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Kirsten Scheid

NECESSARY NUDES: *ḤADĀTHA* AND *MUʿĀṢIRA* IN THE LIVES OF MODERN LEBANESE

In his studio in Beirut in 1929, the young artist Moustapha Farroukh (1901–57) envisioned a composition to change his society.[1] He hoped his oil painting would incite broad support among his fellow Lebanese for a revolution in conventional gender relations and women's participation in the urban social order.[2] He titled the picture *The Two Prisoners* and based it on a European convention for representing the East: the Nude odalisque (Figure 1). The resulting painting exemplifies the complex role Arab intellectuals of the early 20th century played in the formation of modern art and universal modernity. Leading artists in Mandate-era Beirut felt compelled to paint Nudes and display them as part of a culturing process they called *tathqīf* (disciplining or enculturing). To a large extent, *tathqīf* consisted of recategorizing norms for interaction and self-scrutiny. Joseph Massad has revealed that one crucial component of *tathqīf* was the repudiation of behaviors and desires associated with the Arab Past, such as male homosexuality. An equally important component was the cultivation of "modern," "masculine" heterosexual eroticism and a dutiful feminine compliance associated with *ḥadātha* (novelty) and *muʿāṣira* (contemporaneity).[3] This was accomplished through the use of a genre that was deliberately new and alien in both its material media and its impact on makers and viewers.

This article establishes that in the decades between 1920 and 1940, fine-art Nudes were not hidden from Beirut's populace and not rejected as shameful. As *indexes* of modernity, they were an important element of nationalist painters' membership in "*al-ʿaṣr al-ḥadīth*" (the modern era), and they demonstrate the importance of the painters' physical and aesthetic experiences in forming the emergent meaning of modernity. Moreover, Nudes were the very form of the strategic claims artists made on their consociates.[4] Crafted out of a foreign genre and local bodies to impact the aesthetic sensibilities of their viewers, Nudes made claims on all who saw them and compelled viewers to reflect on their social roles. The visual archive from Mandate Beirut provides a means to heed the call issued by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler to study civilizing missions without using binary oppositions that preempt the analysis.[5]

THE ABSENCE OF NUDES

The plethora of talk about Nudes in Lebanon today demonstrates the abiding power of the links Mandate-era artists established between modernity and painted nudity.

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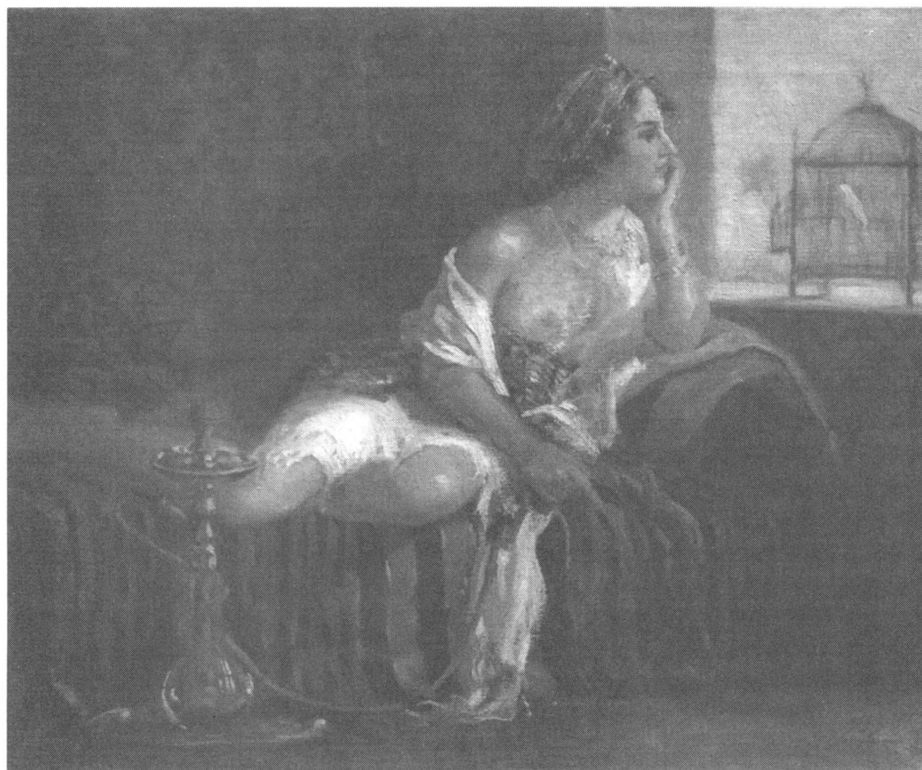

FIGURE 1. *The Two Prisoners* by Moustafa Farroukh; 1929, oil on canvas, 38 × 47 cm. From *Tabiʿa wa Turath* (Nature and Patrimony), *M. Farrouk Series,* Portfolio 7, Beirut, Lebanon, 1995. Reproduced with permission of Hani Farroukh. Copyright 1995 Hani Farroukh. [A color version of this figure can be viewed online at journals.cambridge.org/mes]

During my fieldwork in Beirut on contemporary Lebanese art (1997–2005), the discussion of Nudes, whether at others' prompting or my own, frequently occasioned a curious form of time travel: the commentator on Nudes was suddenly able *and required* to speak with certainty about a past deplete of Nudes and a present characterized by potential improvement if only this paramount index of modernity could be abided. Take one catalogue-writer's commentary on the exhibition in 2003 of another Nude by Farroukh: "*In an era when exhibition walls did not show pictures of naked women*, this painting provoked at the very least confusion and bewilderment among the audience, if not stupefaction [emphasis added]."[6] Similarly, when *Women at an Exhibition* (originally known as *A l'exposition*) (Figure 2), by Farroukh's age-mate Omar Onsi (1901–69), appeared at a London exhibition in 1989, the copywriter observed:

The first time a nude was included in an exhibition in Lebanon, it caused quite a stir. Whereas young Lebanese painters who had studied in Paris were familiar with painting nude models, they

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FIGURE 2. *Women at an Exhibition* (originally *A l'exposition*) by Omar Onsi; 1932, oil on canvas, 37 × 45 cm. From the collection of Samir Abillama. Reproduced with permission of Samir Abillama. [A color version of this figure can be viewed online at journals.cambridge.org/mes]

found it difficult to show their paintings to the conservative Lebanese public upon their return home [emphasis added].[7]

Regarding the same painting by Onsi, an exhibition essayist intoned in 1997, "We are *now, for the first time* before the paintings Onsi painted of nude women, paintings that he did not want to show or even sign his name to . . . " [emphasis added].[8] Curator Sylvia Agémian observed that Onsi's passion for Nudes "*remained* confidential, or semi-confidential, rarely exposed and, according to received testimony, revealed only to amateurs of the genre" [emphasis added].[9] Noting that far fewer oil than pastel or crayon Nudes were among the artist's known body of work, she suggested that the paper-supported media were more easily hidden away.[10] Further, Agémian asserted that owners of such paintings "still" do not expose them, "not even in the bedrooms."[11]

By contrast, several elderly Muslim Beiruti women described their mother (born c. 1905) as "*moderne* compared to her milieu," for she had seen a Nude painting at a friend's and "not found it shameful."[12] Such comments reinforce the necessity of Nudes to index the march of a teleological modernity. Yet they do so by treating the painting of Nudes as a reflection of a given individual or social condition. Their presence supposedly reflects a pioneer's modern outlook, their absence the obstacle Beirutis posed

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FIGURE 3. Group Exhibition, Ecole des Arts et Métiers, January 1931. Photograph from *Al-Maʿrad*, No. 935, 22 January 1931, 8.

to the advance of fine art and time. The very compulsion to speak of time and modernity in the presence of Nudes, however, hints at the agential nature of these pictures. Reducing them to reflections ignores the way they connect audiences to (ascribed) causes (here, modernity) through the indexicality of the techniques evinced. Treating the pictures as firsthand documents from ongoing dialogues clarifies their agential nature. To do this, I focus on the careers of two artist-intellectuals, Moustapha Farroukh and Omar Onsi, who were highly lauded in their time and are particularly well remembered in Lebanon today.

A PLENTITUDE OF NUDES

Khalil Gibran (1883–1931) is perhaps the best-known painter of the Nude associated with Lebanon. Although his pictures were not exhibited in Lebanon during his lifetime, they were well circulated through distribution of his book *The Prophet.*[13] Better known locally were Habib Srour (1860–1938) and Khalil Saleeby (1870–1928), both of whom are credited with a large corpus of Nude paintings and significant influence on their successors.[14] Newspapers add further evidence that the painting of Nudes was neither new in Mandate-era Beirut nor confined to a few maverick picture makers and their intimate audiences. They are peppered with discussions of the Nudes painted by, among others, Onsi, Farroukh, Caesar Gemayel, Saliba Douwaihy, and Jean Kober. *Al-Maʿrad* declared that nearly 5,000 men and women visited a group show held at *Ecole des Arts et Métiers* in 1930.[15] It provided a photograph of the exhibition (Figure 3), including five Nudes. The paper's long review praises them in passing.

