

# Tensta Konsthall

## **Bidoun Library**

Tensta konsthall 12.1—5.2012

The Bidoun Library, founded in 2009 by Bidoun Projects, is a mobile library consisting of books, magazines and other printed matter. Bidoun Projects is a non-commercial project producing exhibitions, publications and various events aiming to support contemporary culture from the Middle East.

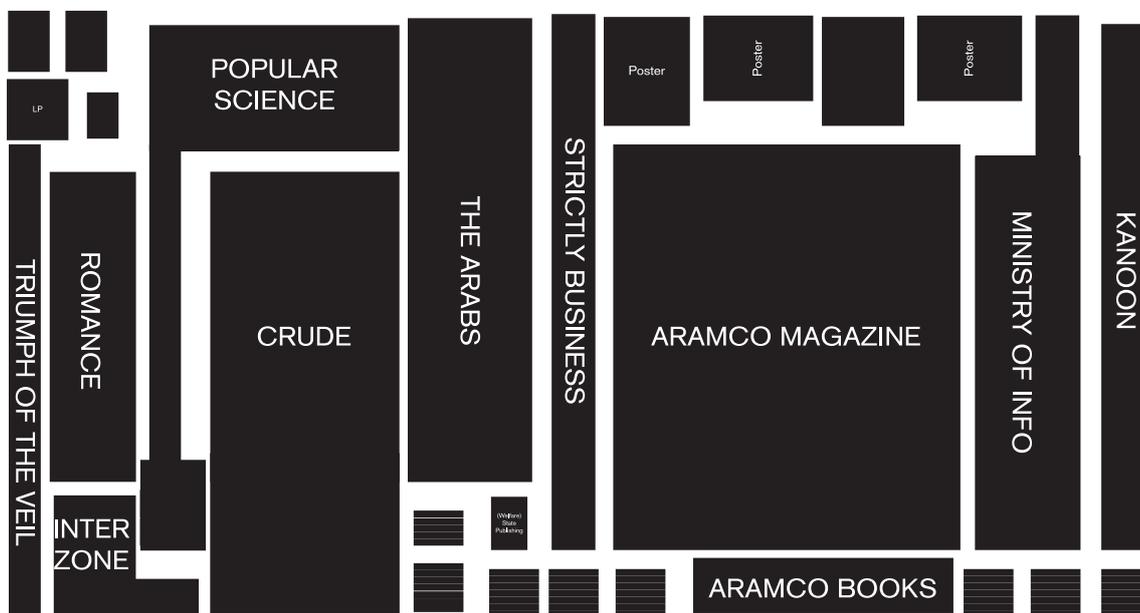
Since the turn of the last century, the term “Middle East”, which was coined in the West, has existed more as a subject for discussion and study than a geographical area. Bidoun Library is an attempt to survey this territory through its printed matter. Books, magazines and other materials are treated as objects in which complex and historical facts and ambitions meet. They are not amongst the most representative or refined objects from the Middle East—they are cheaper and more perishable.

In each location, the Bidoun Library takes on a unique life. Books reflecting regional narratives in print production are systematically collected, read, and then collated and recontextualized into new composite books which are then hung from the ceiling in front of their source materials. While in residence at Tensta konsthall, Bidoun will

investigate various regimes of printed matter in Sweden in as much as they relate to the Middle East, but also themes further afield. Bidoun’s Creative Director Babak Radboy plans to produce a book in collaboration with Sternberg Press—a radical reading of texts—which is born of that experience.

Babak Radboy is an artist, curator, writer and art director living in New York. He is the Creative Director of Bidoun Magazine and curator of the Bidoun Library.

There are four categories in the Bidoun Library at Tensta konsthall, each attended by a catalog hung from the ceiling. These catalogs contain no original text—being composed entirely from materials taken and recontextualized from the books they hang in front of.



### Left wall: Home Theatre

Refers to books that are not made for universities or libraries— but for bookshops, delis and drugstores. Books as merchandise; meant for a general audience, printed in great numbers, distributed widely and designed to sell.

