



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

*JAM'IYYAT AL-FANN* (THE ARAB ARTISTS' GROUP): A  
CRITICAL CARTOGRAPHY OF THE ART SCENE IN JORDAN  
THROUGH THE ARCHIVE (1970 – 1980)

by  
YASSMEEN DAUD TUKAN

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Department of Fine Arts and Art History  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
at the American University of Beirut

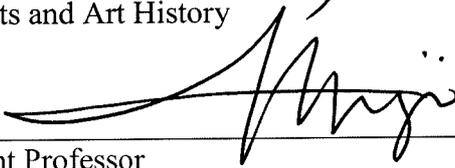
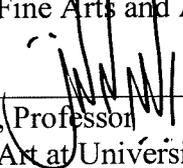
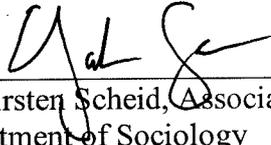
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Yassmeen Daud Tukan for Master of Arts  
Major: History of Art and Curating

Title: *Jam'iyyat al-Fann* (The Arab Artists' Group): A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980)

This thesis, which consists of a research paper and an exhibition, provides a historical survey and critical cartography of the emergence of art institutions in Jordan. Thematically, the study revolves around The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association (previously known as *Jam'iyyat al-Fann*, or The Arab Artists' Group). During the 1970s, the association, which has since faded into obscurity, attempted to establish a mass artist organization in Jordan. Its members played a central role in formulating a progressive cultural program and politics for the arts and culture. This thesis argues that the association, its agenda, and its politics were crucially shaped by regional conflict and war, as well as and, most important, by their commitment to the Palestinian struggle. The influx of Palestinian artists into Jordan, in addition to the solidarity of many artists in the Middle East with the Palestinian cause, had both a direct and an indirect impact on the activities of the association, and later on the establishment of the art scene in Jordan. Ultimately, the attempts of the association's members to institute a mass artist organization in Jordan failed. I argue that this "failure" was in many respects politically determined, as the association's program became suspicious from both political and national standpoints. Methodologically, this research paper and the accompanying eponymous exhibition (which opened in Amman, Jordan, on January 25, 2020) provide an art historical account of the emerging art scene in Amman. This thesis focuses on the role of the association and its impact on or relation to the art scene through the notion of the "archive."

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The art scene in Jordan can be seen as a map consisting of various artist organizations that emerged within a highly politicized environment during the last decades of the twentieth century. These organizations were the product of Jordan's constantly shifting cultural and political landscape. Various art institutions operating in Jordan, from the 1970s onward, were made up of many individuals of diverse social and political backgrounds: from refugees to members of the royal family to both Arabs and foreigners who came to Jordan seeking asylum from regional conflicts and wars. From its inception, the art scene in Jordan was constructed and animated by various forces and art institutions, each with a distinct cultural program, ideology, and political agenda that reflected ethnic, class, and political values. Prominent among these institutions was The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association (previously known as *Jam'iyyat al-Fann*, or The Arab Artists' Group). Consisting of twenty-seven artists, the group was established in Amman in 1975. It would eventually be renamed *Rabita li-l-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin al-'Urduniyyin* (The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association).

The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association (hereafter referred to as "the association") played a prominent role in the constitution of the art scene in Jordan (1970 – 1980). It differed from other art institutions in the country by offering a critical and cultural program with fellow art initiatives in the region (such as *al-Ittihad al-'amm li-l-Fannanin at-Tashkiliyyin al-'arab*, or The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists). Some believed that Palestinian artists, or those sympathetic to the cause, used this association to self-organize and to narrate or exhibit their experience of displacement or political beliefs. This led to a complex political and cultural climate among other associations and art institutions operating in Jordan.

This thesis, which consists of a research paper and an exhibition, offers a critical survey of the local and institutional artistic practices that emerged in Jordan during the 1970s. It is based on extensive archival research and interviews conducted with numerous Jordanian artists. In this project, I construct an art historical, curatorial, and “critical cartography”<sup>1</sup> of the art scene in Jordan, with a particular focus on the role played by The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association. I argue that the association played an important role in acting as a catalyst in the constitution of the Jordanian art scene. Moreover, my thesis concludes that both the question of Palestine and the conflict with Israel played key political and cultural roles in the establishment of the Jordanian art and art institutional scene during the 1970s.

This thesis is shaped by the theoretical engagement with the notion of the “archive,” as it has been theorized by Jacques Derrida in *Archive Fever*,<sup>2</sup> and by the examination of the use of archives in contemporary art practice, as in Hal Foster’s “An Archival Impulse.”<sup>3</sup> With recourse to both, I concentrate on the broader political significance of the “archive” and its current popularity among cultural producers in the region. My main question concerning various regional curatorial practices and exhibitions, as well as with regard to my own project, is: What role does the archive play in our understanding of artistic practices? I pose this question specifically in relation to the rise of the art scene in Jordan. I ask how we can use the archive to construct a history of The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association and of the Jordanian art scene in general. From art historical and political perspectives, the research

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<sup>1</sup> “Critical cartography” refers Fredric Jameson’s assertion in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* regarding the “[c]ognitive map of the alienated city: a practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction of reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile alternative trajectories.” Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 51.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” *October*, vol. 110 (Autumn 2004): 3–22.

paper and exhibition raise the question of the role of Palestine in the constitution of Jordan's art scene as well as the part it played in other regional cultural institutions and collaborations.

The thesis encompasses three main chapters. Chapter One engages with the political context in Jordan and in the Arab region, which had a significant impact on the establishment of the association and the Jordanian art scene. In this chapter, I analyze the effect of regional wars, conflicts, and power dynamics during the 1970s and 1980s. I investigate how the political and cultural climate in Jordan enabled the activities of many local art institutions, particularly those of the association. The chapter also asks: What was the relationship between The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association and other local art institutions? A sociopolitical overview helps us to better understand the urgent need to revisit the role of the archive in Jordan, in general, and its art institutions, in particular.

Chapter Two deals with the problematics of archival practices in Jordan by focusing on my experience with accessing two archival institutions, both of which are limited, small, and overly protected. The National Library of Jordan and the University of Jordan Library are the main official archival institutions in Amman; at both, I found sources for this research paper and the exhibition. My experience working with these institutions also determined my choice for embracing the "archive" as the main, outlined, methodological approach for this study. The archive helps to historicize the art scene in Jordan—in particular, The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, since little has been written about the subject.

Chapter Three focuses on my project's methodological approach by analyzing the collected materials and treating them as artifacts that help to construct the narrative. In this chapter, I work with archival information that concerns the association as well as the art scene. I draw on unpublished, destroyed, lost, and forgotten materials, such as *Malamih al-Tajriba al-Tashkiliyya al-'Urduniyya wa Mukawinatuha* (The Features of the Jordanian Fine Arts Experience and Its Components), written by Mahmoud Taha, and an episode of the

show *Funun Tashkiliyya* (Fine Arts), produced for Jordanian television by Fuad Mimi. The study of these materials proposes an art historical narrative that many publications have previously neglected. Here, I also want to emphasize that the association suffered from political and economic repression and restrictions.

My thesis also consists of an exhibition, which opened in Amman, Jordan, on January 25, 2020. Here, I set on view some of the archival materials, along with reproductions of artworks. I displayed the materials in layers in order to highlight the archival gaps, ideological superimpositions, and distortions. The archival materials shed light on the history of the association and on its impact on the art scene in Jordan. The project will be accompanied by an upcoming seminar and another series of exhibitions, which will display works of art made by members of the association. Finally, I will entrust some of the archival materials to local institutions to make available to future scholars and researchers.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE POLITICAL AND ART SCENE OF JORDAN AND THE ARAB REGION

The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association was a key art institution that played a most substantive role in the establishment of an art scene in Jordan. It was also among the few organizations in the Arab region to have directly sprung out of political unrest around the question of Palestine. This association offered a space to reflect on and impact the political movements of the time. In order to better understand the dynamics and significance of this association in relation to the art scene in Jordan, I consider the development of the art scene in Jordan during the 1970s and 1980s within the context of the country's history during the second half of the twentieth century.

#### **2.1 The Palestinian Presence in Jordan**

Since its establishment in 1946, at the end of World War II, Jordan has been at the crossroads of major regional conflicts. A series of political events immediately after the war, connected to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, led to the displacement of more than 750,000 Palestinian Arabs.<sup>4</sup> In 1947, the United Nations adopted Resolution 181, which ordered the division of Great Britain's former Palestinian mandate into Arab and Jewish states by 1948, when the British Mandate was scheduled to come to an end. After the Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1948, the majority of refugees fled from their homes to camps in Jordan and other countries in the region. Today, more than half of the Jordanian population is made up of Palestinians.<sup>5</sup> The year 1948 marked a pivotal moment in the history of Palestine and Jordan.

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<sup>4</sup> "Palestine Refugees," United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), accessed August 20, 2019, <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>.

<sup>5</sup> "Assessment for Palestinians in Jordan," Minorities at Risk (MAR), accessed September 10, 2019, <http://www.mar.umd.edu/assessment.asp?groupId=66302>.

This forced exodus, known as *Al-Nakba* (or “the Catastrophe”), shaped the sense of national identity for many generations in the Palestinian diaspora following the occupation of their lands and their rising sense of statelessness. In Jordan, the first waves of Palestinian refugees, registered between 1948 and 1954, were given full Jordanian citizenship, along with other cultural and political privileges.<sup>6</sup>

In the late 1940s, Palestinians in Jordan lacked formal leadership and faced multiple limitations in their political and cultural milieus. Over several decades after losing the 1948 war, a number of political Palestinian organizations began to form in the region. Among them was the Palestinian National Movement, whose leadership had a strong following among the Palestinian refugees in Jordan. The call for armed struggle resulted in the establishment of armed resistance movements operating from Jordan. In 1964, *Munazzamat at-Tahrīr al-Filasṭīniyyah* (The Palestine Liberation Organization, or the PLO) was formally recognized by the Arab League as the national representative of the Palestinian diaspora, bringing together various Palestinian groups under its banner.<sup>7</sup> The PLO’s political agenda called for the liberation of Palestine, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, and the repatriation of Palestinians to their homeland.<sup>8</sup>

The PLO’s status within Jordan followed multiple political contestations regarding the presence of “foreign” political parties within a nation-state. Prior to 1957, Jordanian political parties were based on a solid ideological foundation. However, after an attempted

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<sup>6</sup> “General Provisions,” Jordanian Nationality Law, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4ea13.html>.

<sup>7</sup> At the time, the PLO was dominated by three large guerrilla divisions: Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). All three shared a common platform for articulating their political aspirations of liberation and struggle. Dina Matar, *PLO Cultural Activism: Mediating Liberation Aesthetics in Revolutionary Contexts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 3.

<sup>8</sup> In 1974, the PLO was announced as the formal representative of the Palestinian people at the Arab League summit in Rabat, Morocco, in 1974. Since then, the PLO has represented Palestine in the United Nations and other international organizations. The Department of Culture and Arts, which was founded in 1966, dealt with cultural and artistic affairs in Jordan and cooperated with writers, artists, and intellectuals to support their activities. Amad Hani, *Cultural Policy in Jordan* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1981), 20.

coup in April 1957, led by Arab nationalists trying to overthrow the monarchy, King Hussein (r. 1952 – 1999) dissolved the parliament and outlawed political parties in Jordan.<sup>9</sup> This failed coup, which took place at large army barracks in Al-Zarqa (northeast of Jordan) between Bedouin loyalists and the Arab nationalists, led to political parties being outlawed and Jordan being placed under martial law.<sup>10</sup>

The Six-Day War broke out in 1967 between Israel and the Arab countries, and resulted in military defeat for the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian forces. It led to the occupation of the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula by the Israeli army. As a result of the Israeli occupation, another wave of Palestinian refugees fled into Jordan and other countries in the region.

## **2.2 The Emergence of Art Institutions in Jordan in 1970**

Although the Six-Day War had a devastating political effect on the region, it also shifted and raised political and cultural awareness, leading to the intersection of cultural and artistic scenes with the political realm. An art scene started to develop in Amman along the lines of political solidarity with Palestinians across the Arab world. At the same time, the increased presence of Palestinians was perceived as a potential threat to Jordan's stability, and led to tensions between Jordanians and Palestinians.

It was during this politically charged period that several art institutions emerged in Amman. In the 1970s, five major art institutions came into prominence in Jordan: *Ma 'had Muhanna Aldurra li-l-Funun al-Jamila* (The Institute of Muhanna Durra for Fine Arts) (1970), *Ma 'had Fahrelnissa Zeid li-l-Funun al-Jamila* (The Fahrelnissa Zeid Institute of Fine Arts) (1975 – 1991), *Al-Jam 'iyya al-Malakiyya li-l-Funun al-Jamila wa-l-Mathaf al-Watani*

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<sup>9</sup> Ellen Lust, "The decline of Jordanian political parties: Myth or reality?," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 33 (November 2001): 545.

<sup>10</sup> Uriel Dann, *King Hussein and the Challenge of Arab Radicalism: Jordan, 1955–1967* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 39.

(The Royal Society of Fine Arts and The Jordan National Gallery) (1979/1980), *Darat Al Funun* (A Home for the Arts) (1988), and The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association (previously known as The Arab Artists' Group).<sup>11</sup> Each of these organizations was the result of individual and collective endeavors that were established by recognized artists, art collectors, or artist groups. Some of the cultural agents involved in the establishment of the art scene in Amman during the 1970s, and beyond, came from foreign countries. Major organizers and art activists included Turks, Syrians, and Iraqis, as well as a few Western artists such as Italians and Britons.