Naked ladies were not only the subjects of fine-art imagery. In the early 1930s the cultural review *Al-Makshuf* included fairly pornographic photographs and erotic stories as well as advertisements for a depilatory cream whose efficiency was demonstrated by

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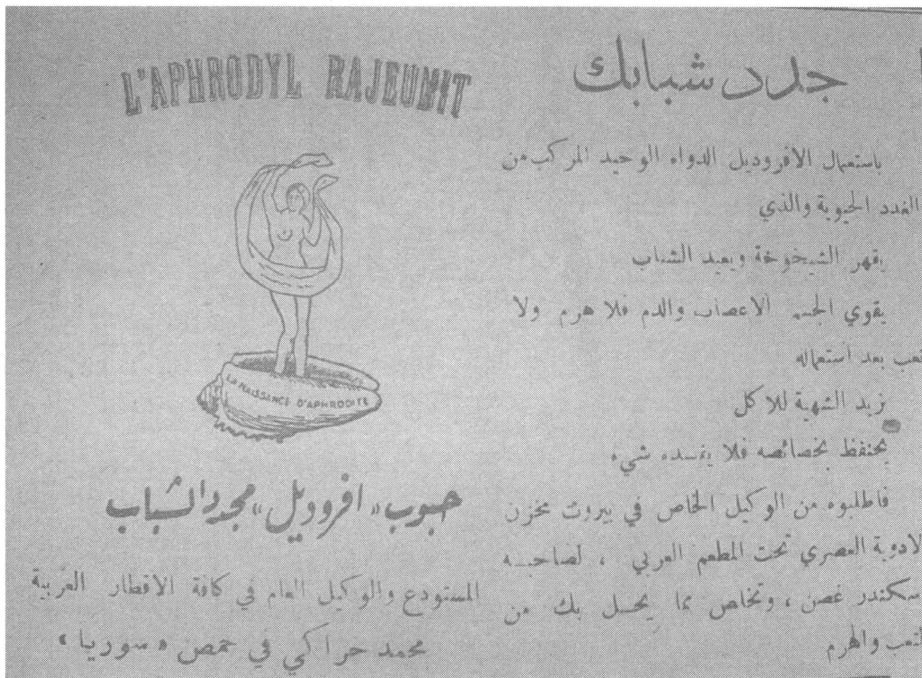

FIGURE 4. An advertisement for Aphrodyl Pills. From *Al-Nahar*, No. 85, 25 November 1933, 6. [A color version of this figure can be viewed online at journals.cambridge.org/mes]

a supine, armpit-baring female Nude.[16] Prominent journals such as *Al-Nahar, La Revue du Liban*, and *Al-Maʿrad* were furnished with similar illustrations and advertisements during the 1930s. One, promoting Aphrodite Medicine for Men, showed a voluptuous Venus rising, like Botticelli's *Spring,* naked from an oyster shell (Figure 4). Another, for a film, was even more explicit (Figure 5).[17]

It is clear that the 1990s were not the first time Nudes were publicly exposed in Lebanon nor were the 1920s an era of artists fearing to sign their names to such pictures, let alone galleries banning them. Indeed, at Onsi's exhibition in 1932, eight of the ninety-one pictures were of nude women, with sale prices ranging from 250 to 1,500 francs.[18] *The Two Prisoners* sold in Beirut in 1929 for the staggering sum of eighteen Ottoman gold pounds.[19] How is it, then, that Nudes are consistently dislocated from early Lebanon to "proper homes" in other locales?

The point of revisiting these forgotten Nudes is not to right a wrongly ascribed absence but to question its very production. The issue is not to what degree naked women and artistic Nudes actually existed in the young Lebanese capital but rather why nudity, as a form of novelty and contemporaneity, became an index and instrument of modernizing. This essay explores the reasons for the agentiality and indexicality of Nudes and, in so doing, illuminates the convergent process by which some Arab artists cultivated universal modernity as a tangible concept and urgent injunction.[20] Displayed at numerous local exhibitions and discussed in the newspapers, the Nude impacted

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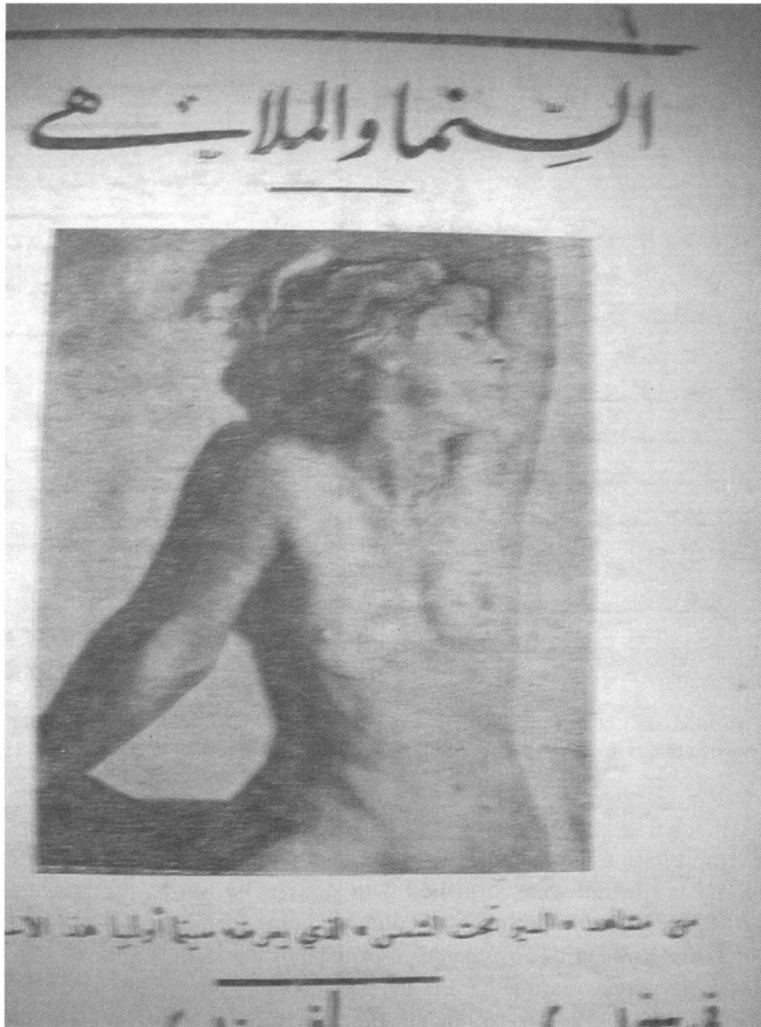

FIGURE 5. A scene from the film *Al-Sir Taht al-Shams* (Walking Under the Sun). From *Al-Nahar*, No. 203, 19 April 1934, 6. [A color version of this figure can be viewed online at journals.cambridge.org/mes]

developing ideas of gender, urbanity, and modernity. In this project artists worked from their particular backgrounds and ambitions toward hazy concepts that were motivating their peers around the globe but were not fully formed in any single locale.

The commendation *The Two Prisoners* and other Nudes received in the local papers contributed major boosts to their makers' careers. This favorable reaction counters not only the common assumption that paintings of nude women posed a threat to Lebanese and Arab viewers but also the notion that those viewers posed an obstacle to the development of fine arts in the Arab world.[21] Not only did Beirut audiences from the 1920s to 1940s appreciate Nudes but they also did so in ways that contradict the notion that Nudes were part and parcel of a Eurocentric modernity.[22] The specific type

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FIGURE 6. Moustapha Farroukh at the Muslim Scouts Exhibition, Ahmad Ayas Villa, 1 January 1927. From the collection of Hani Farroukh. Reproduced with permission of Hani Farroukh. [A color version of this figure can be viewed online at journals.cambridge.org/mes]

of audience interaction and forms of artistic imagery at this time illuminate the role these Lebanese played in producing a modernity that is best understood as neither externally imposed nor alternatively derived but, rather, convergently constructed. Here I explain how Nudes enabled viewers to understand "local" conditions in relation to "foreign" ones and how the "foreign" became universally valid in the process.

MUSLIM SCOUTS AND A MODERN NUDE

Nudes have been included in art exhibitions in Lebanon since their very beginning.[23] On 1 January 1927, the Muslim Scouts gathered in the home of the wealthy merchant and Scout patron Ahmad Ayas to celebrate the return of troop member Moustapha Farroukh from Italy carrying degrees from the School of Ornament and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. A recitation from the Holy Quʾran opened the event and sacralized the space. On display were a few thickly varnished oil portraits, a handful of city scenes and landscapes from Paris recording the artist's trip to the "cradle of art," and one composition that had earned the artist critical mention at the Roman Biennale. Amidst this array of skill and recognition (Figure 6) is a picture of a dark-skinned, nearly naked woman with a water jug. She smiles brazenly at her viewers. Her gaudy necklaces and white shawl accentuate the expanse of her brown flesh.

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Like the other pictures on display, this Nude is rendered in *beaux-arts*, academic style. In *beaux-arts* academic art classrooms, novices became familiar with "the experience of feeling 'magnificent emotion' in front of the totally naked body and transforming that into a conception for drawing, which could intellectually correct physical flaws and trivia; natural desire thus overcome, a naked body became an ideal Nude and a man, an artist."[24] Eminent art historian Sir Kenneth Clark, Farroukh's contemporary, wrote an entire tome discussing the treatment of nudity in art as a civilizational index. He distinguishes between nude bodies and the depiction of Nudes in the academic genre, which he sets off by capitalizing.[25] He interprets the painting of Nudes as "individual" and "modern" for setting the artist free of guild conventions; "learned" for being the result of anatomical training accessible only to a portion of society; "masculine" for involving heterosexual male desires; "refined" for sublimating those desires; "European" for connecting ancient Greek statuary to Renaissance painters and then to modern-day continental heirs; and ultimately "Western," because making Nudes "simply did not occur to the Chinese or Japanese mind."[26] In other words, perfectly executed female Nudes in the academic tradition were more than just "certificates of professional competence"; they were also, supremely, the medium and sign of a refined, intellectual, modern, masculine individual of continental-Western outlook who enjoyed access to elite, exclusively male, art institutions.[27]

Farroukh, his peers, and their predecessors all left Beirut at some point in their careers to receive training abroad. This has usually been discussed as a weakness in local art making.[28] But to disparage their stylistic preferences is to trivialize the exercise of choice in their effort to attain *al-fann al-jamīl* (fine art). Moreover, it overlooks the role migrant artists from around the world had in reinforcing the centrality both of the metropolitan centers and of the *beaux-arts* ideals that were under attack by various anti-establishment movements.[29] Among the many styles practiced in Rome and Paris from 1900 to 1930, what spoke to Lebanese painters was the one taught in the private academies by professors with classical training. Planned compositions, careful execution, and details demonstrating finesse and virtuosity characterized this style. Painters employed it to make a conscious articulation of their intellectual pedigree and to assert their talent as members of an elite with a refined ability to abstract enduring metaphysical truths beneath the wily surfaces of quotidian life.

