

## Bio //

**Zena el Khalil believes in the positive impact that art can have on the world.** Born year of the Dragon, she is a visual artist, writer and Nāda yoga instructor based in Beirut. Her work includes mixed media paintings, installations and performance that focus on creating a culture of peace through love, compassion, forgiveness and empathy. She holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts in NYC, a Bachelor of Graphic Design from the American University of Beirut and a 200 RYT teaching certificate from the Yoga Alliance. El Khalil exhibits internationally, including New York, San Francisco, Miami, London, Paris, Tokyo, and Dubai. She has also held solo exhibitions in Lagos, London, Munich, Turin and Beirut.

Zena also conducts a yearly performance entitled, *The Pink Bride of Peace*, where she participates in the Beirut International Marathon wearing a big pink wedding dress. She uses this opportunity to pair up with local NGOs to raise awareness on issues in Lebanon pertaining to women's rights, and to spread love, peace and positivity in a region that is volatile and unstable. The performance started in 2003 and continues to this day. Zena has also created two other performance-based projects that aim to spread peace on a national scale throughout Lebanon, including *Reading for Peace* and *Healing Lebanon*.

Zena is also the founder of xanadu\*, a non-profit art collective, began in New York City as a direct response to the 9-11 attacks; el Khalil set up this platform as a gallery space, to help Arab artists during a time of extreme xenophobia in NYC. In 2006 in Beirut, she curated the first all young women art exhibition entitled "Shu Tabkha, Ya Mara? (What's Cooking, Woman?) in partnership with the International Museum of Women and co-curated "Nafas Beirut", an exhibit that opened one month after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006, featuring works made during the attacks. Through xanadu\*, she also publishes young poets and comic book artists in Lebanon, also publishing the first four editions of *Samandal Comics Magazine*. Though her new project, the Ātman Institute, Zena is curating cultural workshops and concerts pertaining to Nāda Yoga, the yoga of sound and vibrations.

During the 2006 invasion of Lebanon, Zena was one of the first largely followed Middle Eastern bloggers; her writings published in the international press, including the BBC, CNN, and Der Spiegel. The entire Guardian G2 supplement in July was dedicated to her blog, Beirut Update. Her writing was also included in the anthology, *Lebanon, Lebanon*, published by Saqi Books and *Beirut Noir*, published by Akashic Books. Zena's novel, *Beirut, I Love You*, published in 2008 is translated in several languages including Italian, Spanish, Swedish, and Portuguese. While working on adapting her book into a feature film, she won production awards from the Torino Film Lab, the Italian Ministry of Culture and European MEDIA Fund.

**In May 2008, el Khalil was invited by the Nobel Peace Center to speak in a conference on freedom of expression over the internet.**

El Khalil is regularly invited to lecture about her work. Some events include, *The Guardian Hay Festival: Segovia*, Spain; *the Edinburgh International Book Festival*, UK; *the Hay-On-Wye Festival of Literature*, Wales, UK; the University of Westminster, London UK; the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), UK; The Leighton House, UK; the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University. Her work and projects have been covered by The New York Times, El Pais, The Guardian, The Financial Times, LA Times, Spiegel Online, La Stampa, Repubblica, Time Out Magazine, and the Frankfurter Allgemeine, to name a few. She has also held several radio interviews with the BBC and has been featured on Al Jazeera's arts program, "Artsworld".

**In 2012, Zena was selected to be a TED Fellow, and has since given a few TED and TEDx talks.**

In 2016, Zena graduated from the first program in the world, certified by the Yoga Alliance, devoted entirely to the practice of sacred sound and subtle vibrations. She is from the first class of graduates. She lives in Beirut and her daily mantra is Gandhi's "be the change you wish to see in the world."

## CV //

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### EDUCATION:

- 2016 200 RYT Nada Yoga, Certified Instructor, Yoga Alliance, Rishikesh, India
- 2002 MFA Fine Arts, School of Visual Arts. New York, NY, USA
- 1999 BGD Graphic Design, The American University of Beirut. Beirut, Lebanon