#### —Crude

A collection of mass-market paperbacks featuring Arab villains bent on destroying or taking over the world, tawdry interfaith coupling and superhuman Israeli commandos. A strange genre appearing very suddenly after the oil crisis of 1973 and disappearing by the mid 1980s.

#### —Popular Science

Unbiased and informative non-fiction by American and European Middle-East experts.

#### —Romance

A collection of Sheik-based American romance novels, mostly published after 2001.

#### —Triumph of the Veil

A very small sampling of books on veiling and unveiling.

#### —Interzone

A collection of vintage countercultural representations of the Middle East.

### Centre wall: The Natural Order

Traces a particular strain of State and Corporate publishing; often overlapping, usually about the Gulf and always attended, in one way or another, by the sale of oil.

#### —Kanoon

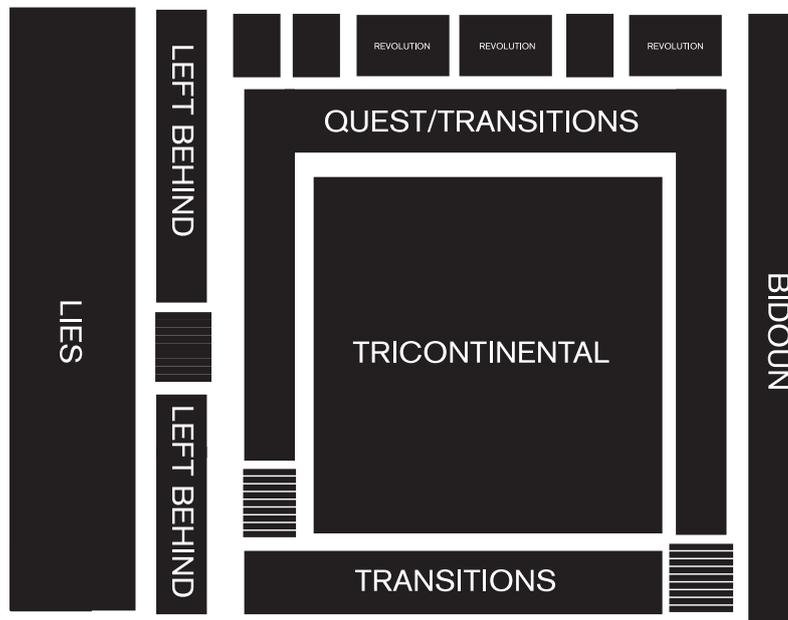
The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, founded by then Empress Farah Pahlavi, was a celebrated pre-revolutionary publisher of children's books and films. It launched the careers of Abbas Kiarostami, Bahram Bayzai and many other well-known Persian auteurs.

#### —Ministry of Information

A selection of official state publications focused on the GCC. Includes an exuberant copy of **Kuwait, A Welfare State** published in 1964 and two copies of the book **Dubai, Gateway to the Gulf**, published within a few months of each other and almost identical (there were a total of 6 printings of **Dubai** in the mid-1990s!). We highly recommend browsing through the two copies simultaneously.

#### —Aramco World

Founded in 1949 by the New York-based public relations department of the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco), and



still published to this day, Aramco World is the oldest English-language arts and culture publication in the Middle East.

—**Strictly Business**

A random collection of texts facilitated by and facilitating Western business in the Middle East. Includes the somewhat inexplicable London-based bilingual poetry magazine TR, which specialized in translating Arabic poetry into English and vice-versa and was illustrated for some reason by Ralph Steadman.

—**The Arabs**

Nearly every book available in English which costs less than five dollars and carries the title **The Arabs**. Including the incongruously titled **Customers and Thieves**, a fascinating criminological text describing Arab and Iranian shoplifting in 1980s London.

**Right wall: Margin of Error**

Is a cruelly named category focusing on extinct or endangered regimes of printing. Whether from the left, right, or the far margins, the documents within share the desolate precarity of having outlived their contexts.

—**Tricontinental**

Based in Havana and art-directed by

legendary poster designer Alfredo Rostgaard, Tricontinental was the official publication of OSPAAAL, the Organization in Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and its magazine was available in each of the New World's great colonial languages: English, French, and Spanish. The bulk of **Tricontinental's** editorial content was aimed at Third World militants, practicing or potential, for whom it served as bulletin board, guidebook, and lifestyle magazine.

