



**CURATED BY ALMA SALEM**

production Moussem Nomadic Arts Centre & BOZAR

# Background

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*KASHASH* in Arabic means a *colombophile*, a ‘pigeon keeper’ or ‘pigeon fancier’ in English. Pigeon breeding is the art and science of breeding domestic pigeons. People have practiced pigeon keeping for about 10,000 years in almost every part of the world, especially in Damascus.

Syrians have substantially altered the morphology and the behaviour of the domesticated descendants of the rock dove to suit their needs for food, aesthetic satisfaction and entertainment.

The kashash is a popular person/character in the memory of Syria, of its old cities and especially Damascus, whom throughout history provoked allot of controversy, prejudice and charm.

The word kashash also means “liar” in slang and raises a question about the roots of social views and mistrust.

Since March 2011, the start of the Syrian uprising, the mysterious disappearance of several rooftops pigeon breeders across the land is evidence of how Syrian skies turned into a maelstrom of fire.

The cities’ rooftops, previously occupied by many kashash, started to serve as vantage points for all forms of authoritative representation and continues to be occupied by police and military presence until today in 2018.

And while the kashash has been replaced by the sniper in the major cities of Syria occupied by the regime, meanwhile, on 9 February 2015, ISIS detained and executed 15 young pigeon fanciers in the city of Raqqa and in an unprecedented act of extreme rejection they issued a statement prohibiting this special traditional practice.

As many buildings were toppled down to ground zero, this project is researching the impact of violence and injustice on the transcended relationship of Syrians with their rooftops. The curator invited artists and thinkers to lobby for reclaiming the ownership of these intimate popular spaces as safe heavens for meditation, spirituality, and personal escape.

*KASHASH* protests the right and freedom of pigeons to dance again in the Syrian skies and thus calls for reflection on today's relationship of the Syrians with their devastated cities, and conversely, with fear and authority. *KASHASH*'s message is a call for peaceful Syrian skies, free from hostile military aircrafts, a safe zone to end the bloodshed.

This dilemma among others intrigued Alma Salem to launch her *KASHASH* curatorial research. Through this unique practice of an under-represented group of pigeon breeders, it aspires to creatively disturb the global community silence about Syria, to push Freedom of expression in a solicited questioning.

Together with Syrian artists and researchers, curator Alma Salem explores the transcendent relationship of Syrians with their cities and sheds light on the traditional Syrian practice of pigeon breeding, the stories behind it and its place in the collective Syrian memory. *KASHASH*, its artworks, its artists, its researchers and its pigeons reclaim the rooftops as personal and intimate transcendental popular spaces.

*KASHASH* at BOZAR will present artistic research, an installation, a photography exhibition, short documentaries, video art, a talk and an online graffiti campaign.

A conceptual space where artists and audiences can meet, free from the limitations of geographical borders, time boundaries and censorship. It stimulates innovative digital and

virtual art forms and attempts to make visible the invisible.

Through arts and dialogue, *KASHASH* intends to break the silence by opening the discussion about issues of preserving intangible and tangible Heritage, of resisting politics of Fear, of understanding Conflict roots, calling for Freedom, Dignity and Justice to all Syrians, resisting Extremism, scandalize War Economy, stressing the universal right of Mobility, and all human and animal rights. It intends to shed light on the beauty of Syrian cities with the eyes of this fragile community of colombophiles and reclaim Beauty, Freedom, Dignity and Justice for all Syrians.

## KASHASH space artistic methodology

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This project that started in 2017 and went tour to four cities in the Netherlands: Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht in partnership with Dancing on the Edge festival, is based on Alma Salem's *Syria Sixth Space* theory:

In media arts theory, digitalism was researched in the sixties by the American media artist Randall Packer, who was dreaming of a new space that he called the *third space*. This space would represent the fusion of the physical (first space) and the remote (second space) into a networked place that can be inhabited by multiple remote users simultaneously or asynchronously (third space).

The hybrid notion of blurring the real and the virtual is expanded in the third space through distributed presence, in which the participants of the third space are in distributed physical spaces referring to a shared electronic social space. The third space extends the notion of the real and the virtual by suggesting a hybrid space that allows remote participants to engage in social relations with one another at a distance.

Nowadays, any twitter account holder can share an image that could go viral, an artist can share digital art through live streaming. At the same time Russian artist Ekaterina Nenashava was arrested in Moscow for refusing to take off her VR headset. The potential for a third space is enormous.

Nevertheless we need to differentiate between social media platforms that are a distribution tool for digital arts and a medium for sharing knowledge; a genre that is developing to embrace all art forms. And because of its powerful flexibility, feasibility, accessibility and endless technological and scientific dimensions, we started witnessing a cross-sectorial artistic experimentation where for example performing arts are being merged with film on stage.