### **2.3 The Twentieth-Century Art Scene in Jordan and the Arab World**

The emergence of art organizations in Jordan must be viewed within the wider context of the region. Many of those who played a key role in establishing the art scene in Amman were knowledgeable about various modern artists and artist groups emerging in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq.<sup>12</sup> The regional art scene and its interplay with politics have played essential roles in the development of the art scene in Amman. As far back as the 1940s, many art groups and collectives were emerging in the Arab region. In Cairo, for example, Hussein Youssef Amin, the founder of *Jama'at al-Fann al-Mu'asir* (The Contemporary Art Group, or the CAG), introduced artistic practices that sought to be different from the Western academic styles.<sup>13</sup> The CAG focused on contemporary art, grounding its belief in “artistic freedom,

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<sup>11</sup> There were several attempts to establish clubs, unions, or associations for artists and writers in 1950s, but due to ongoing political conflicts in the region, these initiatives did not last. Among the earliest attempts to establish an artist association was the symposium held at the *Ma'had al-Nahda fi Amman* (Renaissance Institute in Amman). The symposium showcased the works of ten artists and more than forty amateur students of different artistic practices. Rafik Lahham, *Rihlaty ma' al-Hayat wa- al-Fann (My Life Journey and Art)* (Amman: Greater Amman Municipality, 2011), 167.

<sup>12</sup> Yaser Dweik, President of The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association from 1980 to 1985, in discussion with the author, December 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Anneka Lenssen and Sarah Rogers, “Articulating the Contemporary,” in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, eds. Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017), 1326.

class consciousness, and commitment to social engagement.”<sup>14</sup> Many of the artists in Jordan studied in Egyptian art schools. Kayed Amr (b. 1947), for example, was among the earlier cohort of students who had studied at Helwan University in Cairo, where he was awarded a Bachelor of Arts in 1970.

In 1951, nine Baghdadi artists “drafted a manifesto to be publicly read at the opening of the inaugural exhibition of *Jama ‘at Baghdad li-l- Fann al- Hadith* (The Baghdad Group for Modern Art).”<sup>15</sup> Formulating their intention in terms of forging a localized approach to modern art, these artists commenced a process of cultural renewal that stemmed from the rediscovery of local tradition. What distinguished the Baghdad Group’s program from that of other groups in the region was its emphasis on artistic technique over subject matter.<sup>16</sup> The Baghdad Group saw the primacy of form as a key aspect for modernizing local art. It thus had a significant influence on many artists in Jordan, encouraging them to produce more innovative works. For instance, Mahmoud Taha (1942 – 2016), who studied at the Baghdad Academy of Fine Arts (and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts in 1968), embraced some innovations. Taha was advised by his professor, the Iraqi artist Kadhim Haydar (1932 – 1985)— a member of “Iraq’s modernist movement and a member of artists groups”<sup>17</sup>—to use calligraphy in his work. This advice was the turning point in Taha’s artistic practice, where he used calligraphy as a graphic form and was among the pioneers of the *Hurufiyya* art movement.”<sup>18</sup> Taha is also known as the “leading ceramicist in the Arab region.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 1328.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> “KADHIM HAYDER,” Barjeel Art Foundation, accessed January 20, 2020, <https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/artist/iraq/kadhim-hayder/>.

<sup>18</sup> Nelly Lama, “Pioneers of Jordan: Mahmoud Taha,” Darat al Funun, the Khalid Shoman Foundation, accessed September 10, 2019, [https://web.archive.org/web/20110703083208/http://www.daratalfunun.org/main/activit/press\\_clips/htm/taha.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20110703083208/http://www.daratalfunun.org/main/activit/press_clips/htm/taha.html).

<sup>19</sup> “Mahmoud TAHA (1942–2016),” NABAD, accessed January 16, 2020, <http://www.nabadartgallery.com/?q=node/34>.

In 1962, Syrian artists Fateh al-Moudarres (1922 – 1999), Mahmoud Daadouch (b. 1934), and Abdul Aziz Alloun (1934 – 2011) wrote an eleven-point manifesto for a *Harakat al-Funun al-Tashkiliyya fi Suriyya* (Plastic Arts Movement in Syria).<sup>20</sup> The manifesto, which resonated throughout the region, strove to revolutionize artistic practices in Syria through radical gestures and the rejection of literary norms. In other countries of the Arab world, artists formed groups in order to address similar concerns. Artists in Jordan were also aware of the developments of art groups in Syria, since many Syrians traveled to Amman during that time. Keram Nimri (b. 1944) is one of the artists who studied at the University of Damascus and received a BA degree in Arts in 1970. Being in Syria helped Nimri to make sculptures that incorporated innovative artistic techniques and a wide range of materials.

The 1967 Arab defeat in the Six-Day War and the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1970, which led to the decline of Pan-Arab leadership, had a powerful impact on Arab intellectuals.<sup>21</sup> Many Arab artists worked toward establishing a unified Arab Artists League, which aimed to centralize the political motif of their artistic production. The high demand for art and the development of new artistic production methods and contemporary theories contributed to the expansion of various art scenes in the region. Artists desired to further enrich and explore the use of different arts and themes in the formation of future Arab culture; however, the Palestinian struggle remained the most popular theme. These instances of regional expansion of new forms of artistic institutions, which ultimately also must be seen as part of local postcolonial developments, had a great impact on the Jordanian art scene.

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<sup>20</sup> Anneka Lenssen, Sarah Rogers, and Nada Shabout, “The Plastic Art Movement/Damascus,” in *Modern Art in the Arab World* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2017), 7.

<sup>21</sup> Nada Shabout, “Transregional Solidarity: The Arab Biennial in Retrospect,” accessed May 20, 2019, <http://mezosfera.org/transregional-solidarity/>.

## 2.4 The Growth of the Art Scene in Jordan

Jordan did not have such a burgeoning art scene as other countries in the Arab region until the 1970s. Although artists were active in Jordan from the 1930s, one cannot speak of an art scene comparable to that of Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, or Syria. In this section, I provide an overview of the growth of the art scene in Jordan and its institutionalization. This eventually served as an early infrastructure for the establishment of The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association in question.

The emergence of art institutions and a cultural art scene in Jordan fully started to develop in the 1970s, reaching its peak in the 1980s. For example, in 1970, The Institute of Muhanna Durra for Fine Arts became the first art institution to be established in Jordan. The institute offered education opportunities to art students from different strata of society, and regardless of their class, age, or status. After completing their course training, all students exhibited their works at the Department of Culture and Arts Hall acting under the support of the Ministry of Culture and Youth.<sup>22</sup> Another institution of the 1970s was The Fahrelnissa Zeid Institute of Fine Arts. Established by Fahrelnissa Zeid (1931 – 1991),<sup>23</sup> the institute provided art education to a female student body, which also belonged to an “elite” class. The classes and discussions surrounding her former students’ work took place at her own home on a weekly basis. Another institution of the late 1970s was *Al-Jam'iyya al-Malakiyya li-l-Funun al-Jamila wa-l-Mathaf al-Watani* (The Royal Society of Fine Arts and The Jordan National Gallery). This society was established by Wijdan Al-Hashemi (b. 1939) in 1979/1980, and was primarily dedicated to the promotion of the arts from Arab and Islamic countries.

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<sup>22</sup> Yaser Dweik in discussion with the author, June 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Fahrelnissa Zeid moved to Amman after the death of her husband, HRH Prince Zeid bin Al Hussein in the early 1970s.

Art education in Jordan was also heavily impacted by the region's constantly shifting political and cultural landscape. In 1980, a Fine Arts Department was established at Yarmouk University (in northern Jordan).<sup>24</sup> It initially enrolled fifty students, and today has more than five hundred studying art (Fig. 1).<sup>25</sup> The original faculty members of the Fine Arts Department included Ahmad Na'wash (1934 – 2017),<sup>26</sup> Aziz Amoura (1944 – 2017), Mahmoud Sadeq (b. 1945), and the prominent Iraqi artist Rafa Nasiri (1940 – 2013), who introduced new artistic techniques and helped to establish the department's printmaking division. Another example is *Darat Al Funun* (A Home for the Arts), a nonprofit organization established in 1988 by Suha Shoman (b. 1944)—one of Zeid's most prominent students—with her husband Khalid Shoman, a banking executive and art philanthropist. *Darat Al Funun* had a hybrid agenda, dedicating itself to art as well as to establishing bridges between artists in the Arab region, while connecting them to art institutions in the West. *Darat Al Funun* offered support to local and regional artists, assisting them with the production and promotion of their work.

Finally, The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, which as it will be shown below grew out of The Arab Artists' Group, occupied a more distinct and prominent position among local art institutions. It was this organization that first attempted to establish a nationwide mass artist association resembling other artist associations and unions in the region. The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association sought inspiration from the cultural and political agendas of progressive art institutions in Cairo, Bagdad, and Syria, as outlined above. The association did not necessarily imitate the institutional structure or activities of other art

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<sup>24</sup> Yarmouk University has four departments: Fine Arts (painting, photography, ceramics, and sculpture), Applied Arts (interior design, and graphic design), Theatrical Arts (performing arts, including acting, stage design, and directing), and Music (both Western and Arabic, classical and modern styles). Yarmouk University, academic brochure (Amman: Yarmouk University, 1980). Personal archive of Yaser Dweik.

<sup>25</sup> "About Us," Yarmouk University, Faculty of Fine Arts, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://finearts.yu.edu.jo>.

<sup>26</sup> Dirar Na'wash (the son of Ahmad Na'wash) in discussion with the author, August, 2019.

associations and groups in the Middle East; instead, it aimed to unite and bring together artists from different nations (but primarily, from Palestine).

## **2.5 Historical Background of *Jam'iyyat al-Fann* (The Arab Artists' Group)**

The following overview covers the association's formation as *Jam'iyyat al-Fann* (The Arab Artists' Group) and its development into The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association. The transition from "group" to "association" also highlighted the impact of the state as well as other factors in what could be regarded as the failure of this association to survive and remain an influential art institution comparable to others. I argue that the art scene in Jordan was a product of many art institutions, but it also included a key contribution made by the members of The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association. Although little has been written about the association from a critical angle, I aim to develop an exploration of its first exhibition, titled *Ma'rid 15 'Ayar* (*The May 15th Exhibition*), adding to the discourse of development in Jordan and the Arab region.

Some of the motives in the establishment of the art scene in Jordan may be traced to particular historical events. In 1968, political tensions began to escalate between the Jordanian authorities and the PLO, reaching an apogee during *Ma'raket al-Karama* (the Battle of Karama) and *Aylul al-Aswad* (Black September) in 1970. The military conflicts between the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and the PLO also encouraged a group of twenty-seven artists of Palestinian and Jordanian origin to establish The Arab Artists' Group in 1975. The artists' engagement with pro-Palestinian politics during the 1970s followed other trends in the history of the PLO and its interaction with other structures in the region. The PLO's ability to build impressive political infrastructures—what has been perceived as a "state within a state," or within other states in the region—also accounted for the popularity and influence of this political organization. Most of the Arab countries "were willing to support

the PLO as long as they kept in line with the regional policies of the Arab host countries.”<sup>27</sup>

The Arab Artists’ Group was established in the background of these historical events. The group’s main objective was to invite and accept local and regional artists to participate in its artistic program as long as the artists met the qualifications set by the association’s administrative board members.

Following Black September, a group of twenty-seven Palestinian and Jordanian artists established The Arab Artists’ Group in 1975.<sup>28</sup> These artists were motivated to create an association that would represent them within Jordan. The Arab Artists’ Group was legally recognized as an association three times: the first time was in 1975, as The Arab Artists’ Group; the second time was in 1976, when it was officially registered under a new name, *Rabita li-l-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin fi al-’Urdun* (The Plastic Artists Association in Jordan),<sup>29</sup> whose main objective was to invite and accept local and other Arab artists from the region to be part of its artistic program;<sup>30</sup> and the third was in 1977, when it was forced to change its name again to *Rabita li-l-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin al-’Urduniyyin* (The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association) (Fig. 2). The change of the name from artist “group” to “association” was significant, as its main scope was to insist that the association was a Jordanian entity (and not a Palestinian artist group within Jordan). The Jordanian authorities retained an open membership policy, but stipulated that the association was to be run by Jordanian nationals. The nationalistic turn was a manifestation in the changing political and ideological landscape during this decade in Jordan. The twofold transformation of the association’s title reveals a new relationship and political dynamic between the Palestinian

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<sup>27</sup> Farid el-Khazen, “The Rise and Fall of the PLO,” *The National Interest*, no. 10, Winter 1987/88, 40.

<sup>28</sup> This information was extracted from three primary sources: Yaser Dweik in discussion with the author, August 2018; Abdel Raouf Shamoun, *Afkar wa Tumuhāt li-l-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin* (Ideas and Aspirations of the Association of Fine Artists), *Al Akhbar* newspaper, undated. Personal archive of Yaser Dweik; and Keram Nimri, *Al-Nizam al-’Asasi li Jam’iyyat al-Fann al-Tashkili al-Mu’asir fi al-’Urdun* (The Founding Statement of The Arab Artists’ Group in Jordan), 1975.

<sup>29</sup> Samia Zaru (artist) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

<sup>30</sup> *Al-Nizam al-’Asasi li Jam’iyyat al-Fann al-Tashkili al-Mu’asir fi al-’Urdun* (The Founding Statement of The Arab Artists’ Group in Jordan), 1975. Personal archive of Keram Nimri.

and pro-Palestinian artists and the Jordanian government. The association sought to promote and exhibit the work of these artists locally, regionally, and internationally. Moreover, the association had successfully established relationships with various cultural centers in Jordan as well as regional organizations.

There are no records of relationships or collaborations between the association and the other local art institutions at that time. In discussions and interviews I conducted, former members of the association claimed that this organization was often marginalized, especially when compared to other local art institutions.<sup>31</sup> Due to its Palestinian commitment, the association was often singled out and perceived as “different” from other art organizations. This may also explain why this association’s main objective was to expand and diversify the collaborations between the artists and cultural institutions of local and regional importance. Among the cultural collaborations, it is significant to mention the relationship between the association and the *Al-Ittihad al-‘amm li-l-fannanin at-tashkiliyin al-‘arab* (The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists). The latter was a regional art organization whose initiatives had the goal of creating a framework for coordinating artistic production across the entire Arab world—a major step in the consolidation of Arab art as a transnational project.<sup>32</sup> The presence of the association in The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists provided some sort of escape from its more restricted activities within Jordan. Its affiliation with a regional art organization allowed for a free discussion of its concerns with artists from the Middle East.

