

The American University Museum-Washington hosts an exhibition featuring the works of 30 Lebanese artists and a Lebanese film festival

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An announcement was made on Wednesday regarding the establishment of the Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon (APEAL). The group, which is headed by Mrs. Rita Nammour, aims to "provide Lebanese artists with new prospects by projecting their artwork beyond conventional borders. It envisions launching exchange programs between Lebanese and international artists, granting scholarships to promising talents."

During a press conference held at the headquarters of Fondation Saradar in Achrafieh, APEAL announced that its first activity, which is to be organized in April, will be an exhibition featuring the works of Lebanese artists in Washington D.C. This event will coincide with a Lebanese film festival to be held in May during which a series of prominent Lebanese films will be screened. During the press conference, the group's vice-president, Mrs. Nada Khoury, said that "APEAL's first activity will be an exhibition in Washington D.C. featuring the works of around 30 Lebanese artists in the fields of painting, sculpture, photography, cinema, engineering, etc. "Convergence: New Art from Lebanon" will be held from April 8 to May 16, 2010 at the American University Museum in Washington D.C. The exhibition, which is naturally the first of its kind in the United States, will showcase approximately 70 works focusing on Lebanese post-war art. It will be sponsored by the Lebanese Embassy in Washington D.C. and H.E. Ambassador Antoine Chédid in collaboration with Fondation Saradar of Lebanon."

Khoury revealed that "the works in question were chosen with a great deal of care and professionalism by Mrs. Amal Traboulsi, a leading organizer of art exhibitions in Lebanon and the Middle East, and Mr. Jack Rasmussen, director of the American University Museum in Washington. The exhibition will coincide with two other activities: on April 8, a lecture on urban arts will be given by Lebanese artist Nadim Karam.

A Lebanese film festival will also be organized from May 13 to May 16, 2010 in collaboration with Fondation Liban Cinéma, and will feature a series of prominent Lebanese films." The films, which will be screened during the festival, are The Kite, Zozo, Not Like My Sister, Beirut Open City, After Shave, Under the Bombs, The North Road, When Maryam Spoke Out, Ashes, Smoke Without Fire and Bosta.

"A common framework for supporting Lebanese arts and culture"

Khoury explained that "APEAL is composed of Lebanese and American citizens who envisioned establishing a common framework for supporting Lebanese arts and culture. This support is expressed in various ways, mainly by providing Lebanese art works and artists with new, broad prospects and introducing the world to Lebanese arts and culture, which remained steadfast and creative despite all the difficulties encountered during the war. Rather, the war and its resulting difficulties were a source of inspiration for Lebanese artists."

She added: "Art is an extremely important means to encourage communication among peoples and create a common platform to display the beauty of our pluralism. This was one of the main reasons underlying the establishment of APEAL." Furthermore, she said, "APEAL plans to support Lebanese arts by organizing exchange programs between Lebanese and international artists, granting scholarships to promising Lebanese talents." Mario Saradar Holding Deputy CEO Mrs. Sandra Abou Nader expressed the hope that "APEAL's project will contribute to the promotion of Lebanon's cultural aspect as a center of creativity and the arts, acting at the same time as a support tool for Lebanese artists and students with promising talents. Groupe Saradar is realizing a new dream today, as it is honored to sponsor APEAL." Abou Nader reminded that "in addition to financial and real estate companies, the Saradar family launched the Fondation Saradar, which provides financial assistance to our active or retired colleagues in Groupe Saradar. Nevertheless, this vocation grew and as of 2001, Mr. Mario Saradar sought to expand Fondation Saradar's span of action, transforming it into a factor of progress and development in the Lebanese society."

Mrs. Abou Nader elaborated this point, saying that "this new dimension came as a logical outcome of the solidarity spirit consolidated by Joe Saradar, chairman of the

board in Banque Saradar from 1962 to 1992. Mario Saradar provided the legal and institutional framework for the spirit of social solidarity initiated by his father, thus securing the continuity of the human values, which he cherishes as well."

In addition to its continuous involvement in social action, she said, "Groupe Saradar also wishes to work in favor of sustainable human development, since human resources are Lebanon's wealth. The society to which the Group strives is one of social justice, economic prosperity and protection of the environment. In short, it is a "society for all."

Based on the principles of active citizen participation and partnership between the private sector and civil society to confront challenges, Fondation Saradar launched its initiatives and activities under the supervision of Mrs. Tania Helou. For instance, it funded mobile computer schools in caravans all across the country in order to eradicate IT illiteracy. It also supported APEAL in all fields, especially on the administrative and logistical levels. And since sports are a very important element of society, Groupe Saradar sponsors the Blue Stars basketball team and Lebanese basketball in general."

In conclusion, Abou Nader said, "A new period starts today with APEAL, as the Group becomes involved in an entirely new field and spares no efforts to succeed in cooperation with its other partners whom we thank for their support and efforts. We would also like to thank the APEAL team and wish them luck so that this project helps Lebanese artists and does Lebanon proud."

"A true image of new art in Lebanon"

The exhibition's president in Beirut, Mrs. Amal Traboulsi, took the floor and emphasized "the great challenge of presenting to the American public in a Museum of Contemporary Art a true image of new art in Lebanon. The visit of Dr. Rasmussen to Lebanon contributed to a great extent in putting together the best selection possible of art works, both harmonious and representative, though alas not an exhaustive one. It is thanks to Dr. Rasmussen's fresh and open view to this extremely complex Middle East, coupled with our lifetime intense experience of events and developments, that we were able to assemble this exhibition."

Traboulsi said it is her sincere wish that this exhibition "will provide the American public with an exciting image of the Lebanese art scene, and also demonstrate how it has assumed a contemporary orientation in recent years, all while preserving its true identity."

The former head of the Institute of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University and the Lebanese American University Dr. Chawki Chamoun also took the floor. Chamoun heads as well the Lebanese Artists' Association of Painters and Sculptors.

He says that "the importance of this contemporary art event in Washington for me as an artist lies in the fact that it carries my work along with that of other Lebanese artists to other people under the heading Made in Lebanon. This exceptional experience enshrines my patriotism and gives me the honor of national belonging and interaction with the world".