ART IN LABOR
SKILL / DESKILLING / RESKILLING
المهارة / نقضًا / إعادة تشكيل

ARTISTS

Georges Daoud Corm / Saliba Douaihy / John Carswell / Ghassan El Hajj / Khalid Hamza / Haitham Hassan / Lawrence Abu Hamdan / Mahmoud Khaled / Mohammad El Rawas / Gregory Sholette / Hito Steyerl / Rachid Wehbi / Vera Yeramian

الفنانون
جورج داود القرم / صلبيا الدويهي / جون كارزول / غسان الحاج / خالد حمزة / هيثم حسن / لورانس أبو حمدان / محمود خالد / محمود الروّاس / غريغوري شوليت / هيتو ستيريل / رشيد وهبي / فيرا يراميان

Program of Events at AUB Byblos Bank Art Gallery
برنامج فعاليّات قاعة بنك بيبلوس الفنّيّة في الجامعة الأميركيّة في بيروت
This exhibition, followed by a talk and a seminar, examines the relation between art and labor. Its purpose is not to honor or celebrate labor as one of the activities essential to the human condition—the socialist realists have done this very well in the past. Instead, we look at art itself as a form of production, inquiring what kinds of labor enter into its making—its birth. While the exhibition displays artworks that problematize or touch upon various aspects of artistic labor, a talk by Professor John Roberts of the University of Wolverhampton, School of Art and Design brings into discussion notions of artistic skill, deskilling and reskilling in contemporary art.

يتناول هذا المعرض، وما يليه من نقاش، العلاقة بين الفن والعمل، وهو لا يرمي إلى تكريم العمل أو الإشادة به كواحد من النشاطات الأساسية للوضع البشري، فقدما وقته الواقعية الاشتراكية حقه وزادت. إنما ننظر إلى الفن في حد ذاته كشكل من أشكال الإنتاج، مستفسرين عن نوع العمل الذي يدخل في صنعه/ولادته. يُظهر المعرض الأعمال الفنية التي تطرح إشكالية العمل في الفن أو يتسجح جوانب مختلفة منه. بينما يطرح الدكتور جون روبرتس من جامعة وولفرهامبتون، كلية الفنون والتصميم، يضع موضع النقاش مفاهيم المهارة الفنية، ونقض المهارات وإعادة تشكيلها في الفن المعاصر.
CURATORIAL STATEMENT

This exhibition examines the complex relation between art and labor. Its purpose is not to honor or celebrate labor as one of the activities essential to the human condition—the socialist realists have done this very well in the past. Instead, we look at art itself as a form of production, inquiring what kinds of labor enter into its making—its birth.

In the past, things appeared to be more simple. Artists were individuals who possessed certain manual skills which they acquired in the feudal system of guilds, later in the écoles and académies des beaux-arts, and—not long ago—in the Soviet schools of art and the unions of artists. One was not simply an artist but first and foremost a fine artist, that is a painter or a sculptor whose status and recognition was first to be won within a given métier on the basis of his or her manual skills. In the age of the Fine Arts, artistic skill was closely guarded and distributed by religious, national, or imperial institutions—a situation that remained for the most part unchallenged well into the twentieth century.

Georges Corm in his studio in Beirut
When in the early twentieth century the artistic avant-garde assaulted the very basis of the bourgeois institution of art—with its aesthetics, education, modes of production, reception and distribution—this also reflected within the domain of artistic labor. From Soviet Productivism and the Proletkult to Western European Dada and Cubism, from Vkhutemas to Bauhaus—all of these advocates of a new culture proposed radical ideas about artistic skill and the identity of the artist. These historical avant-garde gestures aimed for the most part at erasing certain well-guarded boundaries between art and life, artistic and empirical object, factory and artistic work, sacred and profane experience. Some of these radical ideas re-surfaced again after World War II under new conditions of capitalist production, when artists called for the dematerialization, de-aestheticization, and deterritorialization of the artistic object and artistic experience. In an emerging post-industrial, post-Fordist, post-modern, late capitalist society, the traditional artisanal skills of feudal or early industrial capitalism began to lose their prestige.

With the Art in Labor exhibition we would like to revisit and rethink this complex art historical process. The subtitle—Skill, Deskilling, Reskilling—is a quotation from a book by one of the participants in our events. Professor John Roberts has analyzed in detail the transformation of artistic labor within the context of the evolution of productive labor under capitalism. We borrow extensively from his labor theory of culture in order to comprehend a complex art historical trajectory of artistic labor.

