

BCN PRODUC- CIÓ '15

Off-site project

SALAH MALOULI *ROSOUN PROJECT, STRATEGIES FOR AN INDEPENDENT ARAB COMIC*

The Rosoun Project (*rosoun* means 'drawings' in Arabic) brings together a series of activities deriving from the meeting in Barcelona of four figures from the world of fanzines and independent publishing in Arabic languages, from 23 to 28 November. During this week the four guests, from Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, will be able to exchange experiences and make contact with other cartoonists and publishers from the local scene. The result of this encounter will be a joint fanzine which will symbolically build a bridge of understanding and will foster future collaborations.

The idea to bring about this meeting arose in the head of the curator and expert in translation Salah Malouli. His close observation of the world of the comic, the fanzine and desktop publishing in Arabic made him aware of the effervescence now bubbling up: "For the last five years we've witnessed a kind of rebirth of the comic in the Arab world, with a wave of independent publications that really break away from the previous moulds and graphic styles", he explains.

It could be said that graphic expression in countries of Arab culture is facing a problem of a lack of structures (publishing houses, bookshops, institutional support, etc.) that facilitate not only the artist's work but also its distribution to the wider public. The political and social conditions do little to help risky productions which, when they appear, are often censored or directly banned, making them even more attractive to a young public thirsty for freedom and new forms of artistic expression. Nonetheless and due to a large extent to the effect of the Arab Spring and the wind of freedom that accompanied it, numerous publications have managed to see the light of day, taking advantage of that creative emancipation and that long awaited and much desired moment of change. There can be little doubt that we are seeing a boom in graphic expression, comics, illustration, cartoons and fanzines. Standing out clearly among these new forms of artistic expression are the new independent comic publications for adults, which are taking the pulse of the political, social and day-to-day reality.

Adult comics from the Arab world are becoming increasingly more significant, but are barely known in Spain. That's why the *Rosoun Project* is bringing together in Barcelona for the first time four of the most active figures in independent Arab comics, with the aim of encouraging an exchange of experiences, but also of making their work known in a city traditionally linked to the comic. The four guests are: **Lena Merhej**, founder of the Lebanese magazine *Samandal* (Beirut, Lebanon); **Mohammed**

Shennawy, founder of the Egyptian fanzine *Tok Tok* (Cairo, Egypt); **Noha Habaieb**, founder of the Tunisian magazine *Lab619* (Tunis, Tunisia), and **Mehdi Annassi**, founder of the Moroccan fanzine *Skefkef* (Casablanca, Morocco).

These four cartoonists and publishers will take advantage of the encounter to discuss strategies for the creation of an artistic network among the Arab comic communities, to explore the possibilities of setting up an alternative distribution system between the cities involved and to interact with the Catalan comic scene by means of an open meeting which will take place on Friday 27 November at the MACBA. During that week they will also address production of the comic in Arabic dialects, as well as the challenges and difficulties inherent in being a graphic artist in a context as complex as that of the Arab world.

The *Rosoun Project* displays the creative, critical and valiant side of individuals and communities which, through graphic creation, are taking an active, positive and independent part in the transformation of Arab societies towards a freer, more democratic model.

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Salah Malouli

Cultural manager from Casablanca. He has lived in Barcelona since 2005, when he studied for a master in Cultural Management at the University of Barcelona. He has collaborated in creating and organizing various cultural projects in Spain, France and Morocco, such as the Slam Klam festival in Fez (2007-2009) and BCNmp7 Casablanca Hip Hop in conjunction with the CCCB (2009). He was director of *anime* at the BAFF Barcelona Asian Film Festival (2010), and coordinator of the residences and exhibition project between Egypt and Spain *L'un i el múltiple* curated by Pedro Soler (La Capella, 2010). He collaborated on Big Draw (2010 and 2011) with the Picasso Museum in Barcelona, coordinated SummerLAB 2011 in collaboration with the LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial in Gijón and directed the SummerLAB Casablanca (2012-2014). Founder of the Moroccan comic fanzine *Skefkef* (2013), Salah Malouli is the artistic director of the street art festival Sbagha Bagha in Casablanca (2013-2015) and of the JIDAR graffiti and street art festival held in Rabat (2015).

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ROSOUUM PROJECT, STRATEGIES FOR AN INDEPENDENT ARAB COMIC

MACBA Auditori Meier, Plaça dels Àngels, 1
Friday November 27, at 7 pm

Round table on the situation of contemporary Arab comic, with Salah Malouli, Mery Cuesta and guest artists: Mohamed Shenawy (Cairo), Mehdi Annassi (Casablanca), Lena Merhej (Beirut) and Noha Habaieb (Tunisia). Moderates: Francesc Ruiz (Barcelona).
In French and English, with translation.

Fatbottom bookstore, c. Lluna, 10
Saturday November 28, at 6 pm

Opening of *Rosoum*, collective graphic exhibition,
from November 30, 2015, to January 6, 2016.

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