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'Minna, منّا, of Us': A Lineage That Seeks No Permission.

Curator Ridikkuluz reflects on proximity, satire, and the politics of gathering across Arab queer diasporas in a conversation on 'minna | منّا of us'.

Ridikkuluz enters into conversation with Suzette Bell-Roberts about an exhibition shaped by intimacy, urgency, and shared political ground. Bringing together artists across Arab diasporas, the project approaches queerness not as spectacle or slogan, but as atmosphere, a recognition of lived proximity shaped by lineage, grief, resistance, and care. In this exchange, Ridikkuluz reflects on staging an exhibition that resists narratives of progress, foregrounds vision over visibility, and proposes a collective futurity grounded in multiplicity, inheritance, and the quiet recognition of being claimed, simply, as of us.



Installation view. Photos by Studio Kukla

Suzette Bell-Roberts: As a collective curatorial effort led by Ridikkuluz, how did you establish a shared conceptual ground for ‘[minnalمننا]of us’ while holding political urgency and communal care together?

Ridikkuluz: At a time when truth is considered too political, it mattered that ‘[minnalمننا]of us’ was held by spaces with a history of supporting queer artists on the front lines—long before institutions decided it looked good in a press release. SALMA had put a painting of mine, “How to avoid being thrown off Roofs”*, in a Palestinian-centred exhibit called Numbers, and PARTICIPANT INC was one of the first art organisations to sign on to PACBI. It felt like a gathering of comrades, so when it came to the artists, all we had to do was pass the mic.



Installation view. Photos by Studio Kukla

The term “minna” signals being claimed as “of us”. How did you translate this sense of queer belonging into the exhibition’s spatial and conceptual framework?

“Minna” is less about identity and more about atmosphere. It’s that “oh shit” moment of familiar experience— when someone clocks you’ve survived the same systems, and the space suddenly feels different. In Elias Richmawi’s *Azooma*, Beit Sahour, Palestine 2019, the artist steps away for a cigarette during a family gathering, capturing a familiar queer feeling of being “neither here nor there.” Mariah Carey sings about the beauty and pain of living on the “Outside”. But Richmawi’s moment suggests something else in the Arab queer experience: we’re not “neither here nor there,” but rather “here and there” – and that multiplicity is the power of our lived experience.



Installation view. Photos by Studio Kukla.

Bringing together artists from multiple Arab diasporas, how did you sustain individual specificity while articulating a shared condition of proximity?

Many of us know what it's like to be bullied by Regina George. In this case, her name is Israel. Proximity to violence creates a strange intimacy, something that comes up often in Basyma Saad's 'Congress of Idling Persons' (2021). Each artist responds to that proximity differently. Yet, in this exhibit, intimacy also exists in the divine feminine, as seen in Anka Kassabji's '*Sandstorm*' (2017). Anka Kassabji is the essence of, and, for that reason, was deliberately spread throughout the show.



Installation view. Photos by Studio Kukla.

Many works engage lineage through craft and transmission. How did you approach tradition as a living, adaptive force within queer diasporic contexts?

Tradition in this show isn't nostalgia (ayyam al izz). It's picking up fragments of lineage and reassembling to resist erasure. The Lenox-Samour Twins have lineage to Bethlehem, known for religious tableaus in mother-of-pearl. In their piece, '*The Sky's Assault on the Reality of Men*' (2026), they use the motif of the northern star that once guided us to Jesus to guide us through queer star-tatted bodies on Grindr today.



Installation view. Photos by Studio Kukla.

In a climate where queer visibility is frequently instrumentalised, how did you guard against the exhibition being absorbed into narratives of progress or rescue?

The oppressor often claims we make a spectacle out of Queerness, but they are the ones who make it a spectacle by weaponising it to fuel their propaganda. We are above the pinkwashing talking points made on “The View”. In this exhibit, queerness sits in the background, while vision takes centre stage. Alex Khalifa spent three years carving alabaster for *Bust* (2023-2026), a testament to the seriousness of their practice.



Installation view. Photos by Studio Kukla.

The show holds grief, rage, and tenderness in tension. How did you shape an atmosphere where these effects could coexist?

A class I took back in college, Politics of the Senses with Uchenna Itam, got me thinking about space in relation to the body. I explored this when creating a funerary room memorialising my late brother Andrew. I approached the heaviness of this exhibit the same way: the smell of oud and myrrh bakhour, the sound of Falkyon's field recordings, the sight of artist constellations, the feeling of NYC's brick weather creeping through the space, and the taste of Fares Rizk- aka Sultana's Knafeh (2026).

