

ELLE

CULTURE
MAY 2011



It's the Spring of Revolutions. While we are still trying to make sense of this tide of upheaval taking the region by storm, there are already some intriguing books out there on what has made these changes possible. Blogistan looks at the power of the Internet that has empowered pro-democracy activists from Iran and well beyond. Cinephiles will have their eyes glued on the French Riviera for this month's glitzy Festival de Cannes, which never misses the chance to get politically engaged; last year it embraced imprisoned Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahai – who will it be this year? And in the spirit of revolution, London's Victoria and Albert Museum is devoting a retrospective to one of the most revolutionary and visionary of fashion designers – Yohji Yamamoto.



May 2011 CALENDAR



2 PhotoWorld Dubai is the place to be this week for photography buffs. There are also free daily workshops and seminars at the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

photoworld-dubai.com

3 The Metropolis Association for Art Cinema, in collaboration with Samandal magazine, is organizing the second edition of its animation film festival, Beirut Animated, at Metropolis Cinema in Beirut.

metropoliscinema.net

6 If you haven't passed by Dubai's latest art gallery Lawrie-Shabibi (opened by the former founder of Art Dubai), then their new exhibition 'Full Metal Jacket' devoted to the rather surrealist paintings of Iranian artist Shahpour Pouyan is well worth a visit.

On until May 18th. lawrieshabibi.com

11 The 64th Cannes film festival opens tonight with Robert de Niro as its president. The opening film is Woody Allen's latest 'Midnight in Paris' starring Rachel McAdams, Adrien Brody, Owen Wilson and...Carla Bruni-Sarkozy.

festival-cannes.com

11 A night at the museum...Europe's art institutions open their doors to the public after sunset! If you're in Europe, why not give it a try – the event has been hugely popular since its creation in 2005.

nuitdesmusees.culture.fr

16 In Jordan, swing by Think Green, the fourth symposium dedicated to building a greener environment, to learn more about eco solutions in the kingdom.

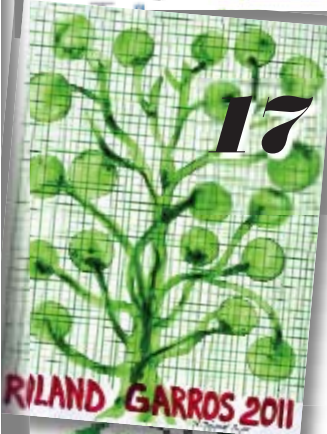
thinkgreen.org

24 If you happen to be in the Lebanese capital, get inspiration for your own garden at the annual Garden Show & Spring Festival, held each year in Beirut's Hippodrome. This year marks the 8th edition of this popular event.

the-gardenshow.com

26 With the Chinese buying more Louis Vuitton handbags and Château Lafitte wine than ever, you can bet they're also investing in art. Check out the very best at the Hong Kong International Art Fair.

hongkongartfair.com



ZOOM ON...

BLOGISTAN

When you think that Wael Ghonim, the 30 year old Egyptian many credit for starting the “day of rage” that changed Egypt’s history, wants to write a book about the “revolution 2.0” and hopes to meet Mark Zuckerberg to personally thank him for creating Facebook, you realize that something in the last few years has changed. As one reporter wryly noted, you can now simply click on Facebook’s ‘I Like This’ button to support a movement or a party. That’s a far cry from the way political momentum was garnered just a few years ago. Enter *Blogistan*, a book much talked about in political circles, that tracks the 2009 Iranian Green Revolution and its pioneering use of sites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to disseminate news to the world, at



a time when foreign journalists were barred from covering Iran. What the author tries to answer is this simple question: has the Internet become a credible public square? And will the dissident voices of the young protesters manage to overthrow the regime like it has recently done elsewhere in the Middle East? Interestingly, the number of Facebook users Iran and Egypt has is

by far less than other Middle Eastern countries, which proves the point that though the medium has changed, you only need a small group of thinkers to start a revolution.

