THE WRITING OF ARAB ART HISTORIES: DISMANTILING "THE WEST AND THE REST"

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Abstract

This chapter analyzes the major methodological issues faced in the writing of Arab art histories and the history of photography. I investigate the intersection of Middle Eastern art histories and their relationship to colonialism as a way of discussing new challenges faced in the study of contemporary art and photography. Focusing on the current state of scholarship in the field, my arguments revolve around the contention that knowledge production is one of the major sites in which imperialism operates and exercises its power. I ask: how can we decolonize the structural limits of the art historical canon that currently condition knowledge production to exclude Arab art histories? To help answer this problematic, I open up the study of Arab art history to a wider scope of postcolonial and anticolonial art production.

This discussion aims to disassemble the Euro-American universalist art history—or "the West and the rest"— and seeks to further cultural dialogue within current art history methodologies. Investigating issues of the art historical canon and the racial dimensions that affect the writing of history will nuance Middle Eastern art research and postcolonial studies by exploring the place of race and colonialism in terms of the recording and writing of art histories. Most importantly, this research provides a powerful glimpse of the ways certain narratives are excluded from the art historical and national projects, and how these racial projects are linked to the canon of art history and photography. Bridging links between rigidly defined (and often Western defined) pre-modern, modern, and contemporary art movements, this analysis provides reflection and new perspectives on methodological approaches that are attentive to both the history of colonialism and the history of art in the Middle East, uncovering the many representations left outside the writing of dominant art history.

PICTURNIG THE MIDDLE EAST

Art from the Middle East has undergone a global shift and is actively becoming a major part of the international art market and art historical narrative. Some milestones contributing to this shift include the launching of major art fairs like Art Dubai in 2007, the establishment of *Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art* in Doha in 2010, Arab pavilions at the Venice Biennale, and the announcement that major Western museums, such as The Louvre and the Guggenheim are planned to open on Saadiyat Island in Abu

Dhabi. Notable patrons in the Middle East have contributed to more institutional attention being given to art from the region, and a strong focus has been given to re-writing dominant art historical narratives that traditionally exclude Arab art. Such patronage has led to the founding of art institutions, including: the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts established in 1979; the Sultan Gallery in Kuwait established in 1969; the establishing of Al Mansouria Foundation in 1988 to support Arab and Saudi artists; the Dar Al Fan in Beirut in 1967; the Green Art Gallery in Dubai in 1995, and two years ago the Atassi Foundation in Syria was founded to support Syrian modern and contemporary art. Yet, even with these institutions being established and with programs being created to better art education in the Middle East, director of Art Dubai Myrna Ayad points to the skepticism and hesitation of the broader art world to take Middle Eastern art seriously:

> "As an arts writer, I've heard the uninformed allegations countless times: the Middle Eastern art scene is a bubble; its art arena is five minutes old; there is no institutional interest or acquisition. And the worst: 'It is art inspired by conflict' -- a sweeping statement that seeks to equate one aspect of the region, i.e. politics, to its art. For me, that last one had always been the zinger, laced with parochialism. As were headlines or exhibitions that used the terms 'veil', 'unveiled', 'women artists from the Middle East', and other sensationalist synonyms." (Ayad, 2017)

Arab artists are in a double bind when it comes to their practice, participating in the international art market, and the writing of art history. Like other artist working outside of the West, Arab artists are forced to represent their cultural heritage within their artwork and represent their nationality and political surroundings. This is an expectation that has been asked of Arab artists by the West both implicitly and explicitly: implicitly in the curation of Middle Eastern exhibitions in the West having singular narratives, like narratives of war and trauma for instance; and explicitly in the exclusion of Arab artists from the canon of art history.

Audiences and viewers of Arab art are forced into negotiating with the images of popular culture, the news, and the overall visual culture depicting the Middle East in deciphering how they attribute meaning to an artwork. As Susan Sontag argues in *Regarding the Pain of others,* the moment of death is the most celebrated and reproduced war photograph (Sontag, 2004). Visual media on Arab subjects has been curated in the news to be a singular story of trauma war and conflict. With photography being a medium that holds an assumed truth (a truth that Sontag critiques), I argue that the sheer association of "Arab" and "art" or "photography" instills a compulsory association with images of war-torn cities reduced to ruble, riots in the streets as citizens overthrow dictatorships, and the ruthless policing of Arab women in religious clothing. Is it coincidental that these examples likely garner specific images of Syrian children running around in the rubble of decimated towns (or lying dead on a beach), scenes of protest as Iraqi citizens topple the statue of Saddam Hossein after he was overthrown, and images of the Taliban riding in the back of trucks, riffles in-hand, policing the streets of Afghanistan? It is these inherent associations with trauma, representation, and the expectation of suffering that haunts and plagues Arab (and Middle-Eastern generally) artists producing contemporary art.