The show moves through darkness until you're greeted by Xaytun Nasr's landscapes through all mediums at the entrance of SALMA. Xaytun pays homage to Sarah Hegazi, an Egyptian writer and activist killed in 2020 after being tortured for waving a rainbow flag at a Mashrou Leila concert in Cairo. Her final words read, "I want the sky, not the land". Xaytun's response, '*I Want the Land, Not the sky*' (2026), holds grief while insisting on life free of the colonial entity in the light before the exhibition continues in the dark.



Installation view. Photos by Studio Kukla.

Did Ridikkuluz's engagement with satire and performativity inform your approach to display and audience encounter?

I was a theatre kid in high school, so I often think about staging. At the end of *The Phantom of the Opera*, the mask sits on the edge of a chair as a single spotlight hones in on it, and the theatre goes dark. This idea of— only seeing what needs to be seen— bearing witness to illuminated truths guided the exhibit. We're not hiding in the dark. Much like the Phantom, we're protecting the space and choosing who enters.

A shift in the conversation. A recentering. A chapter in the textbook is free from the imperial fantasy of progress. An ongoing conversation. Not a trend or neat image, but a lineage that seeks no permission.



Installation view. Photos by Studio Kukla.

The exhibition is on view at PARTICIPANT INC and SALMA in New York until 22 March 2026.

FEATURES

Queer Arab Artists on Their Own Terms

Across two galleries in Manhattan, eight artists and collectives flout the weaponization of their identities to justify violence, instead presenting a vision of belonging and reclaimed lineages.



Rhea Nayyar

February 13, 2026 — 4 min read



Three years in the making, Alex Khalifa's "Bust" (2026) faces the display of works on the first floor of Participant Inc. gallery. (all photos by Studio Kukla, courtesy Participant Inc., unless otherwise noted)

Upon entering Participant Inc. gallery in Manhattan's Chinatown, a pitch-black embrace invites us find one another in the dark. As our eyesight adjusts, a constellation of works illuminates [\[minna/لينا\]of us](#), a group exhibition open through March 15 featuring queer artists of the Palestinian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Syrian, and Egyptian diasporas. Wafts of burning incense mingle with the instrumentals of a commissioned sound mix by Palestinian musician Falyakon to direct visitors through the show, which Palestinian-Jordanian-Egyptian artist Ridikkuluz curated as a space for anti-colonial futurism across tradition and geography.

"The show is about giving the pen back to the writer, giving the paintbrush back to the artist, during this time of genocide," Ridikkuluz told *Hyperallergic* in an interview at the gallery. "And when there's been so much censorship, these are artists that might not have been able to do this anywhere else."



Across from "Triumvirate" (2023) are three photos by Elias Rischmawi and their family members. (photo Hrag Vartanian/*Hyperallergic*)

While [*minna/لينا*]^{of us} centers the narratives of queer artists with roots in the region, Ridikkuluz emphasized that those identity markers are not the exhibition's sole focus. The show comes at a time when the oppression of LGBTQ+ Arabs has been weaponized in support of Israel's genocide in Gaza, but it intentionally avoids dwelling on collective trauma.

"Regarding the work that I'm showing, people are always asking me, 'Is your family okay with you being trans?' And I really hate that question in a way," said Elias Rischmawi, a multimedia artist of Palestinian descent. "I show that I'm so connected with my family through my work. Even if we might be distant, or if we have our differences, I'm still celebrated in my community. And it's like a 'fuck you' to that."



In the exhibition, Rischmawi presents five archival and contemporary photographs depicting family members in Florida, Beit Sahour in the Occupied West Bank, and San Fernando in Chile. In one diptych, a black-and-white photo shows Rischmawi laying their head on their mother's knee, mirroring the adjacent print of a now-lost painting of the artist's mother and great-grandmother in a similar pose.

Similarly reaching into tradition and lineage, queer identical twins André and Evan Lenox-Samour work collaboratively and meticulously with mother of pearl — a reference to intricate family heirlooms that were safeguarded during the Nakba in Palestine. Their shimmering sculptures pay homage to these precious objects and to the storied mother-of-pearl artisans of the Hazboun family in Bethlehem through motifs like arrows and eight-pointed stars, evoking themes of direction, migration, and placelessness.

