

THE ART SALON  
IN THE ARAB REGION  
Politics of Taste Making

Edited by  
Nadia von Maltzahn and Monique Bellan

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ERGON VERLAG WÜRZBURG  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume is the result of a series of conversations and discussions that took place in various forums. It began when we, the editors, were brainstorming about a topic that we could work on together at the Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB). In her longer-term research on aesthetic reflection and the way art has been debated in the media in Lebanon and Egypt since the early twentieth century, Monique was at that time focusing on the avant-garde group *Art et Liberté* in Egypt, which challenged the aesthetic and political order in the late 1930s and 1940s. Nadia was becoming immersed in her case study of the Sursock Museum in Beirut, within her project on the relationship between cultural policies, cultural production and the public sphere in Lebanon. The Sursock Museum was known for its *Salon d'Automne*, and the salon was one of the exhibition formats rejected by the *Art et Liberté* Group in Cairo. We therefore started thinking about the role and impact of the art salon on the formation of public taste and debates on art in the Arab region, as well about cultural interactions between the Middle East and Europe.

Guided initially by the question of the migration of institutional patronage from Europe to the Arab region, we organised a two-part panel on “The Art Salon in the Arab Region.” The first part was held at the Italian Society of Middle Eastern Studies’ annual conference in Catania in March 2016, with Monique Bellan, Catherine Cornet, Morad Montazami, Nadia von Maltzahn, and Nadia Radwan, moderated by Eva Maria Troelenberg. The second part took place at the Middle East Studies Association’s annual meeting in Boston in November 2016, with Monique Bellan, Nadia von Maltzahn, and Nada Shabout, moderated by Kirsten Scheid. A third panel discussion took place in January 2017 at the Sursock Museum, when Jessica Gerschultz joined us. This event was held in the frame of the Sursock Museum’s 32nd *Salon d'Automne*, which the museum had just relaunched after many discussions as to the function of the salon format today.

Since the topic resonated both in academic and art circles, we decided to partner with the Sursock Museum to bring everyone together to discuss more comprehensively the emergence and evolution of the art salon in the

region, and to deliberate on the function of the art salon today in the context of a museum and its collection. In October 2017 we convened a two-day conference on “The Art Salon in the Arab Region.”

We would like to warmly thank all the participants in these discussions, the value of which went far beyond the panels themselves: Amin Alsaden, Hala Auji, Gregory Buchakjian, Eileen Cooper, Catherine Cornet, Nancy Demerdash-Fatemi, Abed al-Kadiri, Kristine Khouri, Alain Messaoudi, Morad Montazami, Marie Muracciole, Camilla Murgia, Silvia Naef, Maria-Mirka Palioura, Dina A. Ramadan, Nora Razian, Ghalya Saadawi, Kirsten Scheid, Nada Shabout, Nayla Tamraz, Eva Maria Troelenberg, and Amar A. Zahr. Our special gratitude goes to the Sursock Museum, Zeina Arida, Rowina Bou-Harb, Yasmine Chemali, and Sasha Ussef, and we are extremely grateful to the Volkswagen Foundation for supporting the conference and contributing to publication costs.

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Beirut, November 2018

Nadia von Maltzahn and Monique Bellan

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE ART SALON IN THE ARAB REGION

NADIA VON MALTZAHN

This volume discusses the emergence and role of the art salon in the Arab region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, focusing on Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq.<sup>1</sup> The institutional forms of exhibiting and teaching art migrated from Europe to the Middle East and North Africa in the late colonial and early post-colonial context and developed into stories of their own, while artists circulated between these regions. The various chapters examine how the salon had an impact on the formation of taste and on debates on art, and discuss the transfers and cultural interactions between the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. Following the institutional model of the Paris salons, art salons emerged in Algiers, Tunis and Cairo starting in the late 1880s. In Beirut and Damascus the salon tradition reached its peak only after independence in the mid-twentieth century. Baghdad never had a formal salon, but alternative spaces and exhibition formats developed in Iraq from the late 1940s onwards.

The salons in the region – like their Parisian predecessors – often defined the criteria of artistic production and public taste, while creating new societal practices. The impact of the salon also lay in its ability to convey particular values, attitudes and aspirations. At the same time, the values and attitudes promoted by the salon were subject to debate, which led to the creation of counter-salons or alternative exhibition practices. The role of the salon evolved within the context of the artistic landscape in each city, which in turn was determined by local political and economic imperatives. Thus the art salon helps us to understand changes in the art systems of these countries, including the development of art schools, exhibition spaces and artist societies, and gives insight into the power

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<sup>1</sup> The Arab region is here taken as the region in which Arabic is one of the official languages. It is understood as a geographical term with no ethnic implications. Unless otherwise indicated, this introduction is based on the information provided in the chapters in this volume. For further reading, please refer to the selected bibliography at the end of the book.

dynamics at play.<sup>2</sup> It also highlights networks and circulations between the Arab region and Europe.

The art salon is understood as a group exhibition of art that takes place on a regular – generally annual or biannual – basis, in which works are chosen by a jury or selection committee. It showcases contemporary artistic production and is generally widely reviewed in the press. Participating in a salon has often constituted an important step for artists in getting their works recognised. Many salons have handed out prizes to further institutionalise taste. The Arabic term for art salon has usually been simply “exhibition” (*ma‘rad*).<sup>3</sup> The Arab region has had a long tradition of scholarly, social or literary gatherings (*majlis*, pl. *majalis*) that have been referred to as salons.<sup>4</sup> Art salons showed similarities to these earlier gatherings, and constituted a (regulated) public sphere in which debates took place, styles were circulated, and a shared tradition was established. However, with few exceptions<sup>5</sup> the model for the art salon in the Arab

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<sup>2</sup> For an engagement with questions of modernity and exhibition practices, see Naef, Silvia. *A la recherche d'une modernité arabe: L'évolution des arts plastiques en Egypte, au Liban et en Irak*. Geneva: Éditions Slatkine 1996; Shabout, Nada. *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics*. Florida: University Press of Florida, 2007; Winegar, Jessica. *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> There are a few exceptions, including the Cairo Youth Salon (launched in the late 1980s), which directly transcribed the term “salon” in Arabic (*salon al-shabab*). The recent Salon d'Automne International de Tunisie, which held its first exhibition in May 2014, also retained the term “salon” (*salun al-kharif al-dawli bi-tunis*).

<sup>4</sup> Older forms of scholarly and social gatherings acted as spaces of debate and encounter, enabled the circulation of ideas, contributed to establishing a shared tradition, as well as helped to spread the reputation of (literary) works. See Pfeifer, Helen. “Encounter After the Conquest: Scholarly gatherings in sixteenth-century Ottoman Damascus.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47 (2015): 219-239. Nelly Hanna writing about Ottoman Egypt emphasises how the literary salon (*majlis adab*) brought together literary people, poets and singers, some of whom travelled long distances in search of patrons and audiences. Hanna, Nelly. “Culture in Ottoman Egypt.” In *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume 2: Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the end of the twentieth century*. Edited by M. W. Daly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, 99. Hanna elaborates on the importance of the *majlis* or salon as a place of debate of literature, politics and current affairs for an emergent middle class in: Hanna, Nelly. *In Praise of Books: A cultural history of Cairo's middle class, sixteenth to eighteenth century*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press 2003. I thank Torsten Wollina for sharing this literature with me. Social or literary salons also had a tradition in France. For a discussion of these, see Martin-Fugier, Anne. *Les salons de la IIIe République: Art, littérature, politique*. Paris: Perrin 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Amin Alsadén in his chapter shows the explicit link between what he has termed “alternative salons” and the tradition of *diwans* in mid-twentieth century Baghdad. See also Al-Karkhi, Hussain Hatim. *Majalis al-adab fi Baghdad*. Bayrut: Al-mu‘assasah al-‘arabiyah lil-dirasat wa al-nashr 2003.

region was the type of art exhibition that had its origin in seventeenth-century France.

Art salons started under Louis XIV in 1667 as the official exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris, which took its name “Salon” after the famous *Salon carré* in the Louvre, where it was held since the early eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The Royal Academy in London followed suit a century later, with its first Summer Exhibition of 1769 taking place a year after the academy was founded.<sup>7</sup> The art academies in Paris and London and their annual salons soon became the most powerful institutions in the European art world of the time, patronising art and directing public taste. The salon became the heart of the Parisian art system, “the instrument for review, control and reward.”<sup>8</sup> Only in the nineteenth century did artists start to oppose the monopoly of the academy, resulting in the creation of new exhibition forums or independent salons such as the Salon des refusés, the Salon d’automne or the Salon des indépendants in France.<sup>9</sup> As the annual Paris Salon declined in power, art salons began to emerge in North Africa and Egypt.

### *Art Salons in the Arab Region*

Art salons in North Africa began as part of the colonial project and stood in close relation to the metropole, the home of many of the exhibiting artists. The Mediterranean part of colonial French Algeria (1830-1961) was administered as an integral part of France and considered like any other French *département* from 1848 until 1957, while Tunisia became a French protectorate in 1881.<sup>10</sup> This is important to bear in mind when discussing

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<sup>6</sup> For insights into the eighteenth-century Salon that was held biannually at the Louvre, see Delon, Michel (ed.). *Diderot: Salons*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard 2008. The collection of Diderot’s critiques of the Salon are also an early example of art criticism.

<sup>7</sup> The Royal Academy’s Summer Exhibition has been running annually without interruption ever since, celebrating its 250th Summer Exhibition in 2018. While not called “salon”, the Summer Exhibition has the same characteristics of the art salon.

<sup>8</sup> White, Harrison and White, Cynthia. *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*. New York: John Wiley & Sons 1965, 156. The book gives a clear idea about the decline of the power of the art academy and the emergence of a new art system, in which the emphasis shifted from the painting to the artist, from canvas to career, with its system of dealers and critics in relation to an evolving market.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the development of the art salon in France, see Monnier, Gérard. *L’art et ses institutions en France*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard 1995.

<sup>10</sup> For a history of French Algeria, see Martin, Claude. *Histoire de l’Algérie française: 1830-1962*. Paris: Éditions des 4 Fils Aymon 1963; McDougall, James. *A History of Algeria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2017; Peyroulou, Jean-Pierre; Bouchène, Abderrahmane; Siari Tengour, Ouanassa; Thénault, Sylvie (eds.). *Histoire*

art in a national context. In Algeria under French rule, “Algerian” artists generally denoted “French” or “European”, but rarely “Muslim” or “Arab”. In Tunisia, the situation was more fluid but nevertheless strongly dominated by France. Fine art exhibitions were presented as a sign of progress and modernity. They promoted European artistic norms and values, aiming to shape taste and aesthetic understanding within this context. The acquisition of “good taste” was seen as part of France’s *mission civilisatrice*. The Salon tunisien – run by the newly founded Institut de Carthage, an academy of arts and sciences – was launched in 1894, following a first group exhibition in 1888. In Algiers, the Society of Algerian Artists and Orientalists established a salon in 1897, in close exchange with the Parisian Society of French Orientalist Painters (founded in 1893), which had started an annual salon in Paris in 1895.

Egypt was not under formal colonial rule in the late nineteenth century despite being occupied by Britain since 1882,<sup>11</sup> and was less connected to the British art scene. The first Cairo Salon took place in 1891. In Egypt, unlike in Algiers and Tunis, colonial imperatives were not behind the creation of new exhibition practices, due also to the fact that Britain did not pursue a civilising mission. Rather, the early Cairo Salon was driven by the Greek artist Theodore Ralli, together with other, mainly European, artists who were either living in or passing through Cairo. They were familiar with the Parisian salons, in which they also exhibited. The Cairo Salon was established at a time when the city boasted a vibrant cosmopolitan community, which together with Egypt’s political elite made up the salon’s main audience. Not being part of an overt civilising mission, the Cairo Salon was portrayed as an “artistic awakening”.

From the beginning, the art salons in Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt also had a commercial aspect, both locally and trans-regionally. Tunis and Algiers provided a new market for painters from France at a moment when the traditional Paris Salon was weakening, and artists often sent works to these salons that they did not manage to sell in the metropole. In Cairo, circulation of art worked the other way round: the Salon apparently served as a testing ground for works that were exhibited in Egypt and then sent to the European salons and art market, as Maria-Mirka Palioura shows

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*de l’Algérie à la période coloniale, 1830-1962*. Paris: Éditions de la Découverte, 2012. For Tunisia, see Martin, Jean-François. *Histoire de la Tunisie contemporaine. De Ferry à Bourguiba*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> For a history of modern Egypt, see Daly, M. W. (ed.). *The Cambridge History of Egypt, vol. 2: Modern Egypt from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008, and Mansfield, Peter. *The British in Egypt*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1972.

in Chapter four. The delay in opening the 1894 Salon reportedly greatly affected the quality of exhibited works, as the more important ones had been sent directly to Europe without waiting for the Cairo Salon. This suggests the secondary nature of the Cairo Salon in the art market.

What can be termed the first Cairo Salon was discontinued after 1906. It was not until the early 1920s that a new art salon was founded in the capital, this time largely by Egyptian protagonists. Prince Yusuf Kamal – the founder of the School of Fine Arts in Cairo – initiated the creation of the Society of the Lovers of Fine Arts in 1923, which in turn established the annual Cairo Art Salon the same year.<sup>12</sup> It was preceded by group exhibitions between 1920 and 1922, and ran until 1951 under the patronage of the politician and art collector Muhammad Mahmud Khalil. Later, after Egypt had been a republic for more than three decades, the Egyptian Ministry of Culture launched a Youth Salon (Salon al-Shabab) in Cairo in 1989.

In Lebanon and Syria, it was not until post-independence that regular salons were established. Whereas group exhibitions had taken place in Lebanon since the 1930s,<sup>13</sup> they were organised in a systematic manner only from the late 1940s. A first Salon d'Automne (*ma'rad al-kharif*, Autumn Salon) was launched by the Ministry of National Education and Fine Arts in 1954, followed by a Salon du Printemps (*ma'rad al-rabi'*, Spring Salon). Beirut's Sursock Museum held its first Autumn Salon in 1961, which is still running today in spite of some interruptions.<sup>14</sup> In Damascus, the first annual group exhibition took place in 1950; in the same year, the Syrian Association for Fine Arts was founded, followed by the Association of Fine Arts Lovers in 1952 and the League of Syrian Artists for Painting and Sculpture in 1956.<sup>15</sup> After a Ministry of Culture

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<sup>12</sup> The Cairo Art Salon organised by the Society of the Lovers of Fine Arts was formally called "Salon" or "ma'rad", but is referred to as Cairo Art Salon in this book to differentiate it from the earlier Cairo Salon. For an image of the exhibition catalogue cover of the salon of 1929, see Bardaouil, Sam. *Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2017, Plate 0.10.

<sup>13</sup> In 1938, the Société des Amis des Arts organised a group exhibition of painting and sculpture referred to as "Salon" (in French), which was repeated the year after in the basement of the parliament building. Oughourian, Joseph. "Le Salon." *Phénicia* (May 1938), 1-16; el-Assi, Farid. "Le Salon." *Phénicia* (May-June 2939), 37-44. For an account of earlier group exhibitions, such as the 1931 exhibition at the Arts and Crafts school, see Lahoud, Edouard. *Contemporary Art in Lebanon*. Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1974, XL.

<sup>14</sup> The Autumn Salon at the Sursock Museum was interrupted between 1969 and 1974 due to renovation works, between 1975 and 1982 due to the outbreak of civil war, and between 2012 and 2016 again due to renovation works. See my chapter in this volume.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Sharif, Tarek. "Contemporary Art in Syria." In *Contemporary Art in Syria: 1898-1998*. Edited by Mouna Atassi. Damascus: Gallery Atassi 1998, 302, 304.

was established in Damascus in 1958, it started organising annual Autumn Salons.<sup>16</sup>

The above salons can be considered as hegemonic institutions that strove to set the taste of the time, just like the Parisian model. While Baghdad never had a formal salon, several group exhibitions started in the 1950s, such as the Baghdad Exhibition – generally referred to as the Mansur Club Exhibition – in 1956, and the exhibition of the Iraqi Artists Society (founded in 1956) in 1957. Artists excluded from exhibiting at the third Mansur Club Exhibition, which due to its popularity could only accept a small number of submitted works, protested their exclusion by holding an “Exhibition of Rejects” (*ma‘rad al-marfudat*) in 1958.

### *Counter-exhibitions*

Iraqi artists holding something like a Salon des refusés in 1958 was not the first time the dominant art salons in the region faced competition. Rival art salons and exhibition practices emerged in Tunis, Algiers and Cairo in the 1920s and 1930s, either because the main salons were considered too experimental or too rigid, too inclusive or too exclusive. French painter André Delacroix initiated the Salon des artistes tunisiens in 1924, in opposition to the Salon tunisien’s openness to “modernist tendencies” as well as its resistance to including Tunisian Muslim and Jewish artists. This rival salon, which ran until Delacroix’s death in 1934, favoured academic-style paintings by French artists. It tried to strengthen France’s position in the country at a time when Tunisian nationalist tendencies were on the rise. Rival salons in Algiers and Cairo, on the other hand, were founded against exclusionary exhibition practices. The Syndicat professionnel des artistes algériens founded its own salon in the 1920s, and the Photo Club of Algiers followed with a Photography Salon in 1934, both of which served as more inclusionary places of exchange. The Union artistique de l’Afrique du Nord, founded in 1925, also established an annual salon in Algiers that ran until 1961.

In Cairo, the rejection of the dominance of the Cairo Art Salon by the Society of the Lovers of Fine Arts – caricaturised as the “dictatorship of fine arts” – soon led to the formation of groups that initiated their own salons and exhibitions. La Chimère, founded in 1924 by Egyptian artist Mahmud Mukhtar and French painter Roger Bréval, organised annual exhibitions that they decided to rebrand as “salons” in 1926 to undermine the official institution. Juryless, La Chimère’s salon had no educational agenda but

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<sup>16</sup> A.G., “A Damas: Des thèmes nationaux, avant tout”, *L’Orient*, 5 December 1965.

aimed at fostering a local cosmopolitan cultural scene. The group *Art et Liberté* was constituted in Egypt in the late 1930s. Its main concern was – as the name suggests – “free” and “independent” art that was critical of the prevailing political and social conditions. The group’s members organised five exhibitions in Cairo between 1940 and 1945 that reflected their independent approach. The works exhibited were neither submitted to a jury nor received official patronage from the political establishment.<sup>17</sup>

### *Inclusion and Exclusion*

Official patronage was common in salons, both in Europe and the Arab region. The initial pre-revolutionary French salon celebrated the king as patron of the arts. In the region, the endorsement of high-ranking colonial administrators or the national political elite confirmed the prestige of salons and situated them within a political project, regardless of whether or not they were initialised or organised by a public or private entity. In Tunisia, the French Résident général and a member of the Tunisian beylical family generally inaugurated the salons. The first Cairo Salon’s opening ceremony was attended by members of the khedival family and the diplomatic corps. The new Cairo Art Salon took place under the patronage of the recently established royal family, generally being inaugurated by the king. King Faisal II and Prince Abd al-Ilah of Iraq opened the 1957 exhibition of the Iraqi Artists Society. Finally, the salons of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Fine Arts took place under the patronage of the president of the republic. The mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in a salon exhibition were determined by the selection committee, generally in the form of a jury appointed by the organising institution. Selection criteria were not clearly spelled out, but followed the overall politics of each salon. We have seen that the Salon tunisien, for instance, increasingly included Tunisian Muslim and Jewish artists, while the Salon des artistes tunisiens excluded them in favour of French artists, as did the Algerian Salon. Selection criteria during the early period thus took religion and ethnicity into account, reflecting overall colonial policies. The early Cairo Salon mostly exhibited European artists residing in or visiting Egypt, while the later Cairo Art Salon provided a forum for Egyptian artists as well as for non-Egyptian cosmopolitans. The situation in Egypt has to be considered in parallel to the development of artistic education. Whereas Egyptian non-colonial elites were active visitors and buyers of the early exhibitions, Egyptian painters and sculptors

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<sup>17</sup> On *Art et Liberté*, see Bardaouil, and Till Fellrath. *Art et Liberté, Rupture. War and Surrealism in Egypt (1938-1948)*. Paris: Skira 2016; Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*; and Monique Bellan’s chapter in this volume.

began to gain track only in the early twentieth century, in particular after the foundation of the Fine Arts School in Cairo in 1908 and the increasing circulation of Egyptian artists to Europe and back.

The politics of prize-giving, developed on the basis of the Parisian system, served to validate artistic preferences – as defined by the jury – and contributed to the shaping of taste. Artist societies played an important role in this endeavour, since it was often they that initiated the salons and selected or even constituted the juries. The Society of French Orientalist Painters, for example, which was closely connected to the development of salons in Tunisia and Algeria, created an award for the Tunis Salon in 1897 for artists living in North Africa and exhibiting at the salon. Starting in 1907, the Society of Algerian Artists and Orientalists awarded the Prix Abd-el-Tif at their salons. Showing parallels to the Paris Salon's Prix de Rome, this prize sponsored the residence of metropolitan painters at the Villa Abd-el-Tif in Algiers, institutionalising the circulation of artists from France to Algeria. The contributors to this volume discuss the extent to which the reward system helped to build a notion of “national” art in Tunisia and Algeria (Chapter eight), and triggered debates about what could be considered national art, as becomes clear in the later examples of the Cairo Youth Salon (Chapter nine) and Beirut's Sursock Museum's Autumn Salon (Chapter ten).

### *The Debate about Categories and Disciplines*

The salon was a place for debate not only as far as awards were concerned. It was often at the forefront of discussions around art. One of the earliest debates revolved around the delineation of artistic categories between fine arts and the decorative arts or crafts (artisanat). This was closely connected to debates about indigenous arts and gender. The Salon tunésien became a place where European artistic hierarchies that placed fine above decorative arts – the latter generally being associated with indigenous art often produced by women – were questioned and challenged (see Chapter two). At the Cairo Art Salon, debates arose about arts and crafts and the notions of “high” and “low” art. Huda Sharawi, who together with Princess Samiha Hussein had set up a Women's Committee of the Society of the Lovers of Fine Arts, founded an artisanal school in 1924 offering free education in pottery and ceramics. One aim of the school was to “elevate the status of the ceramics to that of artworks”, as Nadia Radwan argues in Chapter five. Sharawi was successful in that works from her school were exhibited at the Cairo Art Salon from 1924 onwards, whereas the salon had shown only oil painting and sculpture up till then.

Far from being static, salons thus constantly provided a space for lively discussion and debate, either within the context of the salon itself or by stimulating alternative platforms. While the salon was a place to reconceptualise artistic categories, the domestic gatherings in Baghdad in the 1950s and 1960s served to bridge the gap between art and architecture as two distinct and separate disciplines, as Amin Alsaden argues in Chapter seven. Being grounded in one discipline did not prevent exchanging ideas and inspiring each other, quite the contrary. The Beirut salons of the second half of the twentieth century also attest to this interdisciplinary interaction, as architects often served on the juries.