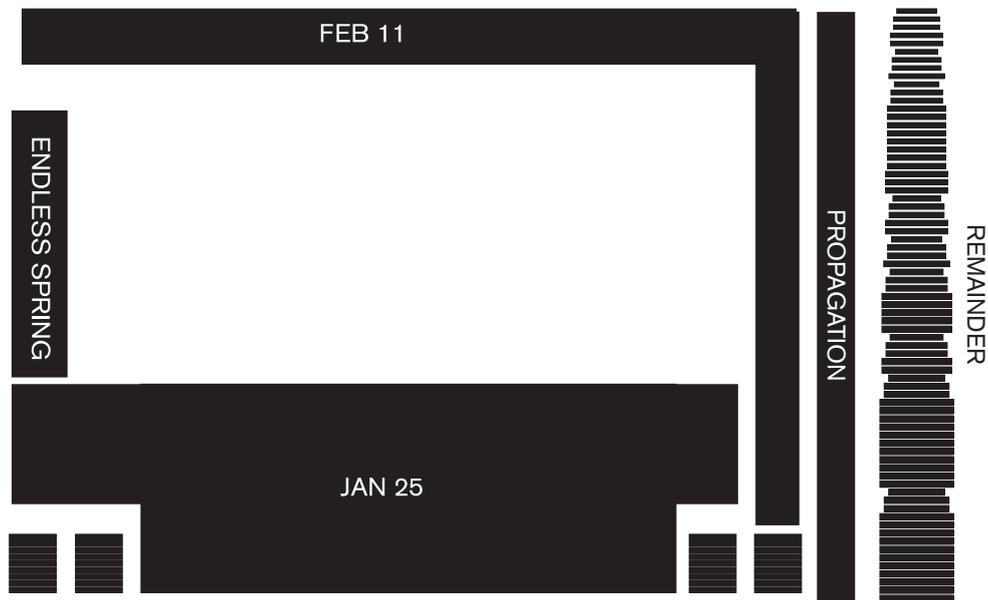
**Tricontinental** stopped printing around the turn of the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Cuba literally ran out of ink.

—**Transitions**

Was an African literary and cultural magazine founded by Rajat Neogy (1938–1995), a Ugandan of Indian ancestry, and was published from 1961 to 1976. Neogy painfully discontinued his magazine after discovering it was secretly funded by the CIA. It was revived in 1991 in the United States and continues to be published out of Harvard University.

—**Left Behind**

Covering Pan-Arabism, Fem-Arabism, Islamic Reformism, Baathism, Islamic



Marxism, Palestinianism and other abandoned fronts of the first wave of Arab modernism. Includes the tabloid **Lebnaan**. Published in Tripoli, **Lebnaan** was the brainchild of renowned Lebanese poet Said Akl. Arguing that the Lebanese language was based in Phoenician and distinct from Arabic, Akl published his magazine in a modified Latin alphabet of 36 characters that he devised himself—making the magazine almost completely unreadable. **Lebnaan** was published throughout the 1970's.

—**All Lies**

Including conspiracies, cults, the occult, propaganda, alternative anthropology, palmistry and many strong male personalities. Includes Mormon tourism guides on Oman, which they claim to be the land '**Bountiful**' described by Joseph Smith in the Book of Mormon.

—**Propagation**

Iranian post-revolutionary publishing from Imam Khomeini Press. Featuring the **Espionage Den** series— a torrential proto-wiki-leak of documents liberated by Iranian students from the US embassy in Tehran.

—**Feb 11th**

Iranian Magazine culture after the fall of

the Shah but before the consolidation of the Islamic Republic.

—**Emigration**

—**Jan 25th**

A broad and unedited selection of printed documents from Egypt published within three months of the revolution of January 25th.

—**Endless Spring**

A small collection of predictions and descriptions of the impending Arab revolution covering the better part of the postwar era.

**Remainder (freestanding book tower)**

This section consists of a single tower, stretching from floor to ceiling, composed of books published after the year 2001 on art and culture in the Middle East.