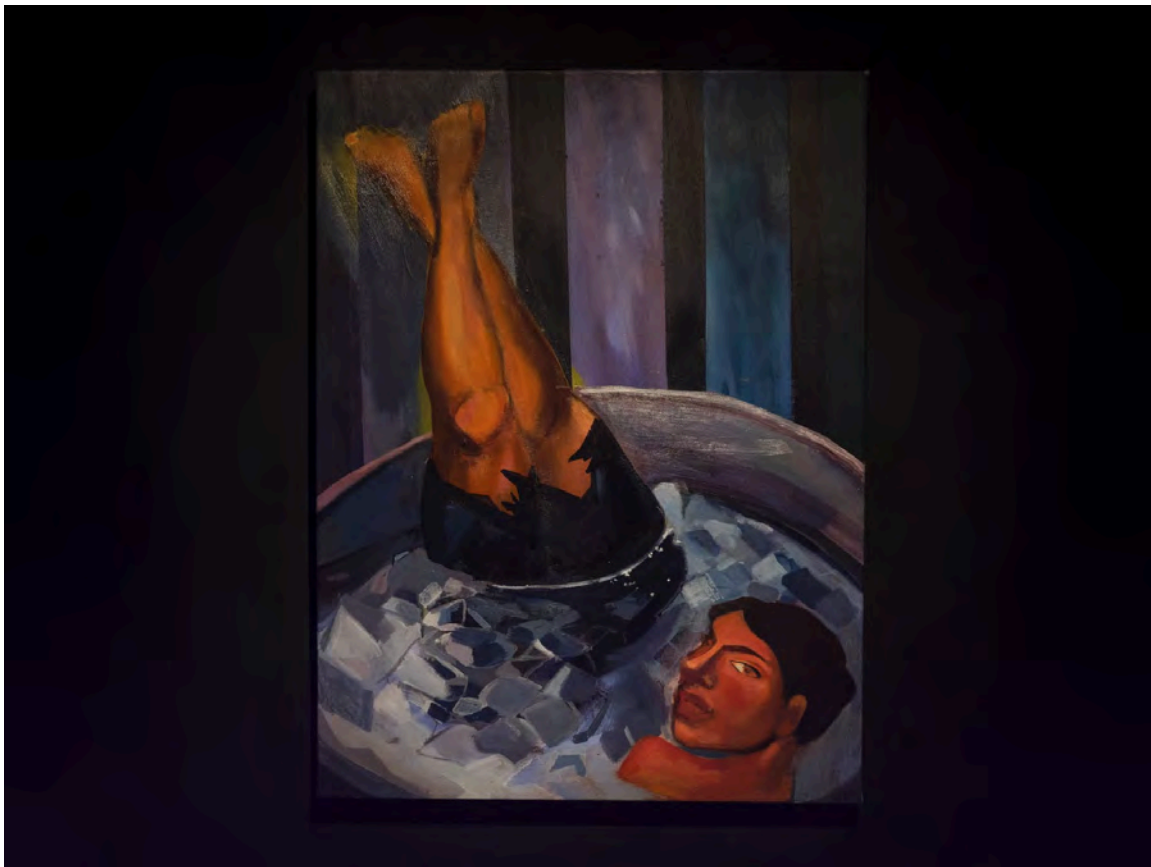


André and Evan Lenox-Samour, "The Sky's Assault on the Reality of Men" (2026)
(photo Rhea Nayyar/*Hyperallergic*)



The exhibition also includes a mixed-media installation by trans Palestinian artist Xaytun Ennasr, a stone bust referencing Egyptian funerary sculptures by Alex Khalifa, and a contemplative film, "Congress of Idoling Persons" (2021), by Beirut-born artist Basyma Saad.

