

International Conference
of the Arab-German Young Academy of
Sciences and Humanities (AGYA)

DESTRUCTION/ (RE-)CONSTRUCTION

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on
Cultural Heritage in Conflict

Beirut, 30 September – 2 October 2019

Organized by Julia HAUSER, Konstantin KLEIN

Lena-Maria MÖLLER, and Mohammad ALWAHAIB



Destruction/(Re-)Construction

Ruins have often captured human imagination and, in one way or another, they have been inscribed into a community's records, memory, or lore. The history of destruction is as old as humanity. The past decades, however, have witnessed a considerable shift in the meaning attached to the deliberate destruction of buildings/monuments and the symbolic character of ruins. What has changed is the way in which acts of destruction are promulgated, celebrated, and perpetuated by being carefully staged and filmed as well as by distributing these records on video-sharing websites. Similarly, the reactions that destruction causes among the viewers of these records gained more and more importance. While ancient temples or statues feel no anguish or pain when they are blown up, it is societies that are distressed by their fate. During the past decades, there has

been an ever-growing number of publications, commentaries, and conferences on the destruction of cultural heritage. At the same time, artists and writers have also turned to the question of destruction, be it under circumstances of war and conflict as outlined above, or in the context of neo-liberal urbanization and gentrification, proposing ways of challenging these developments through their artworks, installations, and writings or by initiating grass-roots projects in an attempt to preserve buildings and create awareness for their value among urban authorities. An international and interdisciplinary conference organized by the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) aims at discussing the cycle of the creation and decay of architectural heritage from a transcultural and diachronic perspective.

In cooperation with



Keynote Lecture | Destruction and Us: Why a Burning Notre-Dame Affects our Emotions



Alexander FISCHER
(University of Basel/Switzerland)

Alexander FISCHER studied Philosophy, Literature, Communication Science, Literature & Film, and History in Bamberg/Germany and Waterloo/Canada. His PhD thesis was on the phenomenon of manipulation, and his book *Manipulation: On the Theory and Ethics of a Form of Influence* (Suhrkamp, Berlin 2017) was widely acknowledged in the media and the academic community. Fischer has been a Visiting Scholar at Duke University/USA and the University of Cambridge/UK. At the beginning of this year he was a visiting

Assistant Professor at Bond University/Australia and has been appointed as a Visiting Professor for Fall 2020 at the University of Notre Dame/USA. He is currently an Assistant Professor in Practical Philosophy at the University of Basel/Switzerland where he continues to analyze how we influence each other, especially when this happens in an unconscious way. Besides his academic work, Fischer trained and works as a psychotherapist. His current research focusses on emotion theory, for which he is mainly interested in the interplay of our rationality with our emotions, but also in the question of how we can conceptualize emotions on the whole.

Beit Beirut, Independence Road, Beirut | 30 September 2019

7:00 pm Doors open – Light Refreshments
7:40 pm Welcome Address | Claus-Peter HAASE (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/Germany)
7:45 pm Introduction of the Speaker | Konstantin KLEIN (University of Bamberg/Germany)
8:00 pm Keynote Lecture: Alexander FISCHER (University of Basel/Switzerland) | Destruction and Us. How a Burning Notre-Dame Affects Our Emotions

Panel Discussion | Cultural Heritage in Conflict: Perspectives from Art and Literature.

Orient-Institut Beirut, Rue Hussein Beyhoum 44 | 1 October 2019

7:00 pm | Doors open at OIB ■ 7:15 pm | Birgit SCHÄBLER (Director, Orient-Institut Beirut/Lebanon) | Welcome Address ■ 7:30 pm | Panel Discussion

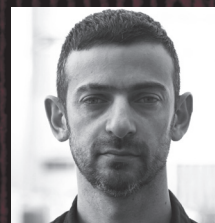
Moderated by Julia HAUSER (Kassel/Germany)



Hoda BARAKAT is a Lebanese novelist. Barakat lived much of her life in Beirut and later moved to Paris, where she now resides. A theme central to her works is trauma and war. Three of her novels are narrated by men living in the margins of society in the Lebanese civil war. In her novel *Ḥarīṭ al-miyāh* (1998), Niqula, the protagonist, returns to his deserted shop in the ruins of downtown Beirut, making his home, and re-living his memories, amid destruction. Barakat has received numerous grants and prizes. In 2010/11 she was a fellow at the Nantes Institute for Advanced Studies. In 2013, she was a scholar in residence at the University of Austin, Texas. In 2015, she was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. This year, Barakat received the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) for her novel *Barīd al-lail* (2018) which tells the story of people in exile through their letters.



Abed AL KADIRI double majored in Arabic Literature and Fine Arts at the Lebanese University. Since 2006, Al Kadiri has had a number of solo shows and participated in several group exhibitions regionally and internationally including Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Bahrain, Istanbul, Hungary, Paris, Cambridge, and Basel. He is the cofounder of Dongola, a publishing house for limited edition books produced by artists. He was recently awarded the Sursock Museum Prize at the 32nd Salon d'Automne (2016). Many of Al Kadiri's works revolve around the decay or destruction of cultural heritage. In his multimedia installation *The Story of the Rubber Tree*, shown at Musée Sursock in 2018, he traces the transformation of his ancestors' Beirut home, now in ruins, re-conquered, and, in a way reanimated, by nature. His watercolour series *Al-maqāma al-mosulīya* is concerned with the destruction of cultural heritage at the hands of ISIS in Syria.



his videos and installations including *Graftings* (2019), *Petrified* (2016), and *Fragments* (2016), Ali Cherri engages with the looting of cultural objects in conflict, their illegal circulation and commercialization in the art market.



Alfred TARAZI graduated with a degree in graphic design from the American University of Beirut. His work has been shown internationally and collected by prestigious institutions and private collections. His work revolves around complex historical investigations into the ultimate event horizon of the Lebanese Civil War. Tarazi deploys his visual strategies in order to dig out fields of memory, emplaced haphazardly in a vast expanse of the present tense. Tackling the Lebanese obsession with history, Tarazi playfully interrogates its questionable sources and selective archival practices, highlighting the role of the past as both origin and destination. This archaeology of the present does not aim to restore, but rather, to represent a historical condition through fragments of anomaly and singularity. Alfred Tarazi's works include the multimedia installations *The Lovers* (2019), *Dear Madness* (2017), and *Monuments to Dust* (2015).