Presiding over the event, Scoutmaster Muhi al-Din al-Nsuli told the audience what their response to Farroukh's *beaux-arts* skills was to be: "we were enchanted and amazed, we the sons of Nature and Existence [*fa saḥarnā wa rawʿanā nahnu abnāʾ al-ṭabīʿa wa kiyān al-wujūd*]."[30] Demanding no special attention, the Nude was received as part of the broader implementation of something now known as *al-fann al-jamīl* rather than simply *al-taṣwīr* (picturing).[31] It was this skill, the Scouts learned, that made Farroukh's Italian mentor ask him to join his atelier. Yet the painter returned to Lebanon to perform "a duty in his nation."[32] As a consequence, the ensemble of pictures indexed Farroukh as belonging to Italy and Lebanon at once: the first through his talent and use of genre and the second through his political commitment. Thus, the artist becomes visible to his peers as potentially elsewhere but not, at the same time that "here" becomes visible to them as *not* Italy or, rather, not a place where art of this type is familiar.

During the event, eminent thinker and historian ʿUmar Fakhuri delivered a lecture called "Picturing in Islam," in which he is said to have declared that "the encouragement

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of *al-fann* is a sign of the awareness of the young generation of this country, something that bodes well for an artistic renaissance that will testify to their expected progress."[33] These words convey a positive attitude toward cultural transformation as well as concern about a current cultural lacuna. At present, people did not encourage art enough. Scout leader al-Nsuli put the matter more forcefully:

> Shall we cling to old, antiquated, intolerant traditions or shall we walk with life, live, and give life to the art that we honor on the evening of the first day of the New Year? We, the sons of the era of the new [*ʿaṣr al-jadīd*], encourage art and are accepting of it.[34]

The exhibition organizers repeatedly urged that the presence of this "new" art be welcomed by the all-male audience as an essential part of their new life. They were now joined not only as believers in Islam and dutiful citizens of a nation but also as members of modernity. The spotlighted newness or *ḥadātha* of the event was thus deliberately aligned with a commitment to membership in the new era, literally *muʿāṣira*.

NUDES AS AGENTS AND INDEXES

"Enchanting" (*sāḥir*) is the adjective most commonly used by commentators in the Lebanese press and exhibition registries to describe Nude paintings. If artist-intellectuals were engaging the aesthetic responses of a nascent public, it was the specific skills and style of their novel pictures that people experienced as captivating them. To reduce the art works to the artists would allow us to grasp neither the sensual materiality of Nudes like *The Two Prisoners* nor the urgency with which Farroukh and his peers disseminated them. Not only were the artists' agents in their social circles but the art objects were too.

According to Alfred Gell, who has gone the furthest in analyzing the agency of art, the "technology" that produces and is embodied by art objects is "the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form."[35] An art object moves between people within a social nexus and "abducts" their attention. Viewers must infer the cause of the traits they recognize in the art object. When viewers attribute the object's visible features to a specific source, the object itself becomes for them an index of the imputed source. For example, one may see a photographically realistic portrait and attribute its convincing appearance to the artist's brilliance or to the sitter's intriguing form. The act of attribution is caused by the portrait's entry into the viewer's world, and in this sense the portrait abducts its viewer. This means that art objects act on people and may induce changes in their lives if they perceive challenges made by the indexed source. An agential analysis of Nudes, thus, looks not for what they reflect but for what they index, or for the ways they enlist various people, even across cultural boundaries, in performances of social change.

The experience engendered by Nudes of captivating skills and surmounted instinctual responses indicates that the aesthetic element in social change cannot be separated, experientially or analytically, from the lives of the people enacting change. As Jonathan Crary has put it, "Far from being exterior to this process [of modernization], the observer as human subject is completely immanent to it."[36] In other words, the aesthetic experiences people had of the new techniques they encountered were fundamental to how they could live *ḥadātha* and *muʿāṣira*. Art is not an epiphenomenon of culture but an agent of its emergence.

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In terms of local debates about modernity, *al-fann al-jamīl* instantiated an attitude the renowned educator and reformer Butrus al-Bustani had outlined: neither rejection of nor submission to Western-introduced concepts, acquiescence to no cultural givens.[37] Ideally, this modernity would result from the principles of observation, self-reflection, and honest evaluation of one's conditions. Muslim Scout leaders reckoned that a "cultural awakening," like that propounded by al-Bustani, confronted them in Farroukh's paintings, which indexed the ability to convert objective inspection into "precise" and "exact" representations and, also, the courage to overcome "intolerant traditions."[38]

The convergence of nudity and Muslim Scouting deserves further consideration. Watenpaugh and Dueck have separately documented the concern of Levantine Scout organizations for refashioning a masculinity shattered by colonialism into one worthy of modernity.[39] The movement borrowed ideas developed for the British invasion of South Africa (1899–1902) to cultivate local youth who were observant, disciplined, self-sufficient, alert, and curious: in short, rational. This training had a double nature: it regimented youths' ways of relating to their surroundings while it standardized their actions according to an international practice.

At Farroukh's first exhibition of a Nude in 1927, being a man and being modern meant performing traits newly associated with masculinity: open-mindedness and cosmopolitanism, rationality, self-control, initiative, and self-reliance as well as recognition of authority and hierarchy. Ensconced among other imported genres such as landscapes and city scenes, the Nude exemplified and promoted the embrace of new practices these men deemed to be globally endorsed approaches to contemporary life. Its appearance was fitted to the Gregorian calendar, as opposed to the *hijri*. Its realistic style indexed not only the artist's entrepreneurial initiative in overcoming social obstacles and getting training but also his interest in close observation and rational interaction with the physical world. Moreover, his rugged independence and mobility indexed in this type of painting supported the idea that men of the modern era should be comfortable in new surroundings, ones they literally "scout out." Finally, the display of this picture indexed Farroukh's nationalism, that he had come to do such good "in" Lebanon when he could have succeeded elsewhere. Yet none of this precluded the Nude from being part of local patronage, hosting conventions, and Muslim piety. By letting themselves be abducted by Farroukh's academic representational techniques, al-Nsuli, his Scouts, and Farroukh himself challenged themselves to participate in *ḥadātha* and *muʿāṣira*. The goal of doing so was to demonstrate the right of such men to national liberation and self-determination.

The Nude can be understood as an integral but unexceptional component of the Scouts' project. As Farroukh reintegrated into Beirut society he came to seek a more active intervention in the aesthetic, ethical, and political practices of his community of conationals, and his engagement of the Nude changed dramatically.

BORROWED BODIES AND LOCAL PLEASURES

To construct his next Nude, *The Two Prisoners*, Farroukh borrowed not only a European convention for representing the East, the odalisque, but also a European body. The image's actual production ironically required the insertion of an *ajnabiyya* (foreign) woman. The story Farroukh narrates of *Two Prisoners'* coming into being is a striking

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instantiation of the intertwining of aesthetics, gender, and space from which the meaning of modernity emerged:

I think it pleasant to recall a story that happened to me once with a foreign friend in Beirut when it had occurred to me to make a picture of the subject "Two Prisoners": an Eastern woman in her living-room rich in feathers, rugs, and opulence, smoking her water-pipe while leaning toward her window and whispering to a bird before her in its beautiful cage. It is as if she says to it, "You are like me, a prisoner in my beautiful house." So, I set about making the picture, but I found it difficult to imagine the correct positioning of the thigh, as I wasn't able to procure a *modèle*. I had a foreign *muthaqqaf* [intellectual] friend who used to visit me, and that is how he found me confused before my canvas that he liked. I explained my problem. He said nothing, but the next morning I was surprised by the entry of his young wife into my studio. After greeting me she started taking off her clothes, saying, "My husband told me yesterday that you are painting a picture and that you have been kept from completing it due to not understanding a portion of the body. So here I've come to put myself at your service to make your picture." No sooner had she said this then she was completely naked. Well, I started shaking, but I got up and closed the door, afraid that someone might come in and find us in this state, in which case no power on Earth or in the Heavens would rid him of the idea that we were not innocent. I undertook my work until I was finished. As a matter of fact, it pleased her. Then she put her clothes back on and left after I had thanked her for her favor.[40]

The resulting painting would command scholarly attention for the paradoxes of its production alone. A native son's image of "our folk life," *Two Prisoners* is a concatenation of nonnative components, from the imported paints and canvas, to the academic *beaux-arts* representational style, to the very model, whose dress and pose are inauthentic. The art tradition Farroukh invoked is replete with artifices for overcoming the distance between traveling colonial painters and their colonized subjects.[41] In relation to this school, *Two Prisoners* promises authenticity—local views from a local's perspective—only to subvert the notion of locality both by using foreign elements and by trying to change local conditions.

Two components of modernity take the foreground in *Two Prisoners*: *ḥadātha* and *muʿāṣira*.[42] The artist sought to make an image that was "modern" in the sense of provoking change in conceptions of *muwaṭaniyya* (loosely, citizenship) and gender relations. To do so, he deployed a new form of critique, painting in oil "*muwāḍīʿ ijtimāʿiyya*" (social subjects) from "*ḥayātinā al-qawmiyya*" (our national life), in order to create specifically graphic challenges to the current state of gender roles.[43] In this way, Nudes were an agent of *ḥadātha* or novelty.

