

For Immediate Release



American University of Beirut announces a major exhibition featuring the work of the Lebanese artist Khalil Saleeby

Beirut, Lebanon- 03/05/2012: The American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanon's leading liberal arts university, announced that it will be opening in June 2012 an exhibition that will be the first major public display of the influential Lebanese artist, Khalil Saleeby (1870-1928).

Saleeby is considered to be one of the founders of modern art in Lebanon. He studied, worked and exhibited in Edinburgh, Paris, the USA and Lebanon and is known for his portraits and interest in the human form. The exhibition is drawn from an important private collection of Lebanese art that was donated to AUB earlier this year. Four previously unseen paintings from the collection were recently selected for inclusion in the exhibition "Le Corps Découvert," currently on view at l'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris.

The exhibition in Beirut will be the first time that such a large and comprehensive showcase of Saleeby's work will be available to Lebanese and international audiences. It will feature more than 30 canvases and will be curated by Octavian Esanu, who was recently appointed by AUB as its first curator.

The exhibition will be held at AUB Art Gallery in Hamra, Beirut. This gallery space will host exhibitions of art from the region, taking as its point of departure the recently acquired collection of leading Lebanese artists of the early and mid-20th century. The gallery is a temporary space created in anticipation of a major new museum of art at the university. Due for completion by 2020, it will be named the Rose and Shaheen Saleeby Museum, in honor of the parents of the donor, Dr. Samir Saleeby.

The exhibition will feature around 30 of the 65 paintings in the collection and will also feature other artists inspired by Khalil Saleeby. The exhibition will open on June 10, 2012 and will run through the end of the year

AUB President Peter Dorman said, "Following our recent loan of paintings to Paris, it gives me great pleasure to see the work of Khalil Saleeby being made available to the wider public here in Beirut. This unique collection forms such an important part of Lebanon's cultural heritage, and AUB has made a major commitment to preserving and promoting it for the benefit of future generations. This is part of a long-term plan to create a home for modern and contemporary art on the campus of AUB. We are extremely grateful to Dr. Samir Saleeby for his visionary gift."

AUB Art Gallery - opening hours:

Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Address:

AUB Art Gallery,

Sidani Street (Off-Campus Women's Dormitory Building), Hamra, Beirut

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Photo caption: Khalil Saleeby, self-portrait—unfinished (1928)

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Notes to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

About Khalil Saleeby

Saleeby is considered the founder of modern Lebanese art. He studied, worked and exhibited in Edinburgh, Paris, the USA and Lebanon. He knew and was influenced by John Singer Sargent, Pierre Cecile Puvis de Chavannes and Pierre Auguste Renoir. For years he had a studio on Bliss Street in Beirut, directly opposite the entrance to the American University of Beirut. Tragically, the painter and his American wife (and muse) were murdered in Lebanon because of a dispute with neighbors over water access.

The Rose & Shaheen Saleeby Collection

In addition to the paintings by Khalil Saleeby, the collection also includes works by other leading Lebanese painters of the early twentieth century: Saliba Douaihy (1915-1994), Cesar Gemayel (1898-1958), and Omar Onsi (1901-1969). This exhibition in Beirut will provide an opportunity for AUB to tell an important part of the history of Lebanese art. AUB considers it essential that the collection be seen as widely as possible in the Middle East and internationally.

Biography of the Curator

Octavian Esanu is AUB's first curator and will hold an academic appointment in the university's Department of Fine Arts and Art History. He brings vast international experience from the USA, Germany, the Netherlands and his native, Moldova. He is associate editor of and contributor to the contemporary art journals *ARTMargins*, and *Umelec* and has curated for Gesellschaft Fur Aktuelle Kunst in Bremen, Germany, and Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, The Netherlands. Prior to completing his PhD at Duke University he was the founding director of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art in Chisinau, Moldova.