00 pm: Film screening: 'L'ÉCOLE DE L'ESPOIR (SCHOOL OF HOPE)', MOHAMED EL ABOUDI (FI/FR/MA/US, 2020, 78') - in collaboration with Cinemamed

6 December, 9:00 pm: Film screening in the presence of the director: 'AS I WANT' - SAMAHER ALQADI (EG/DE/NO/FR/PS, 2021, 88') - in collaboration with Cinemamed

7 December, 6:00 pm: Public debate on the representation of the Arab world through the lens of cinema. Moderation: Karima Saïdi - in collaboration with Cinemamed

7 December, 8:30 pm: Film screening in the presence of the director: 'LITTLE PALESTINE (DIARY OF A SIEGE)' - ABDALLAH AL-KHATIB (LB/QA/FR, 2021, 89') - in collaboration with Cinemamed

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**Extract of “A double interview between the shores” of two Halaqat experts
by Lotte Poté; October 2021:**

How can Europe build bridges with the Arab world in post-covid times?

Elena Polivtseva (IETM, Belgium):

“I think we have to build up awareness about each other, across borders, and really care about the local perspective. [...] Generally speaking, we also need more research and more time in order to build connections, and collaborations need to be built on fairness. But then the question remains: how to achieve this, how to change the way we collaborate across borders? I would like to end by saying that nothing will change after Covid unless there is a very serious, structured collective effort.”

Shiran Ben Abderrazak (Rambourg Foundation, Tunisia):

“One of the main problems that continues to nurture the incomprehension between the two seashores of the Mediterranean, is the problem of mobility. So, building bridges means that people can move on the bridges. Otherwise, I don't know what the bridge is. And I think that the cultural sector is very important in this case because it's where we start to create and develop the narratives, and these narratives can be very powerful when they are used and infused in society and populations. It's where we can start to change the representation of the world.”

More information:

www.goethe.de/belgium/halaqat

<https://www.bozar.be/en/calendar/halaqat>

Halaqat Facebook page: https://m.facebook.com/halaqat2122/?_rdr

Halaqat partners in Brussels and in the Arab world:

Film: Atelier Graphoui, Cinemaximiliaan and NAAS – Network of Arab
Alternative Screens

Media arts: IMAL and Cairotronica

Music: Werkplaats Walter and Amman Jazz Festival

Performance: La Bellone, Théâtre Marni and Studio 8 (Curator : Nedjma Hadj
Benchelabi)

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The European project Halaqat is implemented by the Goethe-Institut in collaboration with Bozar - Centre for Fine Arts Brussels. Halaqat is co-funded by the European Commission (under the designation: EU-LAS CULTURE), the Goethe-Institut and Bozar.



The Goethe-Institut is the cultural institution of the Federal Republic of Germany and represents it worldwide. Through its presence in Brussels, it makes a major contribution to strengthening the European integration process and conveying Europe's cultural diversity at political and strategic level. Its cultural, information and education programmes in Belgium promote exchange and cultural participation as well as interest in the German language.

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