Interestingly, while photography scholar Ariella Azoulay's views on photography are contradictory to that of Sontag, Azoulay's writing of the phantom image is useful to understanding how and why these images are reproduced and remembered. Azoulay recalls memories of her childhood that have been planted by her mother, and how these memories or images are accepted as truth. With Azoulay being an Israeli living in occupied territories at the time, these memories and planted pictures include scenes of

threat, threat that the author asserts is associated with a particular place. Examining the ways in which trauma and racism are both normalized through the screen of memory, she recalls images of Arab markets in Palestine and places like the stairwell in her childhood home as being sites of danger. Reflecting on the process of how these memories were planted, Azoulay states:

> "My mother wouldn't allow me to go to the beach on Fridays. That's the day the Arabs go. 'They go with their clothes on,' she muttered. Ever since, I've carried around in my head an image of Arabs half-submerged in the middle of the sea, struggling to get up, with the weight of their wet clothes pulling them down. While I remember this image as if it were a photograph I actually saw, I know it was planted in my brain, courtesy of my mother's tongue as she tried to embody her warnings." (Azoulay 2012. p. 10)

Azoulay argues that each one of us carries with them an album of these planted pictures, and I assert that this contributes to viewers' understanding and reception of images from and of the Middle East.[1] Here, the images planted from memory, by stories and by visual media, are a part of what plagues Arab artists. With these planted images comes the expectation of trauma, the aesthetic of photojournalism, and the medium of street photography when viewing artworks by Arab artists. These expectations are subliminal and unintentional, but are a part of this album of planted memories that are carried by everyone. Media images and visual narratives that become normalized and accepted as truth inform these associations. The viewer makes this subconscious connection when experiencing artwork of Arab artists or photographs with Arab content, mediating how the artwork is understood and received. The differentiation between the image and the

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[1] This example resonated greatly with my own experiences in the diaspora. With my parents being Egyptian immigrants who are a part of the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt, I remember being told similar stories of women in niqabs fully veiled swimming in the Nile. While these stories were told through the veil of my parents' prejudice, like Azoulay's, this scene became an image that is as real as a photograph in my mind.

photograph is where Azoulay disagrees with Sontag. What Azoulay distinguishes as a phantom image (and being different from a photograph) is what Sontag amalgamates together as the unrelenting visual imagery that bombards the viewer on a daily basis. Nonetheless, for the Arab artist, it is important to understand the impact of these phantom images, and how they condition the reception of the artwork by the viewer, and also conditions the way Arab artists are expected to produce art.

The artistic medium chosen by the Arab artist likewise needs to be examined within this paradigm of power and representation. The history of the medium itself and its common use in wider visual culture, to a certain degree, shapes the artwork that is being produced by artists in the Middle East and/or of Middle Eastern descent. As Palestinian artist Larissa Sansour revealed in a public lecture, she depicts Palestinian consciousness and the experience of displacement through tropes such as humor, science fiction, and most importantly using high budget film and expensive high-production photographs (Sansour, 2016). She produces these tropes and costly visuals consciously because, as she mentions, there is an expectation that as a Palestinian artist she would be producing low-budget documentary photographs that resemble amateur war photography. In this instance, it becomes clear that the baggage of representation has a powerful control over the narratives that are being told, and the ways in which they are permitted to be told.

