

# Jury report eleventh ABN AMRO Art Award

The jury of the eleventh ABN AMRO Art Award is pleased to grant this year's prize to Mounira Al Solh (Beirut, 1978). The choice of Al Solh reflects the jury's appreciation for the artist's broad and incisive practice — rooted in her personal history as a woman and immigrant from Lebanon, she focuses a keen eye for current events while intuitively and poetically presenting deftly interlinked stories and images from across different cultures and times.

The jury admires the unique, thought-provoking, and principled way in which Al Solh visualizes those stories across an ever-changing array of media: Al Solh works with textiles, video, language, and music; produces magazines and installations; she paints and gives performances. The jury is impressed by the comprehensive scope of her approach, in the ways these various disciplines are integrated into a single story with seeming effortlessness.

Trained as a painter in Beirut, Al Solh left Lebanon and continued her studies in Amsterdam — first at the Rietveld Academie, and later as an artist-in-residence at the Rijksakademie. This positioning provided a distance that allowed her to reflect on her homeland and on the Arab world, while simultaneously observing her surroundings in the West with the detached eye of an outsider. The jury has great appreciation for the way in which Al Solh, residing alternately in Lebanon and the Netherlands, uses these vantage points to combine cultures and experiences while actively engaging her shifting environment through collaboration. For instance, in *I Strongly Believe in Our Right to Be Frivolous* (2012 – present), Al Solh documents encounters and conversations with political refugees and immigrants via an ongoing series of portraits, in word and image, on yellow lined paper. Set against the oral history tradition within Arab cultures, Al Solh gives these untold stories, and therefore the subjects of her portraits, a voice and a place in our history.

Al Solh also gives that voice to women in the Arab world whose resilience and power is often overlooked. The installation *Lackadaisical Sunset to Sunset* (2019 – present) consists of a series of tents, embroidered with images and text, and referred to by the artist as 'breathing libraries'; it comprises stories — undertaken, as usual, with thorough and thoughtful research — of women who, defying patriarchal society, keep life going in a country ravaged by war.

In recent years, an intensified focus on painting has reappeared within Al Solh's work, producing infectious and thrilling works, including those in which she blends her passion for music with an agile and energetic style. With these striking paintings, she has added a new dimension to her oeuvre. The jury looks forward to seeing how it further develops.

The ABN AMRO Art Award aims to stimulate talent in the Netherlands. The quality and the singularity of the artist's work are the main criteria for the prize. Mounira Al Solh is, in the jury's view, an artist whose oeuvre can be considered both personal and political, and seductive as well as activist. Furthermore, with her concern for women in the Arab world, she stands as a distinct voice in these times.

While making her mark with significant exhibitions within the country and abroad, Al Solh remains relatively unknown to a wider Dutch audience. The jury believes her work deserves more attention in the Netherlands and deems this an excellent moment to support her in that endeavor. The jury is therefore delighted to grant Mounira Al Solh the eleventh ABN AMRO Art Award.

## Jury of the eleventh ABN AMRO Art Award:

Christa Beaufort, global manager sustainability, ABN AMRO

Danila Cahen, curator ABN AMRO Art Collection

Natasja Kensmil, visual artist

Maxine Kopsa, director De Ateliers, Amsterdam

Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen, director De Pont Museum, Tilburg

on behalf of the jury, Danila Cahen