Many of the artists in the association were originally Palestinians and politically aligned with different Palestinian liberation organizations. This was perceived as a threat to the national integrity of the Jordanian state. Artists’ ideological and political alliances with the PLO were particularly threatening (or, at least, were perceived as such) by the Jordanian

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<sup>31</sup> Yaser Dweik in discussion with the author, June 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Nada Shabout, “Transregional Solidarity: The Arab Biennial in Retrospect,” accessed May 20, 2019, <http://mezosfera.org/transregional-solidarity/>.

authorities. Although not tied politically or financially to the PLO, many of the artists involved in the establishment of this association supported the presence and the agenda of the Palestinian organization. Their sympathies were highly unpopular and were regarded with suspicion by the Jordanian officials.

The association organized exhibitions by cautiously navigating the highly charged political landscape of the time. Its members successfully established the first permanent exhibition space in Jabal El-Webdiah, across from the French Cultural Center, in Amman in late 1975.<sup>33</sup> The association's exhibition space was perceived as far more politicized and transgressive than exhibition venues created by other local art institutions, because the members invited artists from the region to share their experiences. The exhibition space in Jabal El-Webdiah allowed many artists to articulate and give form to the stress and anxiety created by the political realities in the Arab region. The occupation of Palestine and the enforcement imposed on the Palestinian homeland were among the main narratives for the artists of those generations. The formation of the association showcases a need that existed at the time: to establish a common ground for cultivating new opportunities and developing further dialogue among Jordanian artists. This space hosted several exhibitions organized by the members of the association, such as *Ma'rid 15 'Ayar (The May 15th Exhibition)* (1975/1980), which I will discuss as a case study in the following chapter; an art exhibition for students from Al-Zarqa under the supervision of Qassim Amoudi (1979); an exhibition of paintings by Adnan Yahya (1980); and the *First Exhibition of Portraits* (1980). The relationship between the association and other local cultural centers was successful. These collaborations bore witness to exhibitions such as *Paintings Exhibition* by Diana Hajjar Shamounki at the Goethe Institute (1976) and a collective show featuring the work of Saleh

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<sup>33</sup> Keram Nimri (artist) in discussion with the author, June 2018.

Abu Shindi, Hafith Qasis, Kayed Amro, and Mohammad Sayed, organized at the British Council Centre in Amman (1977).

Within the local cultural context, the association is believed to have been marginalized often, or is perceived by other organizations as a failed example of an art institution. I argue that this “failure” was, in many respects, politically determined. I also argue that a critical cartography of Jordanian artist organizations, and the role within it played by The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, must not be considered separately from the political context and power dynamics in the state of Jordan during the 1970s and 1980s. Politics, and especially the “Palestinian question,” has been a determining factor in the rise of the Jordanian art scene.

One significant aspect of the so-called “failure” of The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association is tightly linked to the archive. The dearth of archival materials around this organization has created multiple tensions regarding past processes, as well as how we interpret them in the present. The lack of documentation also raises challenges in writing a historicist narrative about the development of Jordanian art institutions. In what follows, I draw upon the notion of the archive—as interpreted by leading post-structuralist theorists—and inquire whether existing archival materials could nevertheless enable the construction of a narrative about the association’s role in the formation of the national history of Jordanian art.

## **2.6 The Establishment of the Association and the Skepticism toward It**

In 1965, *Qanun li-l-Jam‘iyyat wa-l-Hay‘at al-’Ijtima‘iyya* (The Law of Associations and Social Organizations) was publicly announced in *The Official Newspaper of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* (Fig. 3). The law set the regulations that all potential cultural associations should follow. Among these was that the total number of board members should

not exceed seven. These board members should not be affiliated with any political and/or religious parties. Any regular board meetings and/or official openings should be held in the presence of the Ministry of Culture and Arts representative.

*Al-Nizam al-'Asasi li Jam'iyyat al-Fann al-Tashkili al-Mu'asir fi al-'Urdun* (The Founding Statement of The Arab Artists' Group in Jordan) (Fig. 4) is one clear example of the impact that The Law of Associations and Social Organizations had on artistic circles. This statement includes several points, among which is a list of twenty-seven artists who were named as board members. The list, itself, exceeds the permitted number set by the state in The Law of Associations and Social Organizations. The founding members also appear to be dominated by men, with only four female artists. The female artists on the board played a significant role in teaching the arts. Among them was Afaf Arafat (1925 – 2017), who worked with UNRWA as an art expert from 1979 to 1981.<sup>34</sup> Arafat was known as an active member of the association from its early stages.

The founding statement also included official comments made by one of the officers at *Dairat al-Mukhabarat al-Ammah* (the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, or GID).<sup>35</sup> These comments do not appear to have been simple linguistic amendments, but rather official inquiries placed by the Jordanian authority asking whether any of the association's members were politically supported by Palestinian organizations (even though there was no proof of members being politically or financially affiliated with the PLO). Many of the association's artists I interviewed, however, confirmed that artists supported the agenda of the Palestinian organizations without receiving any financial support from foreign

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<sup>34</sup> Keram Nimri in discussion with the author, June 2018.

<sup>35</sup> *Dairat al-Mukhabarat al-Ammah* (the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate, or GID) is notorious for its extensive activities in Jordan and throughout the Middle East, as well as its cooperation with American, British, and Israeli intelligence. Through a complex spying system, it plays a central role in preserving stability in Jordan and monitoring seditious activity. "GID's Duties," General Intelligence Directorate, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://gid.gov.jo/ar>.

institutions.<sup>36</sup> It was the fear of outside interference that put the association under suspicion with the Jordanian authorities. As a result, the association's members started to withdraw from direct cultural activities; out of fear of political persecution, they stopped archiving their major political events and recording their meeting agendas and minutes. This also explains the scarcity of archival materials on the activities of the association in the current Jordanian archives.

No other Jordanian art institutions experienced as many official restrictions and limitations as did the association. For instance, The Institute of Muhanna Durra for Fine Arts has been seen, up to this moment, as a successful initiative that has been under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Arts since the 1970s. The Fahrelnissa Zeid Institute of Fine Arts—although a short-lived organization founded by a senior member of the royal family—was not subjected to scrutiny or criticism over its cultural agenda. The Royal Society of Fine Arts and The Jordan National Gallery, which did not put forward any specific political program, served as a platform for artists with common interests in promoting modern and contemporary Islamic art. The government did not intervene in the work of these organizations to the extent to which it scrutinized the association.<sup>37</sup> The board members of the Royal Society, for example, even occupied key roles in various sectors of the government. Unlike the work of the association's members, the work of the Royal Society was not constantly monitored by the government. Another example is *Darat al Funun*. This initiative turned into an influential cultural hub serving artists from the region through various programs and cultural activities. Its burgeoning activities made *Darat al Funun* stand out in the local, regional, and international art scene. As for the association, it was conceived

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<sup>36</sup> Keram Nimri and Yaser Dweik in discussion with the author, June 2018.

<sup>37</sup> The Royal Society of Fine Arts board members included: HRH Wijdan Al-Hashemi (Founder of The Royal Society of Fine Arts and The Jordan National Gallery), Dr. Mahmoud Samra, H.E. Dr. Kamel Abu Jaber, Mr. Mamdouh Bisharat, Mr. Khaled Bitar, Dr. Ahmad Chalabi, H.E. Tahir Hikmat, Dr. Hisham Al Khatib, Mrs. Samia Zaru, H.E. Farid Saad, Mr. Daoud Suleiman, Mr. Ja'afar Tukan, Mrs. Barbara Attallah, and Mr. Ali Ghandour.

and led by Palestinian Jordan-based artists who strived through their art to become tools for political consciousness and cultural empowerment. This explains why there has been constant monitoring of this artist organization from governmental representatives working to prevent potential political dissent from its members.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE PROBLEMATICS OF ARCHIVAL PRACTICES IN JORDAN

In August 2018, I came across two newspaper articles (Fig. 5) that influenced the direction of my thesis. The first article was written by the journalist Abdel Raouf Shamoun, and is titled *Afkar wa Tumuhāt li-l-Fannānin al-Tashkiliyyin* (Ideas and Aspirations of the Association of Fine Artists).<sup>38</sup> It explains the need to establish a formal association, with a space for artists to meet, discuss, and, most important, to exhibit their works. Although the article's date is missing from the document, I assumed that it coincided with the formation of the association, since it was familiar with the Shamoun's activities at the time. This also convinced me to investigate The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association further.

The second article was an interview with the artist Hafith Qasis, titled *Ahamiyat wujud Arshif li-l-Fann wa al-Fannānin al-Tashkiliyyin fi al-'Urdun* (The Importance of the Archive for Art and Artists in Jordan).<sup>39</sup> In it, Qasis highlights his concern about archival practices in Jordan. He suggests establishing an archive center that would collect and preserve information about artists, their practices, and their cultural activities. Why would there be an urgent need to establish an association and an archive for artists at a time when other institutions were emerging? What could this new association offer that was different from other institutions? Why was there a concern for archiving back in 1983, and where is the archive now? These main questions helped me to navigate through the collected materials through a particular lens. Today, the association shows that no archive center was ever built. Ultimately, I decided to redirect my research toward finding and studying the collected archival materials necessary to unravel the history of the association.

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<sup>38</sup> Abdel Raouf Shamoun, *Afkar wa Tumuhāt li-l-Fannānin al-Tashkiliyyin* (Ideas and Aspirations of the Association of Fine Artists), *Al Akhbar* newspaper, undated. Personal archive of Yaser Dweik.

<sup>39</sup> *Ahamiyat wujud Arshif li-l-Fann wa al-Fannānin al-Tashkiliyyin fi al-'Urdun* (The Importance of the Archive for Art and Artists in Jordan), *Al Dustor* newspaper, 1983. Personal archive of Hafith Qasis.

### 3.1 The Significance of Archival Practices

Today, archival exhibitions often highlight lesser-known archives discovered in the region. They examine particular periods or aspects of art history through the collection and display of rare archival materials. Artists and curators bring archives into museums and contemporary art spaces. Some treat them as “traces” and documents of historical moments, while others approach archives as artifacts, setting them on display as works of art. Thus, contemporary archival art carries the potential to create and establish new connections through engagement with archival materials. The archival process aims not only to collect traces of the past, but also to develop new relationships with the present. Recent exhibitions, such as *Past Disquiet: Narratives and Ghosts from the International Art Exhibition for Palestine 1978* (2018), curated by Kristine Khouri and Rasha Salti, have been organized around the idea of the archive. This exhibition engaged with the forgotten history of the *International Art Exhibition in Solidarity with Palestine* organized in Beirut in 1978. Another example is *Gregory Buchakjian: Abandoned Dwellings. Display of Systems* (2018), curated by Karina El Helou at Nicolai Sursock Museum, which drew on the narratives of the past and focused on the reemergence of forgotten stories of Beirut inhabitants. Archival exhibitions such as these not only portray diverse methodologies and curatorial strategies, but also trigger viewers to pay closer attention to “the gaps” opened up by the archives. Both *Past Disquiet* and *Abandoned Dwellings* displayed documents of a bygone era, revealing the silent voices of the individuals who produced these documents; they also treated archival materials as an art in itself. These exhibitions made archival research the central point of investigating the past, thus reasserting the significance and importance of the archive as a primary source in contemporary art.

### 3.2 Theoretical Engagements with the Notion of the Archive

Jacques Derrida and Hal Foster both introduced opposing and different approaches to the nature of the archive. Theoretically, the notion of the archive carries a broader definition, yet for the purpose of this research paper, along with the exhibition, I have adopted a more restricted and popular understanding of the archive as a collection of materials in different mediums and formats. Curatorially, the collected materials are being displayed in layers in order to give a comprehensive meaning to how the Jordanian art scene has been constructed through both inclusions and omissions. These layers highlight certain sociopolitical moments that impacted the establishment of the art scene in Jordan.

Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* offers a complete philosophical understanding of the notion of the archive. Derrida started by breaking down the term *arkhé* linguistically. Focusing on either nature or history, the term recalls two principles: *commencement* and *commandment*.<sup>40</sup> *Commencement* is where things take place at a certain time; *commandment* is where things are authorized to be organized into a system by a designated group of people. Derrida dealt further with the history of the archive to discover meanings that can be found in the word itself. The word *archive* comes from the Greek word *arkheion*, which refers to the house of the *archons*. The *arkheion* were places where documents were filed, while the *archons* were the individuals who guarded the documents, allowing them to be gathered, ordered, and protected. Archived files came into existence by means of private spaces transported into public spheres. Yet it does not necessarily follow that they went from being secret to non-secret, because an *archive* is a place of shelter; it “*shelters* itself from this memory which it also shelters: which comes down to saying also that it forgets.”<sup>41</sup> *Archive Fever* highlights Derrida's deconstruction of Freudian

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<sup>40</sup> I discuss the two principles of the *arkhé* using archival materials in Chapter Four.

<sup>41</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2.

psychoanalysis. Derrida returns to Freud in order to analyze the connection between the archives and human memory. For Derrida, the preservation of memory in the Freudian understanding is a “project of knowledge, of practice and of institution, community, family, domiciliation, consignment, ‘house’ or ‘museum,’ in the present state of its archivization.”<sup>42</sup> The archive, as a physical medium, holds a complex tension between remembering and forgetting.