Building on individual artists' choice of artistic medium, art historian Salwa Mikdadi argues that video art is more transportable than other mediums, and its portability has benefited artists living with restrictions (Mikdadi, 2011). This includes artists who have limited mobility between countries, and even artists who need to pass

checkpoints within national walls. The choice of digital media installations has proven to be suitable mediums for the political and social nature of Arab art. Thus, in knowing that photography and digital media are suitable both practically and conceptually for work of Arab artists, I argue that this point needs to be better connected to the ways in which viewers in the West consume and digest artworks by Arab artists. This means that the phantom images that condition the Western audience's expectations and assumptions, and the associations of war and trauma, needs to be closely tied to the medium itself and how the medium of photography is used in the making of Arab contemporary art. Whether or not the singular narrative and the association of war and trauma is mostly effecting Arab artists working with photography, rather than painting or sculpture, would speak heavily to the medium itself and its use in the broader circulation of images in visual culture. The specificity of the medium and the baggage of representation must be examined in more detail, for there is a clear relationship between photography and new media being a practical and suitable trend in the making of Arab contemporary art, the consumption of these war images in the news and media outlets, and the reception of Arab photography. These causalities and dynamics of power and representation are then closely related to the photographic medium itself. In this way, the work of Middle Eastern artists is informed by –but never reducible to– a history of representation that has presented Middle Eastern contexts in troubling ways and continues to do so.

THE ARAB SUBJECT AND THEIR AESTHETICS

With the construction of Arab visual culture being a point of concern, art critic Nat

Muller reinforces that the generic image of the Middle East as 'bad news' to Western audiences forces artists in a rocky power dynamic where they play into expected perceptions or representations (Muller, 2009). When addressing international audiences, artists from the region are expected to somehow personify both the historic and the national—an impossible task seemingly reserved only for Arab artists and is not expected of Western artists. Muller insists that:

> "If we want to lay out conditions of focusing on a contemporary practice, we have to look further and beyond the identitarian markers of ethnicity, politics and geography… and let the art first an foremost speak for itself— or in other words, let the socio-political and historical undercurrents speak from the art, rather than the other way around" (Muller 2009, p. 17).

Along these lines, Dina Ramadan speaks of the "objectification of the artist". This is when non-Western artists are stripped of their individuality and are expected to act as a mouthpiece for "the collective"— Arab, Muslim, Other— as well as having to represent "modernity" and "authenticity", while maintaining a balance in order to avoid accusation of imitating the West or of being too folkloric. The question then remains: When evaluating the production of meaning in an artwork, can aesthetics be the starting point of analysis before considering the sphere of the historical and political? Currently, the aesthetics of the artwork (particularly the artwork of Arab artists) are one of the last things to be evaluated within a work of art. Aesthetics are given less importance than the biography of the artist, their national identity, and most often their geographic location. This question of aesthetics is one that needs to be returned to, revisited, and re-explored in as many ways as possible until Arab artists are no longer ghettoized within exhibitions, in the writing of art history, and within the international art market overall.

Because of this dilemma, art historian Saleem Al-Baholy argues for approaching

aesthetic forms differently. He sees the necessity to stop understanding aesthetics in relation to the artist, but instead in relation to the world event or experience in which the artist is responding to. He calls this the de-subjectivising of artistic creation, and the displacing of the artist (Al-Baholy, 2014). As a way of escaping the shadows of representation that follow Arab bodies and Arab artists, he argues that viewers should not pose questions of aesthetics to a single artist, nor even compare one artwork to another; instead, viewers should pose the question of aesthetics in relation to the world (time, an event, an experience, a problem), and the ways aesthetics are performed by an artwork in relation to its political surroundings. This is an interesting argument for it seeks to rectify the issues previously outlined plaguing discourses of art and the Middle East.

To Al-Baholy, the study of aesthetics needs to take the artist out of the equation and let the socio-political and historical undercurrents speak *from* the art, rather than inform the art itself. This provides a way to better describe the aesthetics of the artwork and its aesthetic meanings, giving a different relationship to art and politics, and the ways art can give aesthetic forms through which political issues are articulated. This means that rather than use an artist's birthplace (Palestine for instance) to dictate the assumed content of the work (apartheid and war), the artwork itself will instead speak for the lived condition of the artist's experience. This is noteworthy as it alters the demand of the Arab artist of having to produce art about a singular narrative in order to be intelligible to the global art market, and shifts the focus to the aesthetics and visual language of the artwork to open up the understandings of the political struggle the artwork is in relation to.

HOW IS ART HISTORY WRITEN?