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

- 2017 *Sacred Catastrophe : Healing Lebanon*, Beirut. Curated by Beatrice Merz & Janine Maamari
- 2014 *from Mirfaq to Vega*, Giorgio Persano Gallery, Turin, Italy
- 2012 *It's Not The End of The World: Beirut, I Love You: A Work in Progress*, Fondazione Merz, Turin
- 2010 *Ou Ali Mama3ou Khabar*, Galerie Tanit, Munich, Germany  
*Ou Ali Mama3ou Khabar*, Espace Kettaneh Kunigk, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2009 *A'salam Aleykum!*, Paratissima 5.2, The Waldensian Church of Turin, Turin, Italy  
*A'salam Aleykum!*, Meteorite in Giardino, Fondazione Merz, Torino, Italy
- 2008 *Maybe, One Day Beirut Will Love Me Back*, Berardi-Sagharchi Projects, London, England  
*But, I Can't Let Go*, Galerie Tanit, Munich, Germany
- 2006 *I Love You*, Espace SD, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2004 *Wahad Areese, Please*, Le Laboratoire, Espace SD, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2003 *Of Love and War*, Signature Art Gallery, Lagos, Nigeria

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

- 2017 *Stories of Stories*, Lebanese American University, Byblos, Lebanon. Curated by Joumana Ibrahim.  
*Dubai Art Fair*, Giorgio Persano Gallery, UAE
- 2016 *Abu Dhabi Art Fair*, Giorgio Persano Gallery, UAE
- 2015 *New Positions*, Art Cologne 2015, Germany  
*Fine Acts*, TED, Vancouver, Canada  
*Art Love New York*, New York, NY. Curated by Nino Azzi  
*Abu Dhabi Art Fair*, Giorgio Persano Gallery, UAE
- 2014 *Artissima*, Giorgio Persano Gallery, Turin Art Fair, Italy
- 2013 *Beyond The Cloth: The Kafiye Project*, WhiteBox, New York. Curated by Hala A. Malak  
TED Fellows Retreat, Whistler, Canada  
ART 13, Olympia Grand Hall, London UK
- 2012 *Arab Express*, Mori Art Museum, Japan  
*Le Corps Decouvert*, Institute du Monde Arabe, Paris, France  
*Art Is The Answer*, Villa Empain & the Boghossian Foundation, Brussels  
*Sovereign Asian Art Prize*, Singapore & Hong Kong
- 2011 *Subtitled; With Narratives From Lebanon*; Royal College of Art, London. Curated by Juliana Khalaf.  
*Beirut ReBirth*. Beirut Exhibition Center. Lebanon. Curated by Janine Maamari.  
*Freedom To Create Prize*. Ana Tzarev Gallery, NYC.  
*Freedom To Create*. Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, Mumbai.  
*Freeome to Create*. National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo.  
*Strike Oppose*. Barajeel Art Foundation. Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE  
*Political Patterns*, ifa-Gallery, Berlin and Stuttgart, Germany. Curated by Sabine Vogel.
- 2010 *Zoom Contemporary Art Fair*. Miami, USA.  
*Freedom To Create Prize*. Cairo Opera House, Egypt.  
*All About Beirut*, White Box, Munich, Germany. Curated by Joy Mardini  
*About The City*, Castello di San Michele, Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy. Curated by Daniele Ratti
- 2009 *Golden Gates*, 46 Rue de Sévigné, Paris, France. Curated by Daniela da Prato  
*Beirut Live*, Vibe Live, London, UK  
*Hopes And Doubts*, Fondazione Merz, Torino, Italy. Curated by Costantino D'Orazio

- 2008 *Hopes And Doubts*, The Dome, Beirut, Lebanon. Curated by Costantino D’Orazio  
*Together*, National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan
- 2007 *The Resilient Landscape*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Paddington, Australia  
*More Light Than Death Could Bear*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon  
*Red Cross Royal Gala Ball*, The Old Billingsgate, London  
*Ana ‘Njassa Al Fan (I Pear Art)*, Dialogpunkt Deutsch Tripoli, Lebanon
- 2006 *Pure Pop*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon  
*Re\*Birth Lebanon*, Dazed and Confused Gallery, London  
*I Love Beirut*, Adam Street Private Members Club, London  
*Nafas Beirut*, Espace SD, Beirut, Lebanon  
*Shu Tabkha, Ya Mara? (What’s Cookin’, Woman?)*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon  
*Imagining Ourselves*, International Museum of Women, San Francisco, USA
- 2005 *He Rests, He Has Traveled*, Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, UAE
- 2004 *Garbagilla*, Sculpture collaboration with Greenpeace, Martyr’s Square, Beirut, Lebanon  
*First Annual Comic and Animation Forum*, American University of Beirut, Lebanon  
*Introducing Palestine*, AFSC Friends House, Pasadena, California, USA  
*The Wedding Project*, 65 Hope Street Gallery, Brooklyn, NY  
*See Williamsburg*, Annual Central Williamsburg Arts Festival, Brooklyn, NY  
*Eat Me*, 65 Hope Street Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2003 *24e Salon d’Automne*, Musee Surssock, Beirut, Lebanon  
*The Vending Project*, ArtLink-Yanaka, Tokyo, Japan  
*Bayshore Festival of the Arts*, The Firehouse Gallery, Bayshore, NY  
*Falastine: Artists Against Occupation*, Ofuroya: Contemporary Art Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2002 *ArtToy*, Gallery Mouri, Ginza, Tokyo, Japan  
*The Armory Show*, New York, NY