Hal Foster’s “An Archival Impulse” examines the nature of contemporary archival art through the artistic practices of the contemporary artists Thomas Hirschhorn (b. 1957), Tacita Dean (b. 1965), and Sam Durant (b. 1961).<sup>43</sup> Each has adopted a different artistic practice that involves the archive. Hirschhorn’s approach is to “distribute ideas, liberate activity and radiate energy”<sup>44</sup> in targeting wider audiences for further engagements. Meanwhile, Dean’s method is known as collection in which she “recalls lost souls”<sup>45</sup> using different mediums of archival materials as her main source. Durant combines and engages with the archive through two historical moments of postwar American culture: late modern design (1940 – 1950s) and early postmodern art (1960s – 1970s).<sup>46</sup> He engages with original materials and their repetitions to offer a critical perspective.<sup>47</sup> His approach points out the “gaps” in contemporary practice, which are what differentiate Durant’s approach from Hirschhorn’s and Dean’s.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that each artist mentioned in “An Archival Impulse” has since changed their artistic practice. To further elaborate: Thomas Hirschhorn is known for his sculptures that are produced from various materials and assembled to create an imaginary reality. Tacita Dean’s conceptual work explores specific historical moments and formal elements of 16mm film (digital archives). Sam Durant’s recent work engages a variety of sociopolitical and cultural issues, unpacking historical unfairness and building connections to the effects of their aftermath.

<sup>44</sup> Hal Foster, “An Archival Impulse,” *October*, vol. 110 (Autumn 2004): 3–22, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Foster believes that these gaps motivate the audience to start a dialogue, which proves that these archival materials are both “active and even unstable.”<sup>48</sup> Although they differ in their artistic approach, they are not concerned with “critiques of representational totality and institutional integrity.”<sup>49</sup> These artists offer other methodologies to be considered within the institutions and beyond them. Foster suggests (at the time of his writing) that even though archival works may differ in their artistic format, they still share a notion of artistic practice as an “idiosyncratic probing into particular figures, objects, and events in modern art, philosophy, and history.”<sup>50</sup> The nature of contemporary archival art is “found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private.”<sup>51</sup> He argues that these contemporary artists seek to categorize the archive in order to physically generate lost or misplaced historical narratives in an institutional space. Foster stresses the fact that these “archives are not databases, they are recalcitrantly material, fragmentary, rather fungible,”<sup>52</sup> and instead invites “human interpretation, not machinic reprocessing.”<sup>53</sup> Foster believes that contemporary archives serve the purpose of establishing new connections with archival materials. These contemporary archival exhibitions not only rely on the traces of the past, but also generate new connections with the present.

The archive has also become a point of inquiry in fields such as anthropology, critical theory, and contemporary art. Several nongovernmental and nonprofit archival institutions were established with the intent of exploring the historiographical potential of the archive in parts of the Arab region. Among these institutions are: The Photography Archive of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), founded in

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

1987 in Jerusalem;<sup>54</sup> the Arab Image Foundation, established in Beirut in 1997 to collect, preserve, and study photographs from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Arab diaspora;<sup>55</sup> and UMAM Documentation and Research, the most recent institution, founded in Lebanon in 2004.<sup>56</sup> These archival institutions have since expanded their practice to showcase their materials and afford the public interactive experiences with them. In Jordan, however, archival institutions act as a shelter to preserve these materials with no public engagement. These materials therefore cannot be used or critically reviewed.

### 3.3 Directing Research toward Archival Deconstruction

By referencing Derrida and Foster, my thesis and exhibition seek to use theories of the archive in order to propose a cartographical map of the art scene in Jordan. This map—presented through the present research paper and the exhibition—establishes connections among particular players (such as The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association and other Jordanian institutions mentioned above). The map was assembled from archival materials collected from art institutions and artists in different forms, such as press releases, pamphlets, posters, and visual recordings.

To date, Jordan is a country that has a rare collection of documents that have been left unstudied. Recently, the situation began to change, as a collection of “excellent monographs treating diverse aspects of the politics, economy, demography and history of Jordan have

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<sup>54</sup> The Photography Archive of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) in Jerusalem was established by a group of Palestinian academics and intellectuals. PASSIA is an independent institution that offers diverse programs. “About Us,” Photography Archive of the Palestinian Academic Society of International Affairs, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://passia.org/page/1>.

<sup>55</sup> The Arab Image Foundation (AIF) offers both a digital platform and a physical space located in Beirut. Cultural practitioners, artists, researchers, and the public are encouraged to interact and exchange ideas using various archival materials available at the institution. “About Us,” Arab Image Foundation (AIF), accessed September 10, 2019,

<http://arabimagefoundation.com/getEntityFront?page=PageDetails&entityName=PageEntity&idEntity=1>.

<sup>56</sup> UMAM Documentation and Research aims to document and examine Lebanon’s conflict and history. UMAM serves as a platform that is accessible to the public for further engagement and interactions on issues concerning Lebanon. “About Us,” UMAM Documentation and Research, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://www.umam-dr.org/en/home/about-umam/1/advance-contents/2/our-vision>.

come out in recent years.”<sup>57</sup> However, the state often raises obstacles limiting the research and use of these materials. Any research that promises to be transparently critical of the regime is severely restricted and often prohibited.<sup>58</sup> It is under such conditions that I utilized archival materials in this thesis in order to critically construct a cartography of the art scene in Jordan. I worked primarily with two major archival institutions: the National Library of Jordan and the University of Jordan Library. These archives are often described as limited, small, and overly protected, as they are intended to be used primarily by the institutions engaged in the construction of the official historiography. The National Library of Jordan is where most official government documents are archived.<sup>59</sup> Many of the official documents found there focus on major laws and regulations set by the state—such as The Law of Associations and Social Organizations, which I will discuss in the following chapter—while the University of Jordan Library offers an extensive database of local, regional, and international newspapers. In the local newspapers, there is a section dedicated to arts and culture. This section covers a wide range of topics, articles, and announcements of cultural activities in Jordan. Both institutions provide copies of original materials, but the process of retrieving copies requires permission and approvals from various officials.

There were two major concerns for my thesis when it came to the collections at the National Library of Jordan and the University of Jordan Library. The first concern was that there was no way of knowing which of the documents I came across had been officially published in the newspapers. There were also gaps in the document trails, as some of the original documents were missing from both libraries. Thankfully, I was able to reach out to a few artists who also kept copies of some documents that shed light on the construction of the

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<sup>57</sup> Eugene L. Rogan, “Archival Resources and Research Institutions in Jordan,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, vol. 23, no. 2 (December 1989): 169.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> “About Us,” Department of the National Library, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://www.nl.gov.jo/En/NL.aspx>.

art scene in Jordan. This indicates that certain documents might have been intentionally removed from the library's database at the government's request, either lost due to negligence or never even collected. The second concern was that nearly all of the documents were written in Arabic (the official language of Jordan), with no translations. Therefore, this often made approaching these documents from a more global, scholarly perspective extremely challenging.

The main aim of this thesis is to utilize documents that have been made available by incorporating them as physical components in order to highlight the role of language. It is evident that today there is an expanded interest in exploring the archive's multilayered significance. The archive is seen as either the embodiment of muted, or carefully orchestrated, narratives or the foundation for geopolitical and historiographical research, as well as scholarly and artistic engagement.

## CHAPTER 4

### ARCHIVAL ANALYSIS OF *JAM'IYYAT AL-FANN* (THE ARAB ARTISTS' GROUP)

The emergence of art associations in the 1970s, and the study of this process, must be placed within the context of what Derrida established as *commandment*—as one of the two primary principles of the *arkhé* (archive). This chapter deals with the application of a theoretical understanding of the “archive” and its laws adopted by the Jordanian state with regard to the regulation of associations and organizations, as well as archival practices. These laws have had an impact on Jordanian artist organizations and events, which I discuss below in an attempt to focus on the critical analysis of these collected materials.

The analysis departs from the founding statement conceived by the artists upon launching the first artist association in Jordan. This statement provides information about the association's general infrastructure. It is therefore essential to highlight one of its early cultural activities that had a great impact: an exhibition titled *Ma'rid 15 'Ayar* (*The May 15th Exhibition*), which played an essential part in the history of the association. *The May 15th Exhibition* made an additional contribution to its establishment. Apart from addressing the Palestinian conflict, which was a common and shared topic at that time, the exhibition was intended to raise awareness among the public and other institutions that the association was an officially registered entity. Yet there were several challenges in the formation of the association, among which was how to build connections and relationships with local art institutions. However, this did not prevent the association from aligning with The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists. This regional relationship made the association stand out as being unique compared to the other institutions. Although little has been written about this relationship, I managed to find some of the unpublished and salvaged sources produced by

the association's members. These materials highlight the major struggles that prevented the association from expanding and developing.

#### **4.1 *Ma'rid 15 'Ayar (The May 15th Exhibition)* as a Pinnacle of the Association's Lifespan**

The transition of The Arab Artists' Group to The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association coincided with *Ma'rid 15 'Ayar (The May 15th Exhibition)*. The association hoped that *The May 15th Exhibition* would be held on an annual basis, yet it only took place twice: the first time at the Writers Association Hall in 1975 (Fig. 6) and the second time at the Cultural Palace in 1980 (Fig. 7). Rare related documents were found in the form of press releases, a pamphlet, and a poster. These documents played a key role in the present research to historicize the formation of the association. Unfortunately, there are no documents or witnesses stating why this exhibition was discontinued; however, one may suspect that it had to do with the tense relationship between the organizers and state officials.

Pro-Palestinian sentiment was clearly presented in *The May 15th Exhibition*, which was the first thematic exhibition to commemorate the Palestinian exodus of 1948. In Jordan, *The May 15th Exhibition* offered a different scope than the multiple other pro-Palestinian exhibitions organized at the time in Jordan and worldwide.<sup>60</sup> *The May 15th Exhibition* also played a significant role in the establishment of the association, as it brought together artists engaged in various forms of struggle throughout the Arab region. The aim of the exhibition

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<sup>60</sup> Some of the most prominent exhibitions include the *London Exhibition* of 1976, which was organized on the Tattershall Castle yacht on the River Thames, London; *The International Exhibition for Palestine*, which was launched by the PLO in Paris in 1978 and opened at Beirut Arab University in 1978, then traveled to the Tokyo Contemporary Art Museum in 1978, and then to the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in 1980 (later, it was also held at the Kunsternes Hus in 1981 and at the Christianssands Kunstforening, Kristiansand, in 1982, both in Norway); and the *Palestine Exhibition in Moscow*, which was put together by the Palestinian-Soviet Friendship Society in 1979 and traveled to Beirut, where it was held at the Karama Gallery in 1982. Jack Persekian, "17 Lost Art Exhibitions," Asia Art Archive, accessed July 20, 2018, <https://aaa.org.hk/en/ideas/ideas/17-lost-art-exhibitions>.

was to establish an institutional entity that could represent Jordan-based artists to local, regional, and international art scenes. This goal, however, was not fully achieved due to a series of political events that created strong tensions between the Jordanian authorities and the association's pro-PLO members.

“*Qadaya al-Fann wa al-Fannanin*” (“Issues in the Arts and Artists”) is the title of the curatorial statement of the first iteration of *The May 15th Exhibition*. It highlights major issues that the artists faced as they prepared for the exhibition. The absence of a legitimate association made it difficult to reach out to these artists. The process of accepting and classifying works was a disappointing experience, since none of the artists were able to produce works due to shortages in materials and limited financial support. In return, the exhibition showcased a limited number of works, since not all of the artists agreed to participate. The exhibition was executed within a short time frame with no advance preparations, which is why many of the artists were not ready to exhibit.

Today, *The May 15th Exhibition* is considered a watershed event. Unfortunately, the lack of documents and archival sources makes it difficult to recapture the historical event. The association did not archive either the documentation used in the organization of this exhibition or its agendas and minutes. The rare occasional documents concerning *The May 15th Exhibition* present only a limited opportunity to map the organizations and individuals who contributed to the political art scene in the 1970s. When the *May 15th* exhibitions (1975 and 1980) were dismantled, they simply disappeared from people's consciousness. The association's records do not include any information on *The May 15th Exhibition*. The contents of the two iterations of the exhibition have been lost, and almost none of the artworks exhibited have been seen since (Fig. 8). For a long time, discussions on what happened to these artworks and who was involved in the dismantling of each exhibition and

the return of the artworks is still unclear. *The May 15th Exhibition* remains a subject of interest to many who visited the exhibition or loaned their artworks.

#### **4.2 The Influence and Fall of The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists**

Despite being marginalized within the cultural scene, the association did not prevent its members from pursuing their goals or asserting their beliefs. Of particular interest to my thesis is the relationship between the association and The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists. The latter was a regional artist organization established in 1971 for the purpose of serving regional collaborations among artists from the Arab region. The first meeting of this union was held in Beirut, where the founding members issued a statement in 1971. In the same year, the Syrian Association of Plastic Artists in Damascus organized the first conference of The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists. The purpose of this conference was to discuss a wide range of topics concerning Arab artists and their contributions to their local, regional, and international art scenes. The union launched the first iteration of the Arab Biennial, which took place in Baghdad in 1974, as well as the second one, which was held in 1976 in Rabat, Morocco.<sup>61</sup> The biennial featured works from “eleven official participants, artist unions from Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Iraq. There was also unofficial participation by artists who were not officially registered at The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists such as Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.”<sup>62</sup>

The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists collapsed during the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980 to 1988. In the late 1980s, a meeting was held in Amman with the President of the General Union Ismail Fattah (1934 – 2004), the General Union Secretary, and the

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<sup>61</sup> Nada Shabout, “Transregional Solidarity: The Arab Biennial in Retrospect,” accessed May 20, 2019, <http://mezosfera.org/transregional-solidarity/>.

<sup>62</sup> Amin Alsaden, “Baghdad’s Arab Biennial, Regional Subversions, Global Ambitions,” *Third Text*, vol. 33 (2019): 13.