More importantly, audiences are becoming thirsty for light, sound, touch that stimulates their senses more intensely. Today's challenge is how do we bring more valuable artistic content, more reflection and social engagement to a digital world dominated by Pokémon go?

Artists can do this by shaping innovative responses to current affairs. This is also where the new contemporary art platform *Syria Sixth Space* comes in. It offers three added fields of impact and influence. Facilitating non-traditional dialogue via both physical and non-physical virtual social platforms; Using the magical sphere of imagination and digital arts to break through conventional spaces inside cities and beyond.

With their digital arts, artists will challenge the ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity, the difficult access to Syria, and the scattered population of the diaspora; And lastly by contriving new dimensions for thought that embraces freedom of expression, science, technology, innovation, creativity, flexibility, lightness, mobility, and the transformative force of digital arts. This all to QUESTION, RESEARCH, ENGAGE, EDUCATE, SHOWCASE, MOVE MASSES, CHANGE REALITIES. The aim for *Syria Sixth Space* is to “bring people together” and to stimulate a shift on global arts movements.

## Who is KASHASH family?

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KASHASH is a on ongoing curatorial multi-disciplinary artistic research in progress that was initiated by curator Alma Salem in November 2017, gathering 22 Syrian residents in 10 countries around the world: Canada, USA, Germany, France, UK, Turkey, Lebanon, UAE, The Netherlands and Syria. Among them artists, intellectuals, journalists, heritage experts, researchers, software developers and speakers. They were invited to discuss and present artworks around the concept of *KASHASH*.

They tackled various underlying issues: from social perceptions to discrimination and citizenship, from protection of intangible heritage and collective memory to interviewing a *KASHASH* artist and looking at similarities between art and pigeon breeding; From highlighting the popular practice presence in poetry, religion books and

ancient literature to reflecting on rooftops, meditation, transcendence, to exploring boundaries between, surrealism, hallucination, dreams and nightmares; From challenging issues of *KASHASH* language, to that of conflict, pride and virility; From a specially commissioned short story in Greece for *KASHASH* to a journalistic investigation in Raqqa on the portrayal in the media of the destruction of the Syrian cities (and their rooftops); From two short documentaries (one filmed in Damascus and the second in Binnish, northern Syria) to a dictionary of the special dialect of Syrian pigeon breeders...

One year after its launch, this installment at BOZAR of *KASHASH*, hosted by Mousseem Cities Damascus, invites a new group of artists to contribute. It presents an exhibition of contemporary new artworks by Syrian artists including two newly commissioned pieces .

The artworks vary between multimedia and video arts, short documentaries, installations and photography.

*KASHASH* is dedicated to the fragility of Syrians who for the first time tested their wings, to all those who are seeking their freedom trapped between ornithophobia and colombophilia, a call to protect this practice as intangible heritage.

Over ten research papers were commissioned during the project and they will constitute the basis of a future publication of a book titled *KASHASH* and the documentary film with the same name.

# The central installation

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## ICONOSTASIS

### Alma Salem

Wooden cube, gold paint surrounded by four curtains made of pure Brocade silk fabric — brought from Damascus in 2018

My first survival moment was a rooftop accident that never happened. A death never happened to me as a young child while hiding, playing on our rooftop, parcouring on its edges, jumping from one building to another to victoriously arriving at the last terrace in our street.

As if creating this horizontal speedometric space would give the lightness I was searching for to fill my everlasting childhood Ennui of not understanding the reason of Life nor Death, a space occupied by a neighboring noisy, smelly, dirty Kashash pigeon's collection, each with a different name, imprisoned in cages.

One night, my parents were absent, and I watched the 1980 American horror film *Alligator* directed by Lewis Teague and written by John Sayles. The film set in Chicago follows a police officer and a reptile expert to track a giant murderous sewer alligator, flushed down the toilet years earlier that is attacking residents after escaping from the sewers.

After this film I couldn't go to the toilet alone because I was scared of being eaten by the Alligator, and for this I had to pee in my pants many times, especially in the dark hole of the Squat toilets of my old Damascene Palace school (Ecole des Soeurs de Besançon) when my best friend Anita wasn't around to escort me in a

mission to kill the Alligator in case it shows up. At home when my parents were too busy working and I was scared to go alone, I went up to the rooftop and peed behind the pigeons' cages of our neighbor, the Kashash.

As much as I was grateful to those pigeons for protecting me and allowing me to use their intimate place full of green yellowish bird poop, that was continually evaporating under Damascus' summer heat, I never understood at the time why they existed in cages on a modern building rooftop in Damascus, their presence added another layer of anxiety to my absurd existence.

This same Ennui continued when I started my first job at IFPO (The Near East French Institute) in Jisr Albyiad area where I spent eleven years archiving the World War II French army forces ( FFL: Forces Francaises Libres de Levant) and digitizing a collection of fifty thousand areal photos and archeological mission findings, and seven thousand maps covering the geography of what was Syria at the time.

