

FAAD and LERC at NDU inaugurate “Lebanese Diaspora” collective art exhibition
Wednesday 17th March 2010, Dome, Beirut City Center
Reported by Elie Nabhan, Elias Sfeir, Basma Abdel Khalek

The Faculty of Architecture, Art and Design, in collaboration with the Lebanese Emigration Research Center at Notre Dame University, Louaize, and under the auspices of the Lebanese Minister of Culture, H.E. Mr. Salim Wardy, inaugurated the *Lebanese Diaspora* collective art exhibition at the Dome City Center in downtown Beirut.

Those present at the event included the Lebanese Minister of Culture, H.E. Mr. Salim Wardy; H.E. the Ambassador of Mexico, Mr. Jorge Alvarez; high ranking officials from the Venezuelan Embassy in Beirut; the General Manager of Jeita Grotto, Mr. Nabil Haddad; the Head of Research Department at Byblos Bank, Mr. Nassib Ghobril; members of the World Lebanese Cultural Union, Mr. George Faddoul and Mr. Munir Atiyeh Abou Jaoude; members of RJ Liban Mr. Naji Farah and Ms. Cynthia Abou Jaoude; President of NDU and Honorary Chairperson of the Exhibition, Fr. Walid Moussa; Director of Public Relations Office at NDU, Mr. Suheil Matar; NDU family and faculty members; the Philatelic Iconography Consultant for the exhibition, Mrs. Huda Taleb Srage; friends of LERC and members of the Talhouk and Pualuan families; LERC Program Developer, Mr. Amin Nehme accompanied by family members; LERC Latin America Liaison Officer, Mr. Roberto Khatlab; NDU’s resident Fulbright Fellow, Dr. George Abdelnour; LERC Visiting Researcher, Mr. Andreas Wischnat; LERC Program Manager, Ms. Basma Abdel Khalek; LERC Indexer, Ms. Liliane Haddad; LERC Indexer and Website Editor, Mr. Elie Nabhan, and LERC IT Support, Mr. Elias Sfeir.



Cutting the inauguration ribbon: (from left to right) Fr. W. Moussa, Mr. S. Matar with H.E. Mr. S. Wardy (Mar 2010).

With the white ribbon cut and the inauguration underway, Ms. Danielle Zaccour, Chair of the Exhibition, declared the exhibition opened and gave a warm welcome to all, especially to H.E. Mr. Salim Wardy under whose auspices the event was being held.

The theme of the Lebanese emigration of great importance in the history of the country, she said, presented a challenge to both the artists and the organizers of exhibition. Visualizing the positive impact of the diaspora on the mother land was a challenge that was picked up by the artists, reflecting in a wide range of media, whether in painting or photography.



H.E. Mr. J. Alvarez (third left) and H.E. Mr. S. Wardy (second right) with other guests in keen attention (Mar 2010).

With a rich history in organizing such activities she believed NDU would this time surpass itself. The artists attracted to the exhibition have come from Lebanon and abroad and have contributed to improve the image of Lebanon culturally, she added. She thanked all those who had worked with her closely, the artists themselves, the organizing committee members, the jury board composed of respected authorities, Solidere who helped to provide a cultural arena in downtown Beirut, and the support of Fr. Walid Moussa, which taken together contributed to the success of the event.



Dr. G. Abdelnour reading an address on behalf of Ms. Guita Hourani and Dr. Sensenig-Dabbous (Mar 2010).

Dr. George Abdelnour delivered a speech on behalf of LERC Director Guita Hourani, thanking the artists for responding and bringing to fruition the vision she had of representing Lebanese migration in visual arts and in creating a visual memory of the Lebanese diaspora. It was because of her vision that artists from around the world were called to reflect on their personal relationships to migration.

One essential point of the exhibition was also to establish the first Art Gallery of the Lebanese Diaspora at the Lebanon and Migration Museum at NDU with the hope that many of the artists would donate their work to the University, to become part of the permanent exhibition.

