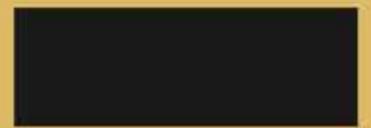


# MUSLIM\*



# CONTEMPORARY

EXHIBITION • WORKSHOPS • LESUNGEN & MEHR

**EIN PROJEKT VON  
ASMA AIAD &  
MARINA GRZINIC.**

AMANI ABUZAHRA | ASMA AIAD | MUHAMMET ALI BAS | ESMA  
BOŠNJAKOVIĆ | IMEN BOUSNINA | CALIMAAT | ESRAP | NEDA  
HOSSEINYAR | OZAN ZAKARIA KESKINKILIC | HIBATULLAH KHELIFI  
DUDU KÜCÜKGÖL | ANAHITA NEGHBAT | EINSTÜCK THEATER



Design & Layout: Fatima Nesibe Dursun  
Fotografie: Asma Aiad / Projekt: „Das hier ist kein Kopftuch.“

A...kademie der  
bildenden Künste  
Wien



**SALAM  
OIDA.**



Stadt  
Wien

Kultur

**08.-12. NOVEMBER 2021**

**ATELIERHAUS PROSPEKTHOF  
LEHÁRGASSE 8 | 1060 WIEN**

# MUSLIM\* CONTEMPORARY

**Asma AIAD**

## MUSLIMS IN AUSTRIA AND THE PROJECT

Muslim life in Austria goes back centuries. The first contact with Muslims in Austria is dated to the 10th century by nomadic tribes. Islam has been recognised in Austria since 1912, as a result of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908. Since then, there has been a recognised Islamic religious society, which has also been an official public institution since 1979. For a long time this gave Muslims in Austria a special position compared to other European countries. Due to the Gastarbeiter [German for “guest worker” or foreign or migrant worker], and the influx of Muslim labour migrants, refugees and employees of international organisations, the number of Muslims in Austria grew and a representation for Muslims in Austria also emerged. Today, Muslims make up a not insignificant part of the Austrian population.



The main poster of the event  
*Muslim\*Contemporary*.  
Photo by Asma Aiad: *This is  
not a headscarf*

Estimates put the proportion at up to 5 to 9 per cent.

The life of Muslims in Austria is as diverse as the Muslim community in Austria itself. Muslims in Austria have different ethnic backgrounds, are converts to Islam, second and third generation and also refugees or migrants due to various migration backgrounds. Muslims are part of Austrian society and contribute to it in many areas, even if this is not always visible.

In the course of the increasing politicisation of Islam in the public sphere, which goes hand in hand with a certain form of “border orientalism,” forms of racialisation of Islam are also becoming increasingly evident. This can be seen in election campaigns such as in advertising posters with titles like “Daham instead of Islam” or “Pummerin instead of Muezzin,” but also in short-lived laws such as the headscarf ban or other forms of problematization of Muslim civil society, such as most recently through the Islam map published by the “Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam.”

Anti-Muslim racism reached a peak with the raids on 9 November 2021, known as Operation Luxor, in which over 930 police officers searched 60 homes across Austria. This operation is considered the largest raid in the history of the Second Republic. Police are accused of committing significant violations of children’s rights during the operation. Furthermore, a former official of BVT accuses his ex-director that the raid was politically motivated and that even minors were on suspect lists. This event, but also others such as the current anti-terror package, the Islam card, the Islam law, etc., are signs of an increasingly politicised Islam in Austria, which is having an impact on the social climate. This is also reflected in the increasing number of attacks on Muslims and Islamic institutions. The Documentation and Counselling Centre Islamophobia & Anti-Muslim Racism recorded 1402 cases in 2020, an increase of 33.4% compared to the previous year. Both the social climate and the political situation regarding Muslims in Austria are thus becoming increasingly hostile.

