

International Conference

CELEBRATING THE POSTWAR AVANT-GARDE IN THE MAGHREB AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis (CEMAT)

June 25-26, 2025



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Front cover: Jewad Selim, *Woman Selling Material*, 1953, oil on canvas, 53.5 x 43.5 cm,
Barjeel Art Foundation

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The third symposium of the *Decolonizing the Avant-Garde* project focuses on post-1945 avant-garde and non-conformist artistic practices in the Maghreb and Eastern Mediterranean region. Often overlooked, anti- and postcolonial art movements in these regions actively engaged with the artistic avant-garde, particularly in the wake of decolonization and national independence movements in the 1950s and 1960s. The postwar era saw intensified cultural exchanges between artists from the Maghreb and Eastern Mediterranean regions and Europe (both Eastern and Western) as well as North America. The period also witnessed the emergence of new art groups and schools at a local level, developing their own avant-garde and non-conformist artistic practices. Through these layered and often ambivalent dynamics, artists not only engaged with but also contested and redefined the aesthetic and theoretical foundations of the avant-garde, expanding its meanings beyond a Euro-American frame.

This symposium aims at investigating these dynamics by mapping the networks, dialogues, and ruptures through which avant-garde practices in the Maghreb and Eastern Mediterranean took shape. How did avant-garde practitioners in these regions navigate the legacies of colonialism and question dominant narratives of Western art? What alternative trajectories of avant-garde practice surfaced in these contexts? How did artists adopt, adapt, or resist established avant-garde aesthetics? To what extent did they articulate distinct, locally grounded and/or transculturally entangled modes of experimentation? And how did they themselves understand and define the concept of the 'avant-garde' within their historical and political circumstances? By engaging in these questions, the symposium seeks to foreground the Maghreb and Eastern Mediterranean as critical sites in the history of the postwar avant-garde, highlighting their contributions to 20th and 21st-century art beyond traditional Western genealogies.

PROGRAM

THURSDAY, JUNE 25

13.00 *Registration*

13.30 *Welcome & Opening*

Laryssa Chomiak, CEMAT; Sascha Bru, Leuven, Belgium and
Isabel Wünsche, Bremen, Germany

Session I: The Avant-garde in Algeria

Chair: Sascha Bru

14.00 *Art Elements for a New People*

Hannah Feldman, Philadelphia, US

14.45 *Positioning the Avant-Garde: The Aouchem Group and
National/Transnational Narratives of Modernism*

Abigael van Alst, Zurich, Switzerland

15.30 *Aouchem and the Labor of Resurgence, Relationality, and
Adjacency*

Sheyda Aisha Khaymaz, Austin, US

16.15 *Coffee Break*

Session II: Creative Avant-garde Exchanges beyond the Maghreb

Chair: Isabel Wünsche

16.30 *Fibre Arts and the Branches of a 'Feminine' Avant-garde*

Jessica Gerschultz, St. Andrews, UK

17.15 *Casablanca(s)*

Maud Houssais, Rabat, Morocco

18.00 *Song on the Death of the Young People (1973): A Close Reading
of Idriss Karim's Film Exercise in Surrealism*

Przemysław Strożek, Dresden, Germany & Warsaw, Poland

FRIDAY, JUNE 26

Session III: Mediating the Cultural Heritage in Egypt and Iraq

Chair: Isabel Wünsche

10.00 Dreaming Against Defeat: Galerie 68 and Surrealism's Post-Naksa Reanimations in Egypt

Sarah Dwider, Evanston, US

10.45 The Baghdad Modern Art Group: Istilham an Aesthetic of a Decolonized Avant-garde

Nada M. Shabout, Denton, US

11.30 *Coffee Break*

Session IV: The Aesthetics of the Palestinian Revolution

Chair: Sascha Bru

11.45 Where is the Vanguard in Guerilla Warfare? Examining the 'Avant-garde' in Revolutionary Palestine

Alessandra Amin, Baltimore, US

12.30 Demanding the Impossible: The Arts of the Palestinian Revolution after 1967

Natasha Gasparin, Oxford, UK

13.15 *Lunch Break*

14.00 Concluding Discussion

After-Conference Event: Book Presentation

organized by Przemysław Strożek and CEMAT

funded by AHRC Project: *Artistic Exchanges in the Global Cold War: Eastern Bloc-Northern Africa, 1940s-1980s*