In a small toilet in the Institute transformed into a darkroom I spent eleven years of my life meticulously archiving, digitizing, restoring, and developing photos. I was also observing every single photo detail, and the repetitions of images in a bird's-eye view over what was the land of my ancestors, their traces, their objects, and what they were proud to offer to Humanity.

For I loved being with people, my solitude in my laboratory was destroying me.

Patterns saved my sanity during these eleven years. From my window, I waited for the neighboring pigeon breeder (kashash) to fly his flock over Alafif Barada river and the roundabout near the Institute.

Another pattern was the noise of a special 'Francois' colleague who lived in a small room on

the IFPO institute rooftop. He would start random fights with everyone in the building and threw stones at a 'murder' of crows that inhabited these neighborhood rooftops like snipers. His daily conflict ended-up with a crow opening a hole of blood in his skull.

Today after 5 years of being exiled from my city Damascus, of living in a maelstrom of a daily pattern, I find myself observing Syria's shelter rooftops from afar in a bird's-eye view put down to ground Zero rubbles of solid, heavy, tons of Soviet gray color cement falling over the heads of its people, my people.

Still scared and helpless again to understand Life and Death.

Still surviving because of an accident that never happened to me...

Still screaming all the names of the people and places ... so far ... back home....

Still stuck in the last scene of the Alligator, where after waiting throughout the movie for any 'hero' to kill the monster, a camera zooms inside the toilet to discover an egg he laid in the sewer.

To save my sanity I need to call my protectors, Syria's artists, to pay our dues to Syria's pigeon fanciers, Syria's kashash, the guardians of its rooftops and their pigeons.

And to reclaim together this space as an intimate shelter for everyone, a refuge and a replica temple of our old cities ...

For this I invited the artist and Kashash Ammar AlBeik with his unique artwork entitled *Diamonds* made by excrement of his own flock of pigeons to become the Icon of my installation *Iconostasis* representing the temple of Damascus.



The Umayyad Mosque, also known as the Great Mosque of Damascus (Arabic: جامع بني أمية الكبير, Romanization: *Ġāmi' Banī 'Umayya al-Kabīr*), located in the old city of Damascus, is one of the largest and oldest mosques in the world.

After the Muslim conquest of Damascus in 634, the mosque was built on the site of a Christian basilica dedicated to John the Baptist (Yahya), honored as a prophet by Christians and Muslims. A legend dating to the 6th century holds that the building contains the head of John the Baptist. The mosque is also believed by Muslims to be the place where Jesus (Isa) will return at the End of Days.

The site is attested for as a place of worship since the Iron Age. Damascus was the capital of the Aramaean state Aram-Damascus and a large temple dedicated to the cult of Hadad-Ramman, the god of thunderstorms and rain, was erected at the site of the present-day Umayyad Mosque. The Temple of Hadad-Ramman continued to serve a central role in the city, and when the Romans conquered Damascus in 64 BCE they assimilated Hadad with their own god of thunder, Jupiter.

The Roman temple, which later became the center of the Imperial cult of Jupiter, was intended to serve as a response to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. The Temple of Jupiter would attain further additions during the early period of Roman rule of the city, mostly initiated by high priests who collected contributions from the wealthy citizens of Damascus. The eastern gateway of the courtyard was expanded during the reign of Septimius Severus (r. 193–211 CE). By the 4th century CE, the temple was especially renowned for its size and beauty. It was separated from the city by two sets of walls. The first, wider wall spanned a wide area that included a market, and the second wall surrounded the actual sanctuary of Jupiter. It was the largest temple in Roman Syria.

I wrapped the temple with pure Brocarde silk that I brought from Damascus old market to celebrate its eternal craft makers and fabrics, hoping by the contrast create between the two artworks of ICONOSTASIS and WANDERING to invite audiences to reflect about the city with its endless layers of luxury, beliefs and place in History and to define Damascus in its holistic borders not only the intra-muros but to add to its extra-muros outskirt, its devastated gardens “GHOUTA”

*KASHASH* is an homage to those who sacrificed so much to keep us, the pigeons, roaming the skies freely.

To all the keepers...

To the different shades of pain hidden between the colours of Ochre and Gold... to Damascus and its seven layers of Truth

—ALMA SALEM





## DIAMONDS

**Ammar AlBeik**

Excrements of pigeons on Canvas

Recently sewn with a blue shiny string.

Size 112 x 112 cm

When the Maestro Kashash plays his melody by flying the birds wearing their pieces of bells jewelry made of silver or gold touching the television antenna with their wings...

— the antenna is like a cord of a string instrument that the Kashash adjusts to get the different tones while listening to the sounds of the wings hitting them (sometimes their speed causes the wings to break).

The birds when suffering from this pain fly faster and we see them generally in the first row, flying and screaming while heating the air behind them for the other birds who follow (the second row).