The exhibition *Muslim\* Contemporary* is a space for Muslim\*s, people who are read as Muslim\*s, and anyone interested in exploring Muslim life in Austria. The \* is meant to represent



this diversity of Muslims in Austria and also the participants in this exhibition. Not all artists or participants are Muslims. Some have a Muslim background or biography, or are considered Muslim because of their name, appearance or the issues they deal with. As well as attempting to represent the diversity of communities, issues such as identity(ies), Muslim lifestyle, racism or anti-racist strategies will also be negotiated. There are no limits for the different artists and actors in the implementation. Thus they make use of the most diverse forms of expression and methods. *Muslim\* Contemporary* therefore sees itself as a multidisciplinary, participatory and dialogical project that aims to reflect the importance of Muslim communities’ participation in Austrian society through education, art, dialogue, activism and culture. Through various artistic forms such as performances, installations, video, photography, theatre, music and poetry, the event from 08 to

12 November 2021 is entirely dedicated to the themes of diversity, coexistence and dialogue in our society, but also to the things that complicate or facilitate all this. The aim is to create a space where important social discourses can be reflected and negotiated through representations. The dialogue in the spaces should not only take place through the exhibited objects and installations, but become a place of conversation in the truest sense of the word (διάλογος *diálogos*). The aim is to open up spaces for discussion and debate through different formats. There people can listen, question and negotiate, learn and unlearn. How do we want to live? How do we want to shape our shared, diverse future? But it can and should also be a place of development, strengthening and empowerment.



Opening event, 8.11.2021. Prospektthof,  
Asma Aiad, introduction



Opening event, 8.11.2021. Prospektthof,  
Asma Aiad and Marina Grzinic,  
introduction

# Marina GRZINIC

## OPENING THOUGHTS *MUSLIM\** CONTEMPORARY, 8.11.2021

Dear all, dear artists and followers, dear Vice-Rector, Dr. Erhart, dear supporters from the Studio of Post-Conceptual Art Practices, and from other departments of the Academy, dear Asma. I am thrilled to participate in this project. Asma Aiad has made a proposal that comes from her deep activation in the civic space of Austria to live and share her own and community practices and knowledge, she is an Austrian citizen in the full sense of the word, language, school, education, but always negotiated as the Other.

Asma asks what an affirmative action could be for all of us. Being here, young, contemporary, studying art, this is a field of imagination, of research, of interdisciplinarity. So if someone says you cannot tell this, or you do not know how to do it, then – take contemporary art. We are post-conceptual, political, contemporary positions that return art to the social and political as a practice of life and as a space for historical-theoretical thought and action.

In a humorous way and with a touch of irony, *Muslim\* Contemporary* twists the state of affairs. Calling oneself contemporary and having the asterisks as a transgender is paradoxical to say the least, because Muslims are considered the most backward of times, if not the worst, and being contemporary is an excellent performative gesture. This is the 21st century.

Look at the main poster of the event, a female face with scarf almost CHANEL or DIOR you might say, but it resembles something else, a kind of hijab composed from the pages of trivial Austrian populist magazines. This contemporary female face with headscarf rounded by the worst

yellow magazines of Austria, which are a pot of racism, is a small masterpiece, as cyberfeminist Donna Haraway would say, it is a coyote, an engine digging in the desert of abandonment of the Muslim community in Austria.

This work is very much in the spirit of Magritte, who says of his painting of a pipe on canvas that you can see that it is a pipe, “This is not a pipe.” ASMA’s work has a title “This is not a headscarf!” The time when Magritte paints *This is not a pipe* is 1929; it is the time of the Wall Street Crash followed by the Great Depression in 1930: the greatest capitalist economic crisis of the 20th century. Magritte’s colossal phrase from the avant-garde art of the previous century *This is not a pipe* is but a representation, a re-articulation, a drama between what we are and how we are seen.

In the 1930s, the Nazis galloped toward the Reichstag... and today we have fascist populism, the rise of antisemitism, and we know that Austria never went through a tough denazification. Today, the rise of anti-Muslim racism mixed with anti-Black racism and anti-Asian racism is something that worries us and calls to action. What we see these days, and last years is the right wing mob taking over public space, Fake News, and looting by the political elite, hostility, fear, a breakdown in the distribution of the sensible and our inability to think a future. But, see this new generation of artists, here around, they want to work and live and think, voila... So here we are. *Muslim\* Contemporary*: the words I like to use in German are, *Muslim\* Contemporary*, yaaa klaar passt! Fits! Thanks...to you all for being here.