Blogistan: The Internet and Politics in Iran, by Annabelle Sreberny and Gholam Khiabany, I.B. Tauris.

WHO'S ON FACEBOOK IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

UAE – 45%
Bahrain – 34 %
Qatar – 33%
Lebanon – 23 %
Libya – 3.9 %
Iraq 1.2 %
Syria 1.07 %
Yemen 0.74 %
Source – Dubai School of Government

Top 3 books

THE CLOUD MESSENGER

The author of ‘Another Gulmohar Tree’, the Pakistani novel shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize, has released a grown-up novel set between England, India, Italy and Pakistan. A love trio unfolds as the restless Mehran struggles to find himself, lost between several worlds. While he discovers and tries to overcome the trials of love, he sends ‘clouds of messages to other places’ in his free time. This elegant story has something very cinematographic and very European about it, and yet the character’s malaise brings us back to the conflicted east where colonialism and exile have left individuals with a broken identity.

The Cloud Messenger, by Aamer Hussein, Telegram.

ARIFT IN TIME

Acclaimed Palestinian lawyer and author Raja Shehadeh writes a simple yet powerful story about his great uncle, showing how history in this region has taken sinuous and fateful turns. From the days of the Ottomans until today, the Palestinians have been unable to control their own destiny. Yet it is not for lack of trying, as Shehadeh explains using his ancestor. The idealistic and independent minded journalist Najib was opposed to the Ottoman Empire entering the First

World War, and had to go in hiding to escape the authorities in his own country. Shehadeh traces Najib’s footsteps in a territory largely transformed and renamed by the Israelis. Through perseverance and luck, he manages to fill in the gaps, and with it, offers us a very interesting window into a mostly forgotten Palestinian history.

A Rift in Time, by Raja Shehadeh, Profile Books).

NEW PERSIAN COOKING

Two Iranian foodies Jila Dana-Haeri and Shahrzad Ghorashian have teamed up to create a beautiful cook book on Persian cuisine. The interest here is that the book has been specifically thought through for non experts, sourcing ready available ingredients from supermarkets and, perhaps most importantly, making sure the dishes are healthy. Dana-Haeri is in fact a doctor with a keen interest in nutrition, so the classic Persian dishes have been updated for our high paced, health-obsessed life. A great idea indeed. The book is beautifully illustrated with images by Jason Lowe, one of the most famous food photographers working today.

New Persian Cooking: A Fresh Approach to the Classic Cuisine of Iran, by Jila Dana-Haeri, Shahrzad Ghorashian and Jason Lowe, I.B. Tauris.

Carole Corm



Objective Image.

ZOOM ON...

What you need to know about the CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

THE OPENING MOVIE

Woody Allen's latest film *Midnight in Paris* will be screened on the same day it is released in cinemas across Europe, starring Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams, Marion Cotillard and Adrien Brody, and also graced by a guest appearance from the French First Lady Madame Carla Bruni-Sarkozy.

THE PRESIDENT

The iconic movie legend Robert de Niro will head Cannes' prestigious jury while the French up and coming actress Melanie Laurent will be the master of ceremonies. Yugoslav filmmaker Emir Kusturica will head the 'un certain regard' category.

A THOUGHT FOR

The Cannes festival has a history of political activism ever since May 1968 when Truffaut and Goddard managed to get the festival cancelled in solidarity with the student protests. Last year, the festival mobilized itself for the Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi who couldn't make it out of Iran to attend. One year on, Panahi has been sentenced to six years in jail and banned from making films for the next twenty years... yet the festival continues to support him. If you haven't already watched it, his movie *Crimson Gold* is a must see.



ELLEmustwatch



Top 3 films

THE HANGOVER 2

We all loved the *Hangover* and eagerly await the sequel, although the story line is still a well-kept secret. All we know is that Phil, Stu, Alan and Doug are heading to Thailand for Stu's wedding. The cast is the same, even Mike Tyson makes another cameo appearance, and so does Liam Neeson... so we are told. It should be hilarious, but prepared for some over-worked clichés that are bound to fly when you have four Americans travelling abroad!