17.00 Abdelkader Lagtaa, *Voyage Permanent (Łódź-Rennes 2023)*

Abdelkader Lagtaa in conversation with Sara Lagnaoui (in French)

ABSTRACTS

SESSION I: THE AVANT-GARDE IN ALGERIA

Chair: Sascha Bru

Art Elements for a New People

Hannah Feldman, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, US

This talk plays with the title of the book, *Elements for a New Art* (*Éléments pour un art nouveau*), by Mohammed Khadda. Written in 1966 after several years of contentious debate about aesthetic form, the book signals Khadda's attempts to qualify the "elements" necessary to create a new Algerian art rooted in both tradition (*turath*) and avant-gardist formal innovation. Interested in his critique of *subjectivisme* in art, I set his writings and the works he (and others) produced alongside them in dialogue with both popular and statist efforts to consolidate the image of a "new people" after the achievement of Algerian sovereignty. As the FLN consolidated its single party rule, it faced the task of reuniting the country across an urban-rural divide as well as a situated-diasporic one in order to consolidate the afterlife of the revolution around a central myth: "*un seul hero, le peuple*." I therefore position Khadda's arguments about abstraction at the core of efforts to make a certainty out of the real abstraction that was the Algerian people. Elaborating an art that would be Algerian demanded—even more so than new forms—a complex temporality enacted across a system of borrowing and repurposing, one that broached great experiment only to land on the conservative prioritization of the indexical. Re-examining Algerian debates about aesthetic form and identity foregrounds the different modalities of historical telling and often conflicting assumptions of origin and authenticity, inheritance and progress, purity and contamination, rupture and continuity that issued from national liberation.

Positioning the Avant-Garde: The Aouchem Group and National/Transnational Narratives of Modernism

Abigael van Alst, University of Zurich, Switzerland

This paper explores the critical reception of exhibitions organized by the Algerian Aouchem Group, established in 1967. When the group described itself as an 'Algerian pictorial avant-garde' in the catalogue of its first exhibition, it provoked immediate debate, revealing tensions over the

transfer of a Western artistic concept into a postcolonial Algerian context. Reviews and commentaries appeared in both Algerian and international press, highlighting the competing interpretations of the 'avant-garde' and inviting broader reflection on its historical construction. This raises questions about how the concept 'avant-garde' travels and transforms in postcolonial Algeria, who defines its contours, and how its criteria are adapted, challenged, or reconfigured. Rather than asking whether the Aouchem group constituted an 'avant-garde' movement, this paper argues that the label functioned as a discursive tool, employed by artists, critics, and institutions alike to position Algerian art within national and transnational narratives of modernism.

The controversy surrounding the group's self-designation reflects larger tensions. While some contemporaries dismissed the group, others, including writers Abdelhamid Laghouati, Ahmed Azeggagh, and the critic Jean Cathelin, defended its project. Drawing on press articles and exhibition catalogues, the paper demonstrates that the debate reveals a fundamental tension in the Aouchem's conception of modernity: on one hand, the association with established Western paradigms; on the other, an effort to articulate a specifically Algerian modernism grounded in precolonial cultural heritage. The reception of the group thus shows that the 'avant-garde' functioned less as a stable category than as a contested site of negotiation in post-independence Algeria.

Aouchem and the Labor of Resurgence, Relationality, and Adjacency Sheyda Aisha Khaymaz, University of Texas, Austin, US