The Kashash observes these birds and will treat their wings later, to heal them.

While the Maestro(master) of this game leads on the ground, he also decides which of the birds will lead in the sky.

The birds differ in color: they are red, black, yellow and blue. The one called *The Black Gypsy* for example, has 8 grey feathers in his wings. Another one called *Dawn* is blue with white eyes.

The Maestro Kahsash is no different from the acknowledged belated Maestro Sulhi Alwadi, the director of the Syrian National symphony Orchestra, organizing *his* 'flock'.

*Al Nawari (The Gitane)* is yellow, it is a new Damascene cross-breed, as is *The Tabashiri* (that is black with white spots).

The first time they fly while the air is pressuring them — a breeze of air coming from Mount Qassiyoun — it carries the flock to the right and to the left dancing in the sky.





{Iconostasis ذُرُوءَ أَلْمَاءَ فِي سَمَاءَ }

الذَّرَى  
المَاءَ  
المَدَّة  
السَّمَاءَ  
وَ  
السَّمَاءَ  
و واو العَطْف  
والهَمَزَيْنِ وَسُكُونِهِمَا  
وَالْقَوْسَيْنِ الْمُزَخْرَفَيْنِ بِمَيُولَاتٍ  
وَالْأَيْقُونَةَ بِحُرُوفٍ لُغَتَهَا  
تَتَابَعَاتٍ فِي السَّيْرِ وَالْمَسِيرِ  
خَرَأْنَا مَاسَنَا وَمَا مَسَّنَا مِنْ لَدُنْهُ رَحْمَتُهُ  
أَلْمَاسَنَا فِي عِظَامٍ كَبْرِيَاءَنَا  
فَلَنُبْحَثَ عَنْ رُؤْيَا بَرْوِيَّةٍ  
وَلَنُصَلِّيَ كَمَا يَحْلُو لَنَا  
صَدَقَ وَصَدَقْنَا  
فَتَعَالَى الْحَرْفُ  
نَحْوَ الْأَعْلَى السَّمَاءِ

The Kashash says to his wife: I am going-up to fly the birds because there's a breeze of air today. He might be in a bad mood so his wife would cook for him his favourite dish (Moussaka) with fried potatoes, parsley, onions and green peppers, and she will make fried Flax seeds for the birds — they adore the smell.

He goes up to the rooftop to an area called *Tayara* (the airport) made of inclined layers of sheets of cheap corrugated metal next to the laundry room to feed the birds before it's dark, they have their dinner on the light of a small bulb of lamp in the cage.

Sometimes he offers them gifts: energy bombs of salt combined with ocre, white and yellow corn, and wheat.

Abou Mahmood was the master of the profession in old Damascus, he lived near Bab el Salam. When he died his wife Oum Mahmood — who has a lot in common with your mother and my mother — started wearing a Kufia (white and black scarf) as if she was a man, so she keeps his legacy as if he were still alive as a Kashash.

He used to tell her stories about the pigeon to express his love to her saying “Today I sent the *belandyieh* or the *gargatieh* for you.”

*The Zayfeh* (the fake one) flies on her back against the sun...

Every Kashash in Damascus started this ritual as a kid in the Ommayad Mosque. They sit in its yard, throwing seeds to the birds and listening to this music of their thousands of wings flapping, even if being little, they don't understand the meaning of these birds' songs. It's like trans music... so enthralling.

And you Alma... you are like them... by doing this quest... you are searching for your temple...

—AMMAR ALBEIK



## THEY PRIMARY FEED ON SEEDS, FRUITS AND PLANTS

Khalil Younes

Video created for *KASHASH*, 2017

The detailed outer crust of existence bears witness to what was once there and now gone. In 1860, bodies were resurrected in Pompeii, plaster casts were made by felling voids frozen in time, trapped under thick and heavy layers of ash, striking and real. The ashes existence preserved their absence.

*They primarily feed on seeds, fruits, and plants* is an attempt to consolidate the voids and to find the outer crust of their surrounding existence. It is dedicated to those who exist as impressions on our outer crusts.



## REQUIEM FOR SYRIA

Khaled Akil

Six photographs on giclee print.

The six images in the series by Khaled Akil, a renowned Syrian artist, feature a Turkish Sufi performer and a white pigeon, using a hybrid technique of photography and painting. Akil explains that the collection was originally created as a prayer for a friend and animal rights activist who was killed in Syria in 2014. "While I created this series as a tribute to her, I later realized that her tragedy symbolizes the calamity that faces all Syrians, and of Syria itself. That's why I named this series 'Requiem for Syria.'"