These practical issues of aesthetics are central to the ways in which aesthetics are theorized and written about. Part of the baggage of representation outlined thus far relates to the writing and recording of Arab art histories. Art historian Nada Shabout argues that the Middle East lacks formal art criticism and relies on Western models of the writing of art history that do not start with the work of art. Rather than provide an analysis of the visual elements first, the critic starts with the artists' biography. This creates a lack of objective criticism for Arab artists (Shabout 2011, p. 46).

This point of the artist biography can be traced back to the Italian Renaissance, and 16th century Italian painter, writer and historian Giorgio Vasari. Commonly thought of as the first art historian, Vasari's book, *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, is considered the ideological foundation of art historical writing. In this book, Vasari focuses on the artist as genius, and contends that the biography of the artist is the most important aspect in understanding their work and art practice. While the concept of "artist as genius" is heavily critiqued in modern scholarship as being masculinist and exclusionary, it still haunts the writing of art history whenever the starting point of analysis is the artist's biography. What started with Vasari anthologizing the lives of living artists during the Italian renaissance, turned into a biographical approach that quickly cemented itself and developed into the primary mode of art writing. For non-Western artists, the focus of the artist's biography slowly shifts the discussion from "artist as genius" to one of "artist as different." The biographical information of the Arab artist is used as a marker of differentiation, a difference that informs the analysis of the artwork itself.

Returning to the discussion on aesthetics, when the artist's biography is the dominant starting point of analysis, the artist's identity then informs the reading of the artwork, rather than having the aesthetics of the artwork itself inform the experience of the artist. The reason why this Western method of writing history is a problem for Arab artists can be traced back to the beginning of this analysis— the inherent associations made by viewers of Arab art and the baggage of representation. We are left in a catch-22, an endless cycle that then produces the very Arab art it conditions. In this method of history writing, the artist's Palestinian-ness, for instance, will always inform the art they produce and the artist's Palestinian-ness will be the sole marker for viewers to interpret the work of art. This results in a cycle of singular narratives where the viewer only comes to expect a certain artwork or narrative of the Palestinian artist. This singular narrative flattens the complex experiences of Arab artists to only be a dominant story of war, trauma, and conflict. This means that a Palestinian artist whose work does not reflect the photographs informed by these phantom images will be left outside of dominant expectations. These dominant expectations are important for they help inform the type of exhibitions Museums organize, and the types of artworks that end up in permanent collections in museums (such as museum acquisitions that are intended to be art representative of the region). Viewers of such exhibitions expect to see a particular kind of art or representation, and the dominant aesthetics of what Arab art looks like slowly starts to cement itself within exhibitions, the institutions' permanent collections, and within audience expectations. Slowly, the phantom image is reified and another album of phantom images is made.

WHY RE-DEFINING MODERN ART MATTERS

Changing the starting point of how historians and critics write about Arab art points to another pressing methodological concern: the writing and recording of Arab artists within the history of art, and specifically the history of modern art. While thus far in the analysis the primary focus has been on contemporary art and photography, the art historical foundation in which these themes are understood is still in flux. The history of modern art is of major concern for current historians of Arab art for a few reasons. First, it is an art movement that dominantly asserts its conception in only metropolitan centers in the West (New York, Berlin, London, and Paris), excluding art from other parts of the world from this period as art unworthy of study or consideration. Second, modern art is so closely related to the industrial revolution and the period of modernity, and these associations bring modern art in very close relations to Europeanizing missions of Western modernity as a whole. Last, in signaling modern art as being authentic and originating in the West—leaving all other locals to be derivative or primitive— it also solidifies a point of comparison for all future (non-Western) art movements that positions the West as *the* example of good art.

To counter this Eurocentric writing of history, scholars of Arab art have been diligently re-writing the history of modern art to include the Arab artists left outside of dominant discourses. In order to better theorize and understand how contemporary Arab art is framed and understood, the broader history of Arab art needs be unpacked. Currently in the field, modern Arab art is still being theorized and understood, and modern art movements all over the Middle East are slowly becoming forged into the

visual vocabulary of Arab art and its history of aesthetics. With modern Arab art still being actively theorized, the insular theorization of contemporary Arab art becomes a less productive task. Linking the problematic of contemporary Arab art and aesthetics to a broader history of politics and representation will help discourse art from the Middle East more broadly, and I contend, more productively. In the rest of this analysis, I outline why it is important to re-think Arab art histories not simply as addendums and additions to current canons, and to reconceptualize the ways in which modern Arab artists can be included within the current model of modern art. It is the canon itself that needs revisiting, re-inventing, and dismantling to highlight the constructed-ness of these histories, and the politics of both representation, and (almost more importantly) the exclusion of representation from history.