The art salons in the Arab region were a place where questions of authenticity and “Arab” or “national” art were discussed. The Cairo Youth Salon launched in the late 1980s was an occasion for discussing “Egyptian art”, modernity and artistic trends; references to Ancient Egypt were encouraged as part of a quest for authenticity and as a political tool for constructing a national narrative. A review of the 1965 Salon d’Automne in Damascus notes that “the ministry suggested to painters and artists to treat nationalist subjects, and the priority should be for works of a style if not Arab then at least Oriental,” in line with the Arab nationalist politics of the day.<sup>18</sup> The debates around abstract versus figurative art that dominated the Beirut salons of the 1960s can also be placed within the discussions around authenticity, and who determined what constituted “good” and prize-worthy art.

The salon was an important stage in the transition of an artist from a beginner or even amateur practitioner to a professional, as it constituted a validation and presented the artist’s work to the public and hence to the market. Even artists who rejected the official salons had previously exhibited there, and turned against them once they were more or less established artists.

### *Outline of the Book*

This volume is divided into four thematic parts. The first two focus on early salons and the institutional construction of taste, with case studies from North Africa (Part I) and Egypt (Part II). Alain Messaoudi analyses the emergence and evolution of the Tunisian annual art salons, classifying the Salon tunisien as a provincial salon in a colonial location. In particular, he reflects on the salon as a public space in which taste was formed, and on the values that were promoted. Jessica Gerschultz examines the foundational role played by the

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<sup>18</sup> A.G., “A Damas”.

Salon tunisien in the development of artistic categories and networks among Tunis-based artists, the Salon serving as the earliest institutional framework for delineating the concepts of “fine” and “decorative” art under the French Protectorate. In a similar vein, Nancy Demerdash-Fatemi enquires into the nature of the salon in French colonial Algeria, reconsidering the power dynamics at play and underlining the processes of taste-making in Algerian salons of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In Cairo, Maria-Mirka Palioura sheds light on the archive of the Greek Orientalist painter Theodore Ralli, one of the co-founders of the first Cairo Salon, examining the production of art and its reception by the communities of the European bourgeoisie in colonial Cairo. Focusing on the annual Cairo Art Salon of the Society of the Lovers of Fine Arts and the rival La Chimère Salon, Nadia Radwan discusses the Egyptian art salon as a space of cultural transfer in which taste and canon were established, but were also challenged in the early twentieth century. She analyses the initiatives that aimed to introduce new objects in the exhibitions of the Cairo Art Salon, looking in particular at the debates around arts and crafts.

Challenging the official salon and creating alternative exhibition practices, which Nadia Radwan starts to discuss, is the subject of the third part of this volume. Monique Bellan considers the resistance to the art salon, in particular from the historical avant-garde in Egypt. She discusses the exhibition catalogues and invitation cards of *Art et Liberté* as media of defying established taste and modes of perception. Amin Alsaden argues that domestic spaces in mid-twentieth century Baghdad represented alternative salons, a hybrid model that acted as what Rancière termed a “community of sense”, and fostered exchanges, circulated ideas and formulated aesthetic taste among middle- and upper-class Baghdadis.

The fourth part focuses on circulations between Europe and the region and on institutional guidance. While the migration of institutional patronage is an aspect present in all chapters, this section highlights the movements of systems and artists. Camilla Murgia concentrates on the artistic exchanges between North Africa and France that were determined by the systems of rewards, scholarships and subsidies of North African salons, revealing how the system affected the rise of a national art and how this art became progressively different from the French model. Catherine Cornet scrutinizes the nexus between the Cairo Youth Salon and the international arena. She shows how participation at the Cairo Youth Salon was instrumental in being admitted to the Egyptian Academy in Rome and also in selection for the Venice Biennale as part of the state-sponsored art circuit. My own chapter revolves around the Salon d’Automne at Beirut’s Sursock Museum in its cultural context. It examines the influence of the museum’s Salon in

patronising art, and contextualises the role of the museum as an institution in shaping the artistic landscape in Lebanon.

The final contribution is the edited transcript of a conversation with British artist and Royal Academician Eileen Cooper. It took place in Beirut in October 2017 in the frame of the conference “Contextualising the Art Salon in the Arab Region”. Eileen Cooper was in charge of coordinating the 249th Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy in London, the longest continuously running salon-style exhibition. The conversation illuminates the selection process and organisation of the Summer Exhibition, drawing parallels to the Sursock Museum’s Salons d’Automne. It shows to what extent the selection process is based on personal preferences. We decided to include the conversation in this volume because it shows how the exhibition is a collaborative effort that needs to be dynamic in order to remain relevant today. The link to the art market is also underlined, because the main *raison d’être* of the Summer Exhibition is and has been to provide a platform for selling the artworks.

The volume is by no means exhaustive, but offers insights into the evolution of the art salon in selected countries in the Arab region. One observation made by several of the contributors concerns the limitations of available sources. Information on the non-official salons, such as the rival salon of the Algerian Professional Artists Syndicate, can be scarce because the media of that time largely covered only the salons connected to the dominant political agendas. Further research is needed, for instance into the impact of the European art salons on Arab artists’ careers, and on other salons in the region such as the Salon d’Automne in Damascus or salons in Morocco. Each of the salons and group exhibitions discussed here can of course be approached from different angles, and we hope that this book will stimulate further research.

## CHAPTER 10

# GUIDING THE ARTIST AND THE PUBLIC? THE SALON D'AUTOMNE AT BEIRUT'S SURSOCK MUSEUM

NADIA VON MALTZAHN

Beirut's Sursock Museum, a centre for modern and contemporary art in Lebanon's capital, reopened its doors to the public in October 2015 after an extensive renovation and extension. Founded in 1961, the museum soon became known for its annual Salon d'Automne (Autumn Salon), a group exhibition of contemporary art in and from Lebanon. The Salon was launched at a high period for contemporary art in Lebanon – when new galleries were opening in Beirut and the city was establishing itself as a regional cultural hub – and quickly became a symbol of the museum. The first president of the museum's committee, Lady Yvonne Sursock Cochrane, announced the third Salon with the words that “the time had come to stop encouraging and proceed to establish criteria that can guide both the real artists and the public in general.”<sup>1</sup> The guidance of public taste and of the artists themselves was one of the Salon's declared missions. In the following, the role of the Salon d'Automne in art patronage will be examined by looking at the selection process, the artists and the public. The focus will be mainly on the first three decades of the Salon's existence. The aim is also to understand the role of the Sursock Museum as an institution in shaping the artistic landscape in Lebanon.

### *The Beginning*

The Sursock Museum was set up as an endowment under the supervision of Beirut's municipality. In his will, Nicolas Ibrahim Sursock (ca.1875-

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<sup>1</sup> Preface, exhibition catalogue *Salon d'Automne 1963*, Beirut: Sursock Museum 1963; “Inauguration, ce soir, du III<sup>ème</sup> Salon d'Automne au Musée Sursock: Lady Cochrane: “une sévérité nécessaire,” *L'Orient*, 28 November 1963.

1952), from a wealthy landowning family, bequeathed his mansion (built in 1912) and art collection to the city of Beirut, to be held in a *waqf* (trust fund) under the guardianship of Beirut's municipality upon his death. The house was to be turned into a "public museum for ancient and modern art from Lebanon, other Arab countries or elsewhere," as well as an exhibition hall where works by Lebanese artists were to be exhibited.<sup>2</sup> After his death in December 1952 the villa was – by presidential decree – initially used as a guesthouse for visiting heads of state, but eventually the will had to be honoured and a committee was appointed to transform the mansion into a museum. The committee's first public activity was an exhibition in the spirit of André Malreaux's "Musée Imaginaire" at Beirut's UNESCO Palace in February 1957, which displayed reproductions offered mainly by UNESCO and the New Graphic Society of New York.<sup>3</sup> In 1961, the Sursock Museum finally opened its doors and showed its first group exhibition from 18-28 November. Entitled "Exhibition of paintings and sculptures by Lebanese artists" (Arabic) or "Exhibition of works of Lebanese painters and sculptors" (French), it was essentially the first Salon d'Automne of the new museum, picking up the tradition established by the Lebanese Ministry of National Education and Fine Arts in 1954.<sup>4</sup> Whereas the exhibition catalogue of the 1961 group exhibition at the Sursock Museum and the majority of reviews did not yet speak of a "salon," the cover of the second exhibition catalogue of 1962 – available only in French – was headlined with "Salon d'Automne."<sup>5</sup> Before we begin a fuller discussion of the Sursock Museum's salon, let us briefly look at the origin of what came to be known as Salon d'Automne.

The original Salon d'automne was established in Paris in 1903 as a progressive alternative to the traditional annual salon organised by the French Academy of Fine Arts (École des beaux-arts). Unlike the existing

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<sup>2</sup> Melki, Loutfalla. "Nicolas Sursock : l'homme et son muse." In *Musée Nicolas Sursock, Le Livre*. Beirut: Chemaly & Chemaly 2000, 19-23.

<sup>3</sup> Exhibition catalogue. *Liban. Aujourd'hui s'ouvre le premier musée imaginaire au monde. Quatorze Février MCMLVII*. Beirut: Sursock Museum, 1957. See also Malreaux, André. *Le Musée Imaginaire*. Paris, 1947. The UNESCO Palace was built in 1948 (designed by Farid Trad) to host UNESCO's third international congress, and became one of the main spaces for large exhibitions and other cultural events. See [www.palaisunesco.gov.lb](http://www.palaisunesco.gov.lb).

<sup>4</sup> For the Ministry's first Salons d'Automne, see its exhibition catalogue 1956, in which the salons of 1954 and 1955 are also mentioned.

<sup>5</sup> Of a range of reviews of the first exhibition, only the *Revue du Liban* of 25 November 1961 speaks of a Salon d'Automne.

juryless alternative Salon des indépendants (established in 1884), the Salon d'automne strove to keep up high aesthetic standards by appointing a jury each year that included not only artists, but also other cultural personalities of the time.<sup>6</sup> The Society of the Salon d'automne that organised the salon wanted to open up the jury and give a place to young artists, thus making it the salon for the independents who had succeeded in the art world, and responding to “the necessity of a commercial representation, but with the desire to mark its will for openness and modernity.”<sup>7</sup>

In independent Lebanon, the earliest record of a group exhibition of Lebanese artists dates from 1947, when the Ministry of National Education and Fine Arts organised an exhibition of Lebanese artists in the National Museum under the patronage of President Bechara al-Khoury in April of that year.<sup>8</sup> From the early 1950s, the term “salon” was used in French and the term *ma'rad* (exhibition) in Arabic, the catalogues usually being bilingual in Arabic and French. In 1954, the Ministry of National Education and Fine Arts launched a Salon d'Automne, which was held annually for at least three years, and later also a Salon du Printemps. At some point they discontinued holding the two in parallel and kept the Salon du Printemps, which was later referred to simply as “Salon.”<sup>9</sup> The ministry

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<sup>6</sup> Altshuler, Bruce. *From Salon to Biennial – Exhibitions that made Art History, Volume I: 1863-1959*. London: Phaidon, 2008, 61. The jury was changed each year and members were selected from the founding members, current members and honorary members, the latter being personalities from outside the circle of professional artists and their conflicts. Monnier, Gérard. *L'art et ses institutions en France*. Paris: Gallimard 1995, 273.