In March 1967, two months before their infamous manifesto declared that "the sign is louder than the bomb," the artists of Aouchem produced a catalogue for their first group exhibition in Algiers, titled plainly, if provocatively, *Aouchem !!?*, that has flown under the scholarly radar. In this paper, I read this catalogue closely to reframe Aouchem's project as a labor of Indigenous resurgence. The catalogue's peripatetic poetics, its proto-manifesto, and its typographic experiments evince a practice that was collective yet polyvocal and disinclined to confine itself to one particular creative expression, one in which painters reached for lyrical poetry, dialogic play, and excessive punctuation that tests the limits of legibility to articulate what they sensed was at stake. Drawing on Cree and Saulteaux scholar Gina Starblanket's postulation of resurgence as relationality, I argue that Aouchem's engagement with Amazigh sign systems, Tassilian rock art, and the magic inhered in ancestral mark-making was not a curated retrieval of the past but a labor of

reconstituting connections with the land-based epistemologies of Tamazgha, stymied under both colonial and postcolonial regimes. Furthermore, deploying Tina Camp's notion of adjacency, I argue that the collective's relation to Amazigh Indigeneity, given that the majority of its members were not themselves Amazigh, was anticipatory in a way that prefigured a politics that would not materialize until the Berber Spring of 1980. The paper proposes that resurgence as relationality offers a more precise analytic for Aouchem's project than either avant-garde or turath frameworks, neither of which fully accounts for the relational labor at its core.

SESSION II: CREATIVE AVANT-GARDE EXCHANGES BEYOND THE MAGHREB

Chair: Isabel Wünsche

Fibre Arts and the Branches of a 'Feminine' Avant-garde

Jessica Gerschultz, University of St Andrews, UK

This paper connects fibre art practices in the 1960s and 70s to reflect on collective making, ecological connection, and gender. Women created collaborative spaces to support their aesthetic visions while attending their professional and familial relations. Often gathering in rural and agricultural areas, they experimented with raw and natural materials, including tree branches, carved wood, wool, mohair, horsehair, handspun silk, and dye matter. Their sensory observations and material engagements offer an opportunity to retrace the more intimate and tactile encounters that activated transregional networks of fibre artists. While many practitioners may be linked institutionally through the node of the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennale, this paper tends to raw matter and material references to the natural world as threads of avant-garde practice marginalised as feminine craft in established narratives. For instance, women in southern Africa mobilised wool, mohair, and the generative processes of tapestry and Art Protis (off-loom techniques developed in Czechoslovakia) to counter the apartheid economy of extraction, mining, and tobacco farming, while woman-centred ateliers in the Maghreb, Egypt, Lebanon, and Poland redrew boundaries for creative exchange and ecological recovery. With emphasis on intersections of gender, class, and race, this paper aspires to open new possibilities for querying the formation of an 'avant-garde' alongside its geographical re-mappings.

Casablanca(s)

Maud Houssais, Rabat, Morocco

The recent publication of *C.A.S.A. – Casablanca Art School Archives* provides an opportunity to revisit a groundbreaking artistic and pedagogical experiment. Between 1964 and 1972, the Casablanca Municipal School of Fine Arts launched a radical transformation that positioned the city itself as both a model for learning and a site of intervention. In postcolonial Morocco, amid rapid urbanization, the school placed the making of the city at the center of its inquiry. Rather than treating the urban environment as a passive backdrop, artist-educators such as Farid Belkahia, Mohammed Chabâa, Mohamed Melehi, Bert Flint, and Toni Maraini, together with their students, took the streets, markets, and medinas as sources of inspiration for developing a new visual and popular culture. Through photography, graphic design, calligraphy, and other artistic practices, they sought to reimagine the social relations and forms of alterity that shaped the metropolis. The school became a laboratory of mutual transformation: the city informed the institution by serving as a site of production and experimentation, while the institution, in turn, reshaped the city through images, exhibitions, and public interventions. This dynamic became particularly evident in the itinerant exhibition series *Présence Plastique* (1969-1971), which successively occupied various public spaces, including Jemaa el-Fna Square in Marrakech, November 16 Square, and several public high schools in Casablanca. By moving beyond conventional exhibition venues, these temporary installations fostered public debate and encouraged viewers to become active interpreters rather than passive spectators. Asserting that art should engage directly with social life, the members of the Casablanca Art School used art as a means to reveal the tensions and suppressed memories but also the potential of a polycentric city shaped by continuous processes of negotiation.

