

## **Re-displaying the Modern: A History of Art Exhibitions, Artistic Networks and Institutions in the Middle East and North Africa 1930–1989**

The Department of History of Art at the University of York in partnership with Tate invites applications for a PhD studentship fully-funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to commence in October 2015.

This doctoral research project focuses on the institutional history of modern art practices in the Middle East and North Africa between 1930 and 1989. While revisionist narratives have brought into view previously neglected spatial and temporal networks, art historical scholarship tends to overlook the fact that artworks today praised as ‘discoveries’ in the West belong to a local narrative of a pre-globalised history of art and exhibitions. This project thus aims to provide a critical framework to map the development of galleries, festivals, biennials, journals and other platforms for artistic exchange in the region. The dominant historiographies of modernist art have, until recently, ignored art from the Middle East or cast it as derivative of its European sources. The successful candidate will thus be encouraged to engage broadly with institutional practices across the region and to frame the project in such a way that it re-evaluates the adoption and adaption of modernist paradigms.

Some of the following questions might frame the proposed thesis. What institutions served to exhibit and disseminate modern artistic projects in the Middle East in the second half of the twentieth century? How did these institutions, and the artists working in them, negotiate the tensions between the local and global, nationalism and cosmopolitanism, political engagement and artistic autonomy, and popular and avant-garde art trajectories? How might a map of the institutional links between artists working in cities such as Baghdad, Beirut, Cairo, Jerusalem, Istanbul and Tehran necessitate a rethinking of the nation-state as a framework through which to understand artistic production in the region?

We would encourage researchers to examine art exhibitions, biennials and festivals as they intersect with the history of avant-garde groups, art movements and political alliances of their time, including but not limited to: *Al-Nahda*’s cultural Renaissance in early twentieth-century Lebanon and Syria; the Egyptian Art and Freedom group in the 1930s; the Baghdad Modern Art Group formed in 1951 by Jawad Salim; the Union of Arab Plastic Artists that gathered throughout the 1970s between Damascus, Rabat and Baghdad, where the first Arab Biennale was held in 1974; the Shiraz-Persepolis Festival of the Arts in Iran; and the Asilah festival in Morocco in 1978.

The PhD supervisors are Dr Chad Elias (University of York) and Morad Montazami (Research Curator, Middle East and North Africa, Tate). The student may be based in London and will examine the histories of works of modern Middle Eastern and North African art within Tate’s collection, utilising the museum’s records, as part of his or her thesis. The student will produce c.40 summary texts about individual artworks in Tate’s collection for publication on Tate’s website, following existing guidelines, or a smaller number of related texts, such as catalogue entries. Such texts will relate closely to the themes and areas that the student is researching, and the experience of writing for a broad public about the works will provide valuable training. The student will be asked to share research findings with staff at Tate, both informally and formally through seminars and a range of possible publishing outcomes with Tate. The assembling of documents relating to the history of art in the region could be a further valuable outcome of the doctoral project.

Candidates should have a strong interest in modern art from the Middle East and North Africa. It is also desirable that they have a strong grounding in postcolonial theory, cultural studies, visual culture or political histories of the region (comparative studies and transnational approaches may be also privileged). The successful applicant will have excellent command of English, spoken and written, and experience with independent archival research. Written and spoken fluency in one of the major languages of the region (Arabic, Farsi or Turkish) is highly desirable.

The AHRC doctoral award does not include funds for travel but please note that the student will be able to apply for external grants that would help to enable travel in the region.

The deadline for applications is **27 April 2015**.

### **Entry criteria**

We invite applications from candidates with a strong academic background in modern art or cultural history of the Middle East and North Africa, showing evidence of archival research skills and a clear and engaging research proposal that can be developed through the available research supervision. The candidate must have excellent command of English, spoken and written, and show evidence of an ability to write about artworks for a specialist and non-specialist audiences in an engaging and accessible way. The successful candidate would also ideally have working knowledge of one of the major languages used in the region.

Successful applicants normally have a good first degree (at least 2.1, or international equivalent) in a relevant field of humanities, and have obtained, or are currently working towards a Masters degree at Merit or Distinction level, or international equivalent. If English is not a candidate's native language, he or she will also need to satisfy the English language entry requirements of the Department of History of Art at the University of York (<http://www.york.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/english/>).

Please note that the award is subject to the AHRC's terms, to which applicants should refer before applying (see the AHRC's Research Funding Guide: <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Training%20Grant%20Funding%20Guide%202014-15.pdf>

Note that overseas students are not eligible for AHRC awards (except under specific circumstances) and EU students need to assess whether they are eligible for fees and maintenance or fees only. Details of current maintenance and fee rates can be found on the 'Current Research Awards' page on the AHRC website (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Postgraduate-funding/Pages/Current-award-holders.aspx>)

### **To apply**

Applications should be made in the first instance by email to the University of York and should include the following documents as electronic attachments:

- A covering letter, stating why you are applying for this opportunity and why you think your academic interests qualify you for this award.
- A proposal for the thesis (up to 1,000 words).
- A curriculum vitae.

- A transcript of your qualifications to date (and anticipated results if still studying for an MA).
- One or more relevant writing samples (e.g. MA essay or dissertation; published articles; images may be omitted if the document is too large otherwise to send by email).
- Contact details for two referees.\*

Applications should be directed to the Postgraduate Administrator in the Department of History of Art at the University of York, Susanna Broom ([susanna.broom@york.ac.uk](mailto:susanna.broom@york.ac.uk)). The successful candidate will, at a later stage, be required to formally submit a programme application via the University of York's online application system.

The closing date is **5.00pm on Monday, 27 April 2015**. We will interview candidates for this studentship on **14 May 2015** at Tate Britain in London.

\*The University of York will contact the referees of shortlisted applicants, who should email their references in the form of a letter to Susanna Broom ([susanna.broom@york.ac.uk](mailto:susanna.broom@york.ac.uk)) by **5 May 2015**. Referees should email their references from their institutional email accounts (references sent from personal/private email accounts will not be accepted unless in the form of a scanned document on institutional headed paper and signed by the referee).

### **More information**

If you have any queries or would like to discuss this opportunity before applying, please contact Dr Elias ([chad.elias@york.ac.uk](mailto:chad.elias@york.ac.uk)) or Morad Montazami at Tate ([morad.montazami@tate.org.uk](mailto:morad.montazami@tate.org.uk)).

If you have any queries regarding the application process, please contact Susanna Broom ([susanna.broom@york.ac.uk](mailto:susanna.broom@york.ac.uk))

Visit <http://www.york.ac.uk/history-of-art/prospective-postgraduates> for more information about the Department of History of Art at the University of York.