#### SELECTED PUBLIC SPEAKING / WORKSHOPS:

- 2017 *Can Art Change the World*, Lebanese American University, Byblos, Lebanon  
*Can Art Change the World*, American International School, Lagos, Nigeria  
*Nāda Yoga Workshop*, International Yoga Festival, Rishikesh, India
- 2015 *TEDxHyderabad*, TEDx Talk, India
- 2014 *TEDxLSE*, TEDx Talk, London School of Economics, UK
- 2013 *Friday Late*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK  
*Institute Talk & Artist in Residence*, New York University Abu Dhabi, UAE  
*Arab Spring, Arab Fall*. Speaker, TED Fellows Retreat, Canada
- 2012 *TEDxAmsterdam Women*, TEDx Talk, The Netherlands  
**TED: Technology, Entertainment & Design**, Fellow Talk, Long Beach, LA, USA
- 2011 *Subtitled; With Narratives From Lebanon*; Panel Speaker, Royal College of Arts, UK
- 2010 *SOAS, School of Oriental and African Studies*; Guest Speaker. London, UK  
*The Leighton House, Nour Festival of Arts*; Guest Speaker. London, UK  
*Inaugural AUB Alumni Literary Festival*; Invited Speaker, American University of Beirut, Lebanon
- 2009 *The Guardian Hay Festival: Segovia*, Segovia, Spain; Invited Speaker  
*Edinburgh International Book Festival*, Edinburgh UK; Invited Speaker  
*Hay-On-Wye Festival of Literature*, Wales, UK; Invited Speaker
- 2008 **Nobel Peace Center, Oslo, Norway**; Invited Speaker, “Freedom of Expression- How Free Is the Internet”, Panel Discussion with Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia

#### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

- 2015 *Beirut Noir*, Akashic Books, Edited by Iman Humaidan
- 2012 *Nowhere Near A Damn Rainbow: Unsanctioned Writing from the Middle East*. The Poeticians  
Volume 1, Edited by Hind Shoufani
- 2011 *Arabesque 1 & 2: Graphic Design From the Arab World and Persia*, Ben Wittner & Sascha Thoma

- 2009 *New Vision: Arab Contemporary Art in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Edited by Hossein Amirsadeghi, Salwa Mikdadi and Nada Shabout, Thames & Hudson, 2009  
*My City: Beirut, I Love You*, by Zena el Khalil, *Canvas Magazine*, April 2009
- 2008 *Beirut, I Love You: A Memoir*, by Zena el Khalil, Published by Saqi Books  
*Hopes And Doubts*, Exhibition catalog. Published by Fondazione Merz  
*Maybe One Day Beirut Will Love Me Back*, Exhibition catalog, October 2008
- 2007 *Project Talib - Intercultural Type Research*, EPS51, 2007  
*Zoom In / Zoom Out*, Edited by Partizan Publik, Amsterdam, 2007
- 2006 *Lebanon, Lebanon; From Beirut, With Love*, Edited by Anna Wilson, Saqi Books  
*Shu Tabkha Ya Mara? (What's Cooking, Woman?)*, Exhibit catalog, 2006  
*Imagining Ourselves*, Anthology produced by the International Museum of Women

