

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

“Akram Zaatari answers FAD’s Questions”, *FAD*, 26 November 2013

FAD caught up with Akram Zaatari ahead of his solo show at Thomas Dane gallery to ask him a few Questions .

Zaatari represented Lebanon in the recent 55th Venice Biennale and featured in Documenta 13 (2012), Liverpool Biennale (2012), Istanbul Biennale (2011) and the Venice Biennale (2007). His work is shown and collected all over the world, including at Tate, London; Bristol Museum, Bristol; Centre Pompidou, Paris; SFMOMA, San Francisco; MoMA, NY; Kunstverein, Munich; MUSAC, Leon; Kunsternes Hus, Oslo; TBA 21, Vienna.

**If you weren’t an artist, what else would you be?**

I studied architecture, but always wanted to become a filmmaker. I do not recall how. I think I slipped into the art world while trying to become filmmaker. But outside the art related fields, I’d love to be historian or archaeologist.

**Can you tell us more about your work and what are the main ideas you would like to express?**

In my work I’m totally driven by my desire. I love to make what I desire to see, no matter how complex the work can be, it is in fact the complexity I desire to experience. As an architect, I did the spaces I desire to live in. In film I tried to shoot the scenes that move me personally before I decide to make them.

**How do you start the process of making work?**

I am known to say that work leads to work

**Do you consider the viewer, when making your work?**

I’d love to say no, but it won’t be totally true. When I did my film Letter to a Refusing Pilot, I thought and asked myself so many times, how people in Lebanon would see it, and how would Israelis react to it. But I have to say I did not do it in such a way to appeal to a particular audience. When I did Tomorrow Everything Will Be Alright, I had in mind a former lover, and was wondering how would he’d react to it when he sees it, but I did not make it for him. By the same logic, Letter to a Refusing Pilot, was metaphorically addressed to a pilot, but was not really a letter to him. To simplify it, making work for me is like putting on clothes in the morning. You might think of someone in particular, but you can’t avoid that it’s public.

**Name 3 artists that have inspired your work.**

Jean-Luc Moulene, Hans Peter Feldman and Jerome Bel in art.

Robert Bresson, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Jean-Luc Godard in film.

**What defines something as a work of art?**

The author determines that this is a work of art. The work becomes art when people believe the artist.

**Anytime, any place – which artist’s body would you most like to inhabit?**

It’s difficult to answer.

**What was the most intelligent thing that someone said or wrote about your work?**

Francois Cheval, director of Nicephore Niepce museum for photography, said once that I seek to root my modernity in past photographic practices, which I thought was smart and true in my desire of looking at the past in general, not only in photographic practices.

**Which artists would you most like to rip off, sorry, I mean appropriate as a critique of originality and authorship?**

The world is huge and there is a place for everyone. Not everything is smart in the art world, but everything makes sense from an anthropological point of view.

**Do you care what your art costs? State your reasons!**

Of course I do. I am very careful with spending, and still produce work with low budgets.

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

### **What's next for you?**

This Day at Ten, opening December 6 at Sfeir Semler Gallery in Beirut.