Minister of Culture and Arts of Jordan. The purpose of this meeting was to reactivate The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists, though it bred no results. The union was officially dismantled after the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, and following the death of Ismail Fattah in the same year.<sup>63</sup> With the collapse of The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists, certain members discussed the opportunity to transform the Jordanian association into a syndicate (Fig. 9). The role of the syndicate was to advocate the rights of artists by offering privileges such as medical insurance, stipends, and a retirement salary, all covered by the government. Today, however, it appears that those ambitions are still far from being realized. One possible explanation lies in the new rules and regulations issued by the Jordanian state. The conditions set by the state with regard to artist organizations made the syndicate's formation and its official registration more difficult and, ultimately, impossible.<sup>64</sup>

#### **4.3 Unpublished and Salvaged Documentations**

Some of the unpublished documents, along with the very limited documentation collected from the personal archives of the association's former members, are on display in the exhibition. The limited local financial support for art and culture did not allow the publication or study of its primary documents. *Malamih al-Tajriba al-Tashkiliyya al-'Urduniyya wa Mukawinatuha* (The Features of the Jordanian Fine Arts Experience and Its Components) is described in the following section. The document provides essential information regarding the art scene in Jordan. One can still find valuable historical sources kept in the possession of artists, but locating them is a long, ongoing process. One should also mention several local television programs (broadcast in 1975 and 1981) and, in particular, the twenty-six episodes of *Funun Tashkiliyya* (Fine Arts), one of which is discussed in more

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<sup>63</sup> Rafik Lahham, *Rihlaty ma' al-Hayat wa- al- Fann (My Life Journey and Art)* (Amman: Greater Amman Municipality, 2011), 145.

<sup>64</sup> *Muswada li Naqabat al-Funun al-Tashkiliyya al-'Urduniyya (Draft of the Jordanian Fine Arts Syndicate)*, 1980. Personal archive of Kamal Abu Halaweh.

detail below. Each episode of this television show focused on an artist from the association. The original version of this TV program has also been destroyed.

#### **4.3.1 *Malamih al-Tajriba al-Tashkiliyya al-'Urduniyya wa Mukawinatuha* (The Features of the Jordanian Fine Arts Experience and Its Components)**

A thirteen-page document titled *Malamih al-Tajriba al-Tashkiliyya al-'Urduniyya wa Mukawinatuha* (The Features of the Jordanian Fine Arts Experience and Its Components), handwritten by Mahmoud Taha (1942 – 2016), provides an overview of the art scene in the Arab region and Jordan (Fig. 10), although the year in which it was written is not indicated.<sup>65</sup> This document offers a cartography of the art scene in Jordan, along with essential information regarding the association's struggles. According to it, throughout its formative years, the association suffered from several bankruptcies that delayed its growth and expansion; it could not maintain its presence due to a lack of support from the government, the other institutions, and its audience. Taha also mentions that he hopes that the various initiatives would unify and collaborate with the association. Instead, each of them worked separately to cater to a specific audience. Similar concerns were raised by Yaser Dweik in a televised report about the 1981 exhibition *Fahrelnissa Zeid and Her Institute*, upon which I aim to elaborate below in relation to two other findings: an episode of the TV show titled *Funun Tashkiliyya* (Fine Arts) and a handwritten TV script about the new extension of The Royal Society of Fine Arts and The Jordan National Gallery.

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<sup>65</sup> On the day I interviewed Yaser Dweik, he indicated that the document was written in 1970, which I find invalid. The year contradicts the contents of the document written by Mahmoud Taha.

### 4.3.2 Jordanian TV Reportage on the Local Art Scene

In 1975, there were three programs on Jordan TV dedicated to the local art scene. Unfortunately, no traces of these programs remain in the Jordan TV archives. The only videos found in the official Jordanian archives include a televised report of the 1981 group exhibition *Fahrelnissa Zeid and Her Institute*, one episode of a program called *Funun Tashkiliyya* (Fine Arts)<sup>66</sup> (Fig. 11), and a twelve-page handwritten TV script about the new expansion of The Royal Society of Fine Arts. The report on the *Fahrelnissa Zeid and Her Institute* exhibition provides a glimpse of the exhibition's opening ceremony as well as interviews with ambassadors of Turkey, Italy, and the United Kingdom, where Zeid lived as the wife of diplomat and as an artist.

The only episode of *Funun Tashkiliyya* (Fine Arts) that I found was presented by Yaser Dweik, and it has been included in the exhibition. The other twenty-six episodes were destroyed with no clear explanation, as per artist and Jordan TV director Fuad Mimi,<sup>67</sup> who also described the episode in terms of providing essential information about artistic techniques and basic insights into Western art. It appears that such a program was meant to raise awareness about the fundamentals of art to a wider audience as well as to introduce the association's members to the public. Another essential document is the script of a TV show that does not exist. Written by Mimi, it revolves around the opening of a new section of The Royal Society of Fine Arts and The Jordan National Gallery in 1980. This document covers the Royal Society's historical background, its new exhibition space, and its early philosophy regarding its collection. The script also contains information about the Royal Society and the role it played in the art scene in Jordan. The handwritten twelve-page text highlights the achievements of the Royal Society, including that it was the first institute to collect a number

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<sup>66</sup> Mohammad Talafeeh (Jordan TV director) in discussion with the author, September 2019.

<sup>67</sup> Fuad Mimi (artist and former Jordan TV director) in discussion with the author, September 2019.

of artworks from the Arab and Islamic regions. This document was filmed in the early 1980s, when the association had been running for five years, alongside other local institutions.

The three Jordan TV findings, which are part of the exhibition, demonstrate political gaps between these local art institutions and the collective artist-led initiatives. These gaps address the difference in support systems, publicity, and audiences between the art institutions and the association. The destruction of the *Funun Tashkiliyya* (Fine Arts) episodes is a result of direct political repression. Without looking into the reason behind why these episodes were destroyed, I instead took the opportunity to evaluate and compare the presence of the art institutions and the association. The study of the collected archival materials at hand contributed to a better understanding not only of the history of the art scene in Jordan, but also of the role played by The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association. These various collected materials, which are on display in the exhibition, reveal essential information that had been dismissed from most of the publications. The above analysis reconfirms that the association experienced constant and direct political repression. Despite these internal struggles and limitations (whether with the authorities or with the other institutions), the association was able to succeed and expand its network on a regional level by being a representative of The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I suggest that the Jordanian art scene (1970 – 1980) could be understood as a complex map and a highly politicized environment of constantly shifting cultural life. The map was drawn to suggest that the art scene has been constructed from various contributions of individuals of diverse social and political status. The key players in the Jordanian scene belonged to various classes and ethnicities: from royal family members to Arab and foreign artists who came to Jordan seeking asylum from regional conflicts and wars. This diverse cultural scene was animated by various art associations, each with distinct cultural programs and political agendas. Prominent among those institutions was The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association (previously known as *Jam'iyyat al-Fann*, or The Arab Artists' Group).

The association, which was established in 1975, emerged to be known as a unique space. It differed from other local art institutions in that it was the product of a political cause that was made possible by the Palestinian conflict. Many of the association's members were initially Palestinians who fled to Jordan seeking asylum during *Al-Nakba* (the first Palestinian exodus) in 1948. These Palestinian artists openly supported the *Munazzamat at-Tahrir al-Filasṭīniyyah* (The Palestine Liberation Organization, or the PLO). Artists' ideological and political alliances with the PLO were particularly threatening (or, at least, were perceived as such) by the Jordanian authorities. I argue that during its years of operation, the association functioned under internal and external pressure, and that in later years, it was marginalized, which prevented it from standing out as more prominent than the other local institutions. Being marginalized, however, did not stop the association from expanding its networks with

local cultural centers and regional organizations, specifically with The General Union of Arab Plastic Artists.

Despite its internal pressures and obstacles, the association managed, during its years of operation, to establish an infrastructure with a cultural program followed by a distinct political agenda. Although not tied politically or financially to the PLO, many of the artists involved in the establishment of the association supported its presence and agenda. Political activities, followed by radical political changes, such as the dissolution of parliament and the outlawing of political parties, have played an important part in the life of cultural unions and artist associations. These various pressures and obstacles are responsible for why the association today is no longer seen as active as it was in the 1970s. It is sadly destined to collapse and disband.

*Jam'iyat Al-fann* (The Arab Artists' Group): A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980) aims to be an ongoing project with several iterations designed to reveal further *untold* narratives of the art scene in Jordan and, in particular, the role that the association has played in the local and regional scenes. Through the utilization of collected archival materials, the project should be divided into two parts. The first part is related to the materials collected over the past two years. It is necessary to digitize and house them in accessible archival institutions for further scholarly and research studies. Almost all of these collected materials require translation from Arabic into English in order to be made available for a wider audience. The second part involves translating these documents, which will generate further interactions and engagements from different fields.

This thesis has the potential to open up several opportunities that revolve around the association's members. Further investigation and documentation need to be taken into consideration in relation to the artistic practices of each of the association's members at that time. Many of these artists have works that should be preserved and studied as well. Finally, I

hope that this research paper and the exhibition offer a glimpse of how unique The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association has been among other art institutions in Jordan and the region, a glimpse that would benefit scholarly research on the art and culture of the Middle East.

## Appendix

### 1. Exhibition Curatorial Statement

The art scene in Jordan can be seen as a map consisting of various artist organizations that have emerged within a highly politicized environment during the last decades of the twentieth century. These organizations have been the product of Jordan's constantly shifting cultural and political landscape. Various artist institutions operating in Jordan from the 1970s onward have included many individuals of diverse ethnic, social, and political backgrounds: from refugees to members of the royal family to Arab and other foreign artists who came to Jordan seeking asylum from regional conflicts and wars. From its inception, the Jordanian art scene was constructed and animated by various forces and art institutions, each with a distinct cultural program, ideology, and political agenda reflecting ethnic, class, and political values. Prominent among those institutions was The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association (previously known as *Jam'iyyat al-Fann*, or The Arab Artists' Group).

The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association (hereafter referred to as "the association") has played a prominent role in the constitution of the Jordanian art scene. The association has differed significantly from other art institutions in the country. Its members were the first to attempt and establish an official and all-inclusive progressive artist organization constituted through, and in solidarity with, the Palestinian cause. At the same time, the association shared a critical and cultural program with many other art spaces and initiatives throughout the country and the region. In Amman, the association has often been seen as a space of political tension that was able to unite and create a platform for artists from Palestine or dedicated to the Palestinian struggle. Some believe that Palestinian artists or sympathizers to the cause have used this association to self-organize as well as to narrate or exhibit their experience of displacement or political beliefs. This has led to a complex political and cultural climate among other associations and art institutions operating in Jordan.

This exhibition offers a critical survey of local and institutional artistic practices that emerged in Jordan during the 1970s. It is based on extensive archival research and interviews conducted with numerous Jordanian artists. I have aimed to construct an art historical and curatorial cartography of the Jordanian art scene focusing, in particular, on the role played by The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association. I argue that the association has been critical in acting as a catalyst in the constitution of the Jordanian art scene. Moreover, my thesis concludes that the question of Palestine and the conflict with Israel played key political and cultural roles in the establishment of the Jordanian art and art institutional scene during the 1970s.

The research paper and the exhibition are shaped by a theoretical engagement with the notion of the “archive,” as theorized by Jacques Derrida in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, along with the use of archives in contemporary art practice as described by Hal Foster in “An Archival Impulse.” With recourse to both, I concentrate on the broader political significance of the “archive” and its current popularity among cultural producers in the region. My main question, with regard to various curatorial practices and exhibitions, as well as to my own project, is: What role does the archive play in our understanding of artistic practices? I pose this question specifically with regard to the rise of the art scene in Jordan. I ask: How can we use the archive to construct a history of The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association and of the Jordanian art scene in general? From art historical and political perspectives, the research paper and exhibition pose the question of the role of Palestine in the consolidation of the art scene in Jordan as well as of other regional cultural institutions and collaborations.

The eponymous exhibition, *Jam’iyyat al-Fann (The Arab Artists’ Group): A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980)*, reveals the *untold* narratives of the art scene in Jordan through the utilization of collected archival

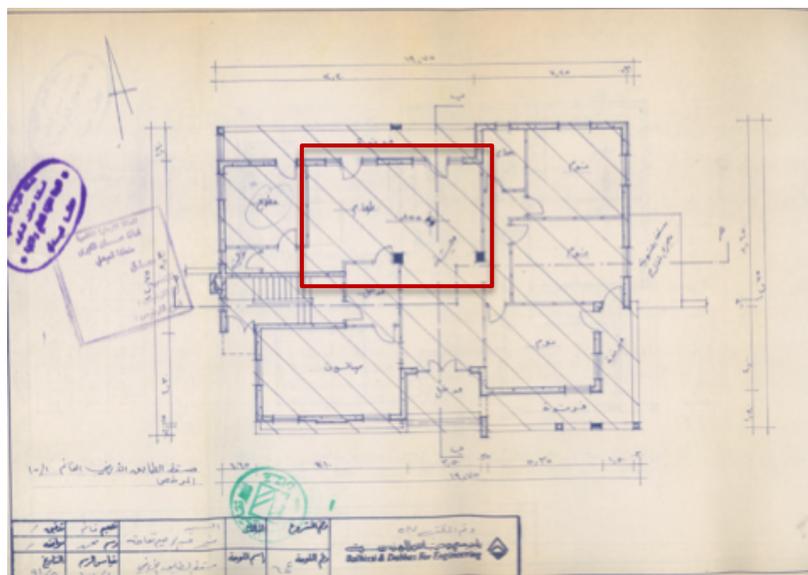
materials. Incorporating documents, videos, and artworks, the exhibition provides an overview of the political and cultural scene in Amman in the 1970s by taking The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association as its main actor. The exhibition showcases artifacts collected over the span of two years from private and public institutions as well as from artists in Amman and Jordan. Using these documents, which are in the form of press releases, founding statements, unpublished materials, visual recordings, and photographs of lost artifacts, the exhibition seeks to shed light on major transformations that took place in the Jordanian, but also regional, political and cultural climate during the 1970s and beyond. Taking The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association as its point of departure, the exhibition builds upon archival evidence, primary and secondary sources, and interviews and conversations with the association's founding members, as it points to the role occupied by the association alongside its complex relationship with other local and regional institutions. The exhibition also seeks to shed light on the main changes in the Jordanian art institutional structure from the 1970s onward, as well as bring into prominence the complex set of relations between art, the state, politics, and regional alliances.