The topic and style could not be simply new, however; they also had to connect with distant models. In other words, their newness had to involve an element of *dislocation*, by which I mean using nonlocal standards to evaluate the local. Borrowed practices, gestures, forms, and other cultural elements maintain their outward connections upon entering new localities.[44] Cultures are not merged. Grounded actors use the alienness of dislocated elements to create an opening in one cultural setting and allow for another to interact with it, so that the first comes to contain an aporia, the weightlessness of which sets off the other as an important parallel world. In the case at hand, *The Two Prisoners* had to please both the self-proclaimed *ibn al-balad* maker and the nonlocal model. It did so in a way that pointed to its connection to a "foreign" artistic prototype and a discerning female sitter—both said to be satisfied by the result. "Pleasing" to local and

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foreign alike, the canvas could bridge (perceived) sociocultural distance with aesthetic convergence.[45] In this way, the Nude genre was an agent of *muʿāṣira.*

Farroukh's aesthetic bridge points to the final criteria of the successful modern visual critique: for it to incite appropriate audience response, it had to involve the rational control of physical reactions as a "new" aesthetic. Farroukh's "shaking" before the naked feminine body as well as his overcoming social objections to female undress were key elements in this process. These responses came from the very fiber of the painter's being, from his own rootedness in a "local" way of life. His "authentic" responses provided a bridge to a universal modernity. The visual medium may have had a singular effect. Whereas Massad finds that in writings of the period, Arab intellectuals engaged the notion of humanity by linking "their sexual desires to the civilized worth," and thereby recorded and recoded apparently preextant "societal energies," Nudes, I argue, cultivated those very energies and charged them with universal meaning.[46]

AESTHETICS AND MODERNITY

By and large, the literature on Arab modernity has not engaged people's aesthetic experiences.[47] An even smaller portion of literature on modernity in the Middle East has paid attention to the careers of "self-described modern artists," and fewer still have used their art works as data.[48] One approach has been to study how art provides a realm in which Arabs construct "authenticity" in opposition to threatening "Western modernities."[49] Jonathan Shannon proposes that "emotionality," or sincere responses to aesthetic stimuli (however cultivated and politicized), forms the basis of an Arab art connoisseur's connection to a deep-rooted, non-Western identity. The evidence from a set of forgotten Nudes made in Beirut between 1920 and 1940 provides another way of thinking about the alleged contrast between authenticity and modernity: not separated by emotionality but joined by it. For intellectuals like Farroukh, Nudes created aesthetic interaction with like-minded "foreigners." This was the starting point for enacting a "universal" truth about the proper organization of society. With a borrowed "foreign" body, Farroukh engaged his "traditional" society—"traditional" because, according to him, it did not provide women with public roles and, likewise, painters with naked females. He cultivated new, sincere, physical, and aesthetic responses in a process that testifies to the intertwining of cross-cultural convergence, fine art, masculinity, and notions of local lack in the production of modern Lebanon and universal modernity.

Farroukh painted during the 1930s, a period in which Beirut expanded in population twenty fold; a new urban plan and building codes were instituted; uncommon housing styles, furnishing, and clothing became widely displayed; and campaigns to rationalize education, house care, hygiene, and personal relationships were undertaken.[50] It is a period that marks the "consolidation of a public sphere" out of earlier experiments in press and education institutionalization.[51] Malek Sharif suggests that the most common terms for social change, *iṣlāḥ* (rectification) and *tanẓīm* (regularization), were largely replaced by *ḥadātha* and *muʿāṣira* during this time.[52] Studies of the period have largely focused on the material and managerial transformations. Yet it is the conceptual shifts that may best indicate how "modernity" came to have meaning, for as significant as the substance of the physical changes Beirut saw was the shift in their designation. Paired, *ḥadātha* and *muʿāṣira* suggest a conception of change as not merely improving and

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imposing social order but also rupturing its temporal flow and overflowing its spatial boundaries. This is the essence of *convergent* modernity.

Because modernity in the region today is claimed for diametrically opposing groups, political scientist Alev Çinar argues that the subject of these claims is best studied not as an entity in itself, delimiting specific practices and objects, but as an "attitude towards society, its present and future, that constructs the present as deficient and in need of remedial intervention that will transform it toward . . . an ideal future."[53] Çinar proposes that this "attitudinal modernity" came into existence slowly, whether in Europe or its colonies, and without clear definition. Nowhere was its meaning, much less the method of its realization, clear and uncontroversial.

The Nudes in Beirut from the 1920s through the 1940s exemplify one process of defining modernity, a process in which sensorial experiences and attitudes were essential. Farroukh experienced his modernity at the conjunction of his trembling body and his steady paintbrush. Essential too, however, is the sense of *lack* pervading the modern subject's sensual experience. Farroukh's pleasure in painting Nudes is marred by the knowledge that he almost missed the opportunity to be modern due to the lack of local women who would be *modèles*. A final element of this process of definition is the attribution of plentitude to another culture. Farroukh attributes the disrobing of his model not to his instigation but to her own national-cultural instincts. He thereby dislocates modernity even as he enacts it and experiences it.

Certainly women willing to drop their clothes for the sake of art were few and far between in France, but it is that special willing woman who comes to stand for French society in Farroukh's verbal and visual composition. Her borrowed body stands in place of critical scrutiny of French society, returning the gaze to the artist's "own" society, whose absence of Nudes is now unjustifiable. The "necessary" character of Nudes in Beirut intimates that French society was imbued by Arab intellectuals with modernity through such interactions. For the artist, contrasting his society with French society in terms of having or lacking necessary Nude *modèles* works as a strategic appeal.[54] With it he invites his consociates, female and male, to converge on a new way of living that if not locally present could be.

If one seeks to comprehend modernity as a concept, attitude, and lived experience, the search for modernity's origin is misleading. Our categories of place, time, or character cannot serve as tools for measuring or mapping modernity when they are products of its coming into being.[55] Ultimately, the models of Eurocentric modernity and of "alternative modernities" both fail to recognize the urgency with which actors like Farroukh insisted that *beaux-arts* painting of Nudes was *neither* "their own [Lebanese] fashion" nor exclusively that of someone else.[56] Whether there truly was a singular source for modernity, as the "Eurocentric" model would have it, or multiple sources, as an "alternative modernities" model would hold, it is the strategies these actors chose for defining and enrolling others in their projects of modernizing that remain to be explained. To appreciate a painting like *Two Prisoners* we need to understand what I call the urgency of convergence, the effort toward an allegedly universal pole that universalized it indeed.

Artist-intellectuals sought to embody a modernity that is best understood as convergent. Some, like Farroukh, taught their bodies to shake and then be still in the presence of a borrowed female body; most proclaimed the self-evident universality of art they

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traveled to learn. When, with the rise of public exhibitions and the spread of art criticism in local journals, the artist was increasingly thought of as a *muthaqqaf*, paintings created from academic training were embedded with imported skills that were the tools of *tathqīf*, or the process of developing new viewers.[57] Use of the term *muthaqqaf* pointed to the observational and manual discipline that artists gained and imported with *beaux-arts* conventions, as well as to their role in disseminating that discipline. In the making of *Two Prisoners,* a foreign *muthaqqaf* (the model's husband) disseminates aesthetic skills by sharing the asset of beauty over which he has privilege. The painting itself further disseminates that asset.

TWO PRISONERS: THE FEMININE NUDE AND THE MASCULINE INTELLECTUAL

The exposed feminine body of the water carrier, shown at Farroukh's first exhibition with the Muslim Scouts in 1927, was carefully reworked for his second exhibition two years later, when *The Two Prisoners* appeared at the American University of Beirut. In contrast to the dark-skinned Nude of 1927, here the Nude is fair skinned and has a pleasant and glimmering plumpness. White gauze winds its way serpentinely around her torso, falling from her shoulders to reveal her right breast while concealing her left breast and two thighs (see Figure 1). Her knees protrude at an angle from the canvas just sufficient to coyly intimate the depths from which they emerge. Her affluence is apparent from the décor, rich in traditional forms of luxury: leather and velvet cushions, tassels, damascene silk drapes, an imported canary, and slow-burning opiates. Certainly there are no signs that these are the products of her *own* labor. She has not a tense muscle in her body. Indeed, the water pipe signals the opposite of work, the dulling of the senses and energies. Amidst all these products of manual work, her body is simply splayed, like a ripe fruit set on a finely wrought tray. But if she has not manufactured the surrounding ornamentalia, she is connected to it in a much more organic way. The playing of light across the Nude's body inscribes it on the canvas as an analogue to the highly polished water pipe. She is no artisanal laborer but a thing of beauty in herself.

This is a woman who can sit, just sit, with no one and nothing to answer to. The bird is the only sign of mental engagement by this female whose senses are clearly dulled through smoke. She has turned out of her way to regard it. With her curved neck carrying the viewer's vision from her thigh, to her breast, to her face, to the dab of bright yellow, the canary is the end-point of her corporal trajectory. The visual bond illuminates a narrative one: In academic painting conventions, the caged canary symbolizes female imprisonment. If the symbolism escaped local viewers, the title of the work would have articulated it. Yet the cage of the odalisque is not material. Were it formed by walls, it could be exited though the open window. Instead, her cage is aesthetic: her addiction to the pipe and her submersion in the sheeny, soft surfaces of the accoutrements of her wealth. Her imprisonment results from her physical fusion with her luxurious material surroundings.

It is interesting that Farroukh's writes of his 1929 show that, contrary to the 1927 show, he excluded "western views" and "naked feminine bodies," which, he maintained, were likely to reverse his aim of forwarding a "nationalist orientation" among his viewers.[58] The single Nude that Farroukh crafted for the event is thus best seen as a "national

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view," one charged with the formation of modern, urbane, nationalist subjectivities. In fact, although Farroukh cautioned that he did not expect "people here" to drop their clothes, he endorsed this instance of feminine nakedness as a metaphor of self-sacrifice and physical strain for the sake of a greater good.[59] His narrative of the picture's making indicates that he conceived of painting as a medium for transferring the process of *tathqīf* from one *muthaqqaf* to others, with the feminine as a medium of transference.

