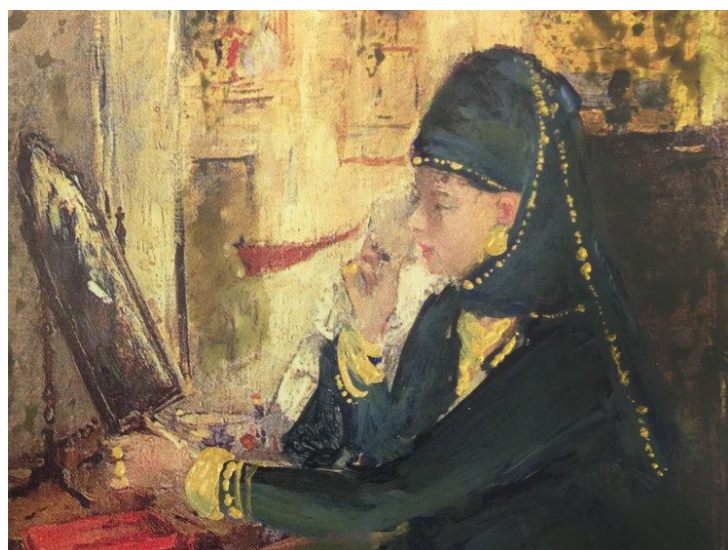


# طارق السيد رجب ديمشقي

## Beauty, Sex and mysticism

### The unholy trinity of the Arab Avant Garde

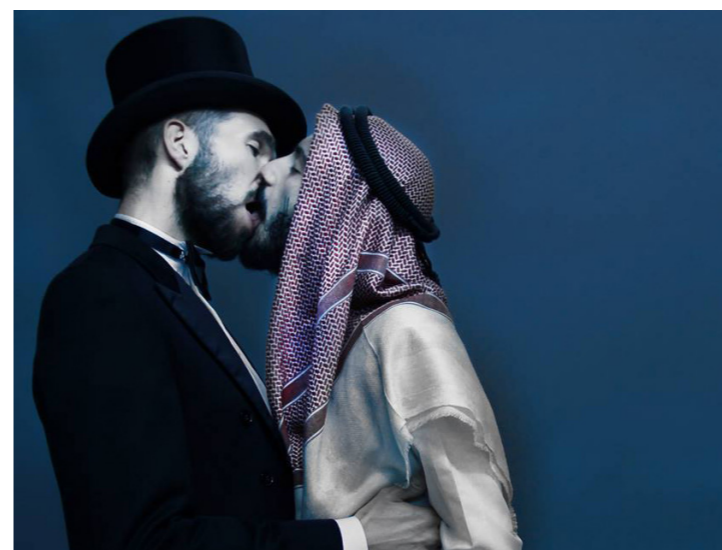
Born in 1989, **Tareq Sayed Rajab de Monfort** is an artist who grew up in Kuwait in a wealthy family, surrounded by the rare and sophisticated works of art and craft that his grand father Tareq Sayed Rajab gathered in his eponymous museum. Leaving Kuwait for London when he turns 18, Tareq studies jewellery at Central St Martin. His latest exhibition **“The Arab Unbound”** in London gathered for the first time in three rooms, what Tareq de Monfort calls «three verses» of his art, as three key items: **graceful Arab men, powerful Arab women and the Arab Avant Garde**, a concept Tareq uses to unifying Arab queer and Arab romanticism through the search of extasy, beauty and mysticism.



The artist repainted this picture of Monnet with Arabic-Islamic style costume, to harmoniously fit the impressionists and orientalist aesthetics, in an attempt reappropriate Orientalist codes in Arab aesthetic. The lady from the West then turns to one of the forgotten queens of Islam.



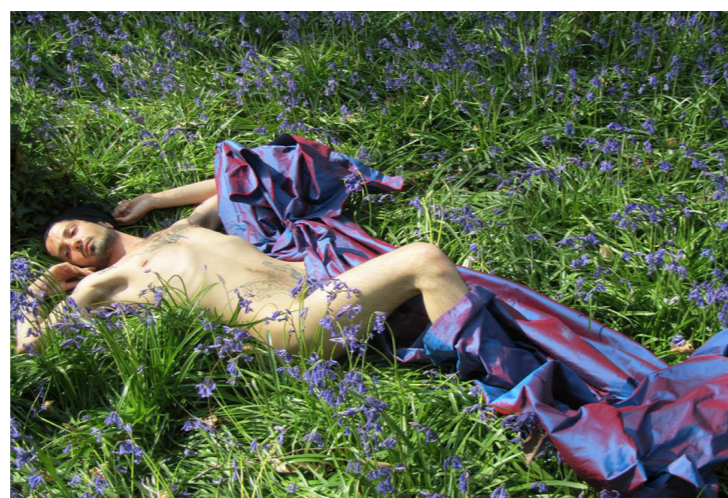
This photograph shows «The Philosopher’s Melancholy». Tareq de Monfort seeks to achieve a unity between East and West through this 19th Century romantic topoi, by representing the forging of both realms relationship to the night hours, moon and melancholy.



**Build a bridge of love and desire between Easterners and Westerners** through a subtle diversion of the concept of *Asala*. This concept of « authenticity » is used to « denote a style of vision, attitude and production situated in the past and therefore always held in opposition to modernity» (Shabout). First inviting us to daydreaming, Tareq de Monfort then brings his public back to modern times with these two men kissing each other while wearing the traditional Arab costume. A political statement that Tareq de Monfort remains paradoxically reluctant to acknowledge.



«Sexuality», this is how Tareq de Monfort called this portrait of a woman entirely veiled, with the hands of a man, who seems pray. It contrasts with the man quietly laying naked in the flowering grass of the English countryside. Although not exhibited together, these two pictures epitomize two visions of the body: **veiled sexuality under control and nudity, as purity and divine contemplation.** Tareq de Monfort intends to give back the Arab-Islamic world an art of sexuality, eroticism and sensuality that conservatism and fundamentalism restricted: a practice that is at the core of the Arab Avant-garde.



« **Sexuality has been a defining element** which I try to define in my life and my work, because for me divinity is the absolute of everything, what everyone eats, what everyone sleeps, where everyone sleeps, who everyone sleeps with. I don’t believe in God, I believe in divinity, and my belief in divinity is the all-embracing mother». Body and soul can’t be separated. The artist hence uses body as a path to reach liberty and ecstasy, inspired by the sufi Zikr ritual: the recitation of the 99 names of God he progressively covers his body with; and the suspension rituals practiced by muslim fakirs.