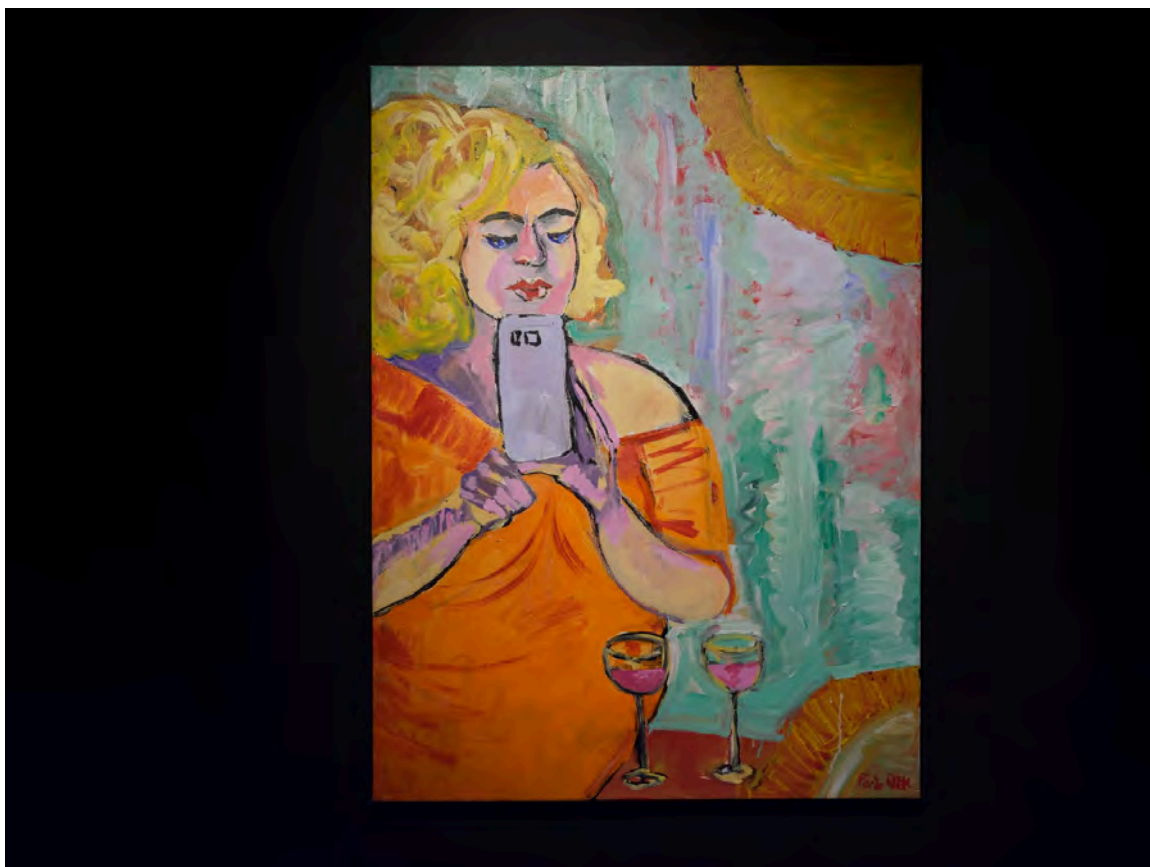
On the next floor, home to exhibition co-organizer SALMA gallery, hangs Syrian-Canadian artist Anka Kassabji's poised self-portrait. Relaxing in an icy bath, she gazes over her shoulder with authority while her legs, crossed at the ankle, jut out from the water — resembling the neck of a chilled champagne bottle.



Anka Kassabji, "Syrienne Delamer" (2026)

“I may be not as confident as my paintings are, but I always want to represent extremely fierce feminine energy in my work,” she told *Hyperallergic*. “The work has this effect of really icy weather that can be uncomfortable, but I’m still very much in control, and I wanted to celebrate what I’ve achieved throughout those hard times.”

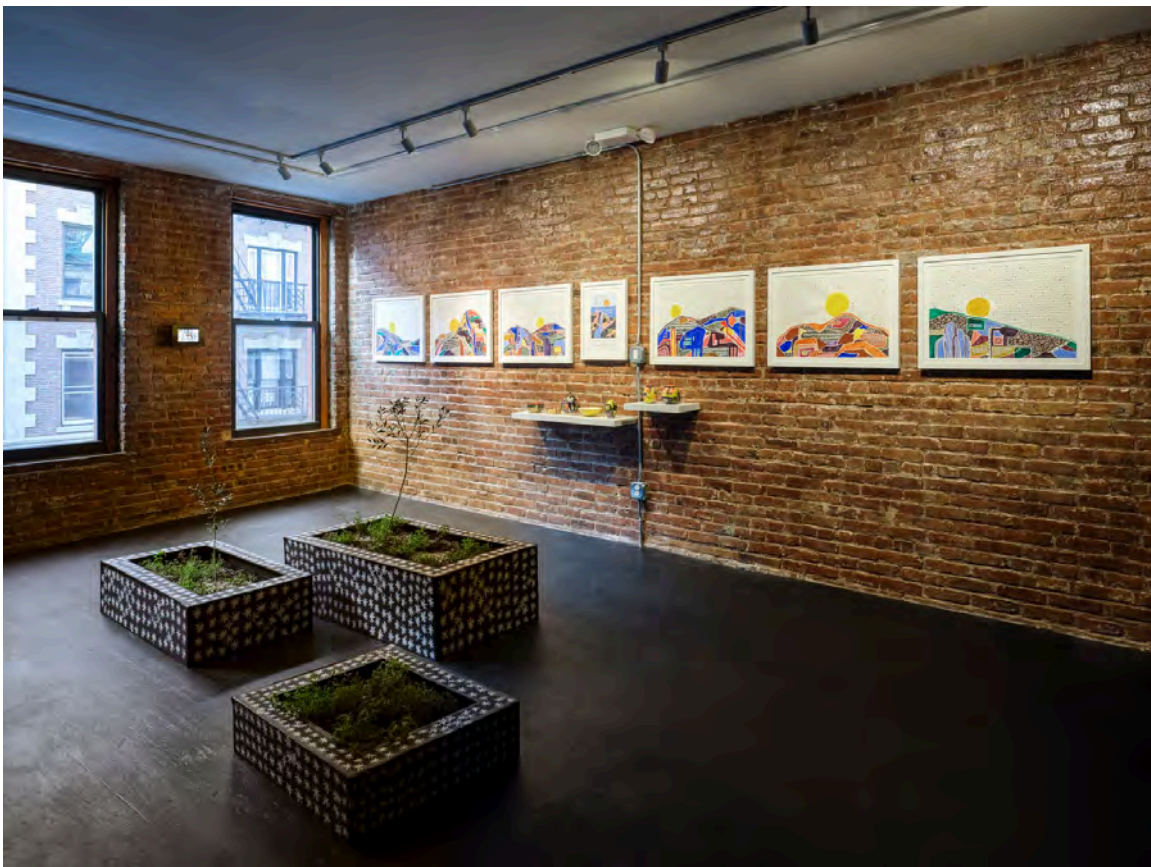
Across the gallery hang three vibrant paintings by Palestinian-Jordanian artist Fares Rizk that portray his better-known alter ego: Sultana, New York’s first Palestinian drag queen. Blonde and buxom, Sultana day-dreams, eats *knafeh*, and snaps a selfie before date night with her devoted boyfriend — channeling her vivacity from the stage to the canvas.