<sup>7</sup> Monnier, *L'art et ses institutions en France*, 273.

<sup>8</sup> Lebanon gained independence in 1943. Before independence, there had been a number of art salons. In 1938, the Société des Amis des Arts organised a group exhibition of painting and sculpture referred to as “Salon” (in French), which was repeated the following year in the basement of the parliament building. Oughourian, Joseph. “Le Salon.” *Phénicia* (May 1938), 1-16; al-Assi, Farid. “Le Salon.” *Phénicia* (May-June 1939), 37-44. For an account of earlier group exhibitions, such as the 1931 exhibition at the Arts and Crafts school, see Lahoud, Edouard. *Contemporary Art in Lebanon*. Beirut: Dar al-Machreq 1974, XL.

<sup>9</sup> Agémian, Sylvia. “Salon d'Automne et Salons du Musée.” In *Musée Nicolas Sursock, Le Livre*. Beirut: Chemaly & Chemaly 2000, 134. See also the Ministry of National Education and Fine Arts exhibition catalogues: “Ma'rad al-fananin al-lubnaniyin fi-l mathaf al-watani (Exhibition of Lebanese artists in the National Museum)” 1947; “Salon d'Automne 1955;” “III<sup>e</sup> Salon d'Automne 1956;” “VII<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture 1959” (ma'rad al-rabi'a); “Le VIII<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture” 1960; “XII<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture 1965;” “XIII<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture 1966;” “XIV<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture 1967;” “XV<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture 1968;” “XVI<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture 1969;”

appointed a jury that consisted of cultural figures (including architects) as well as of artists, who were mentioned separately from the other jury members. When the Sursock Museum launched its Salon d'Automne in autumn 1961, it continued the tradition established by the ministry. For the first nine editions, the museum's Autumn Salons ran in parallel to the ministry's Spring Salons that were usually held at the UNESCO palace, and some of the jury members overlapped.<sup>10</sup> It is not clear whether the Sursock Museum chose to hold a Salon d'Automne merely in reference to the time of year it took place, or whether it was explicitly continuing the path of the French example with its emphasis on openness and modernity. Since Lebanon had no dominant art academy or official salon to rebel against, it is likely that the name was initially chosen to reflect the time of year and create a counterpart to the ministry's spring salon. What is clear is that the Sursock Museum's Salon d'Automne strove to guide both the artist and the public, and to institutionalise Lebanese contemporary artistic production.

### *The Jury*

The selection process of works by a jury appointed by the museum committee was crucial in this endeavour. Speaking to this, art critic Nazih Khatir opened his review of the fourth Salon d'Automne at the Sursock Museum with the following words:

A salon without [a] jury is a fair 'for crumbs' [pour croutes]. The 'Salon des Indépendants' in Paris is a clear proof. We do not want such an 'outfit' for our salons. Nor such an end. We are thus happy that for organising its 4<sup>th</sup> Salon d'Automne, the Committee of the Sursock Museum has this year too called for a jury, and that this jury has opted to be demanding: 'Of a total of 355 works submitted, 98 have been retained.' Only.<sup>11</sup>

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"XVIII<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture 1971;" "XXI<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture 1974."

<sup>10</sup> To name some examples, Victor Hakim was a jury member for the ministry's eighth Salon du Printemps (1959), and Sursock's third, fourth and fifth Salons d'Automne; Assem Salam was a jury member for the ministry's third Salon d'Automne (1956), and of Sursock's sixth, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Salons d'Automne. Camille Aboussouan, long-term curator of the Sursock Museum, was also a jury member for the ministry's 1956 salon.

<sup>11</sup> Khatir, Nazih. "Salon d'Automne 1964: Trois prix ... et des problèmes," *L'Orient*, 20 December 1964.

One might not agree with the jury's choice, but according to Khatir the selection process led to what he called a "true salon" that reflected the core of the Lebanese artistic movement. French art critic and fourth Salon jury member André Bercoff likewise praised the selection process as always a balance between subjective and objective criteria:

A salon raises awareness; two symmetric trials await the artist and the jury, who with each canvas start again the necessary synthesis between personal taste and the internal laws governing the success of a work... Through discussions, questioning, learning and renouncing, the multiform hydra, with its unknown and manifold destinies, of what is called Lebanese painting appeared again this year.<sup>12</sup>

In the 30 editions that have taken place between 1963 and 2016, there has been a rigorous selection process by a jury appointed by the museum committee.<sup>13</sup> Nearly half of the jury members of the first eight salons (1961-1969) were Europeans or Americans, some of whom were living and working in Beirut at the time (André Bercoff, Arthur Frick, John Ferren, John Carswell),<sup>14</sup> while others were invited for the occasion (including Belgian painter and critic Roger van Gindertael, British painter William Townsend, French art critics Georges Boudaille, Jean-Jacques Lévêque, and André Fermigier, Jean Salles, and Italian art teacher Roberto Pisani) (Figure 1). Since the ninth Salon, the jury members have been mainly Lebanese nationals (Table 1).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bercoff, André. "Les Cent Fleurs," *L'Orient*, 16 December 1964.

<sup>13</sup> For the first two salons (in 1961 and 1962), the museum committee itself selected the works.

<sup>14</sup> Journalist and critic André Bercoff, of Russian-Spanish heritage, was born in Beirut in 1940 and holds French and Lebanese citizenship. The American artist John Ferren spent a year in Beirut as an artist in residence sponsored by the United States Information Agency under the US State Department (1963-1964). British artist, scholar and teacher John Carswell joined the Department of Fine Art at the American University of Beirut from 1956 to 1976. During this period, the art department was chaired by American artist and educator Arthur Frick. On Ferren, see Rogers, Sarah A. "The Artist as Cultural Diplomat." *American Art* 25:1 (Spring 2011), 112-123.

<sup>15</sup> The ninth Salon in 1974 marked the reopening of the Sursock Museum after its first renovation and extension. It is possible that a conscious decision was taken to appoint a mainly Lebanese selection committee to mark the new phase. However, external factors may equally have played a role, since the 10<sup>th</sup> Salon took place in late 1982/early 1983 in the middle of the civil war.



Figure 1: Jury members Roger van Gindertael (right) and William Townsend (left) selecting works for the fifth Salon d'Automne, 1965. Courtesy of the Nicolas Ibrahim Sursock Museum.

The presence of foreign art critics in the jury was a subject of discussion, in particular in relation to the heated debates about abstract versus figurative art that dominated the early salons. Some attributed the jury's preference for abstract over figurative art – which reportedly shocked visitors initially but started a trend that continued in subsequent salons – to the presence of French art critics Georges Boudaille, Jean-Jaques Lévêque and André Fermigier.<sup>16</sup> Although the jury members were appointed by the museum committee, the two sides did not always see eye to eye. The museum committee was connected to the municipality, and included members of Lebanon's bourgeoisie who did not necessarily share the same taste as contemporary art critics.<sup>17</sup> Amin Beyhum, mayor of Beirut and *mutawalli* (custodian) of the museum, made no secret of the fact that he was attached to the figurative style of painting in which his generation was formed.<sup>18</sup> In the preface to the seventh Salon catalogue, Camille Aboussouan, curator of the museum, recounts his conversation with committee member Abdul Rahman Labban, who told him the following story:

<sup>16</sup> Akar, Mirèse. "Comment départager les torts?," *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 29 November 1974.

<sup>17</sup> Akar, "Comment départager les torts?."

<sup>18</sup> Exhibition catalogue *VI<sup>e</sup> Salon d'Automne*. Beirut: Sursock Museum 1966.

A young American visits a friend preoccupied with modern art. Walking through the garden, she notices a charming little boy with intelligent eyes and tells the owner of the house: How handsome he is and what a vivid look! – Ouf! My son, that’s nothing at all, come see his photograph which is much more beautiful!<sup>19</sup>

Labban alludes to the point that abstract and pop art in certain Lebanese milieus of the time were raising questions on the evolution of plastic art, where the imagined idea of an object became more important than the object itself. Art critic Joseph Tarrab recounts a similar joke about Paul Guiragossian’s participation in the sixth Salon (Figure 2): “Ah, they don’t want figurative art, they want abstract art,” Guiragossian was saying, so he removed a figure from the painting he was working on and made it “abstract,” submitted it and won a prize!<sup>20</sup>

This would reduce the artist’s agency to conforming to the current trend. According to art historian Gérard Monnier, writing about the nineteenth-century Paris Salon, the social, commercial and professional power wielded by the salon not only had a profound impact on artists’ careers, but also redefined the experience of how the public encountered a work of art. Artists often created their work with the known parameters of the Salon in mind.<sup>21</sup> The Surssock Museum’s salon might have been less powerful as it did not hold a monopoly over exhibition space in the way that the nineteenth-century Paris Salon did, but it was nevertheless one of two main forums in which art in and from Lebanon was showcased in a group exhibition. While the Guiragossian anecdote is certainly an exaggeration, we can assume that the juries’ selections partly influenced subsequent submissions, in particular in the Salon’s first decade. The jury was consciously appointed to this end. Italian art teacher Roberto Pisani, for instance, invited to the ninth Salon jury, was specifically asked by the committee to focus on figurative art, since it had noticed that many of the recent submissions were abstract.<sup>22</sup> The shift to abstraction was a sign of the time. Lebanese artists were linked to Europe in terms of networks and artistic formation; many painters exhibiting at the salons were at least partly educated abroad (in particular in Paris and Florence), and were in touch with European artistic trends of the period.

<sup>19</sup> Exhibition catalogue *VII<sup>e</sup> Salon d’Automne*. Beirut: Surssock Museum 1967.

<sup>20</sup> Conversation with Joseph Tarrab, Beirut, 5 October 2016. The anecdote is also recounted by Agémian, “Salon d’Automne,” 157.

<sup>21</sup> Monnier, *L’art et ses institutions en France*, 141.

<sup>22</sup> Roberto Pisani: “Le Comité du Musée Nicolas Surssock m’a demandé d’apporter cette année une attention particulière à l’art figuratif pour ce Salon d’Automne car il avait constaté que la presque totalité des derniers envois concernait l’art abstrait.” Exhibition catalogue *IX<sup>e</sup> Salon d’Automne*. Beirut, Surssock Museum 1974.

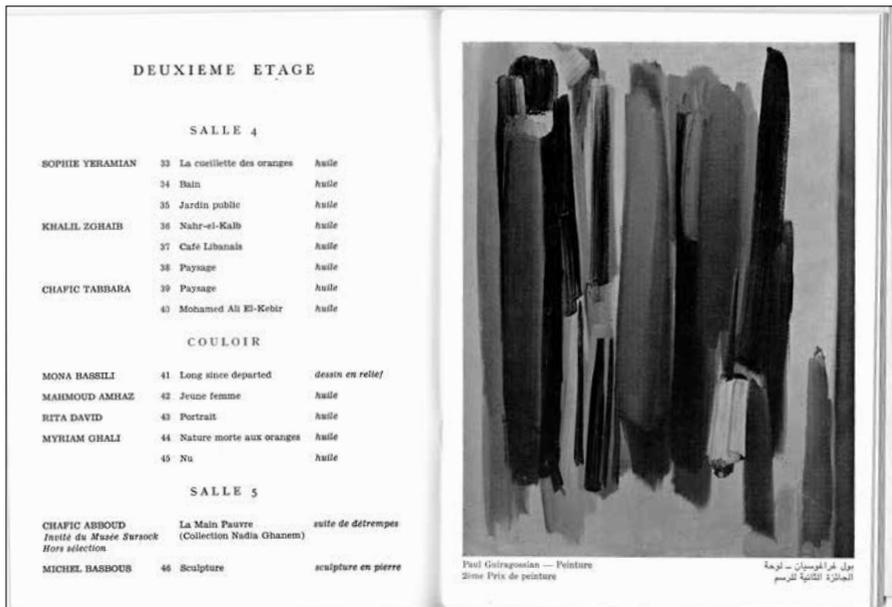


Figure 2: Double spread page (pp.19-20) from the 1966 sixth Salon d'Automne catalogue showing Paul Guiragossian's prize-winning entry. The work was purchased by the Surssock Museum in the same year. Courtesy of the Nicolas Ibrahim Surssock Museum.