The passage recounting Farroukh's "pleasant" encounter that produced *The Two Prisoners* follows a long tirade against women "in our era" who remain in a "state of ignorance [and] materialism, and exploit and compromise men with their bodies."[60] Farroukh contrasts these local women with the "woman in the West," who goes to exhibitions, appreciates art, and uses her aesthetic inclinations not to lull in hazy opulence but to produce national resources: intelligent, alert children; public harmony; and inspirational paintings. While urbane, unproductive Beiruti women could be seen practicing the wrong sort of *muʿāṣira*—smoking and going to cinemas—Farroukh employed another type of contemporaneity—the transportable genre—to justify *ḥadātha* in conceptions of womanhood and nationalist duties. A woman's duty was to inspire her sons to reach their full potential by instilling in them appreciation of moral, physical, and material propriety. Only a woman who was *muthaqqafa* could do so. Sons of uncultured mothers were just as imprisoned as Farroukh's smoking odalisque. Reiterating the discourse of "patriotic motherhood," the painter affirmed that women had a special social role because their natural aestheticism, through *tathqīf* (here both discipline and disciplining), could transform society from a materialistic hell to a civic paradise.[61]

While the dilemma of femininity in the context of urbanity had long been discussed in the local press, Farroukh brought a new way of approaching it. His very "terminology"—oil pigments on canvas, artistic formulae, and so forth—insisted on a convergence between local quandaries and otherwise located histories. The female figure of *The Two Prisoners* is coded as a *marʾa sharqiyya* (Eastern woman) by her physiognomy, costume, and props.[62] Yet, she is just as clearly *not* a *marʾa sharqiyya* because she takes a borrowed pose and narrative justification. Further, she appears in a compositional structure comparable to that of 19th-century studio postcards produced from "the Orient," which had made the passively available "Eastern woman" an icon of the colonized Arab world's feminine rank in colonial hierarchies.[63] As an image that makes publicly visible sights that not even a native son could paint "from life," *The Two Prisoners* is a picture of both what is "here" in Beirut, in terms of social conventions for gender relations, and what is "not here" but could be imported from elsewhere, in terms of changed conceptions. Thus, the canvas is the perfect instance of the *muʿāṣira* of far-flung peoples. Further, Farroukh's trust in women's "natural aestheticism" to enact social change poses authenticity as a means to modernity rather than its opposite.

The question raised by this composition is whether the woman's subjectivity, her ability to realize herself in her surroundings, is strong enough to free her. The answer is not given as part of the visual cueing. Following Gell's notion of "captivating" artworks, we can locate the agency of *The Two Prisoners*, for Beiruti viewers of the 1930s, in its connection to academic, *beaux-arts* skills of representation. It provides "correct," palpable anatomy, an astonishing array of textures, carefully finished strokes, and brilliant colors. Full breasts, flushed cheeks, rouged lips, peaked nipples, half-unwrapped wrappings: these provocative elements are highlighted by Farroukh's naturalistic

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presentation, in line with *beaux-arts*, academic ideals. Her physical allure is so tangible as to be obscene, or as Crary explains, to upset the expected scenic arrangement between viewer and object.[64]

Farroukh's intensely sensual presentation makes viewers intimates of the "typical" Eastern woman, privy to her whisperings of self-doubt. In doing so, it puts the viewer on the spot. Farroukh has provided no visual clues that could narrate the outcome of the woman's presence. Any moral ending is left to viewers who find themselves precariously close to an image of their own, potential society and compelled to account for the relationship between the woman's physicality, her role in urban society, and aesthetic codes. Indeed, the drama Farroukh tells of his turning the naked foreign woman into a painted eastern Nude is reenacted each time the canvas is displayed publicly: will the viewer respond to this provocation in an aesthetically modern way? A beauty-loving yet disciplined and dutiful woman could be a prime instrument of *ḥadātha* for her ability to initiate in the household new social relationships, or not. A man cognizant of the civic value of women could likewise improve society by enabling her education and public participation, or not. Literally, the viewers would decide the picture's unclear outcome by identifying with the woman (or vicariously through a female relative) and acting out the completion of her narrative in their own lives.

Displayed at the American University of Beirut, *The Two Prisoners* was intended to operate as a mirror held up to what Farroukh and others called *al-ṭabaqa al-muthaqqafa* (the cultured class) of Beirut, those who have the resources to participate in *tathqīf* but may not already do so. The canvas questioned their modernity but also demonstrated its enactment. First, it established that "an artist from Beirut" could give pleasure (aesthetic, mind you) to foreigners with cultivated aesthetic sensibilities. Second, it allowed viewers to participate in the modern engagement of heterosexually charged masculinity through its revelation of the artist's own sublimation: this Nude could arouse a sensation of self-control for disciplined male viewers. Third, it structured likely responses to the Nude's challenge by inserting them into a public arena with specific protocols: public access, heightened viewing, rational queuing, and signing and expressing aesthetic opinions in registries. All aligned the audience response with a greater social transformation than attempted at the Scouts show. "Imprisoned," the Nude female body was no longer simply a connection but a provocation, throwing the burden of modernity squarely on viewers' shoulders.

Farroukh's 1927 Nude indexed imported novelty as well as contemporaneity through acquisition and nationalist use of observational, manual, and rational skill. His 1929 Nude abducted viewers to modernity with its vivid depiction of the male artist's overcoming of his less than innocent impulses and the female model's rising to her aesthetic duty. The result was called by many *fann sāḥir*.[65] The agency of the Nude lies in how it magically enrolls viewers, male and female, in a social drama of the picture and forces them to produce the conclusion to the dramatic dilemma of gender relations in Mandate Beirut.

WOMEN AS VIEWERS, NUDES, AND VIEWERS OF NUDES

In 1932, Omar Onsi, Farroukh's peer in age and background, painted a composition dealing with audience interactions (Figure 2). Like Farroukh's Nudes, it deals with

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feminine aesthetic sensibilities, masculine sexuality, and the promise of *tathqīf*, though in a more optimistic way. Onsi called it simply *A l'exposition* (At the Exhibition). At the time it was described as showing "several young veiled women flocking *to gaze at an artistic picture* that represents naked women" [emphasis added].[66] In the foreground are six women and one small boy seen from behind, grouped around a framed image of two Nudes in poses straight out of a novice's art class. The female viewers wear short, black taffeta frocks, silk stockings, high heels, and the *yachmak* (an Ottoman-style head covering common among Beirut's upper-class Sunni families). In the background an amorous couple engage in earnest conversation, disregarding the pictures on display. The man sports a suit and a *fez*; the woman dons the latest Parisian fashion, including a turban *á l'orientale*.

If this is a picture of Onsi's society, as is usually assumed, it is also a picture that wedges art into society. Given that the women of the foreground have the most engaged relationship with the artwork on display and that they represent women from the artist's social milieu, if not family friends, it seems likely that Onsi used their image to explore and induce transformations in urban public behavior. The catalogue order suggests that it hung at the very beginning of the display.[67] Upon seeing it there, visitors could become exceptionally aware of themselves as embodying categories of viewing. This heightened sense of self, of being seen rather than being the one seeing, of having to observe social codes as well as pictures, may have tinged the show with an unprecedented aura. Indeed, reviewers recognized their abduction by art when they spoke enthusiastically of the "glow" crafted in pedigreed "Raphaelian" manner by the artist's "enchanting brush [*rīshatihi al-sāḥira*]."[68]

Immediately adjacent to *A l'exposition* was a picture that tightly secures Onsi's use of an artistic *ḥadātha* to gender relations. *Les Baigneuses de Darat Jouljoul* presents the moment from pre-Islamic poetry when Imruʿ al-Qais comes upon damsels bathing in a river and steals their clothes (Figure 7).[69] A reviewer in *Al-Maʿrad* newspaper explains, "[Qais] stands waiting their exit to the shore to enjoy the view of their nakedness."[70] Whereas the gilt frame provides the curious viewers in *A l'exposition* with dignified, dislocating access to the object of their vision, the palm fronds framing Qais's gaze are circumstantial and flimsy, emphasizing his undisciplined bulkiness behind them. It is clear that Qais is not in a proper position for viewing nudity. His lascivious stare, uninvited and ghastly, indicates an unsanctified, inartistic way of viewing. It is a viewing act liable to turn the ancient Arab male's physical reaction to this aesthetic impulse into something far from "innocent." Moreover, his engagement with their physical beauty lacks the sense of *muʿāṣira* conveyed by the pastiche dress of the viewers in *A l'exposition.* The respect Onsi demonstrates for women who attend carefully to Nudes contrasts drastically with the critique he makes of a male viewer peeking privately and appreciating women only as naked bodies. The two aesthetics bode differently for modernity.

The pairing of two pictures about viewing art at his first solo Beirut exhibition suggests that Onsi was interested in art appreciation and the possible restructuring of social and gender relations. He framed these relations in terms of modern versus antiquated social mores through visual codes and dislocated genres and posited the artist as an intellectual inciting changes. *A l'exposition* impacts quite literally the act of viewing. In it, the nudity is *in* the jauntily depicted canvas, while the viewer of the real canvas is called by its composition to identify with the feminine vectors of visual attention. Thus, they model

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FIGURE 7. *Les Baigneuses de Darat Jouljoul* by Omar Onsi; 1932, oil on canvas, 64.5 × 80 cm. From the collection of Raed Bassatne. Reproduced with permission of Raed Bassatne. [A color version of this figure can be viewed online at journals.cambridge.org/mes]

the external viewer's own vision. Here, by replicating the act of looking in an area newly dedicated to that very act, Onsi demarcates a new social space, the recently built Ecole des Arts et Lettres, as a place where people must discipline their ways of looking and responding to aesthetic, physically engaging cues.