## 1.1 Exhibition Space

The exhibition *Jam'iyyat al-Fann (The Arab Artists' Group): A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980)* opened at The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association on January 25, 2020. The curatorial decision to organize the exhibition in this particular space was due to the symbolic meaning of the site and the community of artists who still come to meet there today. In the past, many other exhibitions, events, and talks initiated by members of the association took place at this locale. The walls still preserve the memories of these past events. By displaying these archival materials and artifacts, the exhibition seeks to invoke some of the past memories. The space is also significant from the perspective of the *Jam'iyyat al-Fann (The Arab Artists' Group): A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980)* exhibition, which is considered to be one of the first events in Amman to give a general overview of this art scene and to reveal *untold* narratives of The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association.

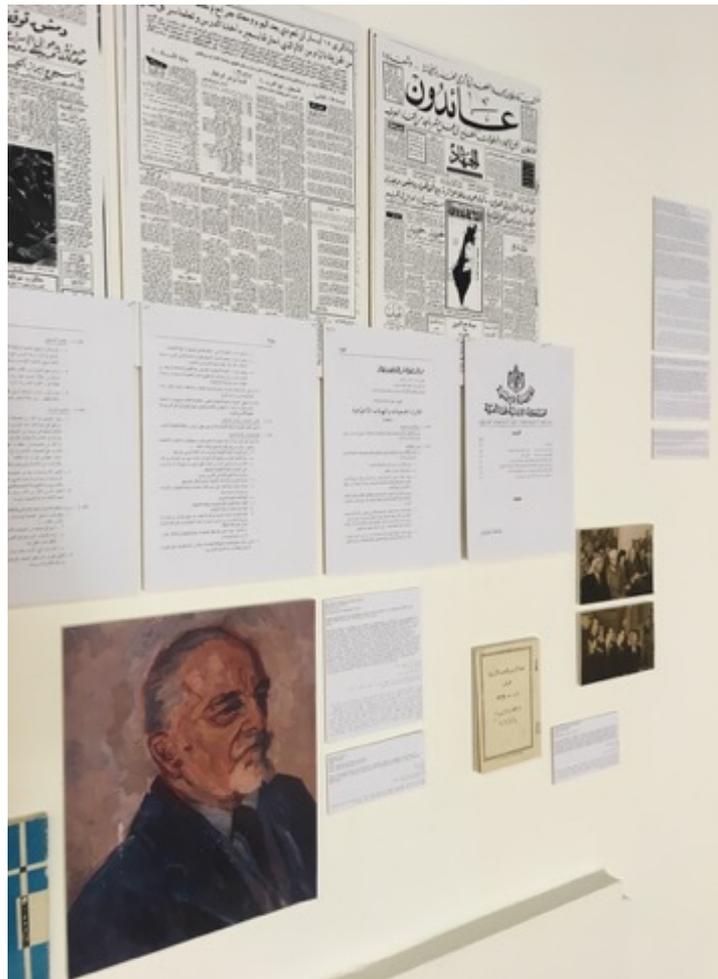
## 1.2 Architectural Plans (Front Elevation and Exhibition Space Floor Plan)

The following architectural plans were drawn manually during the 1970s. The space, once residential, has transformed throughout the years. The designated exhibition space is marked in red.



### 1.3 Installation Views

*Jam'iyat al-Fann (The Arab Artists' Group): A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980)* took place at The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association in Amman, Jordan, on January 25, 2020. The exhibition will be on view until the end of March to celebrate the forty-third anniversary of the association. Below are some installation shots of the exhibition.



Installation view 1. The exhibition walls are divided into three horizontal and vertical sections. Horizontally, the wall is structured thematically. The first row up displays newspapers collected from the University of Jordan Archive and the American University of Beirut Jafet Library Archives and Special Collections. The second row shows the *Qanun li-l-Jam'iyat wa-l-Hay'at al-'Ijtima'iyya* (The Law of Associations and Social Organizations), published in *The Official Newspaper of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* and collected from the National Library of Jordan. The third and final row includes materials that shed light on the art institutions and associations that emerged in Amman from 1970 to 1980. Vertically, the wall is divided into three sections. The first highlights the role of *Ma'had Muhanna Aldurra li-l-Funun al-Jamila* (The Institute of Muhanna Durra for Fine Arts) (1970); the second features the contributions of *Ma'had Fahrelnissa Zeid li-l-Funun al-Jamila* (The Fahrelnissa Zeid Institute of Fine Arts) (1975 – 1991); and the third contains examples of Zeid's students establishing other and, later, nonprofit organizations, such as *al-Jam'iyya al-Malakiyya li-l-Funun al-Jamila wa-l-Mathaf al-Watani* (The Royal Society of Fine Arts and The Jordan National Gallery) (1979/1980). This final section is the primary focus of my research paper and exhibition; it highlights the role played by The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association in the construction of the art scene from 1975 to 1980.



Installation view 2. *Ma'had Fahrelnissa Zeid li-l-Funun al-Jamila* (The Fahrelnissa Zeid Institute of Fine Arts) (1975 – 1991). This part of the wall displays the last exhibition that Fahrelnissa Zeid organized at the Cultural Palace in Amman, Jordan, in 1981, together with her students. The materials include photographs, press releases, and an exhibition poster. Opposite this wall, there is a rare video of the exhibition opening. This part of the wall complements the section dedicated to Zeid's contributions to the art scene in Jordan.



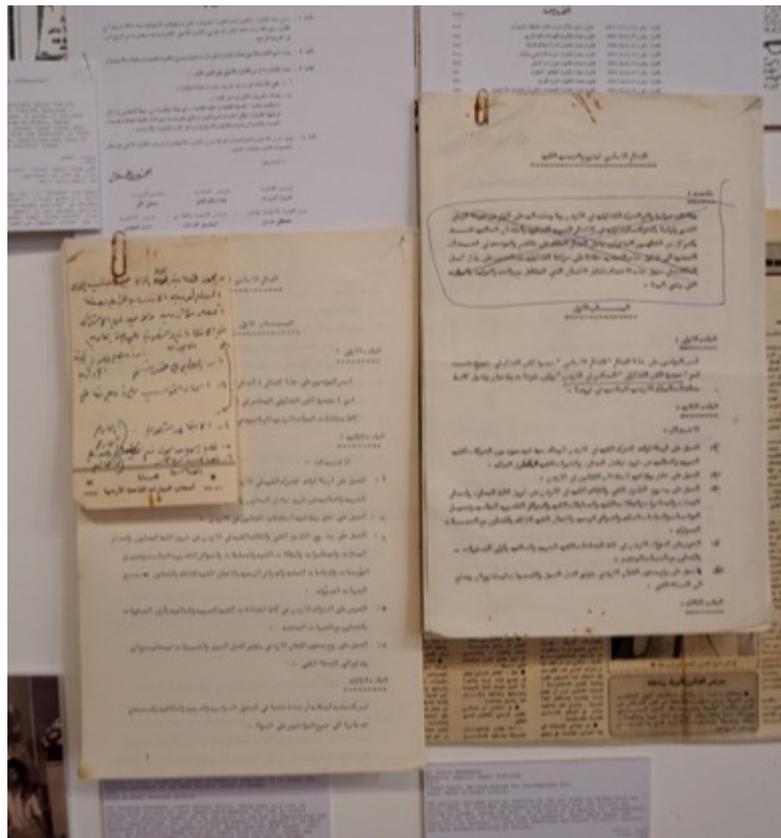
Installation view 3. This part of the exhibition revolves around the role played by the *Al-Jam'iyya al-Malakiyya li-l-Funun al-Jamila wa-l-Mathaf al-Watani* (The Royal Society of Fine Arts and The Jordan National Gallery) (1979/1980). The first document on the right-hand side is an official announcement that was publicly disturbed to provide information about The Royal Society of Fine Arts and the new expansion of the Jordan National Gallery. The materials contain information such as the aim, objectives, and board members of this organization. The document on the left-hand side is the handwritten script of a TV show that does not exist. Written by Fuad Mimi (artist and former Jordan TV director), the script revolves around the opening of the new section of The Royal Society of Fine Arts. This document covers the historical background of the Royal Society, its new exhibition space, and its early philosophy regarding its collection. The twelve-page script contains specific information about the Royal Society and the role it played in Jordan's art scene. It also highlights the Royal Society's achievements, insisting that it was the first institute to collect a number of artworks from the Arab and Islamic region.



Installation view 4. This section provides an overview of the association's formation as *Jam'iyyat al-Fann* (The Arab Artists' Group) and its development into The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association. A group of twenty-seven Palestinian and Jordanian artists established The Arab Artists' Group in 1975. These artists were motivated to create an artist association that would represent them within Jordan. The Arab Artists' Group was legally recognized as an association three times: the first time in 1975, as the Artists' Group; the second time in 1976, when it was officially registered under its new name, *Rabita li-l-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin fi al-'Urdun* (The Plastic Artists Association in Jordan), whose main objective was to invite and accept local and other Arab artists from the region to be part of its artistic program; and the third time in 1977, when it was forced to change its name again, this time to *Rabita li-l-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin al-'Urduniyyin* (The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association).



Installation view 5. The purpose of this detail shot is to show how the archival materials are presented in the exhibition.



Installation view 6. Close-up image of the first founding statement of *Jam'iyyat al-Fann* (The Arab Artists' Group). The document on the right is the first draft; the one on the left is the amended version containing comments and corrections suggested by the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate (GID).



Installation view 7. This section highlights the transition of *Jam'iyyat al-Fann* (The Arab Artists' Group) into The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, which took place with the *Ma'rid 15 'Ayar* (*The May 15th Exhibition*). The association's members hoped that *The May 15th Exhibition* would be held on an annual basis; however, it took place only twice: the first time at the Writers Association Hall in 1975 (on the right-hand side of the wall) and the second time at the Cultural Palace in 1980 (on the left-hand side of the wall). These rare documents were found in the form of press releases, a pamphlet, and a poster. These documents played a key part in the present research to historicize the formation of the association, which is why I dedicated a wall to them in this exhibition.



Installation view 8. Image from the January 25, 2020, opening of *Jam'iyyat al-Fann* (The Arab Artists' Group): *A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980)*.



Installation view 9. Images from the opening of *Jam'iyyat al-Fann (The Arab Artists' Group): A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980)* at The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association on January 25, 2020. The exhibition is on view until the end of March. Another exhibition opens in mid-February to celebrate the anniversary of the association. A new addition to the *Jam'iyyat al-Fann (The Arab Artists' Group)* exhibition includes original works by the association's members. There will also be a seminar and a series of talks initiated by members of the association; these will cover different topics, such as the significance of the archive, which is the main topic of the present research paper and exhibition. Many of the artists expressed their interest in donating their personal archives to be digitized and exposed in an accessible platform for scholars and researchers who would like to know more about the art scene in Jordan and the role played by the association.

## 1.4 Marketing Component of the Exhibition

An exhibition poster and a postcard (in Arabic and English) were developed in conjunction with the *Jam'iyat al-Fann (The Arab Artists' Group): A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980)* exhibition.

**”جمعية الفن” (مجموعة الفنانين العرب): رسم خارطة نقدية للمشهد الفني في الأردن من خلال الأرشيف (١٩٧٠-١٩٨٠)**  
ياسمين د. طوقان

**Jam'iyat Al-fann (The Arab Artists' Group): A Critical Cartography of the Art Scene in Jordan through the Archive (1970 – 1980)**  
Yassmeen D. Tukan

المعرض مقدم لاستكمال متطلبات نيل شهادة الماجستير في الآداب في قسم الفنون الجميلة وتاريخ الفن في كلية الآداب والعلوم في الجامعة الأمريكية في بيروت.

رابطة الفنانين التشكيليين الأردنيين  
عمان - الأردن

افتتاح المعرض  
٢٥ يناير ٢٠٢٠  
الوقت: ٥:٠٠ مساءً

This exhibition is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts to the Department of Fine Arts and Art History of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the American University of Beirut.

The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association  
Amman - Jordan

Opening date  
25 January 2020  
Time: 5:00 p.m.

رابطة الفنانين التشكيليين الأردنيين  
Jordanian Plastic Artists Association

AB | AUB  
Art Galleries and Collections

الصف الأول [من اليمين إلى اليسار]: قاسم العامودي مازن عصفور، الصف الخلفي [من اليمين إلى اليسار]: الدويك راتب شعبان، رفيق اللحام، حفيظ قنوع وأحمد حسان، المورة من مقتنيات ياسر الدويك.

Front row [from right to left]: Qasim Al Amoudi, Mazen Asfour.  
Back row [from right to left]: Yasser Dweik, Ratab Sha'ban, Rafiq Laham, Hafith Qasbi and Ahmad Hassan.  
Yasser Dweik Personal Archive

Design by Malika Dabbouj



الصف الاول [من اليسار الى اليمين]: ياسر دويك، كرام النمري، عبد الحميد حمام، عزيز عمورة  
 الصف الخلفي [من اليمين الى اليسار]:  
 مصباح بيبي و فؤاد ميمي  
 الصورة من مقتنيات ياسر الدويك.  
 Front row [from left to right]: Yaser Dweik, Keram El-Nimri, Abdel Hameed Hamam, Aziz Ammoura  
 Back row [from left to right]:  
 Musbah Bibli and Fuad Mimi  
 Yaser Dweik Personal Archive

”جمعية الفن“ (مجموعة  
 الفنانين العرب): رسم خارطة  
 نقدية للمشهد الفني في  
 الأردن من خلال الأرشيف  
 (١٩٧٠-١٩٨٠)

Jam'iyat Al-fann (The Arab  
 Artists' Group): A Critical  
 Cartography of the Art Scene  
 in Jordan through the Archive  
 (1970 - 1980)

الأردن. أخيراً، الحركة الراديكالية المؤيدة لأجندة الفلسطينيين من خلال شخصيات رئيسية في هذه الفترة استثمرت في مؤسسة سياسية مشبوهة من موقفها الوطني.

