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## EXHIBITIONS

# "The Arab Nude: The Artist as Awakener" at American University of Beirut, Beirut

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"The Arab Nude: The Artist as Awakener" conveys a number of different pictorial approaches to the genre of the Nude, as elaborated by several generations of Arab artists from Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, and Lebanon.

Some of these artists are regarded today as founders and pillars of fine arts traditions in their respective countries, or as truly

"modern artists" in the sense of their personal and professional autonomy. Some have been entirely forgotten. The largest number of nudes displayed here are of Lebanese origin, due to issues of accessibility. While admittedly a regrettable weakness, the density of this collection allows us to observe the complexity of this genre in a specific social setting. Class, sexuality, gender, career ambitions, market practices, and political leanings all played into how artists took up the genre and how critics wrote about it. We hope the intricacies of the material from Mandate Lebanon will inspire similar scrutiny of work known to exist in other countries such as Egypt but under-represented here due to limited resources.

## MILANO ART BULLETIN

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The visitor is invited to look at representations of naked bodies (including original works but also reproductions and photographic material) and to construct for themselves imaginary museums, by arranging and rearranging these nudes chronologically, stylistically, by country, by pedagogical affiliation in European ateliers, or by the names of the masters who trained subsequent generations of painters. From nudes made in the mid-19th century in Ottoman Syria by such locally trained practitioners as Kenaan Dib [Kan`an Dib] (1801-1882), one proceeds to the paintings and drawings of Daoud Corm [Da`ud Al-Qurum] (1852-1930) – an artist trained in Rome and celebrated in some Lebanese

nationalist art histories as the country's artist progenitor – and further into the twentieth century to the nudes of Khalil Saleeby [Khalil Al-Salibi] (1870-1928), Khalil Gibran (1883-1931), Marie Hadad (1884-1973), Youssef Hoyeck [Yusuf Al-Huwayyik] (1883-1962), Mahmud Mukhtar (1891-1934), Mohammed Racim [Muhammad Rasim] (1896-1975), Cesar Gemayel [Qaysar Al-Jumayyil] (1898-1958), Georges D. Corm [Georges Da`ud Al-Qurum] (1897-1971), Moustapha Farrouk [Mustafa Farrukh] (1901- 1957), Omar Onsi [Umar Al-Unsi] (1901-1969), Sophie Halaby (1905-1998), Abdel Wahab Addada [Abd al-Wahhab `Adada] (b. 1915), and others. Most of these artists traveled north to colonial metropolises to learn their painterly skills, which they then redeployed back home, following the current of social transformation by opening artists' studios and new state institutions, designing cultural policies that would address local concerns, or negotiating and contributing to the formation of the first national art schools, museums and art societies. The Nude played a prominent role in their claims to professionalization, as we glimpse from the membership card Moustapha Farrouk designed in 1934 for the Society of Friends of the Arts, with its Venus de Milo sprouting from a painter's palette, set between Pigeon Rock and a Mediterranean minaret.

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[at American University of Beirut, Beirut](http://www.aub.edu.lb/art_galleries/Pages/index.aspx)  
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until 1 August 2016









## "The Arab Nude: The Artist as Awakener" installation views at American University of Beirut, Beirut, 2016

Courtesy: the artists and American University  
of Beirut, Beirut.

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