A group portrait of the artists and speakers in the exhibition

## ARTISTS AND WORKS

### Asma AIAD

Asma Aiad is the curator of *Muslim\* Contemporary* and participated with two works: *This is not a headscarf* and *The Ninth of November 2020*. Aiad is a conceptual artist, activist, social worker and co-founder of Salam Oida. She is a spokesperson for the anti-racism referendum Black Voices. She has a bachelor's degree in political science and is currently studying conceptual art at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and writing her master thesis at the Institute of Gender Stud-

ies at the University of Vienna on the topic of Islamic Feminism. In her activist and artistic work she deals with the issues of identity, representation, anti-racism, feminism and the deconstruction of stereotypes. [www.asmaaiad.com](http://www.asmaaiad.com)



Asma Aiad,  
*This is not  
a headscarf.*  
Installation  
view,  
Prospekthof,  
2021

## Asma Aiad, *This is not a headscarf*

(Original Title: Das hier ist kein Kopftuch / Ceci n'est pas un voile)

In 1929 Rene Magritte painted his famous work *La trahison des images* (Eng: *The betrayal of images*), on which a pipe is depicted with the subtitle “Ceci n’est pas une pipe.” (Eng: “This is not a pipe.”). According to the most common interpretation, Magritte wanted to show that what is depicted is a picture and not a real pipe. In this way, he thematizes the relationship between the object, its designation, and its representation. With her work *This is not a headscarf* the artist Asma Aiad wants to draw attention to the vexed discussion about the headscarf in our society. With which foreign attributions, interpretations,

prohibitions and forced liberations does the female, Muslim body have to struggle daily? How do Muslim women come to be objectified in a debate in which they are constantly talked about, negotiated, judged and determined? This work questions what is head covering and what kind of head coverings are not an issue in our society while others create a great social debate. What is the headscarf in the eyes or on the head of others as opposed to the headscarf on the head of the wearer? What is (k)a headscarf and who defines it?

# Asma Aiad, *The ninth of November 2020*



Asma Aiad,  
*The ninth of  
November 2020.*  
Installation view,  
Prospekthof, 2021

In the early hours of the ninth of November 2020, 60 house searches took place as part of the so-called Operation Luxor. This large-scale raid took place exactly one week after the deadly attack in Vienna (2.11.2020) and is the largest police operation of the Second Republic, involving almost a thousand officers.

Around 5 a.m., officers forcibly gain access to club and office premises, as well as homes and family apartments, in a coordinated operation. Men, women and children were roused from their sleep by heavily armed officers so that “evidence” can be seized. The charges are serious. They are accused of being members of a terrorist organization. They are accused of having an anti-state connection or being members of a criminal organization. There is talk of money laundering and terrorist financing. The search warrant takes the allegations to the extreme: The defendants would establish Islamic enclaves. Here in Austria. At the same time, they would overthrow Arab regimes to ultimately enforce the establishment of a worldwide caliphate. There is hardly a right-wing threat scenario or conspiracy to match what is left out. The Austrian Interior Minister, Karl Nehammer, did not miss the opportunity and appeared himself at one of the crime scenes to stage an operation with the Special Forces officers and get it printed in the tabloids.

Due to the temporal proximity, the public was given the impression that the house searches are connected to the attack the previous week. The seriousness of the accusations and the brutal actions of the police reinforced this impression, and a media pre-condemnation immediately followed.

Nehammer linked the attack in downtown Vienna and the crackdown on so-called “political Islam” in the following way: “We are fighting



a battle on two fronts. On the one hand, we are investigating the immediate environment of the attacker of November 2, and on the other hand, we are investigating bankers and financiers who make such acts possible. ‘The actors of political Islam are trying to undermine democracy,’ to introduce Sharia law, to fight the fundamental rights and freedoms that have become dear to us.“ (*Salzburger Nachrichten*, 9.11.2020)

For those affected, the operation was associated with the loss of financial basis through seizure and freezing of accounts, loss of employment and distrust in personal circles. Legal fees and court costs ruined many families. But many were also mentally affected, with dozens of



Asma Aiad,  
*The ninth of  
 November 2020.*  
 Installation view,  
 Prospekthof, 2021

frightened, traumatized people, including many minors and children. Volunteer individuals and helpers have donated money to the families and tried to organize psychological treatments and trauma therapies especially for the traumatized children. The accused were denied access and access to the files concerning them for months – unlawfully. For a long time they did not know what they were really accused of. The seriousness of the accusations and the disproportionate conduct of the raids have not only traumatized those directly affected, but have also seriously unsettled the entire Muslim community.

