



Summer Academy 2021

Darat al Funun welcomes your application to join its upcoming Summer Academy program, taking place from 1 June- 30 July 2021.

The academy offers participants the space to develop their art practice within a critical setting that encourages experimentation, knowledge-sharing, and communal learning. Taking place as part of the Postcolonial Ecologies exhibition project, this year's program will be curated around a set of fundamental questions concerning ecological crisis, systems of value, and life futures, in light of which the participants will explore new conceptual and aesthetic strategies that entangle both artistic and ecological practices.

What are the limitations of mainstream discourses on the environmental crisis? Is humanity as a whole responsible? Who are the people that are being affected the most? How do we read environmental degradation from a perspective that entangles class, race, and gender dynamics?

How have the legacies of colonialism affected our relationship with our landscapes and ecosystems? How can we expand our understanding of colonial violence to account for the assaults carried out upon indigenous lands and environments? What kind of image or semantics make visible more contemporary forms of colonialism such as development practices, the neoliberal seizure of communal land, and the contamination of our nature commons? How can we contest the commodification of land and nature toward a planetary perspective that recognises land as a source of life and subsistence?

Can technological solutions help, or does the answer lie in rolling back to more "primitive" ways of living? And most importantly, who will bear the cost of any proposed solutions?

Can we imagine other possible worlds that channel and mediate new forms of social organisation? What does a praxis of decolonisation that acknowledges the agency and complicity of local structures and the crisis of the state form look like? How can we contribute to an imaginary that goes beyond structures of race, ethnicity, and nation-state? Moreover, can we envision a politics that transcends the figure of the human to include non-human (or more-than-human) beings as witnesses and agents of change?

Using the space of The Lab as a site of conjunction for the investigation of art and ecology, participants will engage with and begin to answer these questions as they negotiate both contextual and personal gravity points. While there will be a basic guiding structure, the program is designed to allow participants to shape the trajectory of their individual and collective experiences.

The curriculum will include workshops, screenings, discussions, studio visits, and excursions. At the end of the two months, participants will do a group presentation at The Lab, with the option of exploring several formats; exhibition, public intervention, open studio, etc.

Invited faculty members will include Sahar Qawasmi and Nida Sinnokrot (Sakiya Collective), Jumana Emil Abboud, Salah Hassan, Kareem Estefan, Firas Shehadeh, Islam Khatib (WikiGender Collective), Reef Fakhouri and Dina Bataineh (Taghmees Collective).

*The majority of the sessions will be in Arabic. Translation will be provided if needed for sessions facilitated in English.

THE PROGRAM

Part I: Rewilding Pedagogy

Rewilding Pedagogy takes the act of 'rewilding' as its point of departure, rewilding the soil from the ravages of monoculture agriculture, and rewilding local knowledge cultures from colonization and encroaching neoliberalism. Rewilding pedagogy is an approach for envisioning new networks, systems, and processes that can mediate new spatial and social configurations essential for new political, socio-economic, environmental, and material realities. This kind of cultivation takes hard work and is a fundamentally creative and collaborative process. As part of the Summer Academy at Darat al-Funun, we will plug into Sakiya's ongoing work in imagining and creating a global eco network of garden structures made in keeping with local indigenous crafts and science. We will invoke a connection between art and ephemeral infrastructures in the form of social sculptures offering a decolonized more than human communication.

Part II: Witnessing and Worldbuilding in the Wake

What does it mean to witness other possible worlds from within (ecological, political, economic) disaster? How might the concept of "opacity," proposed by Martinican poet and theorist Édouard Glissant, or the links between memory and futurity in Afrofuturism and indigenous futurisms, reorient our understanding of popular witness figures like Naji al-Ali's Handala? This seminar will explore theories of witnessing that look beyond the discourses of social trauma and international law, drawing instead from artistic and social practices of "fabulation," "speculation," and "worldbuilding." Attuning ourselves to the distinct temporary conditions of disaster experienced by different communities, we will seek modes of "witnessing as worldbuilding" that challenge the "capitalist realism" identified by the British cultural critic Mark Fisher, in which "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism."

Part III: The View from "No-Man's Land"

The mainstream discourse on ecological and environmental crises builds on a separation of the problem from its historical and economic roots. Like most crises, they are presented as sudden, unintentional and surprising events. The current pandemic is a representative example. However, environmental devastation is at the core of the modern and colonial project, which has been historically based on extraction, the reengineering of native ecosystems and the exploitation of labour-power in the name of prosperity, growth and progress. Decolonisation as decontamination.

