KHALIL SALEEBY | THE NUDES

INFORMAL PUBLIC DISCUSSION AT AUB ART GALLERY
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2012, 18:00 to 20:00

On the occasion of the closing of the Khalil Saleeby exhibition an informal discussion will take place at AUB Art Gallery. Members of the AUB faculty together with local critics and artists will entertain a public conversation taking as its point of departure Saleeby’s Nudes. The discussion will take place on the lower level of AUB Art Gallery.

MODERATOR | Kirsten Scheid (AUB)

PARTICIPANTS | Angela Harutyunyan (AUB); Walid Sadek (AUB); Rico Franses (AUB); Sonja Meijcher-Atassi (AUB); Kaelen Wilson-Goldie (independent writer); Yasmina Nachabe Taan (LAU).

The AUB Art Gallery on Sidani Street opened in the early summer of 2012 with an exhibition of the Lebanese painter Khalil Saleeby (1870-1928). At the time of the exhibition four of the Nudes, regarded as centerpieces of the Rose and Shaheen Saleeby Collection, could not be displayed: they were on loan to L’Institut du monde arabe for an exhibition entitled Le corps découvert, a comprehensive display dedicated to the depiction of the body in Arab art. As a consequence, we decided to show only black and white full-size reproductions of Saleeby’s Nudes.

Now that three of these four Nudes are back on display at the AUB Art Gallery, and on the occasion of the closing of the Khalil Saleeby exhibition, we open up a discussion regarding the significance of these paintings, and of the genre of the nude in Arab cultures. Saleeby’s Nudes have often found themselves embroiled in various controversies: a hundred years ago, because of their innovative representational approach, as well as today, in the way they are co-opted to participate in the politics of representation in an international art context. While many in Beirut felt proud to have Saleeby’s Nudes placed in the spotlight of a major Parisian institution, others took a more interpretative stance, finding in their display controversy that merits review at this opportune moment. What do these Nudes represent? Individuality? Genius? Modernity? Conformity? Colonized mentality? How do they relate to our present? What is gained by showing Nudes made by Arab artists in non-Arab places?

Octavian Esanu (AUB Art Galleries Curator)