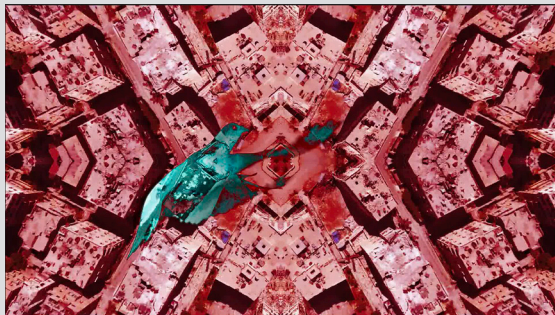
Being able to transcend negative emotions like grief, anger, and frustration, and channel them into something that is productive, inspirational, and uplifting is really the unique message that Akil tells through his art, Husen explains. "And I think that is a lesson that we can all learn."





In his statement about the collection, Akil says “It is not about war, it is about peace. Peace is the way of nature, war is man made. This series portrays the minimalism and impartiality of Sufism and nature, and above all, of humanity.”.

The calligraphy used in some works resembles the movement and the feeling of the photograph. In the photo “Requiem for Syria 2,” the calligraphy says “Love.” In “Requiem for Syria 4” the calligraphy around the dove says “I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place on earth, Wherefore I praised the dead and the one who has never been born.”



## TAWAF – WANDERING

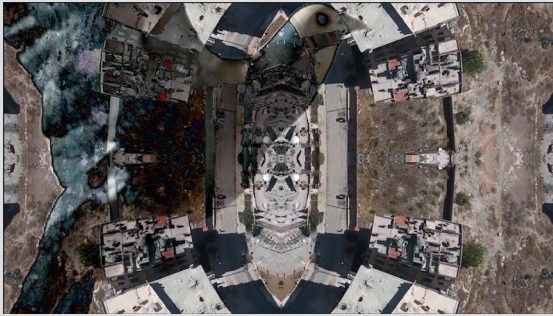
Abdullah Al-Hakwati

Video art

Drone footage courtesy of Abdullah Al-Hakawati

In this ‘psychedelic’ video we follow a pigeon’s view over an area in Aleppo where the artist was raised as a child, we see his school and a park where he used to play. This area became a front-line separating an area beheld under the regime forces (where his parents lived and where being a rebel he couldn’t go). But he used to see flocks of a Kashash’s pigeons flying across to his home, then the aircrafts started bombing the area where he is hiding and the pigeons disappeared...

Abdullah Al-Hakawati in his video art mirrors the two sides of the frontline to compare the differences. In the rebel besieged area we see a park that was turned into a burned land... while the facing parks are still green.



Al-Hakawati divides the image into four pieces reflecting the division of quarters under the many parties who are ruling in them and after the forced deportation of the areas residents. The same happened everywhere in Syria... in the majority of cities, after the sieges, those cities became haunted and devoid of life. Even the pigeons left...



## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW, PHOTOGENIC SYRIA Alma Salem

Virtual Reality, drone footage of Syria by Russian and American military.

Created for *KASHASH*, 2017

Drone footage courtesy of RT and CNN

The creative process is not just iterative; it is also recursive. It plays out “in the large” and “in the small” — in defining the broadest view and smallest details.

In the early 1950s, MIT ( Massachusetts Institute of Technology) engineer Harold Edgerton filmed a series of atomic bomb tests for the U.S. government, projecting an indelible vision of humanity’s destruction.

In this conceptual artwork Alma Salem explores the aesthetics of Destruction. Fly along with Russian and Allies air forces over the cities of Aleppo (Northern Syria), Homs (Mid-Syria), Jobar (Damascus Suburbia), Daraa (Southern Syria) and Raqqa (Eastern Syria) to have a bird’s-eye view on the “photogenic” destruction that both armies “created” and filmed with drones, as they are negotiating reconstruction “deals” today with the Syrian government.



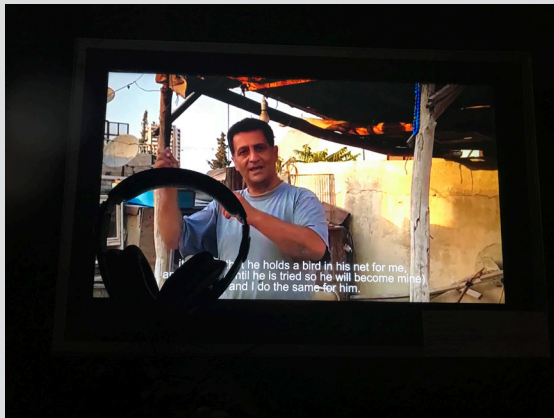


Warplanes in the airspace

## **BINNISH PIGEONS** **Abdullah Al-Hakawati**

Short documentary, 1'45  
Created for *KASHASH*, 2017

On a rooftop in Binnish in Idlib, North-Western Syria, during a Russian air raid over the nearby city of Saraqib, Abdullah Al-Hakawati filmed a flock of pigeons.