Accused persons who worked as teachers were suspended. Associations accused of money laundering and terrorist financing were investigated, even though they have the Austrian seal of approval for donations. But not only that: Muslims who donated to charities with the Austrian seal of approval are summoned for police interrogations or even directly accused of financing terrorism. This amounts to criminalizing tens of thousands of charitable and blameless Muslims. Months later, the commission of inquiry set up to investigate the Vienna attack comes to a very different conclusion about the link between the November 2 attack and the house searches: The attack probably could have been prevented. However, the security authorities were so preoccupied by preparations for Operation Luxor that they had no resources to stop the eventual assassin(s) in time. While the State Security Service observed blameless Muslim citizens for more than a year and collected 21,000 (twenty-one thousand) hours of audio and video footage, officials failed to observe a jihadist with a criminal record.

On the day of the raid, and a year later, there is not a single arrest. 10 months later, the Graz Higher Regional Court declares the house searches unlawful. A spokeswoman says that the measures were not in accordance with the law, that the suspicious situation before the house searches was not sufficient for this. Almost exactly on the anniversary of the operation, the first case is closed: “But no terror: criminal proceedings ended” (*Die Presse*, 2.11.2021). Many others are still waiting for results. The accounts and





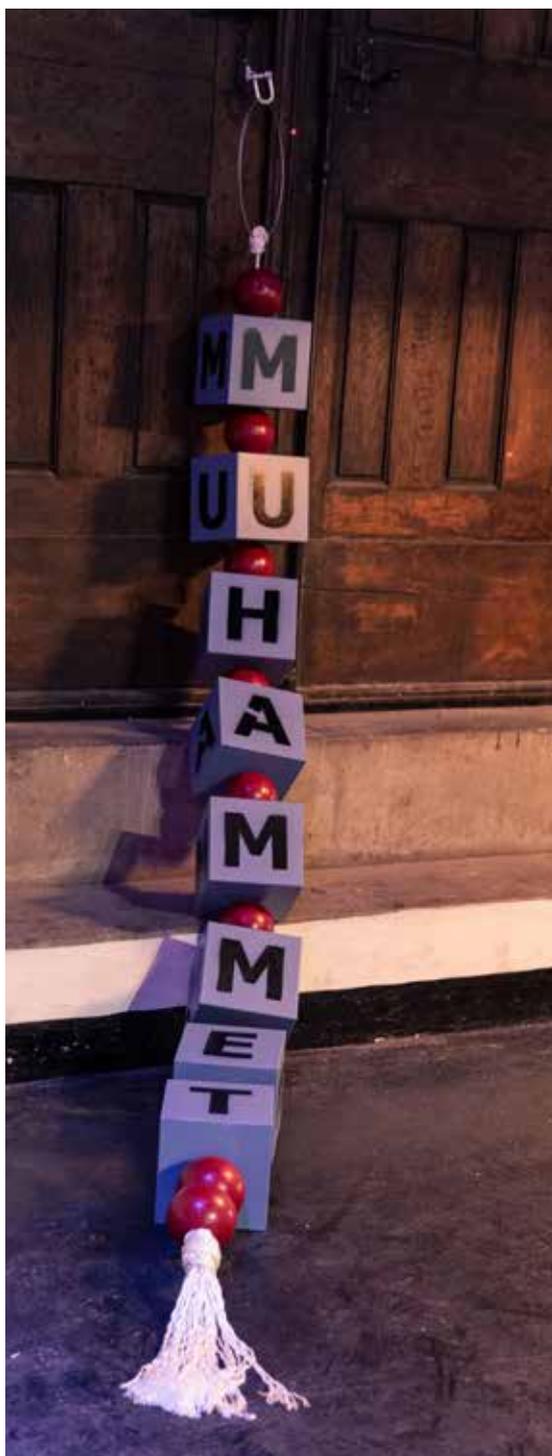
Asma Aiad,  
*The ninth of November 2020*. Installation view, Prospekthof, 2021

assets of most of those affected and their families remain frozen to this day. Mobile phones, laptops and hard drives – both their own and those of their children and spouses or their guests – are still being seized.