To reconceptualize what the writing of Arab art history can look like, I ask: what does decolonizing the study and writing of art history look like? How can anticolonial research exist as a central query of thought, rather than on the periphery engaging with dominant modes of representation and discourse? Understanding that knowledge production is one of the major sites in which imperialism operates and exercises its power, how can we decolonize the structural limits that currently condition knowledge production? To help answer these problematics, I turn to Kuan-Hsing Chen's book, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization.* I believe the methods of inquiry proposed by Chen open up the study of Arab art to a wider scope of postcolonial and anticolonial art production. As Chen describes, decolonization is the attempt of the previously colonized to reflectively work out a historical relation with the former colonizer, involving the process of self-critique,

self-rediscovery, and identity formation. This appears to be the primary focus of study for current scholars of modern Arab art (Nada Shabout; Saleem Al-Baholy; Kamal Boullata; Iftikhar Dadi; Lilian Karnouk; Omar Kholeif; Saeb Eigner), and most attention has been given to this decolonization of the academy. As these scholars have outlined, this process of decolonization is what Arab modern art was born from. Modern art in the Middle East lead to individual nations' self-discovery and created a movement focused on returning to their roots, and a self-fashioning of an artistic expression that is socially and locally relevant to the population. These histories are excluded from dominant accounts of the history of modern art, and this focus and re-writing of history is necessary as it introduces new movements to the art historical canon, and it challenges previously accepted historical narratives.

DECOLONIZATION VS. DEIMPERIALIZATION

While decolonization is mainly the active work carried out by the colonized, deimperialization is work that must be performed by the colonizer first (Chen, 2010). This includes the evaluation of the colonizer's relationship with its former colonies. Deimperialization, I argue, is the current roadblock effecting postcolonial and anticolonial scholars of the study of art history. This self-reflection of the colonizer's writing of history has not yet taken place, and this is evident in the preservation of the art historical canon. Most postcolonial scholars working on non-, or even anti-canonical histories of art are seen as periphery, a one-off, or an alternative. As Chen notes, these secondary histories are then forced to engage with the canon in order to prove their worth

and their validity, while the same does not go for dominant history. Take for instance the scholars of modern Arab art who are working with great rigor to include Arab histories within the dominant history of modern art movements. They tend, through no fault of their own, to bring back modern Arab art movements to the comparison of modern art as accepted and understood in the West. This creates incompatibilities and forces the history of Arab art to somehow mirror Western art movements in order to be legible, and to be recognizable within the academy and as art worth studying. While the writing of this alternative history is important and necessary, the canon here remains intact. The addendum of Arab artists within the history of art, while important, can be easily ignored by the center and does not *require* engagement with, while the same is not true of the Western canon. This is where the process of deimperialization is urgent within the study of art history. This deimperialization has the power to dismantle the absoluteness of the canon and open up alternatives for other histories to exist, engage with, and inform one another in a productive fashion. This is a grand task but one that must be taken up in order for colonialism to be at the forefront of the writing of history, and for postcolonial projects like modern Arab art histories to be taken out of siloes and engaged with productively.

Deimperialization can exist in different ways. *Asia as method* suggests using other cities and countries within Asia as reference points to one another, rather than the mandatory reference and comparison to the West. Changing the frame of reference from being Western theoretical propositions to be more locally relevant theoretical concerns can disassemble the Euro-American universalist contention that Stuart Hall calls "the West and the rest." This opens up the possibility of an inter-Arab referencing system in