Fares Rizk (Sultana), “Date Night” (2018)

Rizk, who has lived in New York for 40 years and debuted *Sultana* in 1996, told *Hyperallergic* that his mother heavily encouraged his interests in dance, art, and makeup. Though his siblings have been less supportive, Rizk says that nothing can get between *Sultana* and her place under the spotlight.

“When I belly-dance on stage and the people clap and the light is on me, it’s healing all the anxiety,” Rizk said.



Exhibition view of Xaytoun Ennasr's "I Want the Land, Not the Sky" (2026)



Alex Khalifa, "Bust" (2026)

HYPERALLERGIC

DAILY NEWSLETTER

Queer Arab Art in Manhattan

A Texas university shuts a show critiquing ICE, a medievalist's ode to a 15th-century Black angel, and "Ponyo" arrives in LA.



Hyperallergic

February 16, 2026 — 3 min read

Winking mother-of-pearl and exuberant paintings dot the walls of a show in Manhattan celebrating work by queer Palestinian, Jordanian, Syrian, and Egyptian artists — aptly titled after the Arabic preposition meaning “of us” or “from us.”

Staff Reporter Rhea Nayyar spoke with some of the artists about the exhibition, which allows them to find one another amid the weaponization and erasure of LGBTQ+ Arab identity. Elias Rischmawi described their work as a “fuck you” to assumptions about their family and queerness; their art, a deeply felt homage to lineage and love, is all the rebuttal they need.

—*Lakshmi Rivera Amin, associate editor*



Elias Jesús Rischmawi, "Triumvirate" (2023) (photo by Studio Kukla, courtesy Participant Inc.)

Queer Arab Artists on Their Own Terms

“The show is about giving the pen back to the writer, giving the paintbrush back to the artist, during this time of genocide.” That’s artist Ridikkuluz on *[minna/لينا]of us*, the exhibition they curated in Manhattan, telling Staff Reporter Rhea Nayyar that the show intentionally centers hopeful visions of queer Arab community, intimacy, and heritage.

Queer Arab Art Today

An exhibition by queer artists from the diaspora, what we need from NYC's culture commissioner, Lunar New Year events around the city, and more.



Lisa Yin Zhang

February 17, 2026 — 4 min read

In an exhibition across two Manhattan galleries, queer artists from Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and their diasporas come together to invite us to “find one another in the dark,” Staff Writer Rhea Nayyar writes.

As you can see, Valentine's Day is technically over, but love in all its forms is still very much in the air (or is that just the first 40+ degree day getting to my head?). Check out the [many lovely ongoing exhibitions](#) related to the subject across the city, such as one on sex and cults and another by the fairy godmother of queercore. (Think: giant penis bedecked in baby-pink frills).

Plus, this week also brings the Lunar Year, Ramadan, Ash Wednesday, Mardi Gras, and ... a lunar eclipse? Suffice to say, there's a lot going on, and the many exhibitions and events we round up below speak to that abundance.



Three photos by Elias Rischmawi and their family members (photo Hrag Vartanian/*Hyperallergic*)

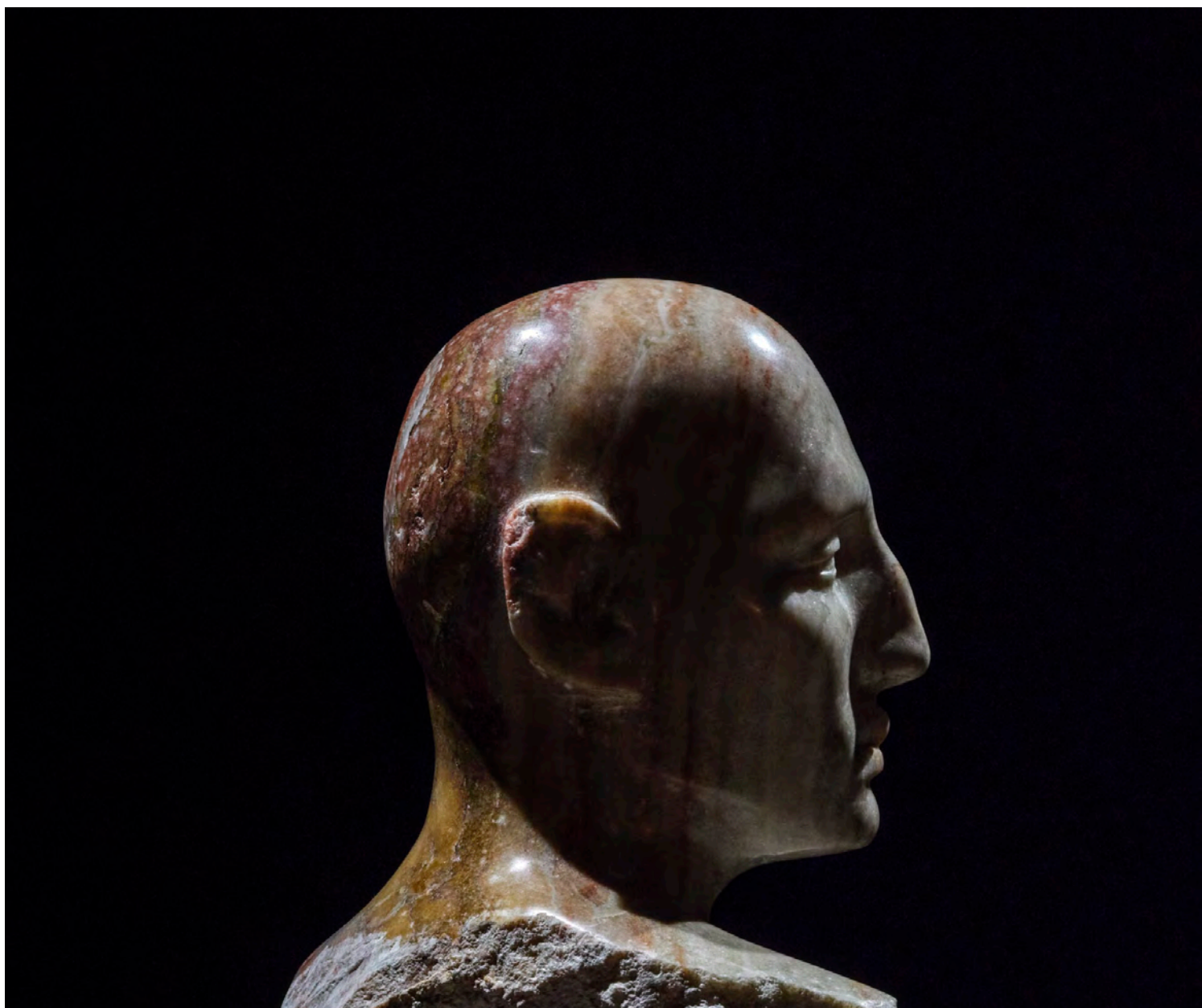
Queer Arab Artists on Their Own Terms

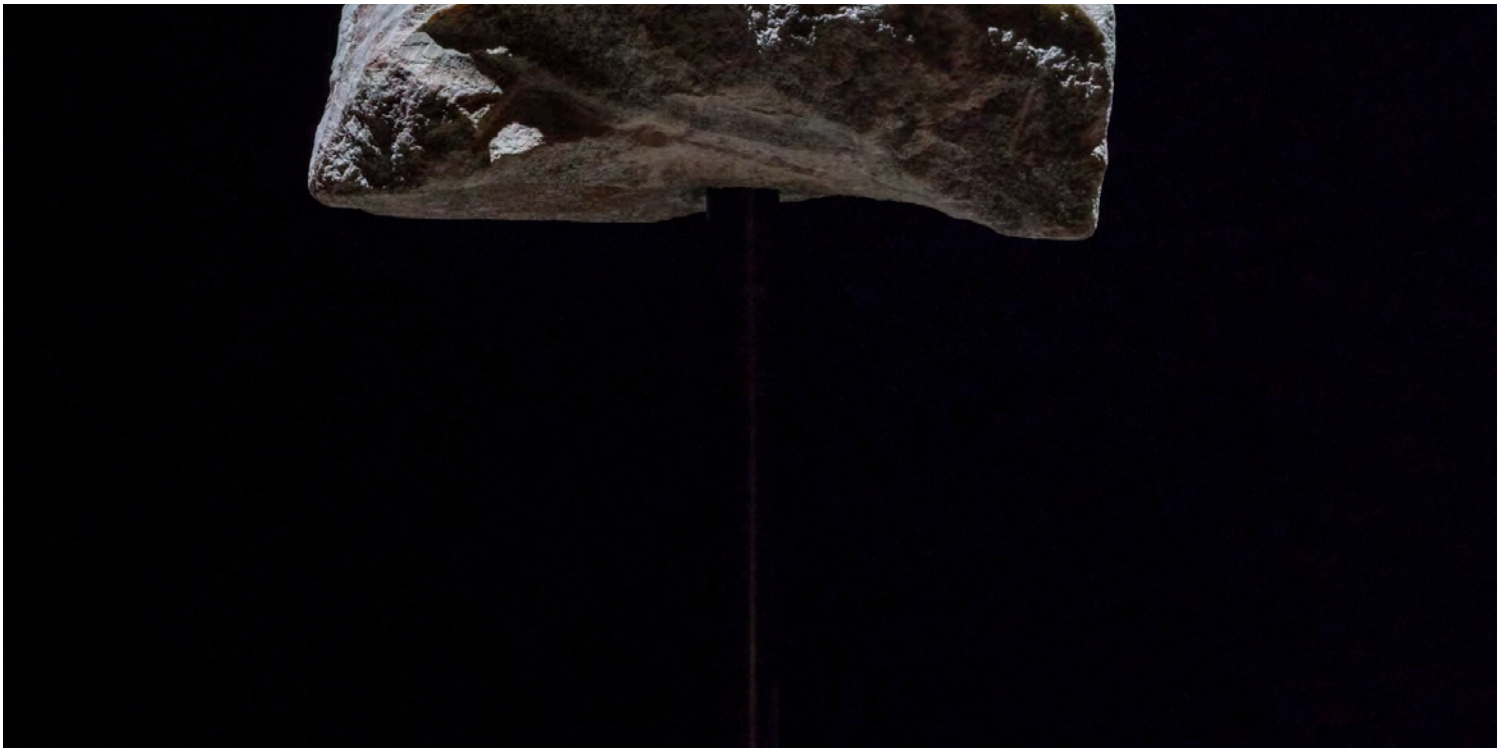
“The show is about giving the pen back to the writer, giving the paintbrush back to the artist, during this time of genocide,” Ridikkuluz told *Hyperallergic*. “And when there’s been so much censorship, these are artists that might not have been able to do this anywhere else.”

'of us [minna | مننا]' at PARTICIPANT INC and SALMA Examines Queer Belonging, Refusal and Transmission

EXHIBITION

Curated by RIDIKKULUZ, with a text by Edwin Nasr, the group exhibition convenes artists engaging lineage, decolonial archives and futurity across two New York spaces





Alex Khalifa, *Bust*, 2023-2026. Alabaster. Photography: Studio Kukla

'of us [minna | مننا]' is currently on view at PARTICIPANT INC and SALMA in New York. Co-organised by both institutions and curated by Palestinian–Egyptian–Jordanian artist RIDIKKULUZ, the exhibition takes its title from the Arabic word minna, meaning “of us” or “from us”. The term signals intimacy and collectivity, describing a condition of being claimed by a community and understood within an atmosphere of queer belonging.

The exhibition opened on 1 February 2026 and brings together works by Xaytun Ennasr, Falyakon, Anka Kassabji, Alex Khalifa, André and Evan Lenox-Samour, Elias Rischmawi, Fares Rizk a.k.a. Sultana, and Basyma Saad. Across painting, sculpture, sound, film and installation, the artists engage transmission, craft and continuity, positioning practice as both inheritance and offering.

A companion essay by writer and cultural worker Edwin Nasr frames the exhibition as beginning from refusal: a refusal of what he describes as the “suffocating, airless space between the artisanal lie and the imperial lie”. Rather than seeking recognition through liberal frameworks of legibility and mourning, the exhibition asserts presence on its own terms. For Nasr, minna gathers gestures that operate as protective barriers against capture and rescue.