The debate about abstract versus figurative art preceded the first decade of the Surssock Museum's Salon d'Automne. Jalal Khoury, in his review of the first salon in *L'Orient Littéraire*, talks about how “the figurative is – surprise – in sharp recline compared to the invasion of modernist conceptions.”<sup>23</sup> The day after the first salon's opening, a reviewer wrote in *Le Jour*, “Why does the abstract prevail, and by far, over the figurative? This is a question we no longer ask,” as art “always takes on a new language.”<sup>24</sup> While several of the French-language reviews of the first Salon mention the dominance of abstraction over figuration as a matter of fact, one of the Arabic reviews expresses outright shock: “It was impossible to know the head of a painting from its tail!”<sup>25</sup> The newspaper *al-Shams* seemed to share the opinion of the more conservative Beirut bourgeoisie.

<sup>23</sup> Khoury, Jalal. “Aujourd’hui, jour 1 du Musée Surssock,” *L'Orient Littéraire*, 18 November 1961.

<sup>24</sup> “Brillant inauguration du musée Nicolas Surssock,” *Le Jour*, 19 November 1961.

<sup>25</sup> “Fi-l-zawiya” (In the corner), *al-Shams*, 21 November 1961.

Non-figurative art works gained most of the prizes in the early editions.<sup>26</sup> Prizes for painting and sculpture were first handed out by the fourth Salon's jury (1964/1965). Artists and critics alike criticised the fact that it was not announced in advance that prizes would be given, and demanded that an institution should clearly publicise its process for selecting prizes for the best and most representative art. Since there had been no mention of prizes in advance, some artists who had allegedly participated in the Salon out of "friendship" – not submitting their best work – did not stand a chance in the competition. However, as was noted, this was a good lesson for subsequent salons, in which the competition would be open to all.<sup>27</sup> In the sixth Salon's catalogue, jury member Georges Boudaille lists a number of criteria for the selection process, trying to establish objective guidelines in view of most members' "ignorance" of Lebanese art. This might have been responding to complaints by some artists about the selection process during the fifth Salon. In the context of the latter, artist Stelio Scamanga wrote in *An-Nahar* that it was impossible for a foreign art critic to accommodate the problems a Lebanese artist encountered in his art, and that only the artist himself could judge his painting.<sup>28</sup> He openly expressed his objection to subjecting his work to foreign art critics.

For the ninth Salon in 1974, the museum committee decided not to hand out prizes – apparently because those given by the jury in previous salons did not always conform to their taste – but instead to use the funds to acquire more works. This was communicated in advance through a press release, widely published in the Lebanese press. The Sursock Museum Prize would eventually be suspended between 1974 (ninth Salon) and 1994 (17<sup>th</sup> Salon), mainly due to the civil war. Between 1991 (15<sup>th</sup> Salon) and 1998 (22<sup>nd</sup> Salon) a new prize, the Dorothy Salhab Kazemi Prize, was awarded to young artists in memory of Kazemi who had died in 1990 at the age of 48. This prize was discontinued in 1998, but since 2009 (29<sup>th</sup> Salon) emerging artists have been rewarded by a new prize offered by the museum's long-time committee and Board of Trustees member Hind Sinno.<sup>29</sup> In 2016 (32<sup>nd</sup> Salon), the museum launched for the first time an Audience Choice Award. This was in line with the efforts of the new post-renovation museum administration to build up a more dynamic outreach programme and work on engaging the public.

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<sup>26</sup> Akar, Mirèse. "Au Musée Sursock: Le savoir – peindre libanais," *L'Orient*, 5 December 1965.

<sup>27</sup> Khatir, Nazih. "Salon d'Automne 1964: Trois prix... et des problèmes," *L'Orient*, 20 December 1964.

<sup>28</sup> Scamanga, Stelio. "Idha aradna al-nahda, fa-la-nakhuq al-mathaf al-da'im" (If we wanted a renaissance, let's have a permanent museum), *An-Nahar*, 12 December 1965.

<sup>29</sup> Hind Sinno was also a jury member of the 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Salons d'Automne.

The jury was generally composed of representatives of some of the fine art departments at national and private universities in Lebanon, as well as of art critics – both foreign and increasingly local – and at times, the acting president of the Lebanese Artists Association for Painters and Sculptors (LAAPS). The relationship between LAAPS and the museum was not always without tension, however, in particular in the early period, as will be discussed below. The jury, moreover, often included some of the pre-eminent architects of the country, who were also major public figures in Lebanon's cultural life, such as Pierre al-Khoury and Assem Salam, who acted on twelve and nine juries respectively. On average, the jury rejected around three quarters of the submitted works and 60 per cent of the artists (some artists submitted several works), and thus had a notable say in setting trends.<sup>30</sup> The speed with which trends seemed to change was noted by several critics. Mirèse Akar in 1966, on the occasion of the opening of the sixth Salon, noted that usually in art history the time unit for reference was at least a decade, but in Beirut, it seemed to be one year or even just one season.<sup>31</sup> In the same vein, French critic André Fermigier states in the eighth Salon exhibition catalogue (1969) that the styles that used to last decades now barely lasted two winters.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, a multitude of exhibitions were taking place in Beirut in the 1960s and early 1970s, and some critics complained in 1974 that they were seeing the same paintings three times – in the ministry's Salon du Printemps at the UNESCO Palace, in the individual exhibitions at the growing network of art galleries, and at Salon d'Automne of the Surssock Museum. Having compared the data for the spring and autumn salons that year, it follows that only five out of 340 paintings were exhibited in both salons. 45 out of 162 artists participated in both salons, however, so it is possible that the style of paintings was familiar.<sup>33</sup> The Salon d'Automne that year was praised mostly for its professional display in the newly extended museum space (Figure 3), rather than for the quality of the art works.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> These numbers were derived from a review of 25 salons for which data was available in terms of how many number of works were submitted and selected, the number of artists who submitted works and the number of artists selected.

<sup>31</sup> Akar, Mirèse. "Le paradis officiel de l'art libanais," *L'Orient*, 29 December 1966.

<sup>32</sup> Exhibition catalogue, *VIII<sup>e</sup> Salon d'Automne*. Beirut: Surssock Museum 1966.

<sup>33</sup> Exhibition catalogues, *IX<sup>e</sup> Salon d'Automne* and *XXI<sup>e</sup> Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture 1974*.

<sup>34</sup> Survey of exhibition reviews. The Surssock Museum underwent its first major renovation and extension between 1970 and 1974, when Nicolas Surssock's mansion was made more functional for a museum.



Figure 3: The ninth Salon d'Automne in the newly expanded museum space, 1974. Courtesy of the Nicolas Ibrahim Sursock Museum.

### *The Artists*

Who participated in Sursock Museum's Salon d'Automne, and who did not? Were the artists exhibited representative of contemporary Lebanese artistic production? And what did it mean for artists to participate in the Salon? Due to its rigorous selection process, the Salon was valued as a proof of quality. Even in the 10<sup>th</sup> Salon in the autumn of 1982, the first held during the civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990) after a period of interruption, selection standards were upheld.<sup>35</sup> The Salon remained an important forum for up-and-coming artists to exhibit their work. According to art critic César Nammour, "there was a lot of enthusiasm to exhibit. The selection process in particular ... brought about the idea that the salon was elite. If you were accepted by Sursock, you'd reached a certain standard."<sup>36</sup> Artist and poet Etel Adnan, one of the leading intellectual figures of the day, equally praised the value of the Sursock Museum's salon, emphasising that it helped many artists to become known.<sup>37</sup>

However, exhibition reviews in the daily newspapers were always mentioning "absent" artists. At times they did not explain the reasons for artists not participating, for instance concerning the absence of Michel al-Mir, Adel Saghir, Munir Najem or Juliana Seraphim in the Salon d'Automne of 1962 (all of whom had participated in the ministry's

<sup>35</sup> Tarrab, Joseph. "Une revanche posthume," *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 21 December 1982.

<sup>36</sup> d'Arc Taylor, Stephanie. "'The place to see and be seen': Beirut's legendary museum rises from the ashes," *Guardian*, 7 October 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Conversation with Etel Adnan, Paris, 10 September 2017.

Salon du Printemps that year),<sup>38</sup> or Aref Rayess, John Hadidian, Amine al-Basha and others in the ninth Salon of 1974. The absence of some of the “regulars” in specific salons might be more easily explained by the overall context – such as the 10<sup>th</sup> Salon that was held in 1982 in the middle of the war. Some artists boycotted the Salon for personal reasons. For example, established artists such as Halim al-Hage, Youssef Ghasub, Michel Basbus, Nicolas Nammar, Michel al-Mir, Rafiq Sharaf and others refrained from participating in the third Salon in 1963 because they felt that they should have been invited to take part in its preparation. They were offended that no member of the Lebanese Artists Association for Painters and Sculptors, founded in the early 1950s, was included in a jury that “even included foreigners.”<sup>39</sup> While the Association welcomed the establishment of the museum and the honouring of Nicolas Sursock’s will – which they had advocated – they disagreed with the management of the early salons. After having learned that the exhibition would be organised “without referring to the official reference which is the Lebanese Artists Association” they formed a committee composed of artists Adel Saghbir, Amine al-Basha and Nicolas Nammar, to discuss the matter with the museum.<sup>40</sup> Before the first Salon opened in November 1961, they published a letter addressed to the Sursock Museum curator Camille Aboussouan and distributed among artists, demanding the following:

The people in charge at the Sursock Museum will organise every year a Salon open to living Lebanese artists.

The Association of Painters and Sculptors has the right of inspection of the jury in charge of selection and acquisition.

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<sup>38</sup> Stetié, Salah. “Inauguré avant-hier au Musée Sursock: Le Salon d’Automne,” *L’Orient*, 26 November 1962.

<sup>39</sup> Dagher, Iskandar. “Ma’rad al-kharif lil-rasm wa al-naht fi mathaf Sursock” (Autumn Salon for painting and sculpture in the Sursock Museum), *Al-Khawatir*, 6 December 1963. For the founding date of the Association, Jalal Khoury wrote in 1961 that it had already existed for eight years. Khoury, Jalal. “Critère unique au musée Sursock: La qualité”, *L’Orient*, 28 October 1961. On the association’s Facebook page, it states that the Lebanese Artists Association for Painters and Sculptors (LAAPS), founded in 1952, was officially registered in 1957 under the name of “The Painters and Sculptors Society,” and was given its current name within the framework of the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (1958) as a union and an advocacy group. See LAAPS website, accessed 19 January 2018, [www.laaps.org/aboutus.php](http://www.laaps.org/aboutus.php).