## **INHUMAN** **Anita Moucadem**

Short documentary, 4'35  
Created for *KASHASH*, 2017

Photographs  
Created for *KASHASH*, 2018

On a rooftop in the old city of Damascus in July 2017, in the short film edited by Abdullah Al-Hakawati, Anita Moucadem interviewed her neighbor kashash Sami Solmon, who shares the fascinating details of the Damascene pigeon breeding tradition.

# KASHASH

## Dissertatio

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The *KASHASH* project is based on a collection of research texts that will be published in a future publication. Below are excerpts from these texts, translated to English.

### **GIVE ME A ROOF IN BERLIN AND SEE A Conversation with Ammar El-Beik about Art and the Ability to Fly**

by Jumana AlYasri for *KASHASH*, 2017

The popular meaning connected to the word “kashash” became synonymous to the word “liar” in Syrian slang. I read some time ago, that the word “hmemati” (the one who breeds pigeons) could be derived from the word “hamam” (pigeon). I personally prefer the title “mutayyer”, derived from the word for “fly”, because it expresses the ability to control the movement of flight, as in controlling nature and instinct, which requires establishing a special and strong relationship with birds. It also has connotations to Sufism in sort of a mystical world where the fancier sets his own rules followed by the birds.

A mutayyer uses a handkerchief to push pigeons away, he can also throw stones at them to chase them away. These kinds of actions are not commendable. The fancier on the other hand, can simply make a unique sound by moving plants on the roof, stomping his feet on the ground in a certain way, or by whistling to draw the birds attention and for the flock to fly. In old Damascus, when the fanciers release their birds



simultaneously, the sky is filled with sounds of whistling. Through whistling alone, the mutayyer is able to control the movement of the flock in the sky. This way, the roof is transformed into a watch-tower, like the ones found at airports.

## THE BIRDS OF LONGING

### A short story.

by Liwa Yazji for *KASHASH*, 2017

Um Yamen swore almost 27 times to leave Abu Yamen and ask for a divorce if he wouldn't find a solution for all those pigeons! The man who had asked her to marry her was a civil engineer with a respectable job, but only 3 nights after their honeymoon in Latakia had she found out that she married the most famous pigeon breeder in the Al Qadam Asali district!

Abu Yamen told me the story and burst out with laughter as her facial expressions changed while she listened, trying not to laugh at her fate. Um Yamen has two children: Yamen and Amer — they're teenagers now. She still considering divorce if Saeed doesn't keep his promise to move his colony of pigeons to another roof and pay more attention to his family, he laughed. In 2011 he owned more than 300 birds. Um Yamen added that the price of a good bird is no less than 1000 Syrian pounds. She assured me his world would end if one of his birds would become ill or die, while finding his own children having a high fever no cause for alarm.

## THE PIGEON FANCIER BETWEEN MASCULINITY AND VIRILITY

### A literary essay.

by Dima Alchukr for *KASHASH*, 2017

The Prophet describes the one who follows the bird as being a devil, and the bird as devilish, with the difference of depicting the latter as being a female.

Al-Damiri describes this in his renowned book *Life of Animals*, but somewhat downplays this negative depiction of the pigeon as a devil in chapter 1, page 262:

*“Bin Habban said after mentioning this Hadith: he was addressed as devil because he who plays with pigeons, can barely refrain from sin, and a sinner is described as a devil, Allah almighty said the devils of Jinn and humans, and a pigeon was called a devil due to its affecting cause”*

In contrast, Bin Taymiyyah's interpretation in *Jurisprudence* chapter 8, page 341:

*“He described him as a devil, and that his deeds are deeds of a devil. And said of a pigeon: it's a devil, see how a person is fascinated by it. I say that it has nothing to do with the effect itself, but it is the person who is to blame, he rather described it with that due to the fact that it occupies him as being the source of diversion.”*

## KASHASH

### A research on pigeon breeding and discrimination.

by Hassan Abbas for *KASHASH*, 2017

Articulation of the word reveals the stereotypical public misconceptions regarding the colombo-ophile. And it is, as every stereotypical conception, a mechanism of thought and cognition, easy to use. It assists in describing an act, performed by someone, going back to a general attribute, shared by the group which the user belongs to, and not by going back to the circumstances and conditions that were in the origin of the act. The word gets articulated and filled with what the group holds of delusions about the colombophile without differentiating between his true nature and the common fabrications about him.

A stereotypical conception has its own characteristics that defines it from other mechanisms of cognitive thinking. It is a simplified conception that places core unique attributes for the group 'We', and other attributes for the subject of 'the Judged.' Here the colombophile becomes 'the Other' that does not resemble 'Us'. For the colombophile is a conniving thug... and we would have none of his business.