NECESSARY DISLOCATIONS: HOW MASCULINITY MIGHT BE MODERN

Undressed females were an essential component of Beirut's fine art from the 1920s through the 1940s. The painters did not simply paint naked women, however: they made Nudes.[71] In this genre universally accessible nakedness meets with exclusively civilized fine art. The meeting was by no means an easy one for the artists of Mandate Beirut. In his memoirs, Farroukh narrates the first time he found a naked woman standing in the middle of his drawing class in Rome: "My mouth went dry, my legs started trembling, and my hands too. I was overwhelmed by stupor and shivering. I truly tried my hardest to resist the unpleasant, unwanted reaction."[72] He was so horrified, both at the woman's presumed humiliation and at his own "uncontrollable" physical response, that he had to exit the room. After forcing himself to make a few sketches, he went home, took

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a cold shower, and read from the Qurʾan.[73] It was both his desire to enter the lineage of academic art makers *and* his consultation of the Qurʾan that enabled Farroukh to overcome the obstacle posed by his bodily reaction. The "far-reaching impact" of the event, says Farroukh, was that it marked his transformation from "a young man from Basta Tahta [Beirut]" to a diploma-carrying artist.[74]

With his professional career, the "shock" Farroukh felt before the naked model was triumphantly transformed into a sense of removal from sociospatial limitations to membership in a professional class. Farroukh's narrative and the Nudes that embodied it for Beiruti viewers complicate the idea that "psychological dislocation" necessarily signifies the corruption of authenticity.[75] Shannon argues that the history of Arab mobility and ambition is concealed with the shock metaphor.[76] Farroukh not only teases his fellow Beirutis for being "immobile" but also depicts dislocation as a possible means to produce modernity through one's own experience.

The racist and sexist policies of most European art academies in the early 20th century deliberately precluded the possibility of non-Europeans, and of female Europeans, taking the role of heirs and progenitors within the academy.[77] But they could not preclude those people from universalizing that tradition and appointing themselves its begetters and beneficiaries. By choosing masters of the European Nude, such as Paul Chabas or Renoir, for their professional forefathers, Farroukh and Onsi affiliated themselves to the tradition of the Nude and, in an unarguably radical move, became its source.[78] It was precisely aesthetically affiliated people who, in an instance of mutual construction, materialized the claim that Paris and Rome were the centers of the art world, despite the battles raging inside them over the form modern art should take.

Paintings of Nudes in Mandate-era Beirut enacted modernity in multiple ways. They enabled the artist's self-insertion into continentally based art genealogies so as to deprovincialize the production of fine art and claim it for local projects. By *dislocating* Roman representational conventions, and by applying them to local women in *The Two Prisoners*, Farroukh enacted the pedagogical system of fine art and allowed his viewers to reenact it. Onsi mapped out the physical and aesthetic modernity gendered urbane Beirutis should enact. Both of their canvasses provided occasions for experiencing the Nude as a geographically unconfined entity. They warped local interactions with womanhood and urban space. The Nude's palpable universality could emerge through the enrollment of viewers' bodies in a process of *tathqīf*. Ultimately, Nudes from Mandate Beirut suggest that the famous "shock" of modernity, or "psychological dislocation," for colonial Arabs was sometimes cultivated, strategic, and productive rather than imposed, inescapable, and destructive.

The sublimation of heterosexual masculine desires into a graphic "avalanche of hips, thighs, breasts, and shoulder-plates" demonstrated the "discipline of the fire of the artist before the nude model."[79] Thus, the epitome of the "successful modern picture," intellectual and reformer Rushdi Maʿluf explained, was the painting of *zalitāt* (uncovered feminine things), in their undeniably "desire-provoking positions," because they had "an impact in refining characters that velvet and silken clothes cannot for the way they camouflage."[80] As aesthetic works they both indexed the *muthaqqaf* artist and enabled the process of *tathqīf*. Journalist after journalist contrasted artists' works with that of politicians to argue that aesthetic sensibility could be the basis of responsible urban behavior.

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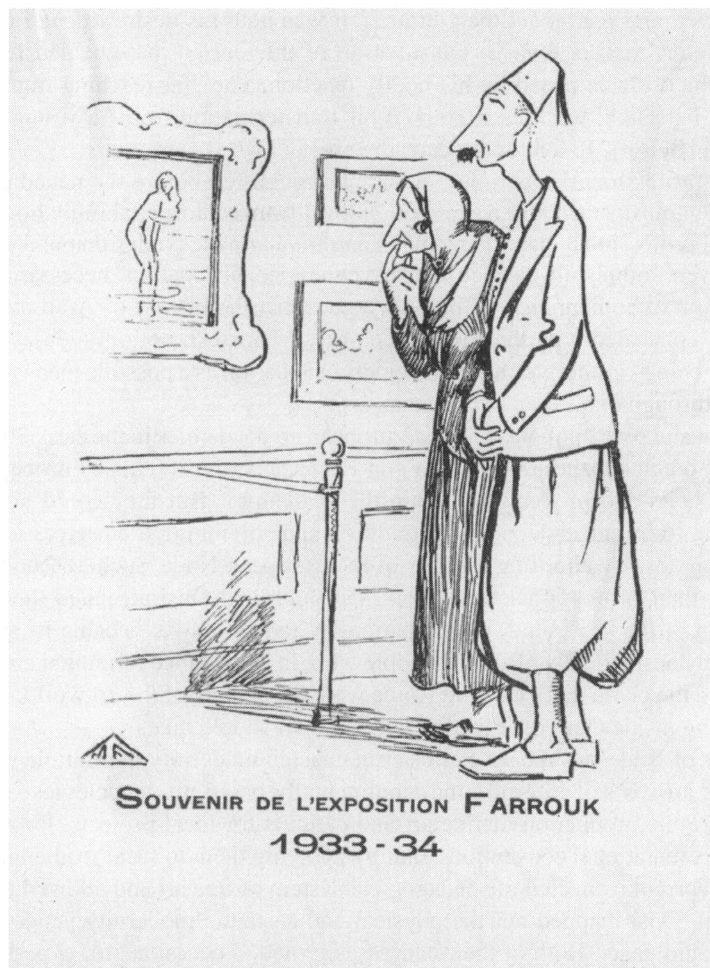

FIGURE 8. *Souvenir de l'exposition Farrouk (1933–34)* by Moustafa Farroukh; ink on paper, 14 × 10 cm. Reproduced with permission of Hani Farroukh.

VIEWERS OF NUDES; PEASANTS OR MODERNS?

From its very title, the inked caricature Farroukh called *Souvenir de l'exposition Farrouk (1933–1934)* would appear to summarize the character of viewers to the artist's December 1933 exhibition at the Ecole des Arts et Métiers (Figure 8). It depicts a peasant couple viewing a painting by Farroukh. Their questioning gestures and passive stance mark their bafflement. These are not people whose aesthetic encounter invigorates or motivates them. The artist draws a stark division between the geometrical rationality of the art exhibition and the slovenly, stooping character of its audience. Further, he has the visitors darken the art rather than receive its enlightenment.

The actual visitors to Farroukh's 1933 exhibition signed a registry. The signatures therein place the audience firmly in the urban class: the artist's relatives and peers,

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journalists and writers, education officials and bureaucrats, and members of the diplomatic corps all attended. Half of the visitors were indigenous to Beirut, and women made up a full third.[81] This contrast between "souvenir" and signatures makes it impossible to treat the ink drawing as a simple portrait. Rather, it is an image of the potentiality of peasanthood still present in many of the viewers who encounter Nudes. Throughout his career Farroukh created ennobling pictures of peasants. It is therefore likely that his critique of the couple's cultural difference was not an instance of attributing their backwardness to an inherent cultural cause, or "culturalizing" as Massad puts it, but rather a strategy of cultivating a new possible subjectivity.[82] The picture challenging their backwardness is, of course, of a Nude but not just any nude. It is a copy of *Crépuscule*, a famous work by Farroukh's French mentor Paul Chabas and thus a performance of the painter's affiliation with the lineage of academic artistry.

By aligning confusion over how to understand and respond to a Nude with signs of pastoral lifestyle, Farroukh equates the appreciation of this fine-art genre with urban, technologically modern lifestyles. If it were published in a local newspaper, as most of Farroukh's ink caricatures were, it may have incited potential exhibition goers to align their art-engaging practices with the broader set of "new" practices that took their force not only from their novelty but also, more importantly, and as opposed to mere *iṣlāḥ* and *tanẓīm*, from their dislocation. The distance Farroukh draws between apparently universal practices of art viewing and aged, country ways reminds that people who share a city space might yet live in different temporal zones, as distinct as rural and urban sensibilities. *Souvenir* proposes that viewers adopting the wrong viewing practices will lose their urban membership and privileges. Fine art may invite viewers into a convergent modernity, but achieving it will require effort and self-monitoring. Jean Bulus, who wrote the catalogue essay for Farroukh's 1933 exhibition, phrased it thus: "To contemplate a work of art is to contemplate oneself, to watch oneself."[83]

FROM THE GENRE OF NUDE TO THE GENRE OF LACK

Many editors of Beirut's newspapers in the 1920s and 1930s did have problems with Nudes—not for their lack of clothing but, counterintuitively, for the lack of art making they seemed to index. For example, Kamal al-Nafi reported in *Al-Ahwal* that in response to learning that a "national painter" was holding an exhibition at the American University of Beirut, he exclaimed, "Don't be crazy! Do you think you're in Venice or in one of the elevated cities of the West?!"[84] For al-Nafi the fact of an exhibition could occasion public awareness of local lack and dislocated plenitude. He took "the Eastern woman" of *The Two Prisoners* as an opportunity to comment on the connection between gender relations and aesthetic sensibility:

> She glances at her companion in prison, *a small bird placed in a cage that sings sad songs* that bring pain to the heart, the songs of the eternal prisoner. For they are both, verily, prisoners whose counsel still, *to this very day*, fights to defend their cause before public opinion [emphasis added].[85]

How is it that elsewhere women may represent themselves, but *to this very day* the Eastern woman relies on others to voice her needs? Al-Nafi spoke to an audience intensely involved in the debate over women's suffrage, among other elements of Lebanon's

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political and economic character. With the trope of teleological change, al-Nafi warns that people can have *muʿāṣira* without *ḥadātha*. Merely living "this very day" does not guarantee living the life of an "elevated city." He then calls on his readers to conform to the demands of *muʿāṣira*, to demonstrate their parity in linear time and their ability to embrace new gender relations, by engaging in sexualized, aesthetic art loving. They should attend shows, support art, and not leave aesthetic uplift to "the foreigners in charge."[86] The stakes for "giving Art its due" are high, according to al-Nafi: "In so doing, they would show that they are a living people truly striving for freedom."[87] Nine years of French Mandate colonialism may have met their antidote.