***Song on the Death of the Young People* (1973): A Close Reading of Idriss Karim's Film Exercise in Surrealism**

Przemysław Strożek, Archiv der Avantgarden – Egidio Marzona, SKD, Dresden, Germany / Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland

Song on the Death of the Young People (1973) was a film étude by Moroccan filmmaker Idriss Karim, made during his student years at the Film School in Łódź. It exemplified his interest in Surrealist cinema and

was an evocation of the death of a Czech student, Jan Palach, who died during the 1968 Prague Spring. Karim lived in Prague between 1959 and 1962, when, together with a Moroccan painter Farid Belkahia, he arrived in Czechoslovakia full of optimism to study in a socialist country. His second sojourn in the Eastern Bloc took place in Łódź from 1967 until he was expelled from Poland in 1975. *Song on the Death of the Young People* used a frame of a Surrealist musical and a “protest song” to mediate absurdity, disillusionment with the politics, imperialist ambitions, and oppressive systems of both the Western and Eastern Blocs. It became not only Karim’s own voice, but also of some film and art students, who arrived in the Eastern Bloc full of optimism to live in a Socialist country but did not fit into the framework of the Socialist system.

SESSION III: MEDIATING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN EGYPT AND IRAQ

Chair: Isabel Wünsche

Dreaming Against Defeat: Galerie 68 and Surrealism’s Post-Naksa Reanimations in Egypt

Sarah Dwider, Northwestern University, Evanston, US

In April of 1968, a collective of Egyptian artists, writers, and critics launched the arts and literary magazine *Galerie 68*. Set against Egypt’s devastating defeat in the Six-Day War, termed the *naksa* or “setback,” the magazine was intended as a rejoinder to collective grief and disorientation that had taken hold in Egypt and the broader Arab sphere. Through experimental aesthetic forms, the magazine’s contributors sought to chart a path out of despair and towards renewed liberatory politics. While the magazine explicitly foregrounded new literary works and voices, under the art direction of artist and poet Ahmed Morsi (b. 1930), the magazine’s visual arts selection largely returned to artistic output from earlier decades, namely the surrealist works of artists like Kamel Al Telmissany (1915–1972) and Abdel Hadi Al Gazzar (1925–1966). Morsi himself was an acolyte of the Egyptian surrealist group *Art et Liberté* whose early practice developed under their imprint. In this paper, I offer analysis of the visual program of *Galerie 68* and the place of surrealist aesthetics therein. I posit that, in confronting the failures of state-centered postcolonial politics after the *naksa*, Surrealism represented a retrievable site of past radicalisms. By returning to surrealist aesthetics, artists in the post-*naksa* moment could

reanimate these radical aesthetic potentials and recruit them as departure points for envisioning alternative futures. In doing so, *Galerie 68* evidenced Surrealism's broader post-war resonances, particularly in the moment of heightened mass movements and transnational solidarity witnessed in 1968.

The Baghdad Modern Art Group: Istilham an Aesthetic of a Decolonized Avant-garde

Nada M. Shabout, University of North Texas, Denton, US

In response to conversations taking place among artists, architects, poets, novelist and other intellectuals in Iraq around the need for a modern but national language of representation for their new country, the Baghdad Modern Art Group was formed in 1951 by artists Jewad Selim (1919-1961) and Shakir Hassan Al Said (1925-2004). The legacy of Group has been their invocation of heritage as a mediator for new modern aesthetics enabling them to contemplate their postcolonial and post Ottoman visual present and empower a visual language that would be true to them. They also were pivotal in fostering a relationship between artists and their audiences that aimed at bridging the gap between avant-garde artists and their people. Ultimately, they succeeded in marking modern Iraqi art as an identity pride to all Iraqis. The new direction in painting their manifesto specified, called for reimagining their historical legacy. It effectively crystallized an approach already circulating among Iraqi intellectuals. They coined, utilized and promoted the notion of *istilham alTurath* (invoking heritage) as their method of mediating between their past and contemporary culture to construct their distinctive modern visual identity. Istilham presented a means of counteracting Europe's dominance over modernism. It involved folding historical signs, narratives, and even styles into modernist aesthetic practice, thereby embracing the duality of modernity and tradition that powers the notion of *istilham al-turath*. It resulted in a unique series of aesthetic experiments that were locally grounded without denying its transcultural modern connections.