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

For the fourth instalment 'On Stranger Tides', Captain Sparrow rekindles with a past acquaintance Angelica (played by the sultry Penelope Cruz). She kidnaps him on the ship of her father and Sparrow's arch nemesis, the pirate Blackbeard. Quite unwittingly, Sparrow joins the quest to find the fountain of eternal youth.



THE BEAVER

Directed by Jodie Foster, this interesting film revolves around a father and business executive suffering from depression (played by Mel Gibson). One day he stumbles on 'the beaver', his old stuffed animal. It soon becomes his only way to communicate with the world, allowing him some measure of success. But at home, he still needs to reach out to his wife and children, without a puppet as his buffer.

Carole Corm

ZOOM ON...

DURAN DURAN

They're back. The group from our childhood has teamed up with the producer-of-the-moment Marc Ronson for their 13th album. This young fan of the Birmingham art schoolboys has asked them to get their synthesizers back out from their basements and play some experimental tunes. Part new wave pop, part trendy disco, *All You Need is Now* is a welcome 'comeback' from the growing number of 80s bands making their way back to the recording studios. With 18 million albums sold in the past three decades, Duran Duran doesn't have much to prove anymore, and so you get a sense that the album is much more about making good music than making money and being back in the frontline. And that's perhaps why collaborations with

Ronson as well as Ana Matronic from the Scissors Sisters, who also featured on the album, turn out to work quite well. True to the 80s, Duran Duran has also produced an amusing clip featuring Simon Le Bon zooming across a German highway on the wrong side of the road – but rest assured it's visually very different. *All You Need is Now*, Tape Modern.



ON MARC RONSON...

Having worked with Amy Winehouse, Lilly Allen and Boy George, Ronson is now playing with the idols of his childhood. He confessed that he would ask his hairdresser to coiffe him in the same way as the band. "Duran Duran were my first musical obsession."

Top 3 CDs

THE STROKES

The trendy New York kids turned rock stars are back with their long awaited third album. The group has gone back to what it does best: garage rock. The result is good but not as good as their first or second albums. The enthusiasm of earlier years has warred off a bit amidst rumours of tensions amongst the musicians who, in between their second and last album had recorded a couple of solo albums.

Angles, Rough Trade Record.

TRIO JOUBRAN

The three Palestinian brothers and oud virtuosos have released a beautiful fifth album *AsFâr*. Its poetic and at times momentous melodies make it an intriguing journey. Percussionist Youssef Beisch is given a bigger stage and Tunisian singer and musician Dhafer Youssef accompanies the meandering tunes. *AsFâr*, World Village Music.



STEPHANIE FARHAT

The latest signer to come out from Lebanon Stephanie Farhat has released some fun dance beats that we will be enjoying this summer. In a very Levantine manner, this half Lebanese, half French singer who grew up in Ivory Coast blends Arabic, Western and African tunes to create something quite fun, and a dare we say, a touch similar to Ms. Shakira.

Ecclectic, Music Master.

Carole Corm



Objective Image

ZOOM ON...

YOHJI YAMAMOTO

A leading figure in the avant-garde movement for the last 30 years, Yohji Yamamoto has worked with iconic figures in the world of photography (Nick Knight), graphic design (Peter Saville), dance choreography (Pina Bausch) and film (Takashi Kitano and Wim Wenders).

Using textile as the starting point for this London show, the Victoria and Albert museum has opened its doors wide open to this very unique Japanese designer. As the pioneer of idiosyncratic fabric choices like felt or neoprene in fashion admits, "fabric is everything." Gaining recognition in the early eighties in Paris for his deconstructed and post-modern approach to designing clothes – think gender play and seemingly unfinished garments – Yamamoto has been paving his own path in fashion ever since. Over the years, it has attracted more followers including fellow designers. With a sharp sense of wit, a



Yohji Yamamoto by Koichi Inakoshi

profound knowledge of fashion history and an unusual approach to pattern cutting, Yamamoto is a key character in the history of fashion.

