

For Immediate Release



AUB co-produces Gertrude Bell exhibit and play at Yale

Beirut, Lebanon- 19/12/2011 - Robert Myers, professor of literature and creative writing at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and a former director of its Center for American Studies And Research (CASAR), curated at Yale University an exhibition about Gertrude Bell who was, along with her colleague T. E. Lawrence, the best known, most accomplished, and most renowned European Arabist of the early twentieth century.

Held at the Whitney Humanities Center at Yale, where Myers is the Franke Visiting Artist/Scholar, the exhibition started on September 26 and ended on December 16, 2011. The exhibition was designed by Myers and is co-curated by Miriam Ayres of New York University.

In conjunction with the exhibition, a staged reading of the play *Mesopotamia*, by Myers, was performed on October 21-22 at the Whitney Humanities Center auditorium. *Mesopotamia* is set in the British Oriental headquarters on the banks of the Tigris River in Baghdad during the 1920s and dramatizes the creation of Iraq, the violent insurrection of 1920 and Bell's Machiavellian political maneuvering. The play has had readings at Pegasus Players Theater, in Chicago; the New York Theater Workshop, in New York; and at Theater Row, in New York, in 2009, where it was produced by the New Group and where the renowned actor Kathleen Chalfant read the role of Gertrude Bell. Chalfant reprised this role in the staged reading which was directed by Evan Yionoulis, professor at the Yale School of Drama, and resident director at the Yale Repertory Theater. The play was co-produced by Yale's World Performance Project, and the cast included stage actor Joe Urla.

Robert Myers is a distinguished playwright and once wrote monologues for Dick Shawn and columns for Paul Krassner's *Realist*, as well as a number of stage plays, including *Atwater: Fixin' to Die*, about George H.W. Bush's deceased advisor.

Both the exhibition and the play were co-produced by AUB Provost Ahmad Dallal and the AUB Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dean Patrick McGreevy. Professor Myers hopes to produce both the play and the exhibit and *Mesopotamia* at AUB next year.

Gertrude Bell (14 July 1868 – 12 July 1926)

The second woman to graduate from Oxford, Gertrude Bell traveled extensively throughout the Middle East, learning Persian and Arabic, and training as an

archaeologist. Shortly after the turn of the century, she led important archaeological expeditions to Syria and Iraq, subsequently writing highly regarded and popular accounts of these expeditions. During World War I and immediately after it, Bell served as Britain's Oriental Secretary of Iraq and was responsible for drawing the borders of the state of Iraq, engineering the accession to the throne of King Faisal, helping to quell the insurrection of 1920, and founding the Iraq Museum. Despite these accomplishments, Bell apparently committed suicide in Baghdad in 1926 at the age of 57.

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Note 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.

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