

"Too Early, too late. Middle East and Modernity" at Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna

EXHIBITIONS





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After the success of last year's exhibition *The Empty Pedestal* dedicated to art in post-Soviet nations, *Arte Fiera Collecting* continues its exhibition schedule in 2015 with an extensive overview of the Middle Eastern art scene. Marco Scotini's new project *Too early, too late. Middle East and*

Modernity examines the relationship between the East and Western modernity.

Showcasing 60 artists and more than 100 works from main Italian private collections, the project will be hosted at Bologna's Pinacoteca Nazionale in the area dedicated to temporary exhibitions, and in some of the museum's display rooms from 22 January to 12 April 2015. Exhibition will extend into the museum's prestigious 14th-century collections to the Late Gothic schools. This particular choice is designed to highlight Bologna's fame as a place of learning alongside Paris, Oxford, Avignon and Salamanca, the five cities where the Council of Vienne held in 1312 decided to establish chairs of Arabic, Hebrew and Syriac, thus laying foreground to the Orientalism in the Christian west.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War's bipolarism appears to have been replaced by a new dichotomy—that between Islam and the West—just as the void left by the alternative to capitalism appears to have been filled by nationalist, ethnic and religious identities. The current mediatic regime, without having verified the proposed theories, has replaced the old "political" opposition with a "conflict of civilisations" between archaic and advanced cultural formats, with the idea of modernity (al-hadatha) as the crisis point.

Too early, too late is a reconstruction of the West meeting the Islamic world. Although the main focus of the project is the contemporary artistic scene, the exhibition starts from 1798 when Bonaparte and his army landed in Egypt. Original documents and archive material alternate with art installations, photographs and films to mark key cultural and politico-social events in the progressive westernization of the East—from the introduction of the "nation-state" to the spectacular museums created in the Arab Emirates.

In fact, the expression Middle East is a terminology invented by the British at the beginning of the 20th century to designate the territories

that extended from the Ottoman Empire (the "Near East") to the Indian Empire. Since then, the geo-political expression has continued to exist more substantially as a subject of discourse (theoretical object) than as a geographic area that opens to the east of the Mediterranean. In *Too Early Too Late*, this acceptance is taken as representing an area that also extends to North Africa, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The exhibition title *Too early, too late* is taken from the 1981 film on Egypt directed by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet *Trop tôt/Trop tard*. A masterpiece in the history of cinema, divided between rural landscapes in Brittany and Egypt, the film focuses on the peasant revolts in France in 1789 and in Egypt in 1952.

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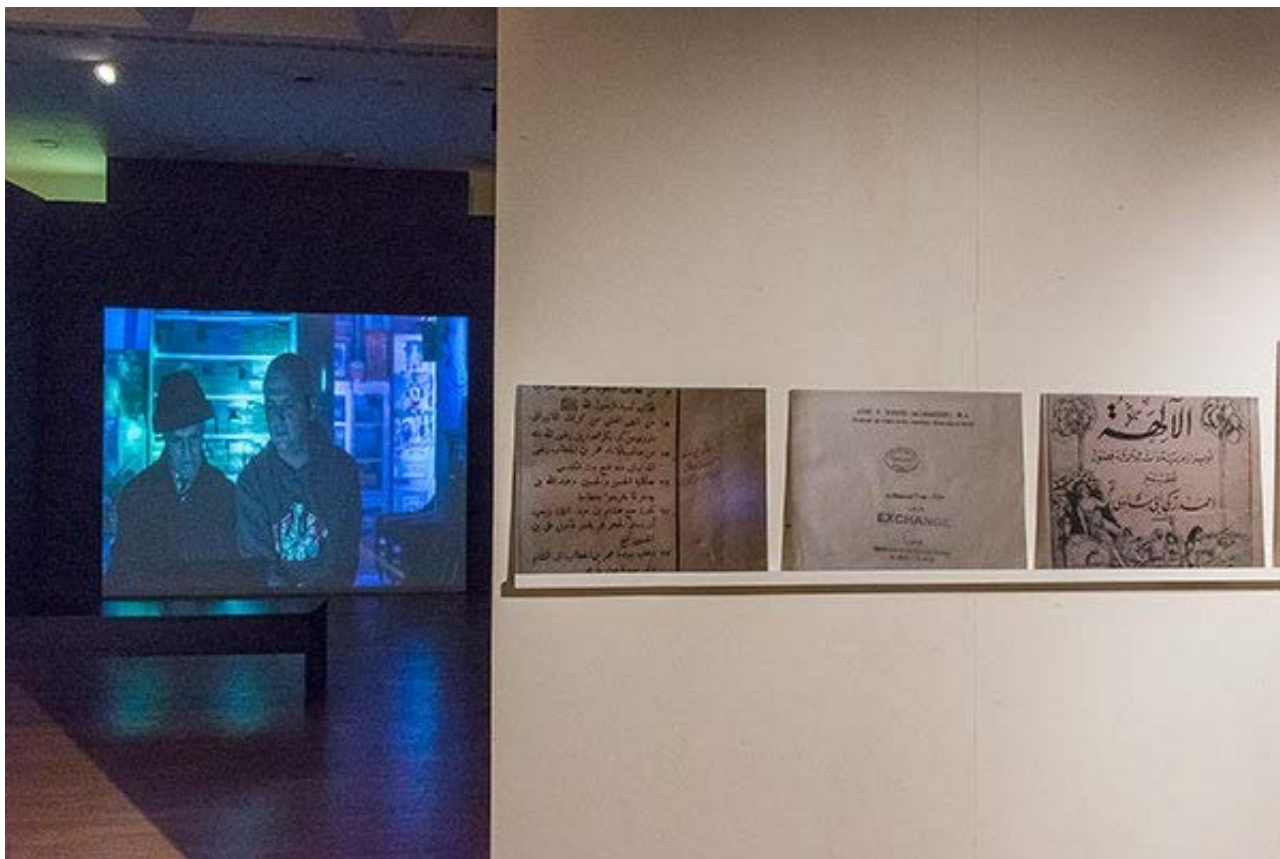
until 12 April 2015

















"Too Early, too late. Middle East and Modernity" installation views at

Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna, 2015

Courtesy: Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna. Photos: © Emilio Sfriso.