The newly opened AUB Byblos Bank Art Gallery offers us the opportunity to set up a miniature art critical field, a mini-laboratory, that will allow us to better grasp the transformation of artistic labor over the past hundred years. This field lies at an art historical and aesthetic crossroads: between artistic tradition and innovation; artisanal manual skill and rational or conceptual form; expression (or mimetic behavior) and construction. Each artwork has been selected with the intention to reveal something about the dynamics of this field—in addition, of course, to testifying to its own laws of form. At the manual-artisanal and/or mimetic-expressive poles we exhibit...
a series of sketches and academic drawings made by artists of past generations, including such pioneers of Lebanese art as Georges Corm and Saliba Douaihy. Some of these drawings were made during their training at Western European fine arts academies during the first half of the last century. On walls next to and across these drawings we display works that operate within a more complex division of artistic labor; works that one might say are drawn towards the opposite pole where artistic labor has migrated after the erosion of the prestige of manual artistic skill. A video by Hito Steyerl and an installation by Gregory Sholette (who requested shared authorship with the workers of the physical plant at AUB who built his piece: Ghassan el Hajj, Khalid Hamza and Haitham Hassan) make succinct reference to the broader social context of productive labor under late capitalism. Lawrence Abu Hamdan and Mahmoud Khaled attest to the transformation of intellectual and rational processes into artistic form, evoking the ways in which economic and political factors today inform the identity of the artist. Mohammad El Rawas comes to remind us (albeit with some post-modernist detachment) that the historical transformation of artistic labor takes place within a complex dialectical field where conflicting extremes (expression and construction, or artisanal skill and conceptual formalization) are in a state of constant negotiation.

Octavian Esanu
AUB Art Galleries Curator
والحياة، بين أعراض الفن والتجربة الملموسة، بين العمل الفني والمصنعي، وتجربة المقدّس والعادي. وعادت بعض هذه الأفكار الجذريّة إلى الظهور بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية في ظل ظروف الإنتاج الرأسماليّة الجديدة، إذ دعا الفنّانون إلى تجريد الغرض الفني والتجربة الفنيّة من كلّ مادة أو جمالية أو حقّ اعتصام. وفي المجتمع البائتي بعد-الصناعيّ، بعد-الحدوديّ، للرأسماليّة المتأخّرة، راحت المهارات الحرفيّة التقليديّة العائدة إلى الإقطاع أو بدايات الرأسماليّة الصّناعية تفقد هيبتها.

يودّنا القدّاس الفن في العمل عبر معرّكة إعادة النظر وإعادة التفكير في هذه السيرورة المعقّدة لتاريخ المهارة، الفن. العنوان الفرعي هو نقضًا، وإعادة تشكيل جون روبرتس. أُقتبس من كتابٍ لأحد المشاركين في فعاليّاتنا. حلّل البروفسور بالتفصيل تحويل عمل الفنّ في سياق تطوّر العمل المنتج في ظل الرأسماليّة، وحتى تستعير على نطاق واسع من نظريّة العقل إلى تفهمه من أجل فهمه مسار تاريخي في تقنيات العمل الفنيّ.

قابلة بنك بيبلوس الفنية المُفتتحة حديثاً في الجامعة الأميركيّة في بيروت، توفر لنا فرصة الإشادة بـ"معركة الفن الفنيّ"، معتَبر معركة من شأنها أن يتيح فهماً أفضل للتحولات في الفن على مدى السنوات الماضية. ويكمن هذا الثقافي في نقطة ملتقى نزال الفن والجماليات: بين التقاليد الفنيّة والأبكار، بين المعايير الفنية الفن الأدبيّ والتشكيل المفاهيمي، بين التعبير أو سلوك المحسّنة، وأيضاً. وقد اختير كل عمل فني بنية كشف شعور عن ديناميكية هذا العمل - علاوة على كونه شاهداً، تعبيلة الحال. على قوانينها الشكلية، المعايير المعرفيّة المحتضنة