<sup>40</sup> Hanin, Riad. “Mathaf Sursock yanqudh karamat Lubnan al-fanniya: limadha qat’at jam’aiyat al-fananin ma’rad al-mathaf?” (The Sursock Museum saves Lebanon’s artistic dignity: Why did the artists’ association boycott the museum’s exhibition?), *Al-Jarida*, 26 November 1961.

The Ministry of Education has to be represented in all museum committees.

Artists admitted by the jury have right to the same exhibition space.

The museum is obliged to acquire at least one work of every artist exhibited.

75% of the acquisition budget will be invested in the acquisition of local works.

All aesthetic trends should be admitted.<sup>41</sup>

Not all artists represented by the Association agreed with the conditions set forth by the letter, leading to some resigning their membership. However, the resentment towards the museum for not following the Association's guidelines lasted several years. On the occasion of the third Salon in 1963, a review expressed the same view that as long as the exhibition was open to artists, the Association should participate in organising it; the exhibition should reflect the general level that painting and sculpture had reached in Lebanon.<sup>42</sup>

In an article in *An-Nahar* in the context of the fifth Salon d'Automne in 1965, Rafiq Sharaf explained his reasons for being the first artist to have boycotted the Sursock Museum for three years – after having exhibited one painting in 1962. One reason was that the museum encouraged what he called the “abstract rage,” with real talents paying the price for this following of a fashion. He alleged that most artists participating were students and amateurs.<sup>43</sup> In a conversation, Amine al-Basha shared a similar criticism in his recollection of the Sursock Museum's Salon d'Automne. He observed that the Salon exhibited artists with very little experience, alongside – or even while rejecting some – works of established artists who had worked hard to reach their professional level.<sup>44</sup> Sharaf writes how the Salon exhibited paintings not belonging to any school or method but following a fashion, and how the museum favoured critics writing about it

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<sup>41</sup> The letter's demands are reproduced in Khoury, “Critère unique au musée Sursock.”

<sup>42</sup> “Jawla thaqafiya ... la-huna wa la-hunaka: “ma'rad al-kharif” wa jama'iya al-fananin” (A cultural tour ... to here and there: The “autumn salon” and the artists' association), *Al-Akhbar*, 8 December 1963.

<sup>43</sup> Sharaf, Rafiq. “Rafiq Sharaf: qat'atu m'arad sursuq bi-surur wa rida wa irtiyah” (Rafiq Sharaf: I boycotted Sursock's exhibition with happiness and satisfaction and ease), *An-Nahar*, 12 December 1965.

<sup>44</sup> Conversation with Amine al-Basha, Beirut, 30 March 2017.

with a pre-conceived idea of this abstract fashion. He considered this trend as going against the artist's individual personality. According to him, the Sursock Museum and those like it believed that the new art produced in Lebanon was "questionable" (*mashkuk bihi*), and instead should be inspired by Europe in order to be new and great and become a reference. Opposing this view, Sharaf and others argued that they were already creating a new art, drawing on their personalities and experiences. They were happy to boycott the exhibition, and planned to "boycott any construction that aimed to squeeze [them] into its imported concepts and criteria."<sup>45</sup> His boycott did not seem to last, as the ninth Salon (1974) included three works by him (*La plaine de Kayal, La plaine de Majdaloun, La route vers le Nord*). While he was director of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University, Sharaf even served on the jury of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Salons d'Automne in the late 1980s.

Sharaf's view of the Salon d'Automne promoting European-style art was shared by others. Dalal Hadidi started her article reviewing the fourth Salon in 1964 with the following statement:

Where are we in these paintings? Where are our experiences and our traditions and our life? Even the abstract ones are Western, although the East produced the first abstraction, a heritage of hundreds of years. The West transferred from our palaces, from our mosques, from the inscriptions of our carpets, the first seeds for this colour of art. As for us, we have started to transfer this Western distortion to our abstraction, because the confidence of the Lebanese artist in himself and his heritage has been shaken in front of the flashiness of Western civilisation.<sup>46</sup>

The critic wonders whether artists like Said Akl or Adel Saghir did not win prizes because of their use of Arabic calligraphy or because their art was inspired by their Eastern heritage. She maintained that the winning works like Shafiq Abud's were imitations of Western artists.<sup>47</sup> The Salon d'Automne always claimed to reflect the spirit of contemporary Lebanese artistic production, although the question of what constituted Lebanese art was a subject of debate in the context of the Salon. Was the Salon shaping taste according to European artistic preferences of the time, as Sharaf and Hadidi suggest? A good percentage of the jury members came

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<sup>45</sup> Sharaf, "Rafiq Sharaf".

<sup>46</sup> Hadidi, Dalal. "Fatit madrasit Paris 'ashit madrasit New York!" (The Paris school is out, the New York school is alive!), *An-Nahar*, 20 December 1964.

<sup>47</sup> Hadidi, "Fatit madrasit Paris."

from outside the country and most of the laureates of the first decade were educated in Paris (including Shafiq Abud, Viola Kassab, Salwa Rawda Shuqair, Aref Rayess, Elie Kanaan, Nadia Saikali), Florence or Rome (including Aref Rayess, Paul Guiragossian, Hussein Madi). Some had first studied in Lebanon, either in studios of some of the established artists like Mustafa Farrukh (such as Wajih Nahle), or at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts (ALBA) that was founded in 1943 (including Michel Basbus, Hussein Madi, Nadia Saikali, Georges Guv). Many of the later artists were educated at ALBA, which was modelled on the French Academy of Fine Arts but never became an authoritative institution.<sup>48</sup> Lebanon's art world has always been marked by a high degree of mobility both to and from the country. Strongly connected as it is to regional and international arenas, there has never been a move to establish a "national" art in Lebanon.<sup>49</sup>

The submission of artworks to the Salon d'Automne was open to all Lebanese artists – regardless of place of residence – as well as to foreign artists residing in Lebanon. While in some years reportedly not much new talent was discovered, some of the known artists who were repeatedly taking part in the Salon surprised the public with new styles. The two artists who were considered to have always remained consistent in their style were Khalil Zghaib and Sophie Yeramian, often referred to as "our two naïfs." Both of them were rewarded in the eighth Salon for their bouquets of flowers (1969), with Khalil Zghaib winning one of museum's three first prizes and Sophie Yeramian one of six second prizes. Some artists, notably John Hadidian and Aref Rayess, won prizes in both painting and sculpture, Aref Rayess even winning them in the same year (fifth Salon in 1965). Sculptor Salwa Rawda Shuqair managed to gain prizes in four salons in a row (fifth to eighth Salons) (see Table 1). She is one of the few pre-war Lebanese artists to have gained international recognition, with Tate Modern dedicating a solo show to her in 2013.<sup>50</sup> She is often portrayed as a recent discovery recognised late in life, although her work was obviously appreciated in Lebanon as early as the 1960s (Figure 4).

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<sup>48</sup> Further research is needed into the role of the artists' education and training in their artistic production, and the rise of the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts and its link to the Salon d'Automne.

<sup>49</sup> On the question of "national" art in Lebanon, see Naef, Silvia. *A la recherche d'une modernité arabe : L'évolution des arts plastiques en Egypte, au Liban et en Irak*. Geneva: Éditions Slatkine 1996, 183-195.

<sup>50</sup> Morgan, Jessica (ed.). *Saloua Raouda Choucair*. London: Tate Publishing 2013.



Figure 4: Prize handed out to Salwa Rawda Shuqair at the seventh Salon d'Automne, 1967.  
Courtesy of the Nicolas Ibrahim Surssock Museum.

### *The Sociétaires*

Starting with the 13<sup>th</sup> Salon (1987), artists who had exhibited in at least five previous salons were elected “members” (*sociétaires*) and were invited to present works to the annual exhibition without having to submit them to the jury. The number of members increased yearly, from seven in 1987 (13<sup>th</sup> Salon) to 28 in 1995 (18<sup>th</sup> Salon) to 55 in 2000 (23<sup>rd</sup> Salon) (Table 2). In the traditional Paris Salon and the annual Summer Exhibition in London, the “members” were elected members of the Academy, for whom the salon was created and by whom it was run. In the absence of an authoritative academy in Lebanon, the Surssock Museum took over some of its functions. However, being a member of the Surssock Museum did not bring any role or responsibility with it. The only function of the membership system was to be admitted to the Salon without being subjugated to the jury’s taste. It thus did not lead to the artists becoming invested in the museum and carried little meaning for them. The practice of admitting members *hors jury* was thus discontinued after 2000, connected to the fact that for several years the standards of their submissions had been highly criticised, both by the museum curator and art critics.<sup>51</sup> According to art critic Joseph Tarrab, “some

<sup>51</sup> See newspaper articles and exhibition catalogues.

artists just sent *n'importe quoi*, which was not fair to the other artists who had to go through the selection process.”<sup>52</sup> Loutfalla Melki, long-time curator of the museum from 1980 onwards, wrote in the preface to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Salon (2000) that this year the jury had decided to award neither the Surssock Museum Prize, twinned that year with a prize by the Société Générale Bank, nor the Dorothy Salhab Kazemi prize for young artists, due to the insufficient quality of the works submitted. It was one of the salons with the highest rejection ratio, exhibiting only 32 works by 21 artists out of 444 submitted by 176 artists. What is more,

the jury reaffirms one more time that the majority of works presented by members of the salon don't have the quality required for a Salon d'Automne. Following this, the jury proposes to the Museum Committee to stop the membership system currently in use and put a new model in place for an up-to-date Salon d'Automne, in line with the real situation of visual arts in Lebanon, at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>53</sup>

This was the end of the membership system.

### *The Public*

In an article published in the *Guardian* on the occasion of the reopening of the Surssock Museum in 2015, Lebanese novelist Hanan al-Shaykh was interviewed about her recollection of the Salon d'Automne: “‘We were all full of ourselves,’ she admits. ‘Everyone used to go, the crowds were amazing ... only the crème de la crème of society. People went because it was prestigious, not because they were interested in art.’”<sup>54</sup> Reviews of the first exhibitions mention how “the opening was attended by large numbers; the elite of Lebanese society attended to express their joy, and to see the exhibition;”<sup>55</sup> that “Society turned out *en masse* for the Salon d'Automne of Lebanese painters and sculptors;”<sup>56</sup> and how “the ladies wandered around in their clothes and their decoration, as though they were in a reception for a king,” reminiscent of an “atmosphere of pride and aristocracy.”<sup>57</sup> Many remember the Salons

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<sup>52</sup> Conversation with Joseph Tarrab, Beirut, 5 October 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Loutfalla Melki, Exhibition catalogue *XXIII<sup>e</sup> Salon d'Automne 2000*. Beirut: Surssock Museum, 2000.

<sup>54</sup> d'Arc Taylor, “The place to see and be seen.”

<sup>55</sup> Hanin, “Mathaf Surssock yanqudh karamat Lubnan al-fanniya.”

<sup>56</sup> “Surssock Exhibition,” *The Daily Star*, 17 December 1964.

<sup>57</sup> Aql, Raymond. “Mahrajan al-rasm wa al-naht fi qasr Nicolas Surssock: Mathaf al-athar al-fanniya al-haditha min al-awqaf al-madaniya alti tushakal turath lubnan al-thaqafi” (Exhibition of painting and sculpture at the Nicolas Surssock palace: the museum of

d'Automne of the 1960s and early 1970s in a nostalgic way, and while there were unquestionably a certain number of socialites attending the exhibitions, it was also the place for art enthusiasts. Art historian Salwa Mikdadi remembers the Salon fondly: “The Sursock’s autumn exhibition was the first event I was always looking forward to every year in the 1960s, when I was coming to Beirut as a 17-year old from Jerusalem.”<sup>58</sup>



Figure 5: Visitors at the 10<sup>th</sup> Salon d'Automne, 1982. Courtesy of the Nicolas Ibrahim Sursock Museum.