For this comprehensive retrospective, more than 80 creations are on display throughout the museum, scattered across the British galleries, the Music Room, the sculpture galleries and the ceramic collections amongst other places. Even the garden has been used for the show, attesting to the novelty of the exhibition, which

Yohji Yamamoto Dream Shop
copyright Ronald Stoops



...His work is characterised by a frequent and skilful use of black, a colour which he describes as "modest and arrogant at the same time" – Victoria & Albert Museum

was designed by Yamamoto's long-time collaborator, scenographer and lighting designer Masao Nihei. In addition, exhibitions have been organized to complement the V&A show at the Wapping Project sites.

Yohji Yamamoto at the V & A, On until July 10th, vam.ac.uk



Top 3 shows

Beirut

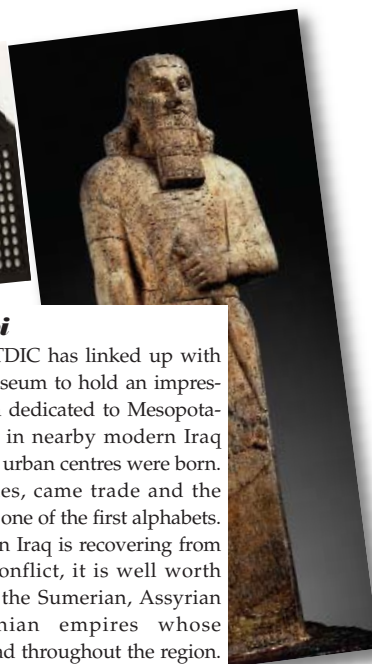
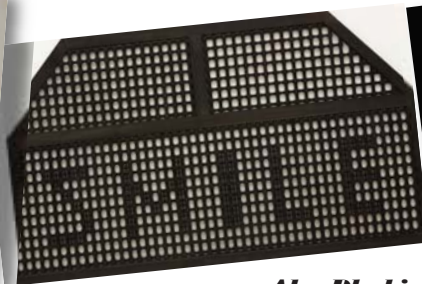
The super active London gallery Rose Issa Projects is back at Beirut's Exhibition center (after the tremendous Arabcity group show last summer) for an all Iranian show. 'Zendegi' (which means life in Farsi) is not an overtly political show, yet in the bilateral context we know, it is interesting to note that the world of arts is also bridging the gap between Teheran and Beirut. Some of Iran's best artists, from acclaimed doyenne Monir Farmanfarmaian to pop artist Farhad Moshiri and filmmaker/photographer Abbas Kiarostami, come to the Lebanese capital. All in all, 12 Iranian artists for a show you shouldn't miss under any pretext.

On until May 30th, Beirut Exhibition Center, roseissa.com

Dubai

One of the most important artists of her generation, the German-Egyptian Susan Hefuna translates the experience of living between two worlds and cultures, bringing together for instance, western value systems with typically oriental artistic practices like mousharabieh. Albeit conceptual, her work is also witty and beautiful, and most importantly, it offers a myriad of interpretations to the viewer. As the Third Line gallery, which is organizing the show, explains, "By directly addressing questions of belonging and representation at large, Hefuna transcends labels, creating work that is open-ended and overcomes boundaries." That surely, must be worth something.

Susan Hefuna at the Third Line Gallery is on until May 31st. thethirdline.com



Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi's TDIC has linked up with the British Museum to hold an impressive exhibition dedicated to Mesopotamia – the site in nearby modern Iraq where the first urban centres were born. And with cities, came trade and the arts, as well as one of the first alphabets. At a time when Iraq is recovering from a decade of conflict, it is well worth remembering the Sumerian, Assyrian and Babylonian empires whose influence spread throughout the region. Artifacts found around Abu Dhabi for instance, dating back to the Hafeet and Umm an-Nar cultures, are proof of the strong trading links between the Gulf and Sumeria.

Splendours of Mesopotamia at Manarat al Saadiyat is on until June 27th. artsabudhabi.ae

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