من الناحية المنهجية، تقدم الرسالة سرداً للمشهد الفني في عمان من خلال فكرة ”الأرشيف“. فهي لا تعتمد فقط على المواد الأرشيفية المعروضة، والمقابلات المتعددة التي أجريت مع الفنانين في عمان خلال مرحلة البحث، لكنها اتخذت مفهوم ”الأرشيف“ باعتباره وجهة نظر منهجية ورئيسية من أجل إضفاء الطابع التاريخي على بناء المشهد الفني في الأردن.

ياسمين د. طوقان  
 المعرض مقدم لاستكمال متطلبات نيل شهادة  
 الماجستير في الآداب في قسم الفنون الجميلة  
 وتاريخ الفن في كلية الآداب والعلوم في الجامعة  
 الأمريكية في بيروت.

تقدم هذه الرسالة، التي تتألف من بحث ومعرض، مسخاً تاريخياً أو رسم خرائط للمؤسسات الفنية في الأردن. تنطلق هذه الرسالة وتتمحور حول دور رابطة الفنانين التشكيليين الأردنيين (التي كانت تعرف سابقاً باسم ”جمعية الفن“ - مجموعة الفنانين العرب). لعبت رابطة الفنانين، التي تأسست اليوم، دوراً رئيسياً في صياغة البرنامج الثقافي والسياسي للفن والثقافة في الأردن خلال السبعينيات والثمانينيات. تؤكد هذه الرسالة على أن الرابطة وبرنامجها الثقافي وسياستها تشكلت نتيجة الصراع والحرب التي ظهرت في النصف الثاني من القرن العشرين في المنطقة. أحد هذه العوامل الحاسمة في تأسيس المشهد الفني في الأردن هي الأحداث التي تلت النكبة عام ١٩٤٨. تدفق العديد من الفنانين الفلسطينيين إلى الأردن، وتزامن العديد من الفنانين في الشرق الأوسط مع القضية الفلسطينية، كان له تأثير مباشر أو غير مباشر في تكوين العديد من المؤسسات الفنية في

## **2. List of Art Institutions Visited and Interviews Conducted with Individuals, Artists, and Estates**

The following provided me with archival documents for the present research paper and exhibition:

### **Art Institutions Visited**

- *Darat Al Funun* (A Home for the Arts)
- *Ma'had Muhanna Aldurra li-l-Funun al-Jamila* (The Institute of Muhanna Durra for Fine Arts)
- *Rabita li-l-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin al-'Urduniyyin* (The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association)
- Ministry of Culture and Youth
- The National Library of Jordan
- *Al-Jam'iyya al-Malakiyya li-l-Funun al-Jamila wa-l-Mathaf al-Watani* (The Royal Society of Fine Arts and The Jordan National Gallery)
- University of Jordan
- Yarmouk University

### **Interviews Conducted with Individuals, Artists, and Estates**

- Wijdan Al-Hashemi (artist and founder of The Jordan National Gallery) in discussion with the author, June 2018
- Mired Bin Ra'ad (on behalf of the late Fahrelnissa Zeid) in discussion with the author, June 2018
- Muhanna Durra (artist) in discussion with the author, June 2018
- Yaser Dweik (President of The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association from 1980 to 1985) in discussion with the author, 2018 – 2019
- Dr. Salwa Mikdadi (Associate Professor Practice of Art History, NYU Abu Dhabi) in discussion with the author, 2018 – 2019
- Dirar Na'wash (on behalf of the late Ahmad Na'wash) in discussion with the author, August 2019
- Keram Nimri (artist) in discussion with the author, July 2018
- Samia Zaru (artist) in discussion with the author, June 2018

### 3. Illustrations

The following illustrations are some of the collected materials that are on display among other documents in the exhibition.

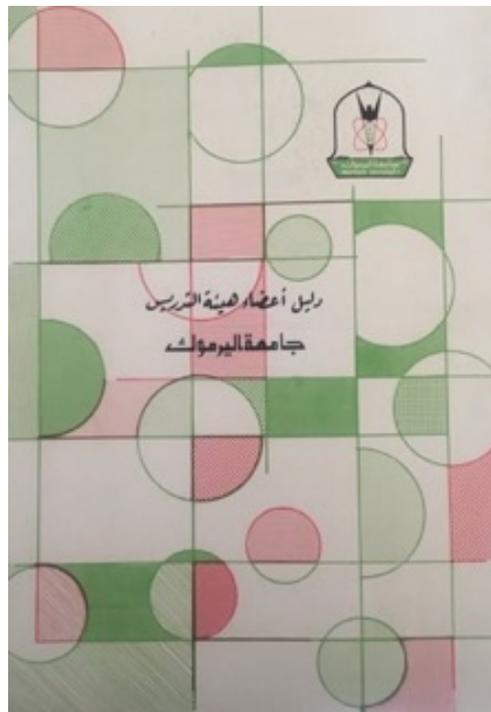


Figure 1. *Dalil al-Hay'a al-Tadrisiyya Jami'at al-Yarmuk* (Faculty Directory of Yarmouk University). Amman: Yarmouk University, 1980. Personal archive of Yaser Dweik. In 1980, a Fine Arts Department was established at Yarmouk University (in northern Jordan). The above diagram explains its four subdivisions: Fine Arts (painting, photography, ceramics, and sculpture); Applied Arts (interior design and graphic design); Theatrical Arts (performing arts, including acting, stage design, and directing), and Music (both Western and Arabic, classical and modern styles). The faculty members of the Fine Arts Department included Ahmad Na'wash (1934 – 2017), Aziz Amoura (1944 – 2017), Mahmoud Sadeq (b. 1945), and the prominent Iraqi artist Rafa Nasiri (1940 – 2013), who introduced new artistic techniques and helped to establish the department's printmaking division.



وزارة الثقافة

شهادة تسجيل

تسهر وزارة الثقافة أنه قد تم تسجيل رابطة الفنانين التشكيليين الأردنيين  
وفقاً للاصلح القانونية تحت رقم ( ١٠١ د ) بتاريخ ١٦ / ٢ / ١٩٧٧ بموجب  
قانون الجمعيات الخيرية والهيئات الاجتماعية رقم ٣٣ لسنة ١٩٦٦ بحيث  
تخوّلهم هذه الشهادة من ائولة العمل ونشاطهم من تاريخ التسجيل  
وإستعمال بنابر إعطيت لهم هذه الشهادة.

وزير الثقافة

→

التاريخ ١٩ / ٢ / ١٩٧٧

Figure 2. The Official Registration Certificate. *Rabita li-l-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin al-'Urduniyyin* (The Jordanian Plastic Artists Association). Amman: Ministry of Culture and Information, February 16, 1977.

## محمد السيد للدين ملك المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية

بمقتضى المادة (٣١) من الدستور  
وبناء على ما قرره مجلس الاعيان والنواب  
تصادق على القانون الآتي وتأمراً باصداره واضافته الى قوانين الدولة

قانون رقم (٧) لسنة ١٩٦٥

### قانون الجمعيات والهيئات الاجتماعية



المادة ١ - اسم القانون وبدء العمل به

يسمى هذا القانون ( قانون الجمعيات والهيئات الاجتماعية لسنة ١٩٦٥ ) ويعمل به بعد مرور شهر على نشره في الجريدة الرسمية .

المادة ٢ - تفسير اصطلاحات

( ١ ) يكون للألفاظ والعبارات التالية الواردة في هذا القانون المعاني المخصصة لها ادناه الا اذا دلت القرينة على غير ذلك .

أ - تعني لفظة الوزير « وزير الشؤون الاجتماعية والعمل » .

ب- وتشمل لفظة « متصرف » المحافظ .

ج- ويقصد بكلمة « جمعية » أية هيئة مؤلفة من سبعة اشخاص فأكثر غرضها الاساسي تنظيم مساعيها لتقديم الخدمات الاجتماعية للمواطنين دون أن تستهدف من نشاطها او عملها جني الربح المادي .

ويشمل هذا التعريف الجمعيات الخيرية والدينية والطائفية والعائلية والقبلية والأندية بأنواعها والجان الكشفية والأولمبية ومنظمات الشباب ولا يشمل الهيئات والجمعيات السياسية .

د - ويقصد بعبارة « هيئة اجتماعية » كل هيئة مكونة من شخص او أكثر تقدم خدمات اجتماعية سواء اكانت تلك الخدمات علمية او ثقافية او تدريبية او ترفيهية او فنية . ويشمل نشاط الهيئة الاجتماعية المراكز الاجتماعية والفرق الفنية والمسرحية والمعاهد الموسيقية ومعاهد الثقافة الخاصة ، على أن يكون هدفها خدمة المجتمع .

هـ - وتعني عبارة « الجمعية الموحدة » أية جمعية الفت عمن طريق ادماج جمعيتين او أكثر من الجمعيات المرخصة او اتحادها بمقتضى احكام المادة السادسة من هذا القانون .

Figure 3. *Qanun li-l-Jam'iyyat wa-l-Hay'at al-'Ijtima'iyya* (The Law of Associations and Social Organizations), in *The Official Newspaper of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*. Amman: National Library of Jordan, 1965 (page 2/10). *Qanun li-l-Jam'iyyat wa-l-Hay'at al-'Ijtima'iyya* (The Law of Associations and Social Organizations) was publicly announced in *The Official Newspaper of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* in 1965. The Law of Associations and Social Organizations set regulations that all potential cultural associations should follow, such as that the number of board members should not exceed seven. These board members should not be affiliated with any political and/or religious party. Any regular board meetings and/or official openings should be held in the presence of the Ministry of Culture and Arts representative.

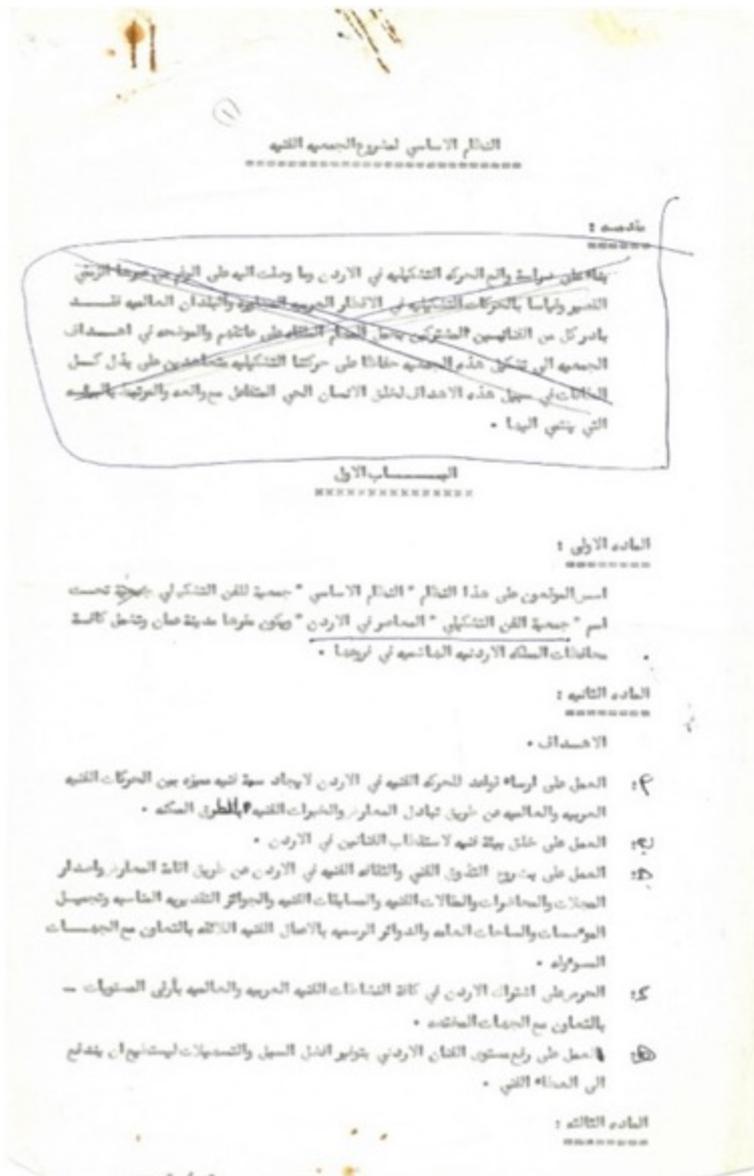


Figure 4. *Al-Nizam al-'Asasi li Jam'iyyat al-Fann al-Tashkili al-Mu'asir fi al-'Urdun* (The Founding Statement of The Arab Artists' Group in Jordan), 1975. Personal archive of Keram Nimri (page 1/10). The founding statement covers several points, among them a list of twenty-seven artists to be named as board members. These included: Keram Nimri (b. 1944), Rateb Sha'aban (b. 1950), Naser Abdel Azez (b. 1941), Mahmoud Taha (1942 – 2016), Ramzieh Hussein Baj (1947; deceased, date unknown), Saleh Abu Shindi (b. 1938), Kayed Amr (b. 1947), Abdulrahman Al Masri (1950; deceased, date unknown), Afaf Arafat (1925 – 2017), Ibrahim Baz (deceased; dates unknown), Mohammad Daud (deceased; dates unknown), Hayel Ajlouni (deceased; dates unknown), Mohammad Eid (deceased; dates unknown), Nabeel Shu'ab (deceased; dates unknown), Aziz Amoura (1944 – 2017), Yaser Dweik (b. 1940), Mohammad Sayed (b. 1944), Mahmoud Sadeq (b. 1945), Hanan Al-Agha (1948 – 2008), Chebli Haddadin (deceased; dates unknown), Hassan Abu Ras (deceased; dates unknown), Arwa Al Tell (b. 1948), Hafith Qasis (b. 1945), Hassan Obadiah (b. 1946), Ahmad Na'wash (1934 – 2016), Ahmad Ammoura (deceased; dates unknown), and Ahmad Beirut (deceased; dates unknown). The list, by itself, exceeds the permitted number set by the state in The Law of Associations and Social Organizations. The list of founding members also appears to be male dominated, with only four female artists. Among them was Afaf Arafat (1925 – 2017), who worked with UNRWA as an art expert from 1979 to 1981. Arafat was known as an active member of the association from its early stages.