SESSION IV: THE AESTHETICS OF THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION

Chair: Sascha Bru

Where is the Vanguard in Guerilla Warfare? Examining the 'Avant-garde' in Revolutionary Palestine

Alessandra Amin, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, US

When, in 1974, celebrated Moroccan painter Mohammad Chabâa attended the First Arab Biennial in Baghdad, he expected more of the Palestinian exhibition. Why, he lamented, were the militant leftists of the Palestine Liberation Organization producing so much artwork based in *folklore*? As far as Chabâa was concerned, the PLO's submission approached Palestine "like a tourist," focusing on bucolic scenes of timeless agriculture and glorifying traditional handicrafts when it should have set the standard for "combat art." Chabâa's critique, shared by Italian-Moroccan art historian Toni Maraini, echoed Fanon's theory of cultural decolonization in its insistence that truly revolutionary art must transcend a misplaced attachment to a mythical pre-colonial past. For Palestinian artists, however, these lines—between heritage and combat, past and present, myth and reality—were not so clear, as Israel's escalating appropriation of Palestinian folk practices worked to erase indigenous presence.

Taking the 1974 exhibition as a point of departure, this presentation considers the utility of the "avant-garde" as a conceptual framework for midcentury Palestinian art. How did artists understand the relationships between form and content while experiencing a global moment of decolonization from the recently (re-)colonized periphery? What does being "ahead of one's time" mean when one's time is circumscribed by a colonial regime that explicitly seeks to resurrect the ancient past? How did the transnational experiments of a largely exiled community impact conversations around the aesthetics of revolution?

Demanding the Impossible: The Arts of the Palestinian Revolution after 1967

Natasha Gasparian, University of Oxford, UK

This paper examines the emergence of "the impossible" (*al-mustahîl*) as a generative aesthetic and political category in the wake of the Arab defeat in the June 1967 war. I approach the impossible not only as a retrospective analytic lens but as a historically operative term in Palestinian literature and other art forms that acquired renewed urgency

after the war exposed a preexisting crisis of political and aesthetic representation. In response, artists associated with the Palestinian Revolution turned to a realism that was not mimetic imitation but a paradoxical effort to construct, within representation itself, the conditions of a different reality. Utopia thus appeared not as a programmatic blueprint but as atopia: a placeless insistence on an alternative the present order deemed unthinkable.

The apparent impossibility of ending imperialism—now entrenched in transnational and neocolonial forms of capitalism—became even more acute after 1967, when asymmetrically organized Palestinian guerrillas confronted the Israeli Occupation Forces' technologically superior war machine. Yet this impasse only intensified the desire for struggle. I argue that it registered formally in moments where the representation of social reality and alternative futures faltered, producing an excess of form that implicated the viewer in making the impossible thinkable. Echoing the May '68 injunction to "be realistic, demand the impossible" (*soyez réalistes, demandez l'impossible*), these works displaced the burden of history onto the spectator, seeking to cultivate a new Arab subject beyond the failed promises of postcolonial nationalism. In doing so, they transformed impossibility from a limit into the very motor of revolutionary desire.

BIOGRAPHIES

Alessandra Amin is a historian of twentieth-century Palestinian art. She received her PhD from UCLA in 2022, and since graduating has held postdoctoral fellowships at Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Johns Hopkins University. In her capacity as a postdoc at JHU, she is currently working on developing the new Global South Humanities Initiative at the Alexander Grass Humanities Institute. Recent work can be found in *Hand Papermaking* and is forthcoming in *Art Journal* and *Feminist Theory*.

Sascha Bru is a professor at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Leuven, where he teaches critical theory and avant-garde studies. He has produced over 20 books, including the monographs *Democracy, Law and the Modernist Avant-Gardes* (2009), *The European Avant-Gardes, 1905-1935* (2018), and the (co-)edited volumes *The Aesthetics of Matter* (2013), *Realisms of the Avant-Garde* (2020), and *Crisis* (2022). A founder of the European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies (EAM), his work has appeared (in translation) in English, French, German, Dutch, Icelandic, Serbo-Croatian, Polish, and Chinese. More info: <https://www.saschabru.org/>