This artistic work, *The ninth of November 2020* by Asma Aiad, is an installation that aims to portray this terrible day from the perspective of those affected. You will not see a military image of the interior minister here. You will see how children and families experienced state violence on his watch. This work was created in collaboration with the accused and affected families and uses parts from the files as well as narratives from the children and their families. The installation plays with the shift in perspective: away from the criminalization and control of the news to the people who crave for justice and truth even more than a year later.

The installation is a mouthpiece for these people who have had little opportunity to address the public for fear of reputational damage. You can enter their home, see what happened to them, listen to their stories, scan QR codes and read and see original documents, allegations and transcripts. Understand what happened that day and see the absurdity of why people are criminalized. This work is both an artistic exploration and a subjective reexamination of the events described. The installation does not claim to be complete.

# Muhammet Ali BAŞ, *Key holder*



Muhammet Ali Baş,  
*Key holder*. Installation view,  
Prospekthof, 2021

Muhammet Ali Baş is a writer, language artist and cultural mediator. He works at the intersection of museum, art and literature. After studying language arts, he is currently pursuing a master's degree in/ecom exhibition theory and practise at the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

# Esma BOŠNJAKOVIĆ, *Integration – what is it really?*

(Original title: Integration – was ist sie wirklich?)



Esma Bošnjaković, *Integration – what is it really?* Installation view, Prospekthof, 2021

Esma Bošnjaković draws comics and illustrations about the everyday life of Muslims. She tries to show what unites us, what occupies us as human beings.

Esma Bošnjaković: *Integration – what is it really?* The word and concept of “integration” seeks its victims and haunts whom it finds – or is this saying too negative? Is not integration a positive process that should have positive consequences? In a comic Esma tries to trace this myth a little and to refresh its traces, which have been blurred by racism and other -isms, or to lay them completely anew.

# Imen BOUSNINA, *Fashion or oppression?*



Imen Bousnina, *Fashion or oppression?* Installation view, Prospekt Hof, 2021

Imen Bousnina is a designer of modest fashion; she was born and raised in Austria and lives in Europe. With this, she wants to show that modest fashion is not a contradiction to modern western fashion. Although Imen grew up in Vienna, her Tunisian roots play an important role in her life and designs. From time to time, Tunisian culture serves as inspiration for her designs and can be seen in Imen's color combinations, cuts and fabrics.

In her work *Fashion or oppression?* she shows two fashion dolls. One of them wears fabrics that are worn on runways and catwalks with a headscarf like major fashion brands and the other fashion doll wears a Muslim headscarf. She wonders why one is considered fashionable and celebrated and the other is considered an oppression, and is therefore banned?

# Calimaat, *Khorasan*



Calimaat, *Khorasan*. Installation view, Prospekthof, 2021

Calimaat is an art & creative director and calligraffiti artist. He is known, among other things, for his mixture of abstract forms of ancient Arabic scripts. His works are mostly seen on the street, in studies or exhibitions. Khorasan is a historical region in Central Asia and means “Morning Land,” “Land of the Rising Sun.” It is also considered one of the most important flourishing periods in Islamic history. The work *Khorasan* reflects the rise of the Qalām (pen) and revives a forgotten memory.

# EsRAP



<https://www.facebook.com/ESRAP.duo/photos/>  
Foto: Tim Cavadini

For the siblings Esra and Enes Özmen, awareness of their own history is very important. As Viennese rap duo with Turkish roots EsRAP they sing about life stories and everyday racism, about Islamophobia and homelessness. Hip-hop lyrics mix with arabesque chants. In their concert, on the last day of the project *Muslim\* Contemporary* they talk to us about the possibilities of music as an expression of one's own attitude to life and life experience, about cultural identities and about the "value" of having migration back-

ground and protesting against discrimination. Esra and Enes Özmen grew up in Vienna Ottakring. As EsRAP they have already performed at the Wiener Festwochen, among others. In 2017 they founded Gürtel Squad, a series of events on rap music and hip-hop. In 2019, their first album *Tschuschistan* was released.

