



A Decade of Arts | Here are the Selected Research Proposals

Ettijahat - Independent culture, the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), and the Arab Council for Social Sciences (ACSS) are pleased to announce that 17 research projects were selected for the 8th and special edition of the Research: To Strengthen the Culture of Knowledge programme, entitled “A Decade of Arts: Research Papers on Syrian Art Production”. The call for applications was launched on May 25 and closed on July 31, 2021, during which 53 applications from eight countries in the Arab region were received, including 45.28% women. The selected proposals are distributed onto the programme’s different research axes as follows: Three research proposals on the role of arts in writing history independently from official and dominant narratives (17.6%), four on the intersection between arts and public issues (23.5%), one on comparative studies between artistic production in Syria and the Arab region (5.9%), and nine research proposals covering several themes (52.9%).

The Jury consisted of: Author and historian Farouq Mardam Beik; Hanan Kassab Hassan: University professor, author, and theater director; and Researcher and author Toufic Khoury, professor and director of the Institut d’Études Scéniques, Audiovisuelles, et Cinématographiques (IESAV) at the Université Saint Joseph (USJ), Beirut. The jury held a two-day meeting in September to assess research proposals and select those qualified. The meeting concluded with the following statement:

The “Decade of Arts” edition sends a much-needed sense of optimism, to see the Syrian and Arab Youth take interest in research, acquiring its methods and skills, while also being capable of innovation in the selection of important themes and new approaches. The number of applications submitted, compared to the timeframe for submitting applications, and in light of the difficult decade-long challenges the region has encountered, particularly in the past two years, is a source of pride and an indication that artists and researchers in the Arab region are motivated to submit constructive research proposals tackling arts in the Syrian context, which allow us to carry on and believe in arts as a tool of resistance and change.

The research proposals tackle a diversified plethora of themes regarding contemporary Syrian art practices. We believe that this Edition is essential, in the sense that it allows researchers and artists to address sensitive and crucial issues regarding creativity in a delicate historical and social context. We were pleased to see that many young Syrians in the diaspora were able to utilize their stay in Europe to pursue their higher education in several fields. This helps ease the pain of being away from home, which was deeply felt by Syrians in the last 10 years, making it a positive phenomenon instead. We were also pleased to see that those who remained in Syria and the Arab region were also able to continue searching and reflecting on new themes, despite all the difficulties they encounter on daily basis.

The selected projects sought to understand the dimensions of current cultural change and to question the future of arts in Syria and their interaction with the region. The proposals examined the contributions of cultural practitioners and artists in the Arab region. They also tackled artistic production throughout the decade, while reflecting on the role of these productions in developing skills and questioning the future. Last but not least, there was a lack of proposals tackling cinema production in Syria since 2011, and its reception around the world, as well as Syrian musical contributions in the diaspora, and the assessment

of artistic critique in Syria. Therefore, we encourage that several researchers be commissioned to look into these themes.

On the collaboration around the “Decade of Arts” edition, executive director at AFAC, Rima Mesmar says: “This partnership constitutes a very important step on many levels as it confirms the importance of the production and sharing of knowledge, and the necessity of elaborating a critical discourse that goes along with the cultural and artistic production in the Arab Region. This partnership coincides with ten years since the Arab revolutions that generated different questions and preoccupations and new production tools and forms. It is not by chance that our awareness as institutions enters a new phase, where partnerships and alliances make an essential building block on the path to advancing cultural, artistic and knowledge production, as well as advancing Arab communities”. For her part, Director General of ACSS, Seteney Shami says “The council is extremely happy to participate along with sister institutions, in this joint programme that constitutes a major step in crossing the boundaries between social sciences, humanities, culture and arts, in addition to creating new prospects to understand the Arab region. It is also important to work together as regional institutions dedicated to the production of knowledge and critical thinking during the hard times that we are witnessing and living”.

The selected proposals include research contributions by researchers from Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan and the UK. The researchers will develop their proposals the coming months, in addition to that, a number of researchers will be commissioned to work on research papers around some subjects as per the recommendations of the jury. The research papers are expected to be finalized during the second half of 2022.

For more information on the selected themes, please click on this link, or contact us through research@ettijahat.org for any other inquiries.

Selected Research Proposals:

1. Alaa Rashidi | A Decade of Syrian Theatre in Theatre History
2. Ammar Almamoun | Transformations of Silence in Syria’s Demonstration Ground: The Impact of Silence on performance and politics under persecution laws
3. Eylaf Bader Eddin | Syria’s Prison Song
4. Firas Jabbour | Historical and Mythological References in Syrian Contemporary Artwork in the Diaspora during the Last Decade
5. Iyas Shahin | Drama Interpretations of the City: The Memory and Mental Image of Damascus in Local Drama Productions and Architecture
6. Jumana Al-Yasiri | Syrian Artists in France: Problematics of History, Identity, and Representation (2011 – 2021)
7. Mohamad Omran | Transformation of the Place in Contemporary Syrian Art
8. Mona Merhi | Returning Home: Syrian Theatre from Syria
9. Mennat Allah Mansy | The Role of Citizen Media in Conveying Resistance Narratives on the Syrian Revolution through Digital Space
10. Nour Asalia | Syrian Contemporary Art Post-2011: Cause and Aesthetics
11. Samar Alumari | Linguistic Units on Events in Syria in Radio Drama: Airport Road Case Study
12. Shama Elrasheed and Mohamad Abdul Rahman | Face to Face: Arab Contemporary Arts and Freedom Concerns, Comparative Case Study on the Experience of Marwan Qassab and Kamala Ibrahim (1960 – 2010)
13. Stefan Tarnowski | The Concept of Dignity in the Syrian Revolution
14. Tala Shamseddin | Spatial Sounds: Studying Damascus’ Auditory Persona

15. Zaher Alkaei | Syrian Rap and Syria Post-2011
16. Zaher Omareen | New Aesthetics in Documentary Filmmaking: Case Study on Syrian Video
17. Zuhar Aljundi | Study on the Syrian and Arab Contemporary Comic Art