Laryssa Chomiak is a political scientist and the Director of the Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis, where she has designed and implemented large projects in critical social sciences and humanities since 2011. She has lectured at the University of Tunis and worked on a South-Africa based comparative project on political violence and transitional justice. She is currently co-authoring a book provisionally titled "Affective Regimes of Disillusionment: Trauma, Memory, and the Afterlives of Revolution." Her work has appeared in *Middle East Law and Governance*, *The Journal of North African Studies*, and *Middle East Report*. Dr. Chomiak has received research fellowships from the Fulbright Commission (Morocco), the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX/Ukraine) and the American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS/Tunisia). She is a member of the advisory board of *Middle East Law and Governance*, a member of the Steering Committee of the Project on Middle East Political Science at GWU, and a member of the Special Commission on Ethics and Social Science Research in the Middle East and North Africa at Columbia University. Laryssa resides between Sidi Bou Said, Tunisia and Oran, Algeria.

Sarah Dwider is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Art History at Northwestern University. She received her BA in Art History and Middle Eastern Studies from Swarthmore College and her MA in Art History from the University of North Texas. Her research centers on modern art in Egypt with a focus on the intersection of visual art, postcolonial development, and technopolitics in the 1950s and 1960s. Her current dissertation project analyses visual art produced around the construction of the Aswan High Dam in Upper Egypt.

Hannah Feldman is the Keith L. and Katherine Sachs Associate Professor of Contemporary Art History at the University of Pennsylvania. The author of *From a Nation Torn: Decolonizing Art and Representation in France, 1945-1962* (Duke, 2014), she has also published extensively on both modern and contemporary art and visual culture in Algeria and the broader MENA region. She curated the first major retrospective of the Lebanese-born artist, *Huguette Caland: A Life in a Few Lines*, which opened at the Reina Sofia in 2025, before travelling to the Deichtorhallen Hamburg and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. She is also co-editor, with Rachel Haidu, of *What we do when we write about art* (forthcoming Duke UP). This talk derives from a perpetually interrupted book-in-progress since 2008 about aesthetic debate, urban space, and museology in Algiers during the short years that bridge independence, experiments with "autogestion" socialism, and the 1965 coup.

Natasha Gasparian is an art historian, critic, and curator whose work centers on modern and contemporary art in the Arabic-speaking world. Based between Oxford and Beirut, she is pursuing a DPhil in Contemporary Art History and Theory at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford. Her criticism has appeared in *ASAP Art*, *Cultural Politics*, and *ARTMargins*. In 2023, she co-curated the exhibition "Je suis inculte ! The Salon d'Automne and the National Canon" with Ziad Kiblawi at the Sursock Museum in Beirut. Gasparian is the author of *Commitment in the Artistic Practice of Aref El Rayess: The Changing of Horses* (Anthem Press, 2020).

Jessica Gerschultz is a lecturer in the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews and recipient of a Senior Humanities Research Fellowship from New York University Abu Dhabi (2023-2024). Her publications centre on modern and contemporary fibre art, artistic engagement with craft-based mediums, and feminist art histories. Jessica was an American Council of Learned Societies Fellow in 2016 for the

writing of her first book *Decorative Arts of the Tunisian École: Fabrications of Modernism, Gender, and Power* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019). Her current book project *Fiber Art Constellations* traces artistic exchanges across the Arab world, Africa, and former Soviet-bloc countries to offer a feminist history of 20th century tapestry. Jessica has published numerous articles, book chapters and essays and serves on the board of the Association for Modern and Contemporary Art of the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey (AMCA).

Maud Houssais is an independent researcher and curator based in Rabat, Morocco. Her work examines artist-led transformations of the urban environment, with a particular focus on the 1960s and 1970s. She is especially interested in the emergence of visual cultures of the city, shaped collectively by networks of artists, designers, architects, filmmakers, and writers. In 2026, she co-edited *C.A.S.A.*, a publication dedicated to the archives of the Casablanca School of Fine Arts under the direction of Farid Belkahia, published by Zaman Books & Curating. As a curator, her recent projects include *Organic Knowledge*, a group exhibition presented at LE 18 in 2026. As an associate researcher, she contributed to *The Casablanca Art School: Platforms and Patterns for a Postcolonial Avant-Garde, 1962-1987*, presented at Tate St Ives, Sharjah Art Foundation, and Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt in 2024, as well as *Bauhaus imaginista: Learning From*, shown at SESC Pompeia (2018) and Haus der Kulturen der Welt (2019).