عمل عزيزي شوالي في الجامعة الأميركيّة في بيروت، مبنى معرض ماسوره من التخطيطات والرسوم الأكاديمية الفنانين من الأجيال السابقة. بين فيهم بعض رواد الفن اللبناني كدروز القرم وصليبا الدويهي، أنجز بعض هذه الرسوم خلال تدريب الفنانين في أكاديميات الفنون الجميلة في أوروبا الغربية خلال النصف الأول من القرن الماضي. على الجدران، بجانب الرسوم وغيرها، نعرض أعمالاً تستعيد ضمن تقسيم أكبر تعقيدًا لعمل الفنّ، أعمالٍ قد تُقال إنها تجده نحو القطب المعاكس حيث هاجر عمّ الفن بعد تراجع هيئة المعايير الفنيّة البيوبيي. وفِي فيديو غريغوري شوليت يحكي تأليف مشترك مع عاملين دائرة المباني والبنك، يبرز الفنّ في الجامعة الأميركيّة في بيروت الدّنيا بناءً قطعته، عسان الحاج، حاليّة. ومصمم إضافة إلى السياق الاجتماعيّ الأوسع للعمالة المنتج في ظل الرأسماليّة المتأخّرة. أما لورنس أبو حمدان ومحمود خالد فشاهدان على تحويّل العمليّات الفكريّة والعقلانيّة شكلاً فنيّاً، يجسّدان الطرق التي تترك بهما العمليات الاقتصادية والسياسيّة اليوم طابعها على هويّة الفنان. ويأتي محمّد الروّاس ليذكِّرنا (والأحد في تلك الأدبيّة) بأنّ التحوّل تاريخي لعمل الفني يتمّ داخل حد يدلّ على ظرفنا التنازُع (التعبير والبناء، أو المعايير الفنية والتشكيل المفاهيمي). في حالة من المعايير المعاكسة المستمرة.

أوكتافيان إيسانو
قِيّم صالات العرض في الجامعة الأميركيّة في بيروت...
May 23, 11:30AM
Seminar with John Roberts, Walid Sadek, Angela Harutyunyan and Octavian Esanu

ON THE FATE OF THE AVANT-GARDES
Home Works 6 Exhibition, Reading Room, Artheum
(Next to Art Lounge, intersection of Corniche an Nahr and Mar Mikhael, River Bridge, Karantina)

Preceding a series of talks by professor John Roberts at the American University of Beirut, a seminar involving AUB students and faculty and the wider art community will take place at Ashkal Alwan’s Home Works 6 Exhibition, curated by Tarek Abou El Fetooh. The discussion and reading group will center on the possibilities and conditions for an avant-garde aesthetics and politics today. The seminar will engage a variety of art historical and theoretical positions and work to localize the discussion in relation to the contemporary conditions of art production and reception in Lebanon, the region and beyond.

May 23, 4 PM
Talk by John Roberts

ART AND THE PROBLEM OF IMMATERIAL LABOR: REFLECTIONS ON ITS RECENT HISTORY
AUB, Building 37, conference room (behind Old Lee Observatory)

The debate on immaterial labor and art has garnered an enormous amount of attention recently, yet curiously there has been little substantive discussion about its history and assumptions. Indeed, its terms are taken to be de facto self-evident, in a way very similar to the rapid acceptance of the notion of the ‘dematerialization of art’ in the 1960s neo-avant-garde art world. In this talk, professor John Roberts traces the origins of the concept of “immaterial labor” to the Italian Marxist-feminism of the late 1970s; discusses its relation to its alleged opposite, productive (material) labor; and considers the political and historical implications of this concept in the work of other influential contemporary thinkers. Most importantly, Professor Roberts uses the concept of “immaterial labor” with regard to recent aesthetic practices and the production and reception of contemporary art.

Professor Roberts is an internationally distinguished writer, critic and curator. Following his first degree in English and Art History at Middlesex Polytechnic (1973-77), Professor Roberts has taught and lectured throughout the UK and overseas, and has completed major curatorial projects in London, Venice, Hamburg, and Liverpool. Roberts is currently Professor of Art and Aesthetics at the University of Wolverhampton, School of Art and Design. In 2005 he gained a PhD on the basis of previously published work, with a written commentary on that work titled “The Logics of Deflation: Autonomy, Negation and the Avant-Garde”. His new book, Photography and Its Violations, is to be published by Columbia University Press in 2014. He lives in London.

Professor Roberts’ visit to Beirut is co-sponsored by AUB Art Galleries and Collections and the Department of Philosophy at the American University of Beirut.
4 أيار- السّاعة 23

حديث جون روبرتس

الفنّ ومشكلة العمل اللامادّيّة: تأمّلات في تاريخه الحديث
المبنى 3.4 قاعة المحاضرات (واجهة مرصد لي القديم)