# Neda HOSSEINYAR, *Politics of fear*



Neda Hosseinyar, *Politics of fear*. Installation view, Prospekthof, 2021

Neda Hosseinyar is an artist, youth worker and educator. In her artistic work, which includes installations, paintings, prints, videos and performative interventions, she undertakes a critical reflection on socially and politically discriminatory structures and attempts to deconstruct them. She currently sits on the board of the Association of Austrian Women Artists [Vereinigung bildender Künstlerinnen Österreichs/VBKÖ].

Her artistic project and research, *Politics of fear*, focuses on cultural racism and is particularly concerned with Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism. Furthermore, *Politics of fear* explores the interplay of culture, religion, ethnicity and gender in this discourse. The installation engages with the visual rhetoric of Europe's far-right parties, presenting a series of posters with anti-Muslim, racist elements that have been used repeatedly by various far-right parties across Europe over several years. The work visualizes a complex network of far-right parties such

as: Alternative for Germany, Britain First (England), British National Party (England), Bürgerbewegung pro Nordrhein-Westfalen (Germany), Democracia Nacional (Spain), Dansk Folkeparti (Denmark), España 2000 (Spain), Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, Lega Nord (Italy), Narodni Strana (Czech Republic), National Democratic Party of Germany, Partij voor de Vrijheid (Netherlands), Rassemblement National (France), Swiss People's Party, Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden), Úsvit – Národní Koalice (Czech Republic), Vlaams Belang (Belgium) and tries to make clear the concept of intersectionality; how class, gender and race works in the realm of the far-right and nationalistic movements in Europe. *Politics of fear* reveals strong traces of legally practiced racism in Europe's far-right parties and attempts to show a critical analysis in which the anti-Muslim content is recontextualized from the national to the transnational right-wing and far-right public sphere.