With al-Nafi and Maʿluf, the "anxiety of the nude" becomes clearer. The necessity of Nudes to social projects formative of national, gender, and class identities made them also necessarily provocative of a certain threat: the threat of invisibility. An index of a modernity that is potentially that of every human, Nudes provoke the anxiety that their enchanting agency may not be heeded by "peasant" viewers and undisciplined men. Compatriots could ignore or, worse, condemn them. Inscribed in the newness of Nude compositions is a strategy of dislocation that involves both reference to other places undergoing similar experiences, *muʿāṣira*, and the ability to claim these experiences for local projects of change under the name of *ḥadātha*.[88] In other words, the Arab "anxiety of the nude" is not so much in relation to the actual number of Nudes present but, rather, to the necessity of their marking a "missing" modernity.

THE LESSONS OF FORGOTTEN NUDES

In the past twenty years, *Souvenir* has gotten extensive replay. Most recently, at Farroukh's 2003 retrospective, it appeared next to his copy of *Crépuscule,* accompanied by a lengthy wall comment berating Lebanese audiences for not appreciating Nudes (Figure 9).[89] Further, the comment compares the cartoon to Onsi's similarly inspired "satire," *A l'exposition*. Notably, the latter painting has been assigned a new name in recent decades: *Young Women at an Exhibition.*[90] Meanwhile, the picture has grown younger and younger with each showing. In a 1989 catalogue it is dated to "c. 1935," in 1997 to "c. 1945," and in 2003 to "the beginning of the 1950s."[91] Curatorial reckoning has pushed its production up to coincide more exactly with national independence (1943), modern governance, and urban expansion. These reckonings are not wrong, sociologically speaking: they are facts produced by the captivating legacy of Nudes.

When we see pictures as reflections of preextant social facts we cannot understand their connection to Lebanese society. How could a picture of women looking at their naked sisters be "about" Lebanese society? How could it be about viewing generally, when only gendered viewing is depicted? But the works discussed in this paper did not illustrate social conditions and conceptions: they instigated them. Ironically, Nudes that were created to be agents of modernity haunt every exhibition of art in Lebanon today, as participants evaluate the degree of *ḥadātha* and *muʿāṣira* in their aesthetic sensibilities. Meanwhile, the alleged "lack" of art appreciation, female models, and so on has come to be at once the main trope for defining the local art scene and the dominant strategy for promoting art in the Arab world.

The political project of nudity in Mandate Lebanon encourages art historians to grasp the historical, cultural, and political value of fine art by expanding their scope from

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FIGURE 9. Author's photograph of Farroukh's copy of *Crepescule* by Paul Chabas. From the Musée Sursock Retrospective for Moustapha Farroukh, 8 January 2003, Beirut, Lebanon. On the right there is a small image of Farroukh's *Souvenir de l'exposition, 1933–34* (see Figure 8) and a curatorial commentary. [A color version of this figure can be viewed online at journals.cambridge.org/mes]

attempts to trace its alleged origins. Outside the metropole, art must be scrutinized for both the genres and the formal elements by which its makers experienced affiliations and created universal modernities. Such expansion would also heighten the relevance of art history to the study of intercultural, and especially colonial, junctures.[92] The necessity of these imported pictures to index a universal modernity demonstrates a method for studying the strategy of dislocation and the relevance of the contemporary discourse of lack in culture and politics.

The forgotten Nudes of Beirut also highlight the importance of studying the aesthetic forms and experiences that have produced the contemporary Arab world. They push theories of cultural reproduction beyond class analysis to intercultural junctures and there provide a way to study cultural contests where the boundaries of identity, belief, and ambition are not clearly circumscribed. The centrality of aesthetic experience they illuminate shows that modernity is not always a rude imposition or an inauthentic

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appropriation. It may be a convergence of a conceptual, sensorial nature. The production of Nudes complicates our understanding of the historical processes that impacted and altered, by local reckoning, Arab societies. That, in turn, must direct our attention to the agencies that have produced "modernity" as a universal force.

NOTES

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[1]Throughout this article I follow the artists' preferred English spellings of their names.

[2]See Moustapha Farroukh, *Tariqi ila al-Fann* (My Road to Art) (Beirut: Dar Naufal, 1986), 171. Lebanon was formed as an administrative territory and mandated to French caretaking by the League of Nations in 1920. In 1943 the French state renounced this position. I use "Lebanese," following Elizabeth Thompson's definition of the populace as colonial citizens of Mandate Lebanon to facilitate discussion but in recognition that it was a contested label. Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

[3]Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[4]Clifford Geertz coined this term to indicate something between "culture members" and "other people." See Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 364. I use it to indicate the deliberate sense of enrolling, easily or agonistically, other people as part of one's social setting.

[5]See Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World,* ed. Cooper and Stoler (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997), 1–57.

[6]Musée Nicholas Sursock, *Moustafa Farroukh, 1901–1957*, Exhibition Catalogue (Beirut: January–February 2003), 127.

[7]*Lebanon—The Artist's View: 200 Years of Lebanese Painting,* Exhibition Catalogue (London: British Lebanese Association, 1989), 148.

[8]Samir Sayigh, "ʿAriyat Muhajjabat wa Shaʿiriyyat Masdaruha al-ʿAql" (Veiled Nudes and Poeticism Stemming from the Mind), in *Omar Onsi 1901–1969*, Exhibition Catalogue (Beirut: Musée Sursock, 14 February–14 April 1997), 24.

[9]Sylvia Agémian, "Omar Onsi au Musée Sursock," in *Omar Onsi 1901–1969,* 20.

[10]Several of Onsi's heirs, who wish to remain anonymous, showed me dozens of unpublished, large nudes in oil paint.

[11]Sylvia Agémian, interview, Beirut, 20 June 2000.

[12]Umayma Ghandur Idris and Asmaʾ Idris al-Dik, interview, Beirut, 27 July 2000.

[13]Nayla Tannous Akkrawi, interview, 11 November 2004. Originally published in 1923, the book was regularly discussed in the local press during the 1930s.

[14]See Maha Sultan, *Ruwwad min Nahda al-Fann al-Tashkili fi Lubnan* (Pioneers of the Plastic Arts in Lebanon) (Kaslik, Lebanon: Université de la Sainte Esprit, 2006); Samir Saleeby, *Khalil Saleeby: A Painter from Lebanon* (Beirut: Lebanese University Press, 1986).

[15]Jawaba, "Al-Musawwirun al-Wataniyyun wa-l-Ajanib Yaʿridun Atharahum al-Fanniyya" (National and Foreign Artists Exhibit their Artistic Works), *Al-Maʿrad*, no. 935, 22 January 1931, 8–9.

[16]"Lait Epilatoire Ambré," *Al-Makshuf*, no. 47, 3 May 1936, 8.

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[17]*Al-Nahar*, no. 85, 25 November, 1933, 6.

[18]*Exposition Omar Onsi, Peinture, Aquarelles,* Exhibition Catalogue (Beirut: Ecole des Arts et Lettres, 21–28 February 1932), Joseph Matar Archives, Edde, Lebanon.

[19]Accounting Book, n.d., Hani Farroukh Archives, Beirut, Lebanon.

[20]"Convergent" suggests neither a teleological forward movement nor a divergent outward movement. Jonathan Shannon describes convergent modernity as an "improvisation" by people sharing certain standards and knowledge but no single script. Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 69.

[21]This assumption was articulated by many of the artists, gallerists, critics, and exhibition goers I interviewed for my fieldwork in Beirut from 1997 to 2005. It underlies all the standard works on Lebanese art production: Wijdan Ali, *Contemporary Art from the Islamic World* (London: Scorpion Publishing, 1990); Silvia Naef, *A la recherche d'une modernité arabe: L'évolution des arts plastiques en Egypte, au Liban et en Irak* (Geneva, Switzerland: Slaktine Editions, 1996), 140; Edouard Lahoud, *Al-Fann al-Muᶜasir fi Lubnan,* trans. Phillippe Michaux (Beirut: Librairie Orientale, 1974); Caesar Nammour, *Mathaf al-Fann al-Hadith fi Lubnan: Dirasa Awwaliyya* (Beirut: Dar Nammour, 1987); Salah Maurice Kamel, *al-Fann al-Lubnani* (Beirut: Fine Arts Division, Ministry of National Education and Fine Arts, 1956).

[22]An example of a Eurocentric, albeit sympathetic, theory of modernity is Naef, *A la recherche.*

[23]A search of newspaper archives and artists' private papers has revealed no documentation of earlier events devoted to the display of painting. The 1921 Beirut Industrial Fair included one of Saleeby's nudes. See Fouad Debbas, *Beyrouth: Notre Memoire* (Paris: Editions Henri Berger, 1986), 262.

[24]Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 138.

[25]I have used the same distinction for sake of clarity.

[26]Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956), 3, 4, 71, 120, and 315.

[27]On the conjoined bias against women and foreigners in European art academieş, see Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Women, Art, and Power, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row), 145–78, and Jane Becker and Gabriel Weisberg, eds., *Overcoming All Obstacles: The Women of the Académie Julian* (New York: The Dahesh Museum, 1999).

[28]The idea is so common it almost numbs the mind and hinders tracking it properly. However, for examples of influential sources, see Ali, *Contemporary Art*, 200 and Nada Shabout, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics* (Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida Press, 2007), 17.

[29]Deniz Artun demonstrates the role Turkish artists had in maintaining the vitality of this besieged type of training. Artun, "Zuwwar ila Akadamiyyat Julian min al-Imbaraturiyya al-ᶜUthmaniyya wa-l-Jumhuriyya al-Turkiyya" (Visitors to the Julian Academy from the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic), *Al-Adab* 51(1–2): 57–61.

[30]Muhi al-Din al-Nsuli, "Khitab al-Raʾis," *Al-Kashaf*, January 1927, 52–56.

[31]Of significance, the former term implies ability to vary skill or technique while the latter refers to that which is made, a picture.

[32]Al-Nsuli, "Khitab," 56.

[33]Quoted in Moustapha Farroukh, *Tariqi*, 149.

[34]Al-Nsuli, "Khitab," 56.

[35]Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 42. This theory is developed by Gell in *The Agency of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[36]Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 10.

[37]Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), chap. 7.

[38]In his speech, al-Nsuli condemned an unidentified Muslim religious scholar who promised Farroukh brimstone and hellfire for drawing human figures. Al-Nsuli, "Khitab," 54.

[39]Keith David Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 294–98; Jennifer Dueck, "A Muslim Jamboree: Scouting and Youth Culture in Lebanon under the French Mandate," *French Historical Studies* 30 (2007): 485–516. On the crisis of masculinity, see Thompson, *Colonial Citizens* and Massad, *Desiring Arabs*.

[40]Farroukh, *Tariqi,* 171.

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[41]For an overview, see Todd Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798–1836* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[42]For an overview of these terms in Arabic literature today, see Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 16–29. Shannon discusses the etymological origins and contemporary usages of these terms in *Among the Jasmine Trees,* 7, 56. My findings do not support Shannon's assumption that the two terms are interchangeable.

[43]Farroukh, *Tariqi*, 153.

[44]With the term "borrowed" I seek to emphasize the way art practices in Lebanon are applied with the sense of difference preserved. For example, despite local roots, art discourse maintains the sense of a foreign origin by regularly using "art," "*vernissage*," and "portrait" rather than their Arabic equivalents.

[45]I use "aesthetic" to refer to "bodily ways of knowing." See Kathryn Linn Geurts, *Culture and the Senses: Embodiment, Identity, and Well-Being in an African Community* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2002). Raymond Firth, a founder of the anthropology of art, defines aesthetics as the capacity for "sensual perception," which may vary culturally. See Firth, "Art and Anthropology," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 18.

[46]See Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 47, 61.

[47]Inspiring exceptions include Jacques Berque, *Cultural Expressions in Arab Society Today*, trans. Robert Stokey (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1974); Jessica Winegar, *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006); Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees*; Christa Salamandra, *A New Old Damascus: Authenticity and Distinction in Urban Syria* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[48]Winegar, *Creative Reckonings*, 23.

[49]Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees*, 6.

[50]This has been meticulously documented by Akram Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2001); Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*; and Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), among others.

[51]Jakob Skovgaard-Peterson, "Introduction," in *Middle Eastern Cities 1900–1950: Public Places and Public Spheres in Transformation*, ed. Hans Chr. Korsholm Nielsen and Jakob Skovgaard-Peterson (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2001), 9.

[52]Malek Sharif, personal communication, 16 July 2008. The suggested translations are Sharif's.

[53]Alev Çinar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 7. Likewise, Deeb argues that "modernity" is best studied as a quest to establish connections with "dominant global and transnational discourses." Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shiʿi Lebanon* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 16.

[54]In fact, Farroukh's competitor, Caesar Gemayel, employed Miryam Khiru as his full-time nude model, but her presence, too, was "kept secret" by the art community. Nadia Nammar, *Hikayat Jasad* (Story of a Body) (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 2001).

[55]Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 3–8.

[56]Dilip Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," in *Alternative Modernities* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 21.

[57]From the Arabic root *th-q-f*, which means to straighten or train (e.g., a cultivated seedling). It is telling that another translation of *muthaqqaf* is "a cultured person." Intellectuals are those who are trained in certain skills that are believed to be capable of straightening bent or misguided matters and who share their training with others. See ʿAbd al-Ilah Balqaziz, "ʿAtaʾ al-Muthaqqaf al-ʿArabi: Fi al-Tawjih al-Ijtimaʿi wa-l-Siyyasi" (The Contribution of the Arab Intellectual: Social and Political Guidance), in *Al-Muthaqqaf al-ʿArabi: Humumuhu wa ʿAtaʾuhu* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-ʿArabiyya, 1995).

[58]Farroukh, *Tariqi,* 153.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid., 171.

[61]The term "patriotic motherhood" is from Thompson, *Colonial Citizens.* Farroukh's debt to Bustani and Qasim al-Amin is clear. His appeal, though, is directed to women and men equally and emphasizes the aesthetic dimension of social development.

[62]There is insufficient evidence to argue that Farroukh intended the female prisoner to represent Lebanon in an iconographic manner comparable to that of Egyptian artists. No national symbols are emblazoned

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on her, and visual clues underscore her alien, artificial status. My argument is that Farroukh's odalisque is less of a symbol than an instantiation. See Beth Baron, "Nationalist Iconography: Egypt as a Woman," in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, ed. Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, http://www.ciaonet.org/book/jankowski/jank06.html (accessed 10 September 2008).

[63]See Mounira Khemir, "The Orient in the Photographer's Mirror," *Orientalism: From Delacroix to Klee*, Exhibition Catalogue, ed. Roger Benjamin (Sydney, Australia: The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1998), 189–233.

[64]Crary, *Techniques*, 127.

[65]See, for example, "Al-Ustadh Farrukh fi Maʿradihi" (Mr. Farroukh at His Exhibition), *Al-Maʿrad*, no. 859, 9 June 1929, 4.

[66]Jawaba, "Maʿrad al-Fannan ʿUmar al-Unsi," *Al Maʿrad*, no. 988, 28 February 1932, 20.

[67]*Exposition Onsi*, Exhibition Catalogue (Beirut: Ecole des Arts et Métiers, 11–25 December 1932), Joseph Matar Archives, ʿIdda, Lebanon.

[68]Jawaba, "Maʿrad."

[69]Farroukh also painted this scene in 1936.

[70]Jawaba, "Maʿrad."

[71]I thank Tom Strong for noting the importance of Farroukh's *not* connecting his art to Early Mediterranean nudes that were excavated during the Mandate era and discussed in the local press. See, for example, "Athar al-Finiqiyyin fi Ifriqiya" (Phoenician Ruins in Africa), *Al-Muqtataf*, no. 66 (March 1925): 250–55.

[72]Farroukh, *Tariqi*, 63–65.

[73]Ibid., 63–65.

[74]Ibid., 63.

[75]Robin Ostle, "Alexandria: A Mediterranean Cosmopolitan Center of Cultural Production," in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Leila Fawaz and C. A. Bayley (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 314–29.

[76]Shannon, *Among the Jasmine Trees*, 60.

[77]Artun, "Zuwwar."

[78]See also Nanette Salomon, "The Venus Pudica: Uncovering Art History's 'Hidden Agendas' and Pernicious Pedigrees," in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. Griselda Pollock (London: Routledge, 1996), 69–87.

[79]Maurice Debbaneh, "Une tournée dans le studio dans un quart d'heure avec le peintre Moustapha Farroukh," *L'Orient*, 13 December 1932, 1.

[80]Jawaba, "Al-Musawwirun al-Wataniyyun."

[81]Registry for exhibition at Ecole des Arts et Métiers, 15–24 December 1933, Hani Farroukh Archives, Beirut, Lebanon.

[82]Massad asserts that Arab intellectuals "culturalized" the causes of their political and economic oppression at the hand of imperialists and nationalists alike (*Desiring Arabs*, 27). My data supports his finding that intellectuals hoped to "accelerate the stage of development to one that is contemporaneous with Europe" and set Arab culture "adjacent to, rather than trailing behind, Europe." However, I find that in the course of attributing backwardness and lack to cultural causes, they also produced the notion of a universal, and hence noncultural, aesthetic body and subjectivity, which was the site of modern authenticity for them.

[83]Jean Bulus, *Exposition du Peintre Farrouk*, Exhibition Catalogue (Beirut: Ecole des Arts et Métiers, 15–24 December 1933), Hani Farroukh Archives, Beirut, Lebanon.

[84]Kamal al-Nafi, "Maʿrad Farrukh fi al-Jamiʿa al-Amirikiyya," *Al-Ahwal*, 1 June 1929, Hani Farroukh Archives, Beirut, Lebanon.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Not all Lebanese artists were enthusiastic about the proposed genealogies and justifications for local art making. The eminent calligrapher Nasib Makarim asserted that his work was disdained for being *sharqī* (Eastern). A journalist added, "This is the fate of any creation that does not come to us from overseas or from a French hand." ʿIssa Mikhail Saba, "Saʿa fi Maktab al-Ustadh Makarim," *Al-Maʿrad* 10, no. 996 (1931): 9.

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[89]Musée Nicholas Sursock, *Moustapha Farroukh*, 127.

[90]This is the title given at the 1997 *Omar Onsi 1901–1969* exhibition at Musée Sursock, Beirut. *Omar Onsi*, 212. The old name seems to have been lost as the picture changed hands.

[91]Ibid., 43, 148; *Omar Onsi*, 212; Musée Nicholas Sursock, *Moustapha Farroukh*, 127.

[92]Silvia Naef has also recently explored the usefulness of images in this regard. Silvia Naef, "Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam," *Studies in Honor of Professor Urbain Vermeulen*, ed. K. D'Hustler and J. Van Steenbergen, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 171 (Leuven, 2008), 468–78.

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