Lineage, land and material insistence

Several works foreground land, memory and embodiment as sites of resistance. Xaytun Ennasr presents paintings that situate Palestinian liberation and trans life within earthly registers, reworking the final words of Egyptian activist Sarah Hegazy to insist on life on land rather than transcendence. Falyakon’s immersive soundscape interweaves Palestinian field recordings and electronic composition, transforming archival memory into intimate sonic continuity.

Alex Khalifa’s alabaster Bust, carved between 2023 and 2026, draws on Egyptian funerary portraiture to consider the face, time, and the encryption of memory in stone. André and Evan Lenox-Samour reanimate Bethlehem’s mother-of-pearl carving traditions, embedding stars drawn from Christian, Palestinian and queer histories into abstract commemorative forms. Through acts of craft and material labour, the artists resist dispossession while sustaining cultural techniques shaped by pilgrimage, extraction and diaspora.

Elias Rischmawi’s ongoing archival project assembles photographs, recipes and recordings from family histories, asserting love and care as forms of resistance to erasure. Fares Rizk’s painted self-portraits of drag alter ego Sultana situate glamour and performance within histories of queer nightlife and Middle Eastern diaspora, positioning self-fashioning as a site of healing.

Gathering as fragile futurity

Basyma Saad’s film *Congress of Idling Persons* situates scenes of gathering within overlapping global crises, from uprisings to pandemic and the Beirut port explosion. Through fiction, analysis and dark humour, the work treats collective assembly as both precarious and necessary.

Nasr describes *minna* as refusing both homonationalist assimilation and romanticised victimhood, engaging queerness as an everyday practice of survival under conditions of dispossession. Rather than proposing a fixed “we,” the exhibition remains attentive to movement, scattering and return.

'of us [minna | مِنَّا]'; curated by RIDIKKULUZ with a text by Edwin Nasr, opened at PARTICIPANT INC and SALMA, New York, on 1 February 2026 and remains on view until 15 March 2026. For more information, please visit [PARTICIPANT INC](#).



EXHIBITION

Dubai Culture Concludes 'Al Marmoom: The Living Wild' and Launches Virtual Edition Highlighting Desert Conservation



EXHIBITION

ifa crafted Exhibition at Art&About, Sandton Showcases Rural KwaZulu-Natal Artisans and Heritage-Led Design



EVENT

Tuwaiq Sculpture 2026

Contemporary Art Daily

Xaytun Ennasr, Falyakon, Anka Kassabji, Alex Khalifa, André & Evan Lenox-Samour, Elias Rischmawi, Fares Rizk a.k.a. Sultana, Basyma Saad

[minna | مينا] of us

Participant Inc. and SALMA SARRIEDINE
February 1 – March 22, 2026

Curated by RIDIKKULUZ

[Press Release](#)

[Checklist](#)

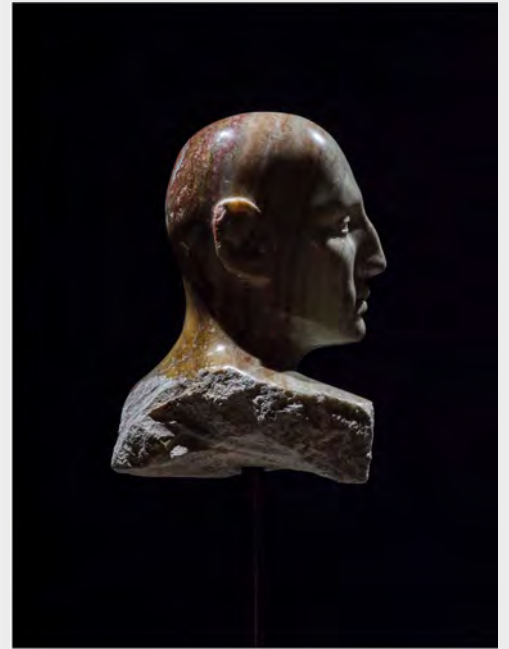
[Text](#)

[Venue website](#)

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Images courtesy of the artists and Participant Inc., New York. Photos by Studio Kukla.

March 15, 2026



[minna | مينا] of us
Participant Inc. and SALMA SARRIEDINE
February 1 – March 22, 2026

March 14, 2026

[minna | مينا] of us

xaytun ennasr, falyakon, anka kassabji,
alex khalifa, andré & evan lenox-samour,
elias rischmawi, fares rizk a.k.a. sultana, basyma saad

curated by RIDIKKULUZ

text by edwin nasr