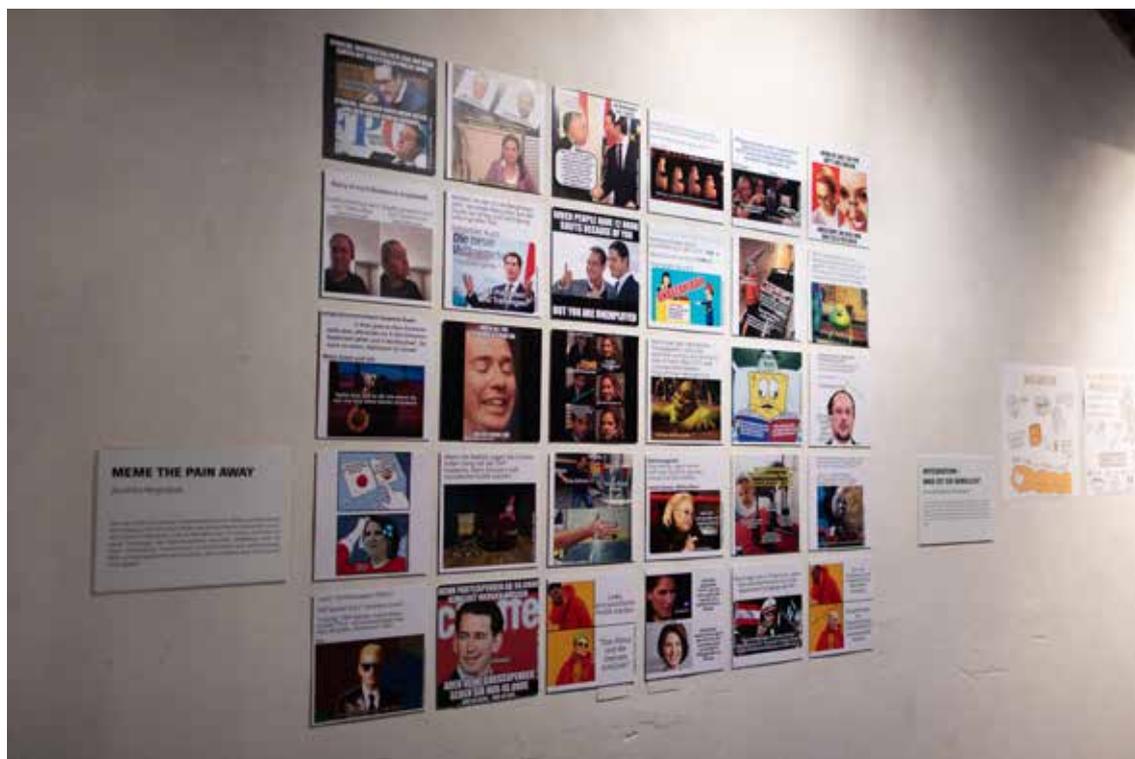
# Hibat-Ullah KHELIFI, *RugLife*



Hibat-Ullah Khelifi. *RugLife*.  
Installation view, Prospekthof, 2021

Hibat-Ullah Khelifi is an Austrian-Tunisian photographer and student from Vienna. Her academic and artistic work focuses on the intrinsic life of carpets and carpet patterns, complemented by visual politics and aesthetic portrait and documentary photography. Having grown up in Favoriten, many of the experiences, impressions, questions and visions she has gathered there over the years flow into her artistic work.

# Anahita NEGHABAT, *Meme the pain away*



Anahita Neghabat, *Meme the pain away*. Installation view, Prospekthof, 2021

Anahita Neghabat is a cultural and social anthropologist and online activist from Vienna. In her research and political work she deals with feminism, (anti-Muslim) racism and internet culture. Since May 2019, she runs the artistic-activist Instagram page @ibiza\_austrian\_memes, where she criticizes Austrian domestic politics with satirical images. This Instagram site now reaches around 25,000 people. Her humor avoids flat stereotypes and discriminatory prejudices. Instead, she takes an intersectional feminist, anti-racist and power-critical look at current political events. In the exhibition a selection of her memes are displayed.

# Ein Stück Theater, *Remake.Ringparabel*



Ein Stück Theater. *Remake.Ringparabel*. Opening event 8.11.2021

Ein Stück Theater is a theater association by and for young people. They are characterized by cultural diversity, multilingualism and multiple affiliations and see themselves as bridge builders in a social atmosphere that is repeatedly threatened by dynamics of simplicity and populism. Their diversity is reflected in all productions of Ein Stück Theater. They direct, organize, technologically support, and put their acting talent into action by themselves. The theater lives from the commitment of the many student volunteers.

*Remake.Ringparabel* is an innovative, contemporary interpretation of classical authors

that questions the humanistic values of these authors and asks whether they are still relevant today or how they can be embodied in a modern society. As part of the realization of the theater performance at the opening of the exhibition *Muslim\* Contemporary*, young people were invited to share their impressions about tolerance, pluralism and equal opportunities in workshops. Excerpts from the play were also performed on the open street and at various events.



1. Readings by Ozan Zakariya Keskinliç from his book *Muslimanic. The Career of an Enemy Image* (published in German by Körber Stiftung in 2021). The readings were followed by a discussion with the author and Mag. Amani Abuzahra and Muhammet Ali Baş, 10.11.2021

2. WORKSHOP 3. *Talking Back Racism and Resistance* with mag. Dudu Kücügöl, 11.11.2021

3. Grand finale. The community of all those working in the organization of the project *Muslim\* Contemporary*

**Colophon***Muslim\* Contemporary*

Art. Lectures. Workshops &amp; more

8-12 November, 2021

Prospekthof, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna,

Lehargasse 8, Vienna

A project by Asma Aiad

In collaboration and with the support of

Prof. Dr. Marina Grzinic

Academy of Fine Arts Vienna/ Akademie der

bildenden Künste Wien

Participants, artists and organizations:

Amani Abuzahra | Asma Aiad | Muhammet Ali Baş

| Esmā Bošnjaković | Imen Bousnina | Calimaat

| EsRap | Neda Hosseinyar | Ozan Zakaria Keskinilic

| Hibatullah Khelifi | Dudu Küçükgöl | Anahita

Neghabat | Ein Stück Theater | Salam Oida

Muslimische Jugend Österreich

Black Voices Anti-Rassismus Volksbegehren

Dokumentationsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit

Organized by the main partner Salam

Oida, in collaboration and with the support of the

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Prof. Grzinic/Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the

Coordination Office for the Advancement of Women

| Gender Studies | Diversity, [Koordinationsstelle

Frauenförderung | Geschlechterforschung

| Diversität] Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. The project

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Documentation edited by Asma Aiad

(concept and story) and Marina Grzinic

(editorial work), Vienna, 21.11.2021