#### **ART CURATING EXPERIENCE:**

- 2016 Curator: Reading for Peace, Abandoned Ibrahim Shaker Palace, Aley, Lebanon
- 2009 Co-Curator: *Ricordando Cesare Roccati*, Fabbrica delle E di Libera, Turin, Italy  
 Curator: *Beirut Live*, Vibe Live, London, UK
- 2008 Co-Curator: *8.8.8*. Experimental Music and Visual Art, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2007 Co-Curator: *Khatt Fonts: Matching Amsterdam - Beirut*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon  
 Curator: *More Light Than Death Could Bear*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon  
 Co-Curator: *Ana 'Njassa Al Fan (I Pear Art)*, Dialogpunkt Deutsch Tripoli, Lebanon
- 2006 Co-Curator: *Nafas Beirut*, Espace SD, Beirut, Lebanon  
 Curator: *Shu Tabkha Ya Mara? (What's Cooking, Woman?)*, Art Lounge, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2004- Director and Chief Curator, xanadu\*, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2003-5 Director and Chief Curator, xanadu\*, New York, NY
- 2003 Co-Curator: *Palestine: Art of Resistance*, Tribes Gallery, New York, NY
- 2002 Co-Curator: *Williamsburg Bridges Palestine*, Williamsburg Art & Historical Center, Brooklyn, NY

#### **AWARDS/HONORS:**

- 2015 New Positions, Art Cologne, Participant
- 2012 TED Fellow  
 Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Finalist
- 2011 Torino Film Lab, Winner of Jury Award and Audience Award  
 Freedom To Create Prize, Commended
- 2002 Masters of Fine Arts Tuition Grant, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY

#### **SELECTED PROJECTS:**

##### **The American Druze Foundation Endowment of Druze and Arab Studies, High Donor**

I aided in the creation of the Endowment of Druze and Arab Studies at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS) at Georgetown University. This is the first endowed research fund in the world dedicated primarily and essentially to producing new—or enhancing existing— academic knowledge about the Druze at a premier US institution of higher learning, with a top-ranked graduate program in contemporary Arab studies and a renowned doctoral program in Middle Eastern/North African history. The practical objectives of the endowed fund are to encourage academic and cultural initiatives that investigate, interpret, document and promote knowledge about the Druze in the arts and social sciences. I am actively following the evolution and content of this program, participating in annual meetings and conferences.

**The Ātman Institute, FOUNDER, TEACHER, CURATOR 2016-Present**

Mission: The Ātman Institute is a collective dedicated to the production of events, concerts, exhibitions, workshops that focus on creating a culture of peace through empathy, exchange and self-awareness. Projects have included Nada Yoga workshops, Indian Classical Music concert, and yoga and art workshops for refugees. I have invited teachers from India to give workshops and lectures in Lebanon. I was appointed by the UNHCR in Lebanon to curate workshops and concert for World Refugee Day in 2016.

**xanadu\*, FOUNDER, 2003-Present**

Mission: xanadu\* supports young/emerging/underrepresented artists, writers and musicians by providing a platform to create, produce and execute their work. Its mission is manifested through art exhibitions, lecture series, poetry readings, performances, publications and chess education. xanadu\* is currently based in Beirut, Lebanon, with a small extension in New York City. The asterisk translates to “a beautiful place”. <http://xanaduproductions.net>

**The Maya Ghannoum Project, FOUNDER, 2007-Present**

The goal of the Maya Ghannoum Project, started in 2007, is to support young writers, poets, illustrators and comic book artists by helping to produce and publish their work.

<http://xanaduproductions.net/mgp/publishing-mgp.html>

**Imagining Ourselves: A Global Generation of Women. International Museum of Women, USA GLOBAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER 2005-2006**

Imagining Ourselves launched on International Women’s Day, March 8, 2006. It reached out to a new generation of women—the one billion women between the ages of 20 and 40—answering the question, “What defines your generation?” Through an online exhibit, a series of global gatherings, and a new book, Imagining Ourselves provided resources and opportunities for women to create change in their lives, in their communities, and in their world.

I was responsible for trend assessment and advice on creation of content, as well as editorial feedback for the Virtual Exhibit, solicitation of partners and organizations in assigned regions, active international marketing and outreach programs, organization of global gatherings and other events related to the Imagining Ourselves project. I was also responsible to communicate the needs of the Lebanese community in relation to the IO project. [www.imow.org](http://www.imow.org)

**Al Jisser: CO-FOUNDER & CURATOR, 2001-2003**

The mission of Al Jisser is to bring Arab artists to international attention. It was founded in New York City in April of 2001. Our first project “Williamsburg Bridges Palestine” (2002) was held at the Williamsburg Art and Historical Center. I was co-curator along with Samia Halaby and we exhibited works from 50 Palestinian artists. Included works by Emily Jacir, Annemarie Jacir, Alexandra Handal, Raeda Saadeh, Sleiman Mansour, Mustafa al Hallaj, Hasan Hourani and Rana Bishara. [www.aljisser.org](http://www.aljisser.org)