



International Association of Contemporary Iraqi Studies

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SOAS, University of London

Abstract of paper to be presented at the conference.

For details of the conference programme go to www.iraqistudies.org

Speaker: Nada Shabout, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and University of North Texas

Title: Modernity Denied: Iraqi Art, Monuments and Artists

Abstract:

The destruction of modern history and heritage in Iraq during the years of sanctions and following the US-led invasion warrants much discussion. The absence of an art historical narrative for Iraqi modern art has been a problem of multiple dimensions. Excluded from the hegemonic Western art historical canon, efforts to assert its aesthetics and identities through studying its works are hindered by the absence of a local (Iraqi) context, and thus further contribute to its historical invisibility.

For the past Four years I have been working on constructing a context (a frame) within which objects (works of art) are to be located, as well as constructing a virtual archive of lost works of the Iraqi Museum of Modern Art. This presentation will address the following: the looting and destruction of the Iraqi Museum of Modern Art and the current state of its collection in view of the lack of international attention and funds for restoration and preservation of the few works retrieved or organized action to stop trafficking of the stolen works in view of the destruction of its archives; the state and fate of modern public monuments in Iraq and the policy of erasure followed for purging aspects of history from Iraq's collective memory; and the state of artists and contemporary Iraqi art production.