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sold for between \$8-10,000 to Lebanese collectors through Karachi-based ArtChowk. “There is a lot of interest in the works, but I haven’t come across any seasoned collectors,” said the gallery’s Camilla Chaudhary. This statement was further augmented by Siham Derradji of Paris’s Galerie Trait Noir, which exhibited a curious mix of pieces: photographs by Moroccan Mohamed El-Baz and one work on paper each by Sam Francis, Sol LeWitt and Joan Miró (the latter was just Miró’s signature in colourful crayon). “The fair needs more rigorous curation, it’s too uneven and it’s at a confused level,” noted Derradji, who, along with fellow dealers, was also annoyed with the fair’s overall standard of finish. While the booth walls were painted in white, blotches of paint permanently stained the grey carpeting – not a good look by any standards. Lighting was also meagre and another point of contention was BIEL’s parking policy (about \$3) and Internet fees (\$230) – the irony was the country’s Internet blackout for most of the fair’s duration. There was also the curious case of live Lebanese rap music, which, coupled with loud sound testing done on BIEL grounds for an impending concert, posed a serious threat to works hanging on vibrating walls.


GREY SKIES

Amazingly, Lebanon’s political situation did not faze foreign participating gallerists or museum representatives either – Venetia Porter of the British Museum and Jessica Morgan of the Tate were in attendance at BAF. Interestingly, the fair’s selection committee does not include any Lebanese nationals – an issue raised by some local dealers – but which is intentional on the organisers’ part. “We really wanted an external committee,” asserts d’Hauteville, “and didn’t want any dealers from within either.” While BAF operates an art collectors circle comprising “100 collectors, of which 80 per cent are Lebanese”, d’Hauteville’s sole requirement of this group is to serve as ambassadors of the fair “and for each member to bring in about four collectors”.

For its fourth edition in 2013, BAF will take place in September so as not to clash with the Holy Month of Ramadan. D’Hauteville intends dedicating a “real corner” for design galleries and maintaining the “boutique nature” of BAF. Hopefully other sections of the next instalment will be allotted spaces and avoid getting diluted

Above, left: Zoulikha Bounabdellah. *Mirage I*. 2011. Steel and car paint. 193 x 193 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Sabrina Amrani Art Gallery, Madrid.

Right: Nadim Karam. *The Elephant Family*. 2012. Super shiny mirror and stainless steel. Ranging from 300-70 cm. Image courtesy the artist.

or lost between gallery booths, as was the case with Odille’s *This is Not a Wonderland*, a curated exhibition of monumental art; *The Comics Corner* of original comics from the MENASA region; and *From Street Art to VJing: The Urban Creation of Beirut*, which featured graffiti art by young Lebanese artists. With any luck, September 2013 will bring better days to the region’s political arena. “Given the political situation, this edition was a success,” noted Chaudhary. Perhaps better organisation, a tighter curatorial strategy and a calmer political climate will help strengthen BAF’s fourth edition. 

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