which modern art from different regions in the Middle East would be compared to one another in a way that connects their shared histories of colonialism and imperialism, providing locally relevant contexts to better inform modern art production in the Middle East. This inter-Arab method proves helpful in framing postcolonial tactics of representation with other nations' strategies of identity formation and independence. This way, modern Arab art takes on more powerful resonances that relate heavily to postcolonialism, national identity, and the construction of autonomous Arab subjectivity. Just as modern Egyptian artists like Mahmoud Moukhtar led a neo-Pharaonism movement, or Ragheb Ayad and Muhammad Nagui were modern artists associated with the Egyptian Awakening, so too did modern artists in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Sudan revert to their historical roots for artistic inspiration as a way of forging a new cultural identity after colonialism. In this way, the aesthetic comparison of modern art from Syria to that of New York or Paris creates a reductively linear narrative that proves unproductive. This forced linear narrative and point of comparison becomes a stumbling block that unravels the history of modern Arab art to being derivative, lacking, and years behind that of Western modern art. As Chen states, Euro-American theory is simply not all that helpful in our attempts to understand our own conditions and practices. There is something wrong with our frame of reference (Chen 2010, 226). Developing Chen's idea of Asia as method for these purposes would require an open-ended imagination in localizing certain practices.

As Chen writes of an inter-Asia referencing system, he intends for "Asia" to be used as a synonym for the third world. In this case it becomes a synonym for the Middle East, and this opens possibility for an Arab inter-referencing as being a productive

process of relativization. This task is not only to understand different parts, and in our case different art historical practices of the Middle East, but also to enable a renewed understanding of world history. Therefore, historicizing the modern art movements in Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine *in relation to one another* becomes the necessary direction to contribute to a history of modern Arab art that best dismantles the center-periphery model of the art historical canon. This then creates alternatives of what modern art as a discipline can look like, rather than theorize modern Arab art as only being understood by the established discourse laid out by modern art of the West.

While such a project is historic in nature, re-working the very foundation of Arab art, its aesthetics, and its history both within the Middle East and in dominant art history will be productive in informing the ways contemporary Arab art is understood. The baggage of representation as outlined in this analysis does not start its problematic solely with the representation of the Middle East in the media, but is multifariously informed by the ways in which these images are positioned within a wider history. Both narratives of the Middle East being associated with "bad news", or Arab art as being unmodern and deficient, have baggage in the very value that is associated with Middle Eastern history and Arab subjects. This historic dismissal of value and worth, as reflected in Myrna Ayad's quote at the start of this chapter, plays a role in informing the inherent associations of Arab art and conflict, and with images that posit Arabs as being perpetually unable to reach modernity, productivity, and peace.

A HISTORY OF ART OR HISTORY OF COLONIALISM?

To help rectify the issues posed, I believe that changing the starting point of such research to be a history of colonialism rather than a history of art will be a productive methodological shift. In doing so, anti-colonial art production will be at the core of the discussion, but the history of art will then have to contend with wider disciplinary concerns. This decentering of Western knowledges in an interdisciplinary fashion will help Arab art histories grow as a discipline, while actively engaging with dominant history in productive ways. The history of colonialism will help bridge the necessary gaps between the history of representation and the impacts this had (and is having) on local populations, forcing a dialogue between the center and periphery that simultaneously dismantles the absoluteness of the canon. This process, I argue, will be a step in deimperializing the Western art historical canon, and will bring histories of Western imperialism and colonialism in forced dialogue with postcolonial critiques and decolonizing practices. This dialogue will not be one sided and will not maintain the current power dynamic relating peripheral Arab art histories to the necessary center of Western art. This discussion will be different in that the confluences and references to either Western art practices or Western modern history with Arab art histories will be to better inform Middle Eastern art practices. The meeting points and references of the two will not be to qualify Arab art histories as being a worthy contender to the Western canon, but instead would examine the construction of the canon itself and deconstruct the center-periphery engagement that maintains such colonial dynamics of power. This reconceptualization of not just the historical narratives being told, but the focus of why certain narratives are told, is a way of escaping these shadows of representation that follow Arab bodies and contemporary Arab artists. As Saleem Al-Baholy urges not to

pose questions of aesthetics to a single artist, I claim that bringing postcolonialism to the heart of the study of modern Arab art and its connection to contemporary art practice will better examine ways aesthetics are performed by an artwork in relation to its political surroundings. Tracing the roots of representation to being a struggle in the colonial history of modern art illustrates the deep seeded imperialism that follows and plagues Arab contemporary art. It is for these reasons that using a history of colonialism as a methodological approach in the writing of art histories will help inform contemporary representations of Arab art by solidifying a strong history of Arab artists dealing with parallel issues of identity, power and representation.

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