## THE KASHASH OF RAQQA

### An investigative report.

by Sarmad Aljilane for *KASHASH*, 2017

Military operations threatened humans before animals, and because pigeons were kept on the roofs, they were exposed to danger even more. As military operations intensified, the roofs of houses became a favored place for the Syrian regime snipers. Pigeon keeping was strictly forbidden in many regions, and many young men were targeted by bullets as they were taking care of the pigeons on their homes rooftops.

The situation became even worse after the Syrian regime launched its ground operations, which included theft of the pigeon houses, and many pigeons were slaughtered and eaten after converting their houses into fixed military points for snipers.

After ISIS took control over Deir ez-Zorr province, it issued a decision on 9 February 2015 that prohibited pigeon keeping under penalty of punishment, which included financial fines, imprisonment and flagellation by al-Hisbah — the Islamic Police of ISIS. It claimed that the dovecotes on the rooftops revealed habitation, and that it acted on other civilians' concerns. Additionally, the main argument was that pigeon keeping was a waste of time and a leisure for young men who should rather join the fighting instead. This hobby became a crime with a penalty as severe as death. ISIS later executed 15 pigeon breeders.

## WHAT IS A KASHASH? WHAT DID HE BECOME? AND WHY DON'T WE SEE HIM ANYMORE IN THE CITIES SKIES ?

A reflection on Kashash and the rooftops

by Hanan Kassab Hassan for *KASHASH*, 2017

Being marginal, talking to the birds, looking for omens, predictions and answers in their flight as the oracles of antiquity did. Rather than looking at the ground in search of treasures, his eyes are turned to the blue of the sky to watch his turtle-doves. He breaks the prohibition, breaks the laws of society when he invades the space normally reserved for women. But the Kashash is not a voyeur. He does not go on the rooftops of houses to watch women who tend the laundry to dry, or who mix jams exposed to the sun. He has other concerns than the contemplation of women, he prefers the observation of his doves that go to heavens, and are quick to return to him as faithful lovers.

Being on the threshold, he embodies the “entre”: he lives on horseback between two worlds and two realities that oppose and complement each other: the inside and the outside; the earth and the sky; the domestic world of the family and the natural world of the elements; the society of men and the company of birds. He oscillates between the thwarting of social rules, and the respect of a pact of honor that the kashashes invent among themselves, and for them, as do the knights in a duel. He has the reputation of a man disoriented, disoriented, unfocused, but in reality, he is a tender and passionate being who does not hurt anyone, and who treats his pigeons with love and tenderness.

# Contributing artist biographies

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## ALMA SALEM

Curator and Cultural Advisor

Founder of the Freedom Museum Canada

Alma Salem is an independent curator and cultural advisor, an international expert in producing hundreds of cultural projects across all arts forms.

Her work has spanned international cultural relations, heritage protection, visual, digital and new media arts, performing arts, cultural policies, cultural Leadership, creative economies, industries and entrepreneurship, arts for development of communities and social change, arts in conflict, arts strategies, management, monitoring and evaluation, coaching and mentorship for artists and cultural institutions, capacity building, training and educational curricula design, arts grants management and judging and cultural translations.

She is a recognized cultural militant, working with the British council from 2006 to 2015 and was the MENA regional arts programme manager. Before that she worked at the IFPO, the French Institute of the Levant for over ten years. She is a fellow of DEVOS Institute for Arts Management at Maryland University in Washington DC, the Founder of Alma Salem Bureau for Curation and Cultural Advisory, and Syria Sixth Space Contemporary Arts Touring Curatorial platform. Alma Salem is the founder the Freedom Museum registered in Montreal Canada.

Read more about her artistic work on [almasalem.com](http://almasalem.com)

## KHALED AKIL

Born in 1986, Khaled Akil grew up in Aleppo city and is currently based in Istanbul. He's a self-taught mixed media artist who holds a Bachelor degree in Law and Political Sciences.

His work focuses primarily on critiquing war, religion and social turmoil in the Middle East. He is best known for his controversial topics pointing out taboos in Islamic and Middle Eastern societies.

Khaled Akil's work was exhibited in multiple solo and group shows in Syria, Turkey, the UK, Canada and the US, among others.

## KHALIL YOUNES

Khalil Younes is a visual artist and writer recognized for challenging social norms and the desensitization of society. Employing the use of a variety of media — ranging from time-based media, to illustration and writing — he aims for the essence of the human experience. With a human society oversaturated with sensorial and emotional stimuli, the rate of socio-emotional development is rapidly changing, with the inverse effect of dulling responses and causing various levels of social desensitization. Through his art, Younes diligently toils on re-designing social and emotional stimuli to motivate personal awareness and self-resensitization. Born in Damascus, Syria in 1983, he studied experimental film and video at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design of Boston in 2008 and received his BFA in cinematography from Columbia College of Chicago in 2010. Younes' art pieces are showcased in both private and public art collections in the US and Europe, and his illustrations have been featured in many renowned magazines and newspapers such as the Le Monde and Natural History Magazine.

