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NECESSARY NUDES: ḤADĀTHA AND MU‘ĀṢIRA IN THE LIVES OF MODERN LEBANESE

In Beirut between 1920 and 1940, the fine-art nude was a necessary genre. Exhibitions of these pictures put audiences on display as much as nudes. Thus, these events enable probing the role of art at intercultural junctures and understanding the experience of self-modernizing subjects outside metropolitan locales. *Al-ḥadātha* and *al-mu‘āṣira* are analyzed as complementary but noninterchangeable aspects of the modernizing project, to argue that viewing art and appreciating nudes were necessary components of an urban, modern identity for Mandate-era Beirutis. The concept of dislocation is introduced to explore why artists such as Moustapha Farroukh employed academic art formulae to intervene in representational conventions and, in doing so, dislocated common ways of seeing and relating to “Easterners.” Nude paintings evince the importance of intellectuals’ physical and aesthetic experiences in the production of modernity. Moreover, they complicate the common idea that “authenticity” opposed “modernity” in Arab and colonial settings.