



'A Decade of Arts': Research Papers about Syrian Artistic Production within the 'Research: to Strengthen the Culture of Knowledge' Programme, in partnership with AFAC - The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture and the Arab Council for the Social Sciences

Research Framework

Over the past decade, interest in creative practices has increased significantly in Syria. The creators of these practices sought to address the major issues facing Syria and the Arab region. Their intellectual and creative ventures helped them discover what is 'new' on the artistic scene and reflect on certain aspects of the overarching change that is taking place. Their work also enabled them to accompany the course of the revolutions and uprisings in Syria and the Arab region.

Artworks produced during this period have deconstructed and rebuilt language and have positioned politics and public affairs at the heart of their subject matter. They sought to liberate speech and question rules, norms, and the structure of power and its strengths. As these artworks questioned what is considered sacred and absolute, they redefined our perception of public and private, reshaped geography and reconsidered its dimensions, especially in light of the reality of living abroad and the conceptual notion of exile. These artworks were an assault on public decency; they stirred debate about public issues, expanded the margins of expression and allowed for instantaneous reactions to changes around the world.

These artworks were not the product of a single generation's work. Their production coincided with a widespread interest in liberating digital narration from its old framework and coupling it with social, economic, and humanitarian themes. The result was artworks that spark debate on public liberties, social freedom queer issues and productions that redefine literature and decency.

Year after year throughout this decade, with the accumulation of challenges, arts and creative productions were present in the public debate about the most important entitlements with the return of dictatorships, the increase in areas of oppression, and the attempt of security forces to seize the public space. These artistic productions looked at the phenomena of increased violence, the failure of safety narratives, the weight of lockdowns, the collapse of psychological, health and economic safety organizations, the attempts to seize the revolutions and the paths of the uprisings fraught with fragility and the magnitude of losses.

Today, when we look at artistic production during this decade, we realize that this creative momentum deserves research accompaniment and critical reviews to contemplate some of its conclusions in order to ensure its development and incite the question of what next?

As we look back at 2011 one decade later, we believe that this rich artistic production merits a critical review and a reflection on its dimensions as a first step towards developing it.

We regard questions of artistic production in the Syrian context as a condensed version of questions of cultural and artistic production in the Arab region as a whole, along with the various changes and transformations taking place therein. We look forward to receiving contributions of cultural researchers and practitioners, to better understand the various dimensions of the profound cultural change happening today and to foresee questions related to the future of arts in Syria.

In this context, we believe that the topics and themes that research papers should address fall under four main theoretical axes:

- The role of art as an alternative to dominant and official narratives in the recording of contemporary history
- Art as a means to engage with issues in public life
- The concepts of novelty and change in artistic and creative production in the context of Syria
- Comparative studies between Syrian artistic production and that of the rest of the Arab region