



**AMERICAN
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AUB Hosts Talk by Historian and Curator Nada Shabout

Art historian and curator Nada Shabout gave a talk at the American University of Beirut's Department of Fine Arts and Art History (FAAH), in collaboration with the Center for Arts and Humanities, and sponsored by the Sheikh Zayed Chair for Arabic and Islamic Studies at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Shabout is presently a visiting professor of art history at NYU Abu Dhabi, where she is senior investigator at the *al Mawrid* Arab Center for the Study of Art.

In her talk, delivered before a full house in FAAH's famed "Skeleton," Shabout discussed the process of curating her recent show on the Baghdad Modern Art Group, which she opened at the NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery in February. It is the second edition of the exhibition, which was first organized at the Hessel Museum at Bard College in New York; a third edition will open at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha in October. Titled "*All Manner of Experiments*," the show profiles the Baghdad Modern Art Group from its founding by Jewad Selim and Shakir Hassan Al Said in 1951, to its legacy among two subsequent generations of artists in Iraq, who in different ways followed the group's founding principle even after the group had ceased to exist, which concerned a commitment to what came to be called *istilham al-turath*, or inspiration by tradition.

Perhaps the central point of Shabout's talk was that the project of *istilham al-turath* cannot be grasped by the dominant art historiographical framework for the postwar period, which opposes autonomy (art for art's sake) to commitment. At one point, she suggested that it might be thought in the terms of Frantz Fanon as a "national representation of culture," but she left open the question of how to conceptualize the Baghdad Modern Art Group's project of renewal for future research.

ENDS

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Note to Editors

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