استحوذ النقاش حول اللاماديّة العمل والفنّ على قدرٍ هائلٍ من الاهتمام في الأونة الأخيرة، ويشكّر مع ذلك قلة ما دار من نقاشٍ فعليّ حول تاريخها واقتراباتها. الحقيقة أنّ اصطلاحاتها تُعَدُّ بديهيةٍ بحكم الأمر الواقع، على نحو مماثلٍ جدًا للتسليم السريع بمفهوم »اللاماديّة الفنّ« في عالم الفنّ الظليعي-الجديد في ستينيات القرن العشرين. ويتبنّى البروفسور جون روبرتس في هذا الحديث أصول مفهوم »العمل اللاماديّ«، بدأً من الحركة الماركسيّة-التوريقية الأوروبية في أواخر السبعينيات، فناقش علاقته بالتوجهات المعمّقة الممزوجة، أي العمل الإنساني (الماديّ)، متأثراً في المبادرات السياسية والتاريخيّة. الاكتشاف المعمّق في أعمال غيرها من المفكّرين المحاضرين المثيرين، وأهمّ ما في الأمر أنّ البروفسور روبرتس يستخدم مفهوم »العمل اللاماديّ« في ما يتعلق بالممارسات الجماليّة الأخيرة وإنتاج الفن المحاضر وثقافةه.

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES
Georges Daoud Corm (1896-1971) is the son of Daoud Corm (1852-1930), who is regarded as one of the first professional painters in Lebanon. From 1919 to 1921 Georges Corm studied at l’École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. After his return to Beirut he established a painting studio and became active within local cultural circles. In addition to painting and exhibiting he participated in the establishment of the National Museum of Art, of the Musical Conservatory, and in the design of the Lebanese national anthem. In 1922, he won the first prize for the design of the first major decoration of the Lebanese State—the medal for the Lebanese Order of Merit. In 1930 he moved to Egypt where he produced numerous portraits, still lifes and landscapes. He returned to Beirut in 1956. In 1967 Georges Corm stopped exhibiting, expressing in this way his protest of the rising popularity of abstract painting in Lebanese high society. He published several books on art theory. In his Essai sur l’art et la civilisation Georges Corm violently attacked the corrosive influence of Stalinist Marxism and American commercialism in contemporary Lebanese art.
Saliba Douaihy (1910-1994) first studied art in the studio of Habib Srour. From 1932 to 1936 he was awarded a scholarship by the Lebanese government to study at l'École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. Upon completing his studies here and after travelling to Rome he returned to Lebanon and began decorating the walls and ceilings of the Diman church. He worked on this project for four years. In 1950 he moved to the United States, a move which greatly impacted his painterly career and style. Saliba Douaihy participated in numerous exhibitions organized by such prestigious institutions as the Salon des Artistes Français and Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in Paris; the New York World Fair; the Guggenheim Museum; and the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, where he had a solo exhibition.

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John Carswell studied art at the Royal College of Art in London from 1948 until 1951. His art education took place at a time when social realism was at its height, though his main interest was in Matisse. After graduating he worked as draftsman with the renowned archeologist of Fertile Crescent Neolithic culture, Kathleen Kenyon. John Carswell worked at various excavation sites at Jericho in Palestine, drawing plans and sketching artifacts unearthed from five thousand year-old Bronze Age sites. The fine craftsmanship of the swords, daggers, wooden bowls, carved pomegranates, and bronze belts left an enormous impact on the artist. After his encounter with the Neolithic period he stopped signing his artworks. In 1956 he joined the American University of Beirut as instructor in the newly established Department of Fine Arts. He worked there for the next twenty years, producing a large number of paintings, sculptures, prints and drawings. In 1967 he had his first solo exhibition at the Hanover Gallery in London and a decade later another exhibition at the Fishbach Gallery in New York. A major retrospective of his work took place in Stockholm.
Gregory Sholette is a New York-based artist, a writer, a founding member of two artists’ collectives: Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D: 1980-1988) and REPOhistory (1989-2000). His recent art installations include Torrent for Printed Matter Books Chelsea, NY; Imaginary Archive for Gallery 126, Galway, Ireland; and Fifteen Islands for Robert Moses at the Queens Museum of Art. Together with artist Oliver Ressler he co-curated the exhibition “It’s the Political Economy Stupid!” for the Austrian Cultural Forum, New York, now re-opened at the Contemporary Art Center in Thessaloniki, Greece. His most recent book is based on this exhibition. He has taught art and theory at the Cooper Union, NYU, Harvard University, Geneva University of Design, Parsons, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is a member of the Home Workspace Beirut Curriculum Committee, and he now chairs the MFA Program and teaches sculpture full-time at Queens College in New York.

Haitham Hassan was born in 1974 in the village of Maroun El Rass, Lebanon. He is a metal worker with 17 years of experience. He has worked at AUB since October 2010.

Khaled Hamzeh was born in Beirut in 1963. He is a metal worker with 20 years of experience. He has worked at AUB since October 2010.