In this part of the program, we will explore the post-colonial effects on ecology, the discourse around the 'Anthropocene', digitality, ecological struggle, computation, aesthetics and value. Examining the interactions between native ecosystems and colonial contamination and the ways in which this affects life, we will look at post-conceptual art practices/contemporary art through the prism of ecological thinking.

WORKSHOPS

The Water Diviners

The water diviners, resources used to divine and sight water sources, often utilizing divining tools in the process. In seeking out water, we must accept that water has a physical as well as metaphysical presence. We imagine that water exists outside as well as inside of ourselves, and we look for water in stories and for the story in water. We remap the folktales that were once interwoven with the natural environment and water resources. Envisioned as an open exploration of the wonders and the wanderings of folktales and their inherent connection with the natural environment, the workshop shall function as a platform for imagining our very own stories. Workshop participants shall act as diviners, guided to locate the tales within themselves as well as within their natural surroundings. Working in the natural landscape of Jordan, and drawing on the artist's experience in performance and live art, the workshop sessions shall utilize integrated exercises and collective exchanges that fully engage in storytelling and water themes.

The intensive workshop encounters are imagined as an arena for experimental creation that channels storytelling through the land and its waters. The tools for divining will include working in drawing using various materials, working site-specifically & through land art exploration, as well as working through body movement & sound; all of which will build up to a collaborative live art action at a future date. The practice and exploration of performance art – ranging anywhere between action painting, happenings, land art, sound and video work, with individual as well as group activity – will act as our interlocutor between place (the natural landscape), and story (folktale). In other words, the exercises in performance art will “speak between” us diviners and the natural environment around us.

As a result of the workshop commitment, participants will develop a creative and conscious relationship with the land and its water sources. Our roles as water diviners shall bridge a reconnection to folktales and the empowering qualities of stories.

Mud Building

The earth is not merely what we walk upon; it is a source of life in all its forms, our food, our homes, our culture, and our existence. Beneath and within the soil there is life; we may not see it, but it exists. Over the span of two days, we will immerse in the nature of mud to understand what it means to each of us, engaging closely with it, getting to know its different types and characteristics. We seek to understand the soil, to touch and smell it, to experiment with it, and to create from it.

In these two days we hope to connect and build a relationship with mud through our hands and through reflective conversations that allow us to digest our collective experience and shape our personal meaning.

In this social kitchen, we will be accompanied by mud and soil enthusiast, Nujood Ashoor, in an immersive experience in mud building, combining our work with reflections and conversations around food to help ground our learning.

A Reading in Ecofeminism and the Middle East and North Africa

Today we live amid a climate crisis of unprecedented proportions. With the escalation of apocalyptic scenarios and the diversity of its manifestations between forest fires and a virus that quarantines the world, the hope that the current reality can change is fading. In this context, we decided to work on Ecofeminism to expand our conceptual tools in the Arabic language to tackle various environmental issues, unjust distribution of the earth's wealth, and how all that relates to women in their varying lives and identities. We also seek to shed light on the importance and methodologies of organizing in light of environmental crises.

We see that the current period is a political moment that can be used to review the roots and history of global ecofeminist theories and movements and to reflect on our regional reality and issues to chart a path that we can benefit from today. Ecofeminism is a spirituality-rooted broad school of thought. Therefore, we developed the Ecofeminist Webpage to include a timeline showing the development of Ecofeminist thought and departs from theology to literature and then to the emergence of various Ecofeminist schools of thought in socio-political movements around the world from the late 1950s until now. We conclude our research with our environmental realities and issues in the region.

How can we understand our new reality from an Ecofeminist perspective? How do we envision moving forward?

LECTURERS AND FACILITATORS

Jumana Emil Abboud

Jumana Emil Abboud (born Shefa-'Amr, Galilee, 1971) works with drawing, installation, video and performance, exploring personal and collective memory, loss, longing and belonging. Inspired by the cultural landscape of her home, Abboud draws on the traditions of Palestinian folklore and myth-making by collecting stories and fairy tales. Investigating these storytelling practices and oral histories, the artist provides new interpretations for the tales she has Discovered.

Nida Sinnokrot and Sahar Qawasmi (Sakiya)

Sakiya – Art | Science | agriculture is a research platform grafting agrarian traditions of self-sufficiency with contemporary arts and ecological practices. It is a vital laboratory for exploring the commons, their loss, and ways to (re)imagine and (re)claim them. Sakiya's model integrates agriculture and ecology within the framework of an interdisciplinary residency program. It is located on a rewilded hillside with ancient trees and water springs, and historic buildings and pools in Ein Qiniya, a village 7km west of Ramallah in the West Bank area C.

Salah Hassan

Salah M. Hassan is an art historian, critic and curator whose work focuses on African and African Diaspora art history and visual cultures as well as the black intellectual tradition. Hassan is Director of The Africa Institute, Sharjah. He is also the Goldwin Smith Professor and Director of the Institute for Comparative Modernities as well as Professor of Art History and Visual Culture in the Africana Studies and Research Center and the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies at Cornell University, Ithaca, US.

Kareem Estefan

Kareem Estefan is a writer, editor, art critic, teacher, and PhD candidate in Modern Culture and Media at Brown University, researching the poetics of witnessing and worldbuilding in Palestinian visual culture. His essays and reviews have been published in a number of art magazines and cultural journals, and he is co-editor, with Carin Kuoni and Laura Raicovich, of *Assuming Boycott: Resistance, Agency, and Cultural Production* (OR Books, 2017).

Firas Shehadeh

Firas Shehadeh is an artist based in Vienna. His work grapples with the understanding of home and identity in a post-internet age. He is interested in post-colonial effects, technology, and history. He holds a Master of Fine Arts from the Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien.

Islam Khatib (WikiGender Collective)

Wiki Gender is a regional participatory platform producing feminist open knowledge on gender and women issues in Arabic, works in a cumulative, ever-evolving manner, and is open to include interested people. In addition to knowledge production, we are working on archiving written, visual, or audio content produced by others in our fields of interest. We also translate selected texts and papers on gender and feminism into Arabic. The content we're interested in includes concepts and terminology, films, songs, visual arts, books, people, incidents and issues, and campaigns and organizations working in the field.

Reef Fakhouri and Dina Batayneh (Taghmees Collective)

Taghmees is an experiment in non-institutional learning grounded in personal and collective experiences and situated knowledge. Our learning happens organically and each session takes on the flavor of its participants, food, and fabric. In Arabic, taghmees means the act of dipping, often used to refer to dipping by hand into food with bread, or the act of immersing yourself deeply into anything – a discussion, an experience, or life.

APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply, please send a CV, letter of interest and portfolio of previous work (if applicable).
opencall@daratalfunun.org

Deadline: 15/4

ATTENDANCE

The Summer Academy program will take place from 1 June- 30 July 2021. Participants are expected to commit to the space of the conversation by attending all sessions.

FEES/ TRAVEL/ACCOMMODATION

Participants are offered a stipend to cover food and transportation expenses for the two months. For participants from outside Amman, we will offer shared accommodation in one of our residency flats. However, we cannot cover travel costs to/from Amman. Please note that in light of COVID restrictions, we're limiting this year's participation to artists based in Jordan and Palestine. If the pandemic situation gets worse by June, the Summer Academy will be exclusively online. In this case, attendance remains free but no stipend will be provided.

COVID SAFETY MEASURES

The program will feature a combination of online and onsite activities. However, we will keep the arrangements flexible as we closely monitor changes in the pandemic situation, with the chance of moving all our activities online if the circumstances do get worse. In case the participants do attend on site activities, they are required to keep their masks on at all times and maintain social distancing. Your health and safety are of utmost importance to us.

DARAT AL FUNUN

Darat al Funun is a home for the arts and artists from the Arab world. We trace our beginnings to 1988 and are now housed in six renovated historical buildings from the 1920s and 30s, with a restored archaeological site in the garden. We aim to provide a platform for contemporary Arab artists, to support art practices and artistic exchange, to stimulate critical discourse, and to research, document, and archive Arab art.

The 2021 Summer Academy takes its inspiration from the 1999-2003 Darat al Funun Summer Academy which was established on the occasion of our 10th anniversary to provide a key opportunity for emerging artists to study and work under the supervision of the late Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan. Over the course of four years, over 60 artists from Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iraq attended the academy.