

## **“Visionary Threads”: Collective Quilting from Tripoli**

Quilting is both a generative act and a practice of communal sustenance that encompasses material, sensorial, and emotional domains. Quilt designs often narrate dreams and memories or send messages, while storytelling and community building are inherent to the processes of making and using. During 2023 Sixty women associated with Ruwwad Al Tanmeya in Tripoli experimented with these layers of creative practice under the creative guidance of Huda Baroudi and Maria Hibri, co-founders of Bokja Design. Stitching on the border of Syria Street, which has separated the communities of Jabal Mohsen and Bab el Tabbeneh since the 1970s, the group envisioned restorative and sustainable connectivity through the design and fabrication of highly textured wall hangings made from upcycled fabrics.



Quilting connects to a rich history of textile projects oriented toward social empowerment, engaged art practice, and memory work. Most of the Ruwwad quilters had learned the historically feminine practices of stitching, crocheting, and knitting in familial and vocational settings. As such, they were not exposed to the elite institutionalized realm of “high art” that many exhibitions of contemporary textiles are currently attempting to rupture. Agial Gallery approaches this project in support of artists’ social engagement toward their own societies. Moreover, the gallery upholds the value of quilting, a genre once categorized diminutively in the Euroamerican art world as “outsider” or “folk” art. The women and their collaborating partners thus engage a slow disciplinary unraveling, showing how gender and socioeconomic class shape and are shaped by lingering hierarchies that distinguish art from craft, high from low, professional from amateur. In their suturing, the Ruwwad quilters sow into a rich terrain of collective quilting practices that seek to mend societal divisions. Their artistry evinces the restorative power of their work.

The Ruwwad Quilting Collective

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Rawaa Akkari

Ahlam Awwad

Suzan Beirouti

Suzanne Chaaban

Aya Dannawi

Youssra Doudeh

Rima Ghassa

Caroline Ghawi

Bousayna Habesh

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Mouna Hallak

Zainab Hallak

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Dima Hassan

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Saada Hassan

Rose Hmedeh

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Amal Ibrahim

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Souad Ibrahim

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