

Surrealism in North Africa and Western Asia: Crossings and Encounters

Edited by Monique Bellan
Julia Drost



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Surrealism in North Africa and Western Asia: Crossings and Encounters

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Acknowledgements

This volume has its origins in the joint workshop “The Avant-Garde and its Networks: Surrealism in Paris, North Africa and the Middle East since the 1930s”, held by the Orient-Institut Beirut and the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte Paris (German Forum for Art History in Paris) from 14–15 November 2016 in Beirut. The initial idea for it arose out of a chance encounter between us, the editors, in autumn 2015. Monique was working on surrealism in Egypt within the context of her research project on aesthetic reflection, while Julia had, for several years, been investigating surrealism’s international networks with a special focus on the art market. This led to the idea of a joint workshop examining the connections between Paris, as the place of origin of the surrealist movement, and North Africa and Western Asia. We were interested in both the North–South and South–South relationships and the possible connections between artists, writers and groups. In this, we were guided by the assumption that all kinds of reciprocal relationships – of both a direct and indirect nature – existed between Paris and the regions of North Africa and Western Asia that were not necessarily linear, but which took place through third parties, and it was our intention to investigate these relationships.

With their specific research into individual protagonists in various countries of the region, the ten essays in this volume contribute to a deeper knowledge of surrealism and foster a better understanding of why surrealism, as a revolutionary and accessible artistic movement, had the potential to stimulate and enrich artistic production in a historical and cultural region so different to Paris, London and New York.

This volume is the fruit of numerous colleagues’ work. The editors would like to express their sincere thanks to Sam Bardaouil, Judith Bihl, Cléa Daridan, Fabrice Flahutez, Catherine Hansen, Megan C. MacDonald, Arturo Monaco, Eyüp Özveren and Jad Tabet, all of whom took part in the workshop, as well as to the authors Ambra D’Antone and Alfred el-Khoury, who joined the project later. We also thank Nadia Bou Ali and Sonja Mejcher-Atassi for participating as discussants in the workshop and contributing to the debates. The Orient-Institut Beirut and the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte Paris, namely their directors Stefan Leder and Birgit Schäbler in Beirut, and Thomas Kirchner in Paris, have supported the project with great interest and commitment right from the start. Our thanks go as well to the interns of both institutions for their editorial assistance and picture research, namely Ida Forbriger, Hans Magne Jaatun, Maxime Kuhlmeier, Michael Rauch, Alexander Reindl, Lena Syen and Manzi Tanna-Händel. We would also like to offer our sincere gratitude to Christopher Bahl and Abdallah Soufan for coordinating this publication, to the BTS Advisory Board for its critical input,

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Berlin and Los Angeles, May 2020

Monique Bellan and Julia Drost

Note on transliteration

This book uses the transliteration system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)* to convert Arabic into English. This applies for citations and titles of books, articles and journals. For artists' and authors' names, the chapters generally adhere to the spelling that these persons used themselves or under which they are commonly known to facilitate recognition. However, some authors use full transliteration throughout their entire chapter.

Note on contributors

Monique Bellan is a researcher who focuses on art, aesthetics and their political dimensions. She holds a PhD in Arabic Studies from the Free University of Berlin and an MA from the University of Bonn. She has worked as a researcher at the collaborative research centre on Aesthetic Experience and the Dissolution of Artistic Limits, and, from 2013 to 2019, as a research associate at the Orient-Institut Beirut with a project on aesthetic reflection and art critique in Lebanon. She is the author of *Dismember Remember: Das anatomische Theater von Lina Saneh und Rabih Mroué* (Reichert, 2013). Among her recent publications is *The Art Salon in the Arab Region: Politics of Taste Making* (BTS, 2018), co-edited with Nadia von Maltzahn.

Ambra D'Antone is a collaborative doctoral candidate at The Courtauld Institute of Art and Tate Modern, supervised by Prof. Gavin Parkinson and Dr Matthew Gale. Her thesis provides a historical and methodological reconfiguration of the international surrealist presence by analyzing the artistic and literary expressions of surrealism in the Levant region as instances of translation. She is the editor-in-chief of *immediations* no. 17, the 2020 issue of The Courtauld Institute of Art's academic journal.

Cléa Daridan is an art historian, critic and curator. She is shortly to submit her PhD thesis entitled "Histoire de la conscience du patrimoine Alexandrin, de Nasser à nos jours" at the Sorbonne University from which she holds an MA in Art History. Recently, she won a residency at the Villa Médicis, Académie de France in Rome. She is a regular lecturer and guest speaker at international universities and institutions, including ENSAD, Parsons School and the CESE in Paris, ESAD in Reims, NYU in New York and UNIGE in Geneva. She has regularly contributed to international publications such as *Intramuros*, *Diptyk* and *La Tribune de l'Art*. To be published: "Almagia/Ambro: Itinéraire d'une famille de mécènes et collectionneurs juifs au croisement de l'Italie fasciste et de l'Égypte nassérienne", *Mélanges*, Rome, EFR.

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Jad Tabet is an architect and planner working between Beirut and Paris. He is currently president of the Lebanese Order of Engineers and Architects and president of the Arab Union of Architects, a member of the UNESCO High Level Reflection Group for Strategic Transformation and a former member of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (2001–2005 and 2013–2017). Tabet is the author of several academic publications on war and reconstruction, and on the relationship between heritage and modernity. He taught architecture at the National Institute of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University, the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture at the American University of Beirut and the Belleville School of Architecture in Paris and served as distinguished faculty member at the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA, Sciences Po Paris).

