

PRIVATE AIR

LUXURY HOMES



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CLOCKWISE:
Yuval Wolfson; Leila Pazooki, *Democracy*, 2014
Neon tube installation; and Leila Heller

TRADING MILK & HONEY FOR APPLE PIE

Middle Eastern Art and the American Collector

By: Gina Samarotto

The powerful effect Middle Eastern culture has upon the United States is indisputable – and growing. With a steady staccato of interest, the region’s impact booms and reverberates with a rhythm that has yet to reach crescendo. And nowhere is that music heard quite so loudly as it is in the art world.

Fueled in no small part by world politics, the international attention focused on the Middle East has helped put the region into the forefront. From the ateliers of Turkey to Art Dubai and all points in between, the Middle East has stepped out and into the spotlight of the art world.

On an intimate, personal level, the growing interest shown by Americans for Middle Eastern art is not only luring collectors to visit those far off lands where the art is born; it’s also drawing a growing number of prominent, Middle Eastern artisans to the United States. And for those American-bound artists, the increased interest defines not only their work, but also the path their lives take.

Case in point: Israeli painter Yuval Wolfson. The artist is trading his native land of milk and honey for a slice of apple pie. Not content with merely touring the United States, Wolfson is in the process of moving his studio and family from Tel Aviv to America; just one of a growing number of artists who has decided to bring his work – literally and figuratively – to US collectors.

“There is definitely more Middle Eastern art being collected by Americans,” Wolfson shared. “I’ve had American collectors interested in my work for many years and I’m very appreciative of them.”

Indeed, the growth of Wolfson’s American-based market spurred his decision to start a new life on US soil. “I love Israel, it has been my home – but being an artist in Tel Aviv is difficult,” Wolfson explains. “Living in the United States will give me the ability to be closer to the collectors, closer to the galleries that offer my art, and closer to the business of being an artist.”

The overall interest in Middle Eastern art by

American collectors comes as little surprise to Iranian-born Leila Heller who oversees the two New York-based, internationally renowned galleries that bear her name. With an elegant finger placed squarely on the pulse of this artistic, seismic shift, Heller is well known for her knowledge and support of Middle Eastern artists.

“The reality is that Leila, being from Iran, was well aware of the developing interest in art from that region of the world,” says gallery director Daniel Hamparsumyan. “There is more art coming from Middle Eastern regions and in the United States there is growing interest for that art. While the Middle Eastern market does not necessarily define the gallery, we understand the trends.”

“The United States is the future for me, it’s the future for many artists from Israel and throughout the Middle East,” says Wolfson. “Here, I can have a life that puts me in touch with the people who collect my art. Being in the United States lets me connect in a way that isn’t possible in Israel. Israel will always be my past, but the United States will be my future.” ✈