Two of his pieces were also acquired by the British National Museum in London. His first exhibition was in Damascus Syria, Ashtar Gallery in 2006. Younes has since participated in many group shows, including *Syria Art for Freedom* Gdansk, Germany 2011; *#Withoutwords* London 2013; *Syria's Art of Resistance* Rundetarn, Copenhagen 2013; *Culture in Defiance* Amsterdam, Holland; Institut des Cultures de l'Islam Paris, France; 2012. Younes was also a coauthor of many publications, including *Syria Speaks Art* and *Culture from the Frontline* which showcases the work of artists and writers who are challenging the culture of violence in Syria, published in 2014 and comprising a collection of essays, art projects. His work was also featured in a book titled *Syrie, l'art en armées* which showcase art work related to wars. [khalilyounes.com](http://khalilyounes.com)

## AMMAR ALBEIK

Ammar al-Beik, an 'ex-artist, ex-footballer, a pigeon breeder, trying to understand the driving centrifugal force of the ball and the game', creates conceptual works that embody his thoughts, seeking to create an energy that can be transmitted telepathically. A film director, on his own time, al-Beik explores details of his surroundings as he seeks to reveal the complexities of human relationships through his work, often alluding to current sociopolitical issues and how they reflect on the human soul. He considers art as an intellectual rebellion tool society is subject to, one to which there are strict philosophical rules aimed at revealing the difference between good and evil.

## ABDULLAH AL-HAKAWATI

Born in Hama in 1978, Abdullah Al-Hakawati moved to Aleppo with his family in 1983. He participated in many theatrical plays in the city of Aleppo, the last of which was the play *The Clown* in 2011. He was arrested in March that year, the first month of the civil uprising in Syria, during rehearsals. After his release he continued portraying and documenting the civil and popular movement in the city of Aleppo. He moved to northern Syria after his second detention at the end of 2011 and began training activists on photography and media reporting beside taking part in organizing the Syrian street festival. By the end of 2012, he began filming and directing short documentaries, among them *Mortar*, *Euphrates*, *Under the Rubble*, *A Normal Day*, *Peaceful*, *I don't hear the sound of bullets* and *Tattoo*. He also took part in shooting and producing the film *False Labor* in 2013.

Damascus crafts and heritage. She created photography and filming materials for *KASHASH*.

## ANITA MOUCCADEM

Anita Moucadem is a renowned retail designer and events organiser with over 20 years of experience working in diverse prestigious corporations in Syria and Dubai, among them Reebok, Sheraton, Swatch, Droubi sports club and Patchi chocolate company, where she held positions as retail expo representation and shop manager, and brand concepts and boutiques display designer. She also organized sponsorship, marketing, media and PR events. In 2014 Anita opened *Anita's Attik* her own antiques and design boutique shop in Old Damascus. Later she moved to Dubai where she continues her work in designing and exhibiting.

Anita was born in an old Damascene house, and she is knowledgeable and passionate about

# Acknowledgements

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Contributors to the first *KASHASH* tour to the Netherlands in partnership between Alma Salem and Dancing on the Edge in November 2017 are in alphabetical order:

**HASSAN ABBAS** (academic and writer)  
**RASHA ABBAS** (writer)  
**BASEL ABDO** (software developer)  
**ZIAD ADWAN** (theatre practitioner)  
**DIMA AL-CHUKR** (critic and writer)  
**ABED AL-HAKAWATI** filmmaker)  
**SARMAD AL-JILANE** (activist and journalist)  
**ABDULLAH ALKAFRI** (playwright, executive manager of Ettijahat for Culture)  
**JUMANA AL-YASIRI** (performing arts manager and researcher)  
**KHALED BARAKEH** (visual artist)  
**IBRAHIM FAKHRI** (graffiti/visual artist)  
**OMAR IMAM** (photographer)  
**HANAN KASSAB HASSAN** (art scholar)  
**ANITA MOUCCADEM** (filming material)  
**MARIEKE ODEKERKEN** (photographer)  
**ASTRID RIJBROEK** (former director of the Netherlands Institute for Academic Studies in Damascus NIASD)  
**MEY SEIFAN** (dancer and choreographer)  
**LIWAA YAZJI** (filmmaker, writer and poet)  
**KHALIL YOUNES** (visual artist)  
**NATASJA VAN'T WESTENDE** (director of Dancing on The Edge festival)  
**DIMA WANNOUS** (writer and critic)  
**ESTHER WIENESE** (writer)  
**DANCING ON THE EDGE TEAM**

Contributing artists to the second *KASHASH* tour at BOZAR, Brussels in partnership with Moussem Cities Damascus in February 2018 are in alphabetical order:

**AMMAR ALBEIK**  
**KHALED AKIL**  
**ABDULLAH HAKAWATI**  
**KHALIL YOUNES**  
**MOUSSEM & BOZAR TEAMS**





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