Sheyda Aisha Khaymaz has completed their PhD at the University of Texas at Austin with a specialization in sign- and script-based artistic modalities across North Africa. Their doctoral project, *Indigenous Presentness: Translocal Politics of Amazigh Signs and Symbols*, theorizes the post-1960s innovative visual strategies rooted in ancestral sign-making practices, from tattoos to rock inscriptions, as a mode of decolonizing praxis. Khaymaz's recent curatorial works include *The Shape of Words* collection exhibition at Tate Modern (2024-2026), the Algeria archive display in *Hamid Zénati: Two Steps at a Time* at Nottingham Contemporary (2024), and *Roots and Horizons*, programmed for the 3rd Biennial Black Midwest Symposium, in Dayton, Ohio (2024). Their writing appears or is forthcoming in the *Journal of Black Studies*, *Settler Colonial Studies*, *African Arts*, and *Tate Papers*, among others.

Nada Shabout is a Regents Professor of Art History and the Coordinator of the Contemporary Arab and Muslim Cultural Studies Initiative (CAMCSI) at the University of North Texas. She is currently a Visiting Professor of Art History and a Senior Investigator at al Mawrid Arab Center for the Study of art at NYUAD. She is the founding president of the Association for Modern and Contemporary Art from the Arab World, Iran and Turkey (AMCA) and founding director of Modern Art Iraq Archive (MAIA). Shabout has published widely on modern and contemporary Arab and Iraqi art.

Przemysław Strożek is a curator at the Archiv der Avantgarden - Egidio Marzona in Dresden and a researcher at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. He organized many exhibitions, published academic texts on the history of the avant-garde, is the author of the book *Picturing the Workers' Olympics and the Spartakiads: Modernist and Avant-Garde Engagement with Sport in Central Europe and the USSR, 1920-1932* (2022) and co-editor of the volume *Abdelkader Lagta: Voyage Permanent* (2023). Together with Sara Lagnaoui, he co-curated the exhibition, *Ahmed Cherkaoui in Warsaw: Polish-Moroccan Artistic Relations, 1955-1980*, which was shown at the Zachęta National Gallery of Art in 2020.

Abigael van Alst is a postdoctoral research and teaching assistant at the Chair of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Institute of Art History, University of Zurich. Before joining the University of Zurich, she was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Art History Institute of NOVA University of Lisbon. Her current research focuses on artistic collectives and schools that emerged in the Maghreb during the 1960s, paying particular attention to their complex, often ambivalent engagement with the 'avant-garde'. She is the author of *Avant-Garde World Creation: Cosmogony and the Total Work of Art in Europe 1913-1923* (Routledge, 2025). Her writing has appeared in *Fabula LHT* and in De Gruyter's book series on *Comparative Studies* and *European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies*.

Isabel Wünsche is Professor of Art and Art History at Constructor University (previously International/Jacobs University Bremen) since 2001. She studied Art History, Classical and Christian Archaeology in Berlin, Moscow, Heidelberg, and Los Angeles and received her PhD from Heidelberg University. Her research interests are European modernism and its global dissemination, the avant-garde movements, abstract art, and émigré networks. Her most important publications include

Biocentrism and Modernism (2011), *Meanings of Abstract Art: Between Nature and Theory* (2012), *The Organic School of the Russian Avant-Garde: Nature's Creative Principles* (2015), *Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists in Her Circle* (2016), *Practices of Abstract Art: Between Anarchism and Appropriation* (2016), *The Routledge Companion to Expressionism in a Transnational Context* (2018), *Bauhaus Diaspora and Beyond: Transforming Education through Art, Design and Architecture* (2019), *100 Years On: Revisiting the First Russian Art Exhibition of 1922* (2022), as well as the essays "From Universal Visual World Language to Global Cross-cultural Dialogue," in *Representing and Understanding Abstraction Today* (2024) and "Abstraction: On Beyond the Western World", in *ARS*, vol. 58 (2025), special issue on Contemporary Painting: Contexts and Parallels.