The public was thus an important component of the Salon. As artist and art teacher John Carswell explained, “for a society to create and nurture an artistic tradition, there are two requisites; first, there must be the artists themselves; and second, there must be a public to support them.” Carswell maintained that the relatively conservative public in Lebanon initially did not facilitate artists finding a place in Lebanese society.<sup>59</sup> The public was just getting introduced to contemporary art in the 1960s, with a rising

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modern artistic artifacts from the civil endowments that compose Lebanon’s cultural heritage), *Al-Aml*, 22 November 1961.

<sup>58</sup> Salwa Mikdadi, comment made during “The Museum As... An International Symposium on Museum Futures,” held at the Sursock Museum on 2 October 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Carswell, John. *Lebanon – The Artist’s View*. London: British Lebanese Association 1989.

number of exhibition spaces and shows. The museum committee repeatedly emphasised how the Salon allowed the public to discover new talents. While people had access to contemporary art through individual exhibitions, the annual Salon allowed them to take stock and get a more complete overview of artistic production and trends.<sup>60</sup> Critics also made the point that unlike in the exhibitions taking place in galleries, artists did not have to please the public in their work exhibited at the Salon.<sup>61</sup> Unlike most salons, works exhibited at Sursock Museum's Salon d'Automne were not for sale – although of course the latter helped in getting the works known.

While the high period of the Salon d'Automne was without doubt the pre-war period, it still had its place in the 1990s. Its importance as a comprehensive showcase of current artistic production was stressed both by the exhibition catalogues and reviewers. "This event attracts a lot of people: artists to exhibit and amateurs to watch," wrote a reviewer in 1995. "This Salon d'Automne, in short, constitutes a mix of the different artistic trends and certainly gives an idea about the landscape of visual arts in Lebanon ... The event of the country in the field of visual arts is the Salon d'Automne of the Sursock Museum."<sup>62</sup> The museum also tried to attract new audiences after the war, reaching out to schools, for instance, as was recounted in Helen Khal's review of the 1998 Salon:

Again, as in the past, the Sursock Museum has put together what is undoubtedly the year's best and most comprehensive exhibition of contemporary art in Lebanon. It's a 'must-see' that offers something for everyone. Schools by the dozens have been bringing their students in to see the show – and students in turn have been returning with their parents for a second look.<sup>63</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The Salon d'Automne was one of the main channels through which the Sursock Museum acquired art, which forms an important part of its total collection. It documents Lebanese art from the 1960s until today. Reading

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<sup>60</sup> Akar, "Comment départager les torts?," "Talents d'aujourd'hui et espoirs de demain," *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 18 December 1986; May Makarem, "Exprimer par les couleurs des émotions nouvelles," *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 16 March 1994.

<sup>61</sup> Davidian, Edgar. "73 artistes, témoins de leur temps, au 26<sup>e</sup> Salon d'automne," *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 28 December 2005.

<sup>62</sup> K.M., "Salon d'Automne: Paysages artistiques," *Magazine*, 15 December 1995.

<sup>63</sup> Khal, Helen. "Exhibits come in all shapes and forms at Sursock's Autumn Salon," *The Daily Star*, 30 December 1998.

through the exhibition catalogues and reviews, it becomes clear that the Salon played a role in the development – or at least the documentation – of what could be termed a “canon” of Lebanese art, in particular in the first 20 editions (1961-1996). Walking through the Sursock Museum’s second floor, where works from the permanent collection are presented, the Salon’s legacy for modern Lebanese art is visible.<sup>64</sup> The jury and museum committee were major players in setting trends – the former explicitly, the latter implicitly by appointing the jury and deciding on acquisitions. The museum as exhibition space was an important vehicle through which to form public taste, both during the temporary Salon exhibitions and through its permanent collection display by which it marks its place in Lebanon’s art history. The market component of the Salon – providing a commercial representation – was less developed, as the works on display were not on sale at the museum. There is little doubt, however, that exhibiting at the Salon d’Automne raised the visibility of an artist and his and her works. The Sursock Museum actively contributed to shaping Lebanon’s artistic landscapes from the 1960s until the 1990s, the period focused on in this chapter.

The later editions need to be studied also, keeping in mind the development of new media – the 25<sup>th</sup> salon (2004/2005) included video installations for the first time – which became an important mode of expression in Lebanon’s post-war art. The fact that the quality of members’ submissions dropped must have affected the Salon’s relevance by the late 1990s. At the same time, new forums were opening up for group exhibitions, like Ashkal Alwan’s Sanayeh or Corniche projects, as well as new gallery and exhibition spaces.<sup>65</sup> One article asked in 1998:

Around ‘40’ years after the creation of the Salon d’Automne, is it still valid to exhibit in one space and *sous le même regard* all the generations of Lebanese artists ...? Going back to history reminds us that the Salon d’Automne of the Sursock Museum was, before the war, the ultimate place for reflection on visual art and artistic promotion of the country. The Salon d’Automne was the event through which discoveries and surprises were made.

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<sup>64</sup> This held particularly true for the second floor permanent exhibition display (“Collection Display – A Selection of Works: 1961-2012”) between October 2015 and September 2017, following the reopening of the museum and before the collection display was rearranged in mid-September 2017.

<sup>65</sup> Ashkal Alwan, or the Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts, is a non-profit organisation based in Beirut that has been active since 1993. In the 1990s, it organized a number of group exhibitions in public spaces, such as the Sanayeh Project in 1994, the Sioufi Garden Project in 1997 and the Corniche Project in 1999. See Ashkal Alwan’s website, accessed 19 January 2018, [www.ashkalalwan.org](http://www.ashkalalwan.org).

It was through the Salon d'Automne that numerous talents were launched.<sup>66</sup>

The author goes on to complain that there were now too many group exhibitions. Finishing on a positive note, he mentioned that the Salon d'Automne nevertheless still provided a useful space for young artists. Since its reopening in October 2015, the Sursock Museum is back on the scene. After some hesitation, the museum re-launched its Salon d'Automne in November 2016 – to be held biannually. Its impact in the twenty-first century artistic landscape remains a subject for future inquiry.

Table 1. The Salon d'Automne (SA) at the Sursock Museum. Dates, Prizes, Jury Members.

SA	Date	Prizes	Jury
1	18-28/11/1961	No prize	Museum Committee
2	24/11-10/12/1962	No prize	Museum Committee
3	28/11/1963- 5/1/1964	No prize	Wassek Adib, André Bercoff, John Ferren, Victor Hakim, Louis Tabet
4	15/12/1964- 15/1/1965	Painting: Shafiq Abud, John Hadidian Sculpture: Viola Kassab (Sursock Museum Prize)	Wassek Adib, André Bercoff, Arthur Frick, Victor Hakim, Pierre al-Khoury
5	7/12/1965- 7/1/1966	Painting: Elie Kanaan, Hussein Madi, Aref Rayess (Sursock Museum Prize) Special Mention: Nadia Saikali, Munir Najem, Mohamed Sakr Sculpture: Salwa Rawda Shuqair (Sursock Museum Prize) Aref Rayess (Sculpture Prize) Special Mention: Alfred Basbus, Michel Basbus	Roger van Gindertael, Wassek Adib, Pierre al-Khoury, André Bercoff, Louis Tabet

<sup>66</sup> "Le XXII<sup>ème</sup> Salon d'Automne au Musée Sursock: De nouveaux talents prometteurs," *La Revue du Liban*, 26 December 1998.

6	28/12/1966- 12/2/1967	Painting: 1. John Hadidian, 2. Paul Guiragossian, 3. Joumana Bayazid, 4. Wajih Nahle  Italian Cultural Centre Prize: Munir Najem  Sculpture: 1. Aref Rayess, 2. Joseph Basbus, 3. Salwa Rawda Shuqair  Italian Cultural Centre Prize: Moazzaz Rawda	Georges Boudaille, Pierre al-Khoury, Abdul Rahman Labban, Jean- Jacques Lévêque, Assem Salam
7	12/12/1967- 12/01/1968	Painting: 1. Elie Kanaan, 2. Rita David; Munir Najem; Mohamed Sakr, 3. Simone Baltaxe Martayan; Stelio Scamanga  Italian Cultural Centre Prize: Nabil Mattar  Sculpture: 1. Michel Basbus; Salwa Rawda Shuqair, 2. Moazzaz Rawda, 3. Antoine Berberi; Jamil Molaeb	Victor Hakim, Abdul Rahman Labban, Jean Salles
8	3-26/1/1969	Painting: 1. Levon Moumjian; Nadia Saikali; Khalil Zghaib, 2. Lotti Adaimi; Antoine Asfar; Georges Guv; Stelio Sca- manga; Harout Torossian; Sophie Yeramian  Sculpture: 1. John Hadidian, 2. Joseph Basbus; Salwa Rawda Shuqair  Italian Cultural Centre Prize: Hussein Madi	John Carswell, André Fermigier, Jean Khalifé
9	27/11/1974- 10/1/1975	No prize	Roberto Pisani, Museum Committee

10	20/12/1982- 20/1/1983	No prize Homage to Farid Aouad (1924-1982), Hussein Badreddine (1939-1975), Michel Basbus (1921-1981), Jean Khalife (1923-1978), Ibrahim Marzuk (1937-1975), Khalil Zghaib (1911-1975)	Aimée Kettaneh, Pierre al-Khoury, Abdul Rahman Labban, Joseph Rabbat, Rickat Salam, Samir Tabet, Georges Tohmé
11	21/12/1984- 21/1/1985	No prize	Sylvia Agémian, Nazih Khater, Pierre al-Khoury, Hind Sinno, Joseph Tarrab
12	16/12/1986- 31/1/1987	No prize Homage to Sophie Yeramian (1915-1984)	R.P. Abdo Badaoui, Rafiq Sharaf, Hussein Madi, Joseph Rabbat
13	12/1987-1/1988	No prize Homage to Alfons Philipps (1937-1987)	R.P. Abdo Badaoui, Rafiq Sharaf, Pierre al-Khoury, Hussein Madi, Joseph Rabbat
14	12/1988-1/1989	No prize Homage to Fadi Barrage (1939-1988), Olga Limansky (1903-1988)	Sylvia Agémian, Pierre al-Khoury, Hussein Madi, Joseph Rabbat, Joseph Tarrab
15	20/12/1991- 1/1992	Dorothy Salhab Kazemi Prize: Youssef Aoun (painting) Homage to Diran (1903-1991), Munir Najem (1933-1990), Dorothy Salhab Kazemi (1942-1990)	Joseph Abu Rizk, Sylvia Agémian, Hussein Madi, Joseph Rabbat, Samir Sayegh, Joseph Tarrab
16	2/4-2/5/1993	No prize (decision by the jury to hand out neither the Dorothy Salhab Kazemi prize for young artists nor the Sami Rafi prize for young sculptors)	Pierre al-Khoury, Hussein Madi, Joseph Rabbat, Ramzi Saidi, Samir Sayegh, Sylvia Agémian, Jean-Philippe Schweitzer, Joseph Tarrab

