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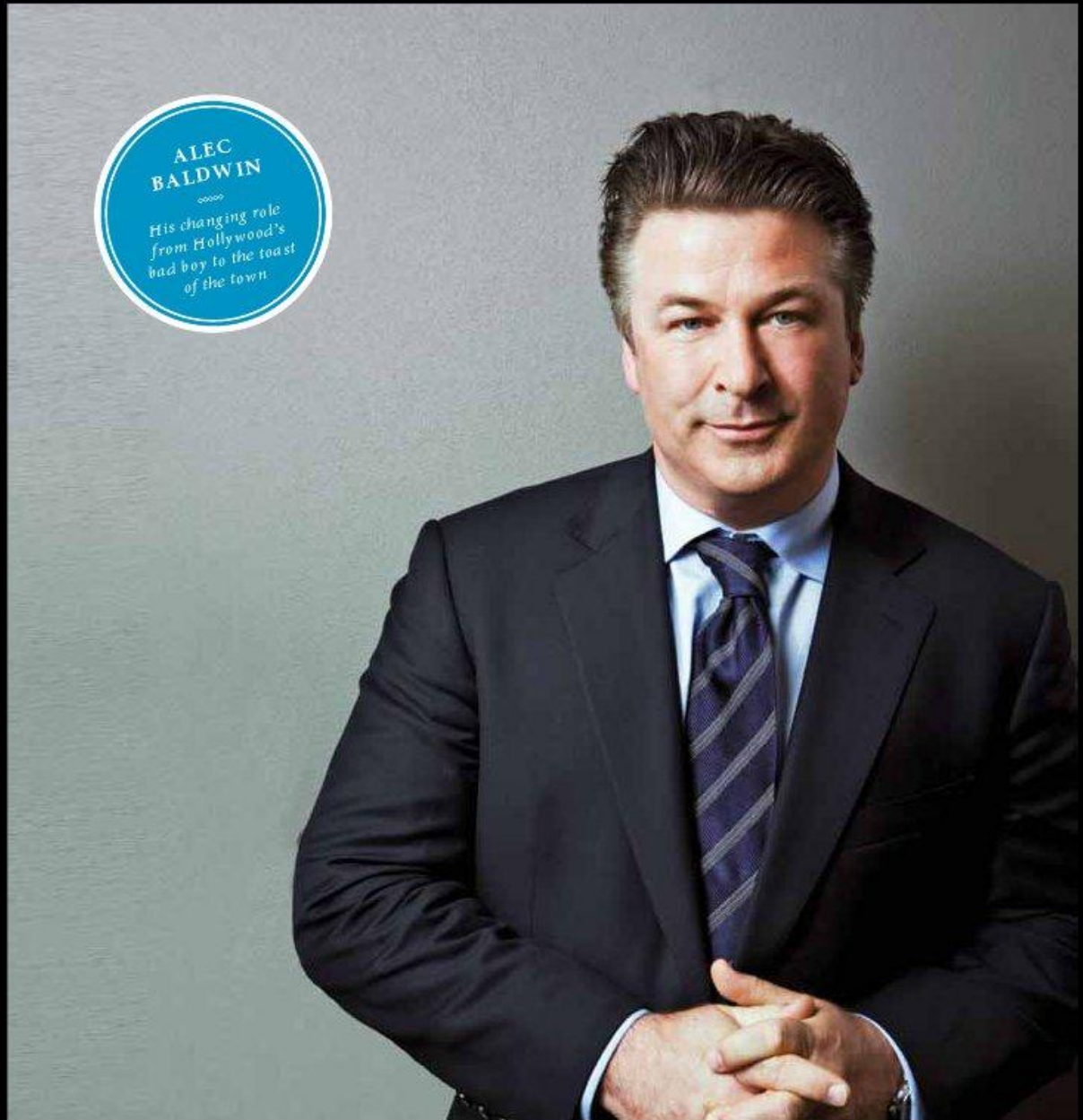
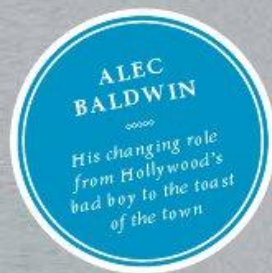
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# AIR

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## Art across borders

*Ayyam Gallery has long captured the Middle East's love of art, and now it's spreading its wings to Jeddah and London. AIR meets the man behind the new generation*



**T**he Middle East's love of its art is well-documented, but how does it translate elsewhere? That's the question that Ayyam Gallery's founding director Khaled Samawi will be asking himself as the gallery prepares to open in London this month. Its launch on 143 New Bond Street will mark the gallery's first foray into Europe – a move that has already captured Samawi's imagination: "The market in London is very overcrowded so we will have to work hard to ensure our voice is heard," he admits, "but there is a real thirst for art from the MENA region. Middle Eastern contemporary art has been on the radar for a while but it is only just beginning to be noticed as globally significant, rather than as a regional novelty."

But the London venture isn't the only challenge on Samawi's radar: in February he will also take the

Ayyam concept to Jeddah, adding yet another space to the established Middle East galleries in Damascus, Beirut and Dubai. "We are launching Ayyam Jeddah in response to the recent revival of the Saudi art scene," says Samawi. "We are very excited to be the first international gallery operating in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. While there is a great deal of energy and youthful vitality circulating around the Saudi scene there is very little infrastructure and very little institutional support."

In Jeddah, the gallery will exhibit work by both upcoming and established artists, including the likes of Mohammad Orabi, Abdul Karim Majdal Al Beik, Oussama Diab – with a strong focus on the Saudi contingent specifically. In London, by way as a taster of the region's art, Nadim Karam's iconic sculptural pieces – a playful blend of brushed-steel forms and quirky animal themes – will open the new gallery, followed by mixed-

media installations by Iraqi filmmaker Sadik Alfraji and paintings by Palestinian artist Samia Halaby later in the year.

Breaking into the two unknown markets promises to be an interesting move for Ayyam Gallery, but Samawi is philosophical: "We are not afraid to show work that tackles serious issues, but at the same time we do not want to alienate anyone. People are always excited to encounter, culturally and politically engaged work that hasn't been over-commercialised." [ayyamgallery.com](http://ayyamgallery.com)

1. Nadim Karam & Atelier Hapsitus, Untitled. Beirut.
2. Mohammad Orabi, It's No Longer About Me. Ayyam Gallery Jeddah.
3. Abdul Karim Majdal Al-Beik, Wall. Ayyam Gallery Jeddah.
4. Mouteea Murad, Trial No. 67. Ayyam Gallery Jeddah.
5. Ayyam Gallery Beirut.