Dr. Abdelnour then thanked H.E. Salim Wardy for his patronage of the exhibition, Fr. Walid Moussa for his precious and continued support of LERC, and Mr. Habib Melki, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Art and Design at NDU and all the staff who organized and prepared this event in collaboration with the LERC team.



Fr. W. Moussa delivers his speech at the exhibition's inauguration (Mar 2010).

For his part Fr. Walid Moussa welcomed all those present to the opening and mentioned that when young he was inspired by a poem that Lebanese emigrants used to refer to, poetry about the love and passion of returning to Lebanon.

Artists, he said, who migrated and spread their love of Lebanon through their culture forever retained the beauty of Lebanon in their eyes. Lebanon was always a magnet attracting her children to return. Today, he said, the patriotism of these artistic ambassadors is reflected in their paintings and their artistic photography.



H.E. Mr. S. Wardy talks about contemporary art, the diaspora and the collective exhibition in Beirut (Mar 2010).

H.E. Mr. Wardy elaborated further. Lebanese artists ventured into the diaspora with only their potentials to imagine and create and in the process achieve fame. The exhibition, he said, shows the artists coming back to their roots to present their works. He thanked NDU for its efforts in bringing together these talents from the diaspora in one collective exhibition in the heart of Beirut.

Contemporary art is the vehicle whereby many civilizations have preserved their traditions, much like the Phoenicians. This kind of art, he said, has now become a part of the people's daily behavior and since the artists have expressed their own migratory experiences and emotions, the exhibition can be considered as tribute to the era of migration in Lebanon.

The Minister went on to congratulate those involved in this artistic effort, thanking all the artists involved who answered the call for paintings, to present Lebanese art as a mirror of the uniqueness of the Lebanese individual.

Ms. Jocelyn Issa, Sponsorship Coordinator, on behalf of the NDU Sponsorship Office, expressed her sincere appreciation and gratitude to the sponsoring companies for their generous contributions in helping to organize the exhibition, especially in the current economic and political climate. These sponsors included Khatib Al-Alami, Emile Azar and Sons, and Middle East Power Systems.



Flavia Codsi, on receiving the first prize (second right) from Fr. W. Moussa in the presence of H.E. Mr. S. Wardy (right) and Dr. G. Abdelnour (far left). (Mar 2010).



Winning painting *I Love Lebanon* by artist Flavia Codsí (Mar 2010).

The distribution of prizes then took place. Third Prize of US\$1000 went to Rania Matar for her photograph, *Barbie Girl, Haret Hreik, Beirut, 2006*; Second Prize of US\$ 3000 went to Alfred Tarazi for his collage, *Hijra 1*; the First Prize of US\$ 5000 was awarded by Fr. Walid Moussa to Flavia Codsí for her acrylic and oil painting *I Love Lebanon*.



Artist Flavia Codsí explains the emotions behind the painting to H.E. Mr. S. Wardy as Fr. W. Moussa looks on (Mar 2010).

With formalities concluded, the public passed into the exhibition itself to view the various works on display. Soon enough the place was humming with people and groups of all ages taking keen interest in the art works presented. Drinks and cocktails were served, with many viewers staying on till early evening.



H.E. Mr. J. Alvarez (right) in discussion with Fr. F. Bou Chebl (left) and Mr. Georges Faddoul from WLCU. (Mar. 2010)



LERC team and dignitaries at the event:(from left to right) Mr. E. Sfeir, Mr. E. Nabhan, Mrs. L. Haddad, H.E. Mr. S. Wardy, Fr. W. Moussa, Ms. B. Abdel Khalek , Mr. A. Nehme, Mr. N. Ghobril and Mr. R. Khatlab (Mar 2010).



LERC team stands proud with H.E. Mr. J. Alvarez (fourth right) (Mar 2010).



Second prize: the collage *Hijra 1* by Alfred Tarazi (Mar 2010).



Third prize: the photograph *Barbie Girl, Harek Hreik*, 2006 by Rania Matar (Mar. 2010)