

**Major works from Arab collection come to Jordan for the first time:
Barjeel Art Foundation and Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts present
'Lines of Subjectivity: Portrait and Landscape Paintings'**

Opens next week: 9 March - 31 May 2017



Marguerite Nakhla, *Scene dans le parc*, c. 1940s, oil on canvas
Image courtesy of Barjeel Art Foundation

'Lines of Subjectivity: Portrait and Landscape Paintings' features a selection of modern work from the Barjeel Art Foundation's permanent collection. Curated by Suheyra Takesh and Dr. Khalid Khreis and presented at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, this exhibition explores the development of landscape painting and portraiture in the Arab World in the first half of the 20th century. It looks into evolving styles and approaches towards representation, along with the artists' subjective perspectives and understanding of the world.

The exhibition seeks to highlight the technical skill and craftsmanship that painting in the early 20th century involved, and to contextualise the development of formal simplification and abstraction, which occurred towards the middle of the century. It also aims to illustrate that the work of contemporary practitioners does not exist independently from its precedents, but has emerged as a result of a cumulative art history. 'Lines of Subjectivity' will include works from artists from Armenia, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, and others.

Paintings selected for this show not only reflect a socio-political condition of their time and individual preoccupations of their makers, but bear testimonies to the academic training and cross-geographic, cross-societal exposure – at times within their own countries – that these artists had. Many of the presented painters began training in their places of origin under established masters, later receiving government scholarships to study in international (typically European) art academies or independently seeking academic opportunities abroad.

Many of them returned home, re-evaluating familiar scenes and previously habitual experiences, as well as local materials and methods of production. Some also took on students or directed art departments at local universities, creating ever-expanding networks of influences. For instance, Habib Srour and Khalil Gibran, whose presence is marked in the exhibition by their depictions of nudes, both studied portraiture under the tutelage of Daoud Corm in Lebanon before pursuing further schooling away from home. Srour then went on to employ the young Saliba Douaihy, whose work also makes an appearance in the show, as an apprentice in his atelier, setting him up for a nearly six-decade long career as an artist.

The exhibition's development was led by an enquiry into the academic training and exposure artists received at the turn of the century, as well as ways in which it impacted their practice and outlook towards representation. This became a compelling thread that led the curatorial processes between the curators through the collection of modern work held in the Barjeel Art Foundation to the final display at Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts this month.

Exhibiting artists will include:

Habib Srour; Kamel Moustafa; Mohammed Naghi; Abdul Qader Al Rassam; George Sabbagh; Khalil Gibran; Ahmad Nashaat Alzuaby; Ibrahim Salahi; Ervand Demerdjian; Elias Zayat; Abdul Hadi El-Gazzar; Louay Kayyali; Ezekiel Barouk; Faraj Abou; Faiq Hassan; Hatim Elmekki; Paul Guiragossian; Mona Saudi; Saad El Khadem; Saliba Douaihy; Clea Badaro; Abdullah Al-Qassar; Marguerite Nakhla; Ragheb Ayad; Huguette Caland; and others.

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Notes to Editors

Barjeel Art Foundation is an independent, UAE-based initiative established to manage, preserve and exhibit a collection of Arab modern and contemporary art. The foundation's guiding principle is to contribute to the intellectual development of the art scene in the Arab region by building a prominent, publicly accessible art collection in the UAE.

Part of this objective involves developing a public platform to foster critical dialogue around contemporary art practices with a focus on artists with Arab heritage internationally. The foundation strives to create an open-ended enquiry that responds to and conveys the nuances inherent to Arab histories beyond borders of culture and geography.

By hosting in-house exhibitions, lending artwork to international forums, producing print and online publications, and fashioning interactive public programmes, the foundation strives to serve as an informative resource for contemporary art by Arab artists both locally and on the global stage.

In addition to building an informative database of artists, the foundation is seeking to develop an educational programme that both understands and involves the local community. By establishing partnerships with arts and cultural institutions internationally, the foundation looks to create opportunities to encourage public awareness of the importance of art to the community.

The Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts was founded by the Royal Society of Fine Art in 1980. It has since developed to become one of the major art museums in the Middle East, housing one of the largest art collections by modern and contemporary artists from the Developing World. Its collection now comprises over 2,800 works, including painting, sculpture, ceramic pieces, weaving, video art, installation, graphic arts, and photography by more than 1,000 artists from 66 countries, predominantly in Asia and Africa.

The Gallery engages in a wide range of activities and collaborates with major international museums, cultural foundations and ministries in order to promote cultural dialogue and artistic exchange. It also organizes poetry-reading seminars, workshops, concerts, book launches, lectures, and film screenings.