Figure 5. Top: *Afkar wa Tumuhat li-l-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin* (Ideas and Aspirations of the Association of Fine Artists), Abdel Raouf Shamoun. *Al Akhbar* newspaper, undated. Personal archive of Yaser Dweik. The article explains the urgency to establish a formal association, with a space for artists to meet, discuss, and, most important, to exhibit their works. Bottom: *Ahamiyat wujud Arshif li-l-Fann wa al-Fannanin al-Tashkiliyyin fi al-Urdun* (The Importance of the Archive for Art and Artists in Jordan), *Al Dustor* newspaper, 1983. Personal archive of Hafith Qasis. The interview was conducted by Aida Al Dibs and Abdul Hameed Mustapha, and published in the newspaper *Al Dustor* in 1983. In it, Qasis stresses the establishment of an archive station that would preserve data about the artists, as well as their practices and cultural activities. This article helped me to formulate questions such as: Why would there be an urgent need to establish an association for artists at a time when other institutions were emerging? What would this association offer that differed from other institutions?



Figure 6. *Ma'rid 15 'Ayar (The May 15th Exhibition)*, exhibition pamphlet, 1975. Personal archive of Yaser Dweik. This exhibition pamphlet consists of the following: a curatorial statement, a list of participating artists, and a list of works on view. The exhibition statement, titled "*Qadaya al-Fann wa al-Fannanin*" ("Issues in the Arts and Artists?"), highlights major issues that the artists faced during preparations for the exhibition. The absence of a legitimate association made it difficult to reach out to the artists. The process of accepting and classifying works was a disappointing experience, since none of the artists were able to produce works due to shortages in materials and limited financial support. In return, the exhibition showcased limited works because not all of the artists accepted could participate. The exhibition was executed within a short time frame with no advance preparations, which is why many of the artists were not ready to exhibit. What is worth noting, however, is that the association hoped that this exhibition would be held on an annual basis. According to the narratives and compiled materials, the exhibition only occurred twice. The first exhibition took place at the Writers Association Hall in 1975 and the second at the Cultural Palace in 1980.

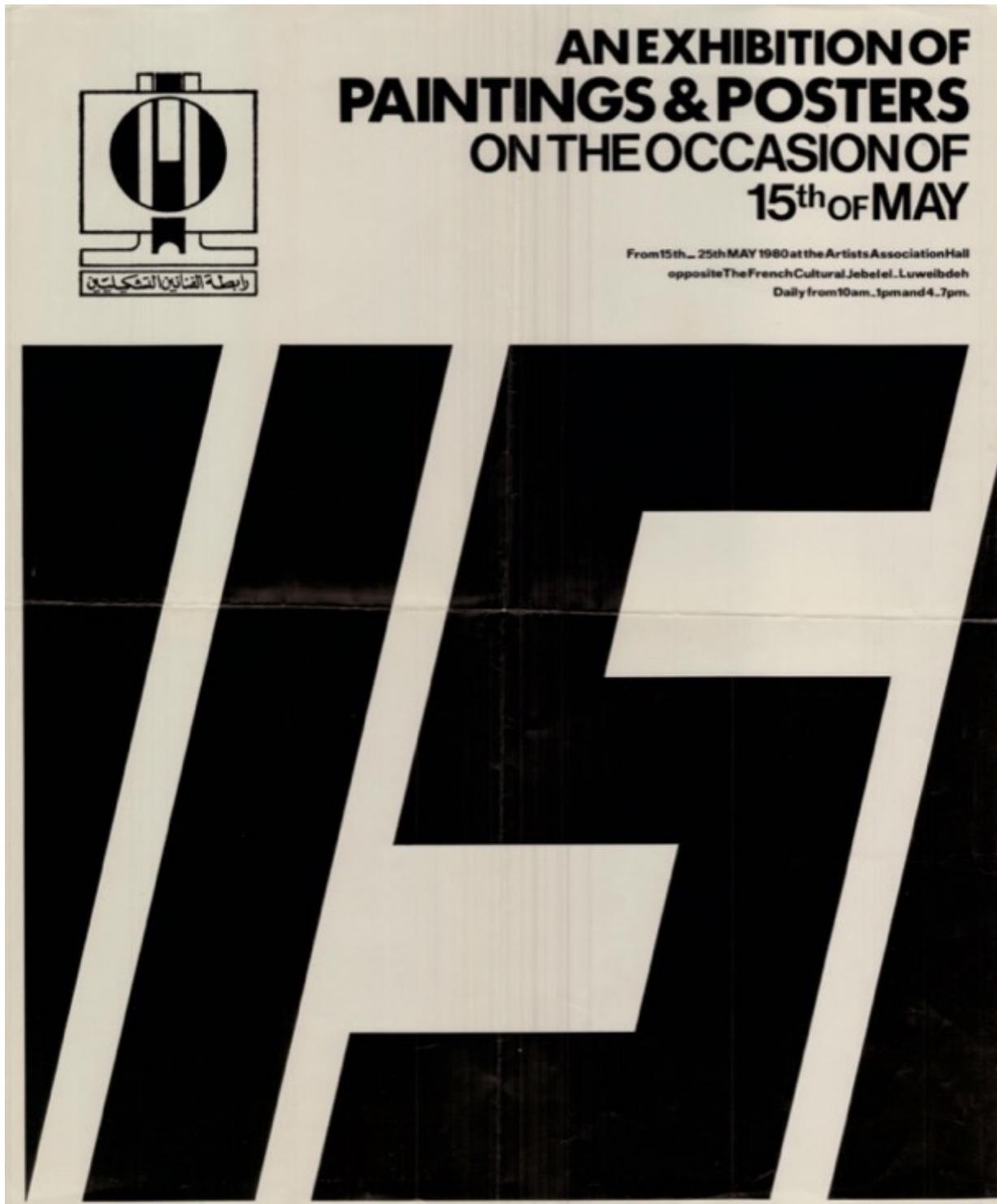


Figure 7. *Ma'rid 15 'Ayar (The May 15th Exhibition)*, exhibition poster, 1980. Personal archive of Yaser Dweik. This is one of the rare documents I found about *The May 15th Exhibition* in 1980. When it was dismantled after two iterations, in 1975 and 1980, the exhibition simply disappeared from the people's consciousness. The association's records do not include any information about *The May 15th Exhibition*. The contents of the exhibitions have been lost, and none of the artworks exhibited have been seen since. Discussions on what happened to these artworks, as well as who was involved in dismantling the exhibitions and returning the artworks, are still unclear. *The May 15th Exhibition* remains a subject of interest to many who visited the present exhibition or loaned their artworks to it.



Figure 8. Suad Malhas, *Al-Nakba* series (*The Palestinian Exodus*), 1976; oil on canvas, dimensions variable. Images courtesy of Suad Malhas. The above two images were found in the artist's possession in the form of photographs.

## الفصل الاول

### انشاء نقابة الفنون التشكيلية الاردنية وشعب الفنون التشكيلية وأهدافها

- المادة (١) يسمى هذا القانون بقانون نقابة الفنون التشكيلية الاردنية... لسنة ١٩٨٠ ويعمل به بعد....
- المادة (٢) تنشأ نقابة الفنون التشكيلية الاردنية وتتمتع بالشخصية الاعتبارية... وأنها الحق في التملك والتصرف في الاموال ضمن الاهداف في هذا القانون... والمقر الرئيسي للنقابة في العاصمة عمان.
- المادة (٣) تنشأ شعبة لكل من الفنون التشكيلية الآتية :-
- ١ - الرسم والتصوير والحفر (الجرافيك) والنحت والخزف.
  - ٢ - الخط العربي والزخرفة.
  - ٣ - التصوير الضوئي والتصميم الاعلاني.
  - ٤ - النقد التاريخ التشكيلي والتربية الفنية.
  - ٥ - هندسة الديكور والتصميم الداخلي.
- وتتمتع كل شعبة كل شخصية الاعتبارية وأنها الحق في التملك والتصرف في الحقوق والاموال ضمن اهداف الشعبة والنقابة ولكل شعبة نظامها الداخلي وصندوق لاموالها وصندوق تقاعد لاعضائها ولكل شعبة مجلس شعبة لادارتها وهيئة عامة من اعضائها العاملين واللجان الخاصة بها لتحقيق اهدافها. ويحق لكل شعبة فتح فروع لها في المملكة الاردنية الهاشمية بقرار من مجلس الشعبة والمقر الرئيسي للنقابة في العاصمة عمان.
- المادة (٤) يقصد بالكلمات الآتية :-
- الوزير : وزير الثقافة.
- الوزارة : وزارة الثقافة.
- النقابة : نقابة الفنون التشكيلية الاردنية.
- الشعب : كافة الشعب التي تنشأ بموجب هذا القانون.
- الشعبية : احدى الشعب التي تنشأ بموجب هذا القانون.
- نقيب الفنانين : نقيب نقابة الفنون التشكيلية الاردنية.
- رئيس الشعبة : رئيس احدى الشعب التي تنشأ بموجب هذا القانون.
- مجلس النقابة : يتكون من مجلس الشعب للنقابة الفنون التشكيلية الاردنية.
- مجلس الشعبة : مجلس الشعبة لحدى الشعب التي تنشأ بموجب هذا القانون.
- النظام الداخلي : اللوائح الداخلية التي توضع من قبل مجلس شعب الفنون التشكيلية لتسيير النظام الاداري والمالي لنقابة الفنون التشكيلية الاردنية.
- المادة (٥) الاهداف :-
- تعمل كل شعبة بالاهداف الخاصة بها في نظامها الداخلي وتحقيق ما يلي:-
- ١ - النهوض بالحركة الفنية التشكيلية الاردنية في كافة مجالات الفنون التشكيلية بما يحقق تقدمها وازدهارها وفق متطلبات العصر ورفع مستوى الاعضاء فنيا ثقافيا ومهنيا.
  - ٢ - اظهار الدور الحضاري والابداعي لتراثنا الانساني والعربي واحترام القيم الروحية وتقاليد الشعب والدفاع عن الوطن ووحدة الوطنية.
  - ٣ - الدفاع عن حرية التعبير وممارسة المهنة.
  - ٤ - التعاون مع الجهات المعنية بالفنون الرسمية والشعبية من وزارات ومؤسسات وافراد في مجالات التوجيه والتخطيط والتنفيذ والمساهمة في مناهج التعليم لكافة المراحل التعليمية في مجالات الفنون التشكيلية والمشاركة في المؤتمرات والتندوات والمسابقات في داخل البلاد وخارجها ولتقامة تلك الانشطة وتنظيمها.

Figure 9. *Muswada li Naqabat al-Funun al-Tashkiliyya al-Urduniyya* (Draft of the Jordanian Fine Arts Syndicate), 1980 (page 2/18). Personal archive of Kamal Abu Halaweh. This draft provides essential information about the syndicate, such as its internal infrastructure, aims, and objectives. The role of the syndicate was to advocate for the rights of artists by offering privileges, such as medical insurance, stipends, and retirement salaries, all covered by the government. Today, however, it appears that these ambitions and trials are still far from being realized.

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مدامح لتجربة التشكيلية الاردنية ومكوناتها

قبل الدخول في هذا الموضوع أرى من الضروري العودة إلى  
الخطوات الأولى التي ظهرت فيها الفهم الابداعية في  
الفنون التشكيلية في الوطن العربي بعد الحرب العالمية  
الأولى. والسبب في ذلك يعود إلى محادثة ربطت بين  
المكونات الأساسية للاتجاهات الفنية التي بدأت  
تظهر في عهده الاقطار العربية مع أشكال النظم  
السياسية والاجتماعية والثقافية التي بدأت تتبلور  
في تلك الفترة.

وللدخول في هذا الموضوع لابد من توضيح الخارطة السياسية  
الجغرافية للمنطقة العربية وعلاقة الاردن بها،  
لذا فيما يتعلق بالنشاط التربوي والثقافي  
يحيط بالاردن، مجموعة من الاقطار العربية كما له  
دور مهم في استقبال ابناءه لتلقي الدراسة  
في المدارس الابتدائية والثانوية والجامعات  
التعليمية العالية.

Figure 10. Mahmoud Taha. *Malamih al-Tajriba al-Tashkiliyya al-'Urduniyya wa Mukawinatuha* (The Features of the Jordanian Fine Arts Experience and Its Components), 1970 (page 1/13). Personal archive of Yaser Dweik. This thirteen-page document written by Mahmoud Taha (1942 – 2016) provides an overview of the art scene in the Arab region and Jordan, although the document is undated. It not only reveals information about the association, but also describes its relationship with other local institutions. The association suffered from several bankruptcies that delayed its growth and expansion. It could not maintain its presence due to the lack of support from the government, other institutions, and its audience. Taha also hoped that private initiatives would unify and collaborate with the association. Instead, each of them worked separately to cater to a specific audience.



Figure 11. *Funun Tashkiliyya* (Fine Arts), Jordan TV, Amman, 1975 (still images). The only episode of *Funun Tashkiliyya* (Fine Arts) found at the Jordan TV archive station was presented by Yaser Dweik. The other twenty-five episodes were destroyed with no clear explanation as to why. Dweik also described the episode in terms of providing essential information about artistic techniques and basic insights into Western art. It appears that such a program was meant not only to raise awareness about the fundamentals of art to a wider audience, but also to introduce the members of the association to the public.

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