

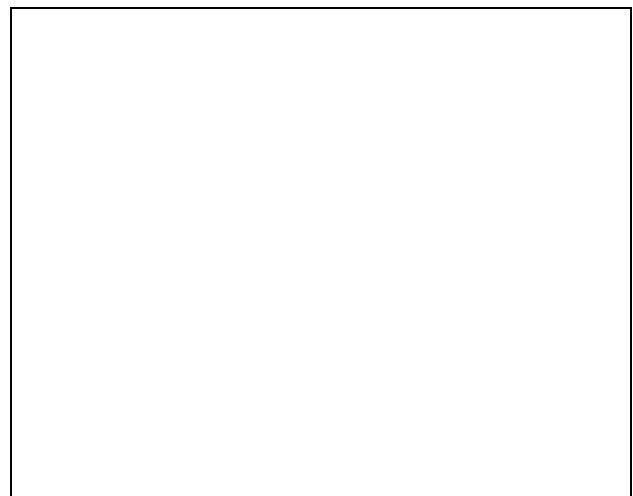
# Missing *Niké*: On Oversights, Doubled Sights, and Universal Art Understood through Lebanon

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The first thing Moustapha Farroukh did upon arriving in Paris in July 1926 was to go to the Louvre.<sup>1</sup> He had departed from Beirut two years before to study drawing and painting in Rome, or the “cradle of art” as he called it, and now he was on an obligatory side trip to catch up with modern art production (*al-fann al-hadīth*). The principal locale for that, however, was in the showcase of ancient production: the Louvre. His goal was to expand his “god-given” skills to enable his participation in the making of what he called *al-fann al-‘ālamī*, or universal art. And so, one morning early in that summer month between the wars, after waiting in “orderly” lines for both his bus and museum tickets, “because pushing, hitting, cheating, big bodies, and *lack of taste* have no place here,” Farroukh was the first customer to enter the Louvre (Farroukh 1986:126–127, emphasis added). At that time the *Niké of Samothrace* was the first object on display at the very entrance to the museum, atop of the Daru Staircase, placed there to signify the foundations of High Art in the Greek attention to the human form, and just beyond her was the *Venus de Milo*. Seeing these sculptures, “encircled by an aura of artistic majesty and Greek glory,” Farroukh reported being born anew (1986:127–128). The ambitious artist had long ago copied the *Venus de Milo* in oil, but at some point during his stay he diligently produced a sketch of the *Niké* (no figure).<sup>2</sup>

I think it highly appropriate to begin a study of the concept of universal art with an absence, a missing picture, a non-figure, an oversight made because the researcher’s mind was seeking other evidence. There is a paradox in the notion of universal art that has animated both the disciplines of art history and the anthropology of art, though in different ways. This paradox suggests that art

exists as a human impulse found universally but that the truly paradigmatic art is found in limited geographical locales and chronological zones. This notion of art seems to exist as much by absencing some experiences as it does by focusing on others. To take my own foray into art history and anthropology as an example, a copy of the *Niké* seemed irrelevant to my study of contemporary art in Lebanon, so I chose not to record it. Likewise, after the 1930s it was not published or otherwise propagated by any actors concerned with the pioneer artist’s oeuvre. Others have responded to it as I did, assuming that, “It’s just student work, prior to the development of his artistic personality, so it’s not really important,” to quote the comment his son, Hani, made upon presenting Farroukh’s set of sketchbooks to me (personal communication, February 15, 2004). In seeking to highlight the artist’s ultimate originality—his singular sight—and his suitability as an exemplar of universal art, this comment unwittingly negates the promi-



No Figure.

ment role the *Niké* seems to have had in the development of Farroukh's own vision, his nation's potential, and the concept of art as a universal concept. Similarly, the art world's conscientious inclusion of such copies in successive exhibitions becomes unworthy of explanation.<sup>3</sup>

Opposing this trend, I focus in this paper on doubled sights. I argue that by paying attention to convergences exemplified in Farroukh's encounter with the *Niké*, to interactions that cultivate similarity, much can be learned about the development of the concept of universal art that has been ignored by an exclusivist focus on artistic difference and authenticity. Methodologically, I attend to interactions in order to destabilize the apparently solid boundaries between metropolitan and marginal art production, suggesting that such entities gain materiality only in the process of sustained interaction. In my seven years of interviewing art world actors about art in Beirut, no one ever mentioned copies, old or new, as part of the production of art here. Unsurprisingly perhaps, they condemned the very possibility of copying, direct or indirect, as proof that "we do not have art here." To consider this assertion properly requires calling into question both categories equally, both "art" and "here." This is an important issue to bring both to the literatures of art history and of art theory and anthropology dealing with global circuits of art. In relation to "art" as a concept, I interrogate Walter Benjamin's (1968) notion of an *aura* for art that is diminished with each reproduction, each move from the original. In relation to the idea of "here" I apply Arjun Appadurai's (1996) exploration of locality to understand the way each move from an original may produce the universal. By drawing on performance theory, I assert that the exclusivist and spatialized sense of national identity is better replaced with an embodied, experienced, socially constructed community of taste.

Many tellings of encounters such as that between Beirut-born Farroukh and the *Niké* excavated from Samothracia foreground locality as a problem by assuming that distance "naturally" separates people born in Beirut from objects created in Greece and museums established in Paris. To explain their counter-intuitive convergence, such tellings take the principle of taste: that the *Niké* is inherently beautiful was recognized by per-spicious Frenchmen in Greece whose inherent

taste for beauty led them to excavate it and ship it to France where people of inherent taste from the world over converged to appreciate things of beauty, with Farroukh naturally among them. Inherent aesthetic value, recognized through an innately good eye, overcomes boundaries of distance, culture, class, etc. However, a focus on physical (and social) distance between actors and objects leads to reifying taste as a universal human quality (though one not inherent in all humans) to explain encounters in ways that ignore all political, economic, or other constraints while overlooking other sorts of interactions.

*Al-thauq* (taste) is what Farroukh invoked in his first encounter with the *Niké* to explain the convergence of civil comportment (no pushing in line, etc.) and the presence of universal art. Through his narration he highlighted his taste, a quality demonstrated by his own comportment and experience before the sculpture. His autobiography, portions of which were published in a local women's magazine called *Sawt al-Mara'* in the late 1940s, can be seen as the sharing of that experience with Arabic-reading compatriots.

In terms of performance theory (Bauman 1984), "taste" is alertness to the codes that inform how an act should be understood and create a certain predictability of audience response. It develops through participation in performances that bring actors, objects, and ways of practice together. In this sense taste is a social construct. By contrast, the notion of taste employed in Farroukh's autobiography is one that leads effortlessly to elevating those who share a given alertness over those who do not, often with severe political consequences. "They may have the quantity, but we have the quality," intoned Lebanese MP Pierre Gemayel in his March 9, 2005 address to supporters, helping them to interpret the massive turn-out of government protestors as citizens whose votes were rendered less weighty due to their sectarian or educational background. Gemayel thus articulated a conception few people in Lebanon today voice so clearly but many hold dearly: that the political process is not about numbers of participants but their sensibilities. The Lebanese political opposition ultimately responded to this drive by asserting their own tasteful or civilized quality, telling their own supporters that their demonstrations were "peaceful, democratic, and civilized" (Qassam

2006).<sup>4</sup> In recognition of how taste has come to political potency in Lebanon, as in other countries, this essay seeks to show that taste, like art, needs to be reconceived, not as a reflection of natural, inherent, individually bounded sensibilities, but as a performance of constructed, emergent, collective identities that have animated the history of Lebanon and universal art together.

Rather than assume that desirable aesthetic qualities simply inhere in the *Niké*, and that Farroukh quite naturally evinced his endowment of good taste, my technique in this exploration of the social life of copies will be to trace the *Niké* back to a time when its aesthetic qualities were not inherent, when Farroukh's endowment of taste was not assured, and when the metropole could be found only in the periphery. My point in doing so is to take apart at once the notion of Lebanon's exclusion from art-making, the notion of universal art's inherent inclusion in France (or the West), and lastly, the notion of hierarchically structured taste as a cause of cross-cultural convergences. Taken apart these notions reveal their implicit politics and leave room for alternative models to comprehend art and identity.

### Doubled Sights

In the last years of his struggle with leukemia, Farroukh reproduced his visit to the Louvre for a community of Arabic readers, taking his life as an allegory for the hopes and despairs of his newly formed nation. *Qussat Insān min Lubnān* (The Story of a Person from Lebanon) published in 1954, describes the protagonist, Salim—an ambitious art student clearly modeled after himself—arriving at the Louvre early one morning in 1935 and standing “first, of course,” in a long queue to enter the museum (Farroukh 1954:47–48). When at the specified hour the museum doors finally open, the first thing Salim sees is the “*Victoire de Samotrace*” (in his text the French name is rendered in Arabic letters) greeting visitors “with a sigh” and seeming “about to fly on its marble wings” (Farroukh 1954:8). Below the verbal description on the same page is Farroukh's ink-sketch (figure 1). It shows a man and a woman at the bottom of a grand staircase, legs in mid-step as they begin their ascent. Moving in perfect unison, the couple's bodies are almost an exact mirror of the *Niké*'s position—were her arms and head present—and their heads are raised to-



Figure 1. Farroukh's sketch of a couple at the Louvre. Courtesy of the Hani Farroukh Archives, Beirut, Lebanon.

wards the sculpture, with their eyes locked on it as if mesmerized by some magical force.

The ink drawing demonstrates graphically Farroukh's own concern for making art based on the human form in a Louvre-codified pedigree. Visually, it extends that concern to the representation of his audience of compatriots. Moreover, it demonstrates the compatibility of Farroukh's compatriots to the art historical pedigree; indeed, it makes them the contemporary embodiments of it. While the *Niké* sculpture is ancient and Greek in origin—that is, when understood art historically—she is also Lebanese-Arab (to use Farroukh's ethno-nationalist term) to the extent that she finds physical completion in the bodies of Salim and his companion, people whose very bodies can be seen in this format to reproduce and revivify the *Niké* as the basis of High Art. Salim and his partner double the sight of the *Niké* and the virtues that, for Farroukh, she not only represented but promoted. Yet unlike the broken, headless, and wingless sculpture, these compatriots carry forth the posture and meaning of fine art in the modern world. Thus, this doubling is not mere reproduction of something already formed but production of its living relevance and agency in the present.

The life of the *Niké* in Lebanese-Arab bodies shows that copies have been much misunderstood. What makes the act of copying important is that it acknowledges an external source as the motivation and guide for production of a new entity. The criterion then is not the degree to which the subsequent

product imitates precisely the precedent. It is rather the acknowledgement that the act of creation is not self-defined, not an act unto itself as it were, but an act in rather strict relation to something else. In most academic discussions of art, as in literature, copying has been deemed a lesser form of production because it seems to seek, beguilingly or naively, to offer complete interchangeability. Painters of the 19th century, Linda Nochlin explains in relation to Courbet, represented their work as an “act of progeneration, the supremely originating thrust of brush to canvas” (1986:82). Thus, while a model or portion of land might inspire their work, the result was not a copy but a creation mediated by the mature artist’s mind and hand. Likewise, authority in literature has been tied to a model of patriarchal progeneration that creates space for itself by announcing ruptures with the social environment and intellectual lineage (Said 1985). Against this model of production, copying deliberately assumes a different role for the creator. It is through recognition of the model and obedience to it, that production (as replication) results. When we disdain copying as unoriginal we miss the importance of the way doubling allows for insertion of extant entities into new contexts, often beyond material constraints. Equally, we lose sight of the way doubling enables affiliation or the pursuit of lineage *retroactively*. Attention to this pursuit reveals that production can be understood as the confluence of agents rather than their succession, which is the usual model of the influential artist begetting offspring artists who are influenced by, but not identical to the progenitor. By contrast, copying as an act insists not on objects as products but on relationships of production.

The very assumption of a stable original source is rendered problematic through unbiased study of copies. This is true whether the issue at hand is copying of an aesthetic style or of a modernizing process. It is important to rethink copying because both Edward Said (1985) in relation to literature and Linda Nochlin (1986) in relation to art history have called attention to the political power asserted through claims to origination. Particularly in relation to art and the spatial sense of community (the local art world), the notion of an origin of art style presumes that practices and ideas were fully formulated by sets of people in close interaction with their spatially given environment and then dif-

fused out to impose themselves on peripheral areas with little structural change. Such studies tend to overlook debates within the very environment held to be originating and, correspondingly, to take for granted the boundaries of the environment long before its inhabitants could do so.

By contrast, I believe attention to the ways that art practices actually spread historically fulfils the injunctions embodied in Ann Stoler’s injunction to “look more carefully at the ambiguous identities that empires dealt with, at the cultural labor that went into the making of ‘communities of sentiment,’ and at the strategies of recruitment to them” (1992:27). In other words, rather than presume separations, scholars should consider, in a single conceptual field, the mutual constitution of colonial and colonized, French and Lebanese, modern and traditional identities (cf. Chakrabarty 2000; Mitchell 2000). Art, in particular, allows for questioning any Eurocentrism because its production palpably requires networks, institutions, dissemination, audiences, reception, and consumption. These factors encourage attention not just to the agency of non-Europeans in contributing to universal art (e.g., Winegar 2003) but, also, to the ways in which the constitution of the latter has been processual and necessarily mutual (though agonistic and hierarchical). Put simply, before positing any sort of derivativeness, we must explain originality itself.

It is important to state the extent of copying in Farroukh’s oeuvre, as an example of one particularly well-documented producer of today’s Beirut-based art world. I have been able to find record of copies made from the following: the *Venus de Milo* (ca. 130 BCE, Musée du Louvre); Rembrandt’s *Portrait de l’artiste avec chevalet* (1660, Musée du Louvre); Raphael’s *La Vierge au voile* (ca.1518, Musée du Louvre); Gérard’s *Pysche et l’Amour* (1798, Musée du Louvre); Boucher’s *Diane sortant du bain* (1742, Musée du Louvre); Titian’s *L’Amour Sacré et l’amour profane* (ca.1514, Galleria Borghese); and Chabas’ *Au Crépuscule* (1905, Musée du Luxembourg).<sup>5</sup>

Of his making the copy of Titian’s *L’Amour Sacré et l’amour profane*, Farroukh wrote:

Among the most important contents [of Villa Borghese] is a picture by one of the outstanding artists of [the Venetian] school . . . Titian, and he has there his picture by the title *L’Amore Sacro E L’Amore Profano*, one of his most famous pictures. Truly the picture amazed me

with the beauty of its composition and golden colors. So I got permission to make a copy of it to study and sharpen my vision in understanding the secrets of this genius. The *mujtahid* is always rewarded. [1986:78]

Strictly translated as “one who makes independent judgment,” the term *mujtahid* can be loosely translated as “he who makes effort” but the phrasing plainly refers to an Islamic hadith promising that religious, ethical judgment made in the absence of religious authority will be rewarded in itself. The *mujtahid* is the opposite of the *muqallid*, the one who makes judgment by copying what an authority has done or made visible.

It is noteworthy that, for Farroukh, there was the possibility that copying a famous picture was not mere imitation but a means for developing and exercising individual understanding of a school of art. This picture was displayed at Farroukh’s first exhibition in 1927 with the Muslim Scouts and again at his subsequent exhibition at the American University of Beirut in 1929. Before the scores of young scouts and their aged, notable sponsors were invited to view the picture at the 1927 show, they heard a lecture on “Picturing in Islam” by Muslim scholar Omar Fakhoury who thanked the Muslim Scouts for encouraging an art renaissance “that comes as a sign of our aspired ascent” (Farroukh 1986:149; cf. Al-Kashāf 1927:50). The role of the copied picture as instigator to the performance of that renaissance and independent judgment anew should not be disregarded. Rather than being incidental to the artist’s career, such pictures performed the ability of their re-maker to produce the quintessential markers of the Greco-Roman, Renaissance heritage, with its depth of meaning in terms of rationality, humanism, *disegno*, and *colore*. I do not use the word “performed” here casually. Performance theory (Bauman 1984; Schiefflin 1985; Schechner 1988) points to the emergence of meaning rather than its fixity in a finished text, just as it points to the responsibility of an audience for producing that meaning dialogically with the author(s) and performer(s). Art was not simply something received but something that came into being through such interactions.

To explain further how paintings, and particularly copied ones, could become performances, I will take a case from later in Farroukh’s career, his reproduction of Paul Emile Chabas’ *Au Crépuscule*, a



Figure 2. Souvenir de l'exposition Farrouk (1933–1934), Moustapha Farroukh, ink on paper, 14×10 centimeters. Courtesy of the Hani Farroukh Archives, Beirut, Lebanon.

canvas dating to 1931 when Farroukh was accepted as a participant in the *Société des Artistes Français* in Paris. Chabas was the president of the Society and it is probable that the act of copying was an act of homage and affiliation. Farroukh’s copy, *Au Crépuscule*, shows a young woman in a body of water crouching to cover her genitalia and peering over her shoulder at some unseen viewer, and it appeared at Farroukh’s 1933 exhibition at the Ecole des Arts et Métiers (Exposition du Peintre Farrouk 1933). The sort of performance Farroukh may have hoped to spawn with this picture can be grasped from a cartoon he published in a newspaper the following spring.<sup>6</sup>

### Performing “Pictures of Us”

Titled *Souvenir de l'Exposition Farrouk (1933–1934)* (Souvenir of Farroukh’s Exhibition), this ink-

drawing shows a couple viewing with obvious distaste the copy of Chabas' picture (figure 2). Newspaper readers would have immediately recognized from the clothing cues that the viewers were peasants, but most palpably it is their art-viewing posture that demonstrates their "backwardness." Farroukh has positioned the pair in such a way that he allows his viewer to see them and their object of viewing at once. Both man and woman stoop slovenly, eyes wide and eyebrows raised. While the woman raises a finger to her lip as if wanting to pose a question yet unutterable, the man humbly folds his hands at his crotch, a feeble, effeminate mirror of the figure they are viewing. Not only are the rural visitors rendered recalcitrant towards the trappings of official French academic art, but their apparent estrangement is increased by Farroukh's setting the world of art in straight lines and right angles against their floppy, drooping dress. They literally cast a shadow on the art.

The response of the peasant couple to the art-given view contrasts dramatically with that of Farroukh, which was to become a viewer and producer of the viewed. Instead they huddle as viewed objects themselves. The picture shows how people untrained in the codes of visual interpretation are unable to distinguish between viewing a naked girl and viewing a nude exploration of humanistic beauty. This inability renders their response to art self-degrading rather than self-enhancing. *Souvenir*, then, precisely opposes the ink-drawings from *Qussat insān min lubnān*, where the couple in the Louvre perform a mutually enhancing engagement with the *Niké*. The difference between the two couples is not their origin—both are from the same locale as the painter—but their acquisition and, more importantly, performance of taste. Performing one's taste for imported objects produces both the universality of art and audience while performing distaste grounds one in the mountain village.<sup>7</sup>

To understand the value of art performances in the lives of Mandate-era Beirutis it is useful to know something of the background of those who attended art exhibitions. These were people who would have learned about show openings by receiving an invitation, in their capacity as desirable visitors (those whose social status or economic position lent prestige by their presence or made it

likely that they would purchase a work) or as personal acquaintances of the artist. Others were school-children brought by their teachers or regular readers of the Arabophone and Francophone local newspapers, most of which had a section on social events of importance that tended to include exhibition announcements. The tone of such announcements was often didactic: "Visiting this exhibition is imperative for everyone who considers himself among the class of *al-muthaqafīn* (cultured people)" (Anonymous 1937). Often these announcements explicitly defined Beirut notables as "those who are in greatest need of *fahm fann al-taswīr wa tathawwīqihi* (understanding and having a taste for art)" (Jawaba 1932). Apparently it was not sufficient, in the minds of these writers, that the nearest public pathways be those of the nannies and soldiers who strolled in the park neighboring the Ecole (C. K. 1932). Rather, the pathways that bordered art ought to be ones walked by the wealthy, whose hard and liquid assets had afforded them public office and the power to direct the allocation of national resources, for it was this power the "cultured people" wished to benefit through their "culturing" activities.

Yet a good number of people lacking both unusual wealth and prestige did in fact attend the exhibitions, according to the available records.<sup>8</sup> Journalists tended to claim between 3,000 and 5,000 visitors per shows, approximately a tenth of the city's literate population (Himadeh, ed. 1936). The registry from Farroukh's 1933 show at the Ecole des Arts et Métiers provides tantalizing clues about the visitors' backgrounds and occupations (Exposition du Peintre Farrouk 1933). Signatures were penned by French Mandate authorities (nearly 30 percent), fellow artists (20 percent), doctors and educators (20 percent), merchants (15 percent), and writers (15 percent), in addition to a few engineers, several scouts, and one member of Farroukh's family. The majority of the visitors seem to have come from families long-established in Beirut and of respectable standing, but many belonged to families that had recently moved to the city from outlying towns of the Mandate territory. Several signatures were penned by travelers who noted their cities of origin: Aleppo, Homs, Damascus, Jerusalem, Amman, Tiberias, and so on. The names of a quarter of the signees suggest they were not of Arab origin, but Armenian, American,

French, British, Greek, Italian, Russian, or Polish. Christian and (Sunni) Muslim names, as far as they can be distinguished, appear in equal amounts, with a significantly smaller number of Shiite and Druze Muslims.

In general, the sort of people who came to Farroukh's 1933 show seem to be the highly educated, self-employed or those otherwise receiving a steady salary. Very few were aristocrats, land-owners, or politicians. This means that the majority of people who saw Farroukh's works had arrived at their current economic condition by birth, education, or lucky speculation. Though better off than the several hundred thousand of the Beirutis in low-paying, informal, or part-time jobs in the city, they could not be assured of maintaining their relatively new status. In stark contrast