17	15/3-15/4/1994	Dorothy Salhab Kazemi Prize: Flavia Codsí (painting) Homage to Saliba Douaihy (1915-1994), Paul Guiragosian (1926-1993), Youssef Hoyek (1883-1962), Rachid Wehbe (1917-1993)	Sylvia Agémian, Joseph Rabbat, Assem Salam, Samir Sayegh, Joseph Tarrab
18	31/1-5/3/1995	Rima Amyuni (Sursock Museum Prize) (painting) Dorothy Salhab Kazemi Prize: Youssef Aoun (painting)	Camille Aboussouan, Pierre el Khoury, Assem Salam, Hind Sinno, Sylvia Agémian, Joseph Tarrab, Samir Sayegh
19	29/11/1995-14/1/1996	Dorothy Salhab Kazemi Prize: Vartan Aror (Sculpture) In Memoriam: George Chanine (1951-1995)	Hind Sinno, Assem Salam, Pierre al-Khoury, Wassek Adib, Sylvia Agémian, Joseph Rabbat, Joseph Tarrab, Samir Sayegh
20	25/10-30/11/1996	Flavia Codsí (Sursock Museum Prize) (painting) Dorothy Salhab Kazemi Prize: Theo Mansour (painting)	Nayla Kettaneh Kunigk, Hind Sinno, Sylvia Agémian, Wassek Adib, Pierre al-Khoury, Joseph Rabbat, Samir Sayegh, Joseph Tarrab
21	28/11/1997-10/1/1998	Joseph Abi Yaghi (Sursock Museum Prize) Dorothy Salhab Kazemi Prize: Rana Raouda (painting) Special Mention: Anita Toutikian In Memoriam: Michel Akl (1923-1997)	Wassek Adib, Sylvia Agémian, Nayla Kettaneh Kunigk, Nazih Khater, Samir Sayegh, Joseph Tarrab
22	11/12/1998-31/1/1999	No Sursock Museum Prize Dorothy Salhab Kazemi Prize: Anita Toutikian (Installation) Special mention: Jacko Reshtikian, Nabil Helou, Halim Mehdi Hadi, Theo Mansour	Nayla Kettaneh Kunigk, Janine Maamari, Hind Sinno, Sylvia Agémian, Assem Salam, Nazih Khater, Joseph Tarrab, Samir Sayegh

23	12/12/2000- 14/1/2001	No prize (due to insufficient quality according to the jury)	Nayla Kettaneh Kunigk, Janine Maamari, Nazih Khater, Samir Sayegh, Nabil Tabbara, Joseph Tarrab
24	3/12/2003- 17/1/2004	Halim Mehdi Hadi (Surssock Museum Prize) Dima Hajjar (Jury Prize) Special Mention: Bassam Geitani	John Carswell, Syvia Agémian, Jacques Assouad, Nazih Khater, Pierre al-Khoury, Ramzi Saidi, Assem Salam, Hind Sinno, Joseph Tarrab
25	2/12/2004- 15/1/2005	Fulvio Codsì (Surssock Museum Prize) Antoine Mansour (Surssock Museum Prize)	Syvia Agémian, Hind Sinno, Jacques Assouad, Nazih Khater, Nicolas Nammar, Ramzi Saidi, Samir Sayegh, Joseph Tarrab
26	28/12/2005- 28/1/2006	No prize	Adel Koudaih, Sadek Tabbara, Alfred Tarazi, Joseph Tarrab
27	22/12/2006- 31/1/2007	Samar Mogharbel (Surssock Museum Prize)	Pascale Feghali, Adel Koudaih, Walid Sadek, Samir Sayegh, Sadek Tabbara, Alfred Tarazi, Joseph Tarrab
28	3-31/3/2008	Charles Khoury (Surssock Museum Prize) Gilbert Hage (Jury Prize) Special Mention: Abdel Rahman Katanani	John Carswell, Adel Koudaih, Samir Sayegh, Sadek Tabbara, Samir Tabet, Alfred Tarazi, Joseph Tarrab
29	12/1-12/3/2009	May Catherina Abboud (Surssock Museum Prize); Samir Muller (Surssock Museum Prize); Abdel Rahman Katanani (Emerging Artist Prize); Laure Ghoraieb & Mazen Kerbage (Jury Prize) Special Mention: Zeina Assi; Oussama Baalbaki; Ziad Tarabah; Jasenka Tucan-Vaillant	Assem Salam, Gregory Buchakjian, Adel Koudaih, Samir Sayegh, Joseph Tarrab

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30	2/12/2010- 4/1/2011	Raouf Rifai (Sursock Museum Prize) Youssef Nehme (Emerging Artist Prize) Mario Saba (Jury Prize) Special Mention: May Haddad; Karim Joreige; Annie Kurkdjian; Hassan Zahreddine	Assem Salam, Maha Sultan, Adel Koudaih, Samir Sayegh, Joseph Tarrab
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31	28/1/2011- 17/2/2012	Raffi Tokatlian (Sursock Museum Prize); Raya Mazigi (Emerging Artist Prize); Joe Kesrouani & Muhamad Saad (Jury Prize) Special Mention: May Abboud; Leila Jabre-Jureidini	Assem Salam, Maha Sul- tan, Adel Koudaih, Samir Sayegh, Joseph Tarrab
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32	25/11/2016- 27/2/2017	Abed Al Kadiri (Sursock Museum Prize); Dala Nasser (Emerging Artist Prize); Nevine Bouez (Audience Choice Award) Special Mention: Engram Collective; Raymond Gemayel	Reem Fadda, Walid Sadek, Rasha Salti, Hind Al Soufi, Kaelen Wilson- Goldie
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33	25/10/2018- 14/1/2019	TBD	Tarek Abou al-Fetouh, Nizar Daher, Rania Stephan, Christine Tohme, Jalal Toufic

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Table 2. Members (*sociétaires*) of the Sursock Museum's Salon d'Automne (SA) between 1987 and 1999.

**SA Members (*Sociétaires*)**

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- 13 Samir Abi Rached, Alfred Basbus, Joseph Basbus, Lotti Adaimi, Odile Mazloun, Nadia Saikali, Sophie Yeramian
- 14 Samir Abi Rached, Lotti Adaimi, Joseph Basbus, Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui, Paul Guiragossian, Halim Jurdak, Hussein Madi, Odile Mazloun, Wajih Nahle, Nadia Saikali, Torossian
- 15 Samir Abi Rached, Lotti Adaimi, Antoine Asfar, Amine al-Basha, Joseph Basbus, Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui, Maya Eid, Zaven Hadichian, Hassan Jouni, Halim Jurdak, Helen Khal, Hussein Madi, Odile Mazloun, Wajih Nahle, Salwa Rawda Shuqair, Mohammad Al Rawas, Sami Rifai, Harout Torossian, Rachid Wehbe
- 16 Samir Abi Rached, Yvette Achkar, Lotti Adaimi, Michel Akl, Amine al-Basha, Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui, Maya Eid, Zaven Hadichian, Hrair, Hassan Jouni, Halim Jurdak, Hussein Madi, Joseph Matar, Odile Mazloun, Wajih Nahle, Salwa Rawda Shuqair, Mohammad al-Rawas, Aref Rayess, Sami Rifai, Juliana Seraphim, Cici Sursock, Moussa Tiba, Harout Torossian, Rachid Wehbe
- 17 Shafiq Abud, Desiree Abu Jaber, Samir Abi Rached, Yvette Achkar, Lotti Adaimi, Michel Akl, Amine al-Basha, Alfred Basbus, Joseph Basbus, Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui, Maya Eid, Hrair, Aram Jughian, Halim Jurdak, Mohammad Kaissi, Elie Kanaan, Hussein Madi, Joseph Mattar, Odile Mazloun, Wajih Nahle, Salwa Rawda Shuqair, Mohammad al-Rawas, Aref Rayess, Sami Rifai, Moussa Tiba, Harout Torossian
- 18 Shafiq Abud, Samir Abi Rached, Lotti Adaimi, Krikor Agopian, Loulou Bassiri, Amine al-Basha, Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui, Antoine Berberi, Maya Eid, Joseph Faloughi, Zaven Hadichian, Hrair, Hassan Jouni, Aram Jughian, Halim Jurdak, Mohammad Kaissi, Elie Kanaan, Joseph Mattar, Odile Mazloun, Wajih Nahle, Mohammad al-Rawas, Aref Rayess, Sami Rifai, Samir Tabet, Moussa Tiba, Harout Torossian, Nada Yammine, Fadl Ziade

- 19 Shafiq Abud, Desiree Abu Jaber, Samir Abi Rached, Yvette Achkar, Lotti Adaimi, Krikor Agopian, Michel Akl, Rima Amyuni, Loulou Baassiri, Amine al-Basha, Antoine Berberi, Maya Eid, Joseph Faloughi, Chucrallah Fattouh, Zaven Hadichian, Hassan Jouni, Aram Jughian, Halim Jurdak, Mohammad Kaissi, Elie Kanaan, Helen Khal, Hussein Madi, Adnan El Masri, Joseph Mattar, Odile Mazloun, Jamil Molaeb, Samir Muller, Wajih Nahle, Greta Naufal, Norikian, Samia Osseiran Jumblatt, Salwa Rawda Shuqair, Aref Rayess, Sami Rifai, Nadia Saikali, Samir Tabet, Harout Torossian, Fadl Ziade
- 20 Desiree Abu Jaber, Samir Abi Rached, Lotti Adaimi, Michel Akl, Loulou Baassiri, Amine al-Basha, Haibat Balaa Bawab, Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui, Antoine Berberi, Houry Chekerdjian, Fulvio Codsì, Rita David, Maya Eid, Joseph Faloughi, Chucrallah Fattouh, Zaven Hadichian, Fouad Jaouhar, Joseph Harb, Hassan Jouni, Aram Jughian, Halim Jurdak, Elie Kanaan, Helen Khal, Boulos Khawam, Charles Khoury, Hussein Madi, Adnan El Masri, Joseph Mattar, Odile Mazloun, Samar Mogharbel, Jamil Molaeb, Samir Muller, Wajih Nahle, Greta Naufal, Norikian, Samia Osseiran Jumblatt, Mohammad El Rawas, Aref Rayess, Sami Rifai, Gisele Rohayem, Marwan Saleh, Samir Tabet, Moussa Tiba, Harout Torossian, Nada Yammine, Fadl Ziade
- 21 members, names not listed in the exhibition catalogue 57
- 22 Shafiq Abud, Samir Abi Rached, Lotti Adaimi, Krikor Agopian, Rima Amyuni, Youssef Aoun, Loulou Baassiri, Haibat Balaa Bawab, Youssef Basbus, Mouna Bassili Sehnaoui, Antoine Berberi, Charles Chahwan, Houry Chekerdjian, Flavia Codsì, Fulvio Codsì, Amal Dagher, Maya Eid, Joseph Faloughi, Chucrallah Fattouh, Mansour Habre, Hrair, Rose Hussein, Fouad Jaouhar, Sami Jarkas, Hassan Jouni, Aram Jughian, Halim Jurdak, Mohammad Kaissi, Elie Kanaan, Helen Khal, Helou Ange Khalil, Boulos Khawam, Charles Khoury, Naziha Knio, David Kurani, Bassam Kyrillos, Hussein Madi, Adnan El Masri, Joseph Mattar, Odile Mazloun, Jamil Molaeb, Samir Muller, Jean-Marc Nahas, Wajih Nahle, Samia Osseiran Jumblatt, Salwa Rawda Shuqair, Mohammad al-Rawas, Aref Rayess, Sami Rifai, Gisele Rohayem, Mario Saba, Ghada Saghieh, Marwan Saleh, Missak Terzian, Harout Torossian, Lucy Tutunjan, Fadl Ziade