Ghassan El Hajj was born in the Chouf district of Lebanon in 1949. He is a senior metal worker with 40 years of experience. He has worked at AUB since May 1975.
Lawrence Abu Hamdan is a London-based artist. In 2012 he had two solo shows featuring the newly commissioned works The Freedom Of Speech Itself at The Showroom, London and The Whole Truth at CASCO, Utrecht. His ongoing project Aural Contract has recently been exhibited at Arnolfini, Bristol (2013) and The Taipei Biennial (2012). Other works include Marches for Artangel and his collaboration as part of Model Court presented at Gasworks, London (2013). He has written for Cabinet magazine and the 10th Sharjah Biennial and is part of the group running the arts space Batroun Projects in North Lebanon. Abu Hamdan is a part of the research team for Forensic Architecture at Goldsmiths College where he is also a Ph.D. candidate and lecturer.
Mahmoud Khaled was born in 1982 in Alexandria, Egypt and currently he lives and works between Cairo and Beirut. In 2004 Khaled received a BFA in painting from Alexandria University, and in 2012 completed the Home Workspace study program in Beirut. His work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions in various art spaces and centers across Europe and the Middle East, including the BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK; the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA), the Netherlands; Bonner Kunstverein, Germany; UKS, Oslo, Norway; Salzburger Kunstverein, Austria; Contemporary Image Collective/CiC, Cairo, Egypt. His projects have been featured in several international biennales including Manifesta 8: European Biennale for Contemporary Art, Biacs 3, the Seville Biennale, and the first Canary Islands Biennale. He received the Videobrasil in Context prize in 2012.

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Mohammad El Rawas was born in 1951 in Beirut, Lebanon. In 1971 he joined the Institute of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University in Beirut, Lebanon, and graduated with a BA in painting in 1975. At the beginning of the civil war Rawas left the country; as a result of the effect that the war had on him, he stopped painting for two years. In 1977 he traveled to Morocco, where he worked as an art instructor at the École Normale des Institutrices, Rabat, until 1979. It was at this time that he started painting again. In 1979 he returned to Beirut, and held his first solo exhibition. Having been awarded a scholarship from the Lebanese University he enrolled at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, United Kingdom, and graduated with an MA degree in printmaking in 1981. In 1982 he started teaching at the Lebanese University, Institute of Fine Arts in Beirut, a post he held until his resignation in March 2009. From 1983 until 1992 Mohammad El Rawas served as Secretary General of the Association of Lebanese Artists and was a founding member of the Syndicate of Lebanese Artists in 2004. From 1992 until 2004 he taught at the American University of Beirut, Department of Architecture and Design, and founded the etching, engraving and silkscreen studios. Mohammad El Rawas currently lives and works in Beirut.
Hito Steyerl has produced a variety of work as a filmmaker and author in the field of essayist documentary video and post-colonial critique. She has been very active both as producer and theorist of contemporary art, culture and politics. Her interests revolve around contemporary media and the global circulation of images.

In 2004 she participated in Manifesta 5: The European Biennial of Contemporary Art. She also participated in Documenta 12, Kassel 2007, Shanghai Biennial 2008, and Gwangju and Taipéh Biennials 2010. Hito Steyerl holds a PhD in Philosophy; she is a professor of media art at the University of Arts Berlin and has taught film theory at such schools as Goldsmiths College in London and Bard College Center for Curatorial Studies in New York.
RACHID WEHBI

Rachid Wehbi (1917-1993) is a Lebanese artist who began by working in the studio of Habib Srou. In 1945 he graduated from the College of Fine Arts in Cairo, where he also studied dramatic art. He has participated in and organized numerous exhibitions in Lebanon and abroad. Rachid Wehbi was one of the founders of the Association of Lebanese Artists (departments of painting and sculpture) launched in 1957, where he served as secretary between 1957-1962 and was elected president of the Association in 1962. He began teaching art in 1947 at various institutes and universities. In 1956 he was granted the Decoration of Knowledge (first degree), the National Prize for Painting in 1971, and the Said Akl prize in 1972. Rachid Wehbi is considered one of the pioneers of contemporary art in Lebanon.
Vera Yeramian (1926-?) was born in Kharpout, Turkey. After her family emigrated to Lebanon, she began painting with Haroutioun and Armine Galentz in 1944, then enrolled at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) in 1949. In 1953 she graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels. In 1965 she moved to Rome where she was awarded the Minerva Prize in sculpture in 1971. Vera Yeramian has had numerous solo exhibitions at the AUB Alumni Club (1959), at the Galleria Marguttiana, Rome (1969), Gallery One (1974) and Haigazian College (1979).

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