AHC 324: Collecting Practices in the Arab World

Syllabus

Catalogue Description

AHC 324 Collecting Practices in the Arab World 2.2; 3 cr. Offered Occasionally.

The course offers a survey of collecting practices in the Arab world. While discussing different models, economies and circulations of collections (private, public, non-profit), the course critically investigates the impulse of archiving and collecting.

Course Description

The course introduces students to collecting practices in the modern Arab world. Examining collections as processes and practices and not just as things, it focuses on both a collection’s content and form and studies the historical context and socio-political as well as material conditions that drive a collection into being. It critically questions not only what collections include but also how and why we collect, how collections come into existence, grow, change, wither, or are destroyed, what causes they serve, and what narratives they engender. The course starts with theoretical considerations. It then proceeds in three parts: 1. Early museums between colonial legacy, Arab awakening, and nationalism; Diversification of collections: private/public/non-profit; 2. Collecting practices and war: collections built, destroyed, and looted; Collecting practices and cultural capital in the Gulf; 3. Museums of modern and contemporary art; Collecting in artistic practices: the archival or documentary turn in artistic practices and institutional criticism. It includes field trips to museums and other collections in Beirut, such as the AUB Museum, the National Museum, the Robert Mouawad Private Museum, the Sursock Museum, and the Arab Image Foundation.

Students are required to write reviews of these collections in addition to reading responses. They furthermore have to give a brief presentation (10-15 min) on a topic of their choice related to the course that serves as a basis for their final paper, gives them the opportunity to discuss their ideas in class, before they submit them in writing, and is graded accordingly as work in progress.

Assessment

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Reading responses:</td>
<td>20 % (each 10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Reviews of museums/collections:</td>
<td>20 % (each 10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation:</td>
<td>10 % (work in progress, ideas/basis for final paper)</td>
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<td>Final Paper:</td>
<td>30 %</td>
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Learning Objectives

(1) to trace the history of collecting practices in the modern Arab world
(2) to distinguish between public, private, and non profit collections
(3) to raise critical questions about collections and the narratives they engender
(4) to analyze the impact of collections on politics, culture, and everyday life
Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction
Week 2: Collecting practices: content and form
Week 3: 1.1. Early museums between colonial legacy, Arab awakening, and nationalism
Week 4: 1.2. Diversification of collections: private/public/non-profit organization
Week 5: Field trip to museums and other collections in Beirut (National Museum, AUB Museum, Robert Mouawad Private Museum, Sursock Museum, Arab Image Foundation)
Week 6: 2.1. Collecting practices and war: collections built, destroyed, and looted
Week 7: 2.2. Collecting practices and cultural capital in the Gulf
Week 8: Presentations
Week 9: Presentations
Week 10: 3.1. Museums of modern and contemporary art
Week 11: 3.2. Collecting in artistic practices: the archival or documentary turn in artistic practices and institutional criticism
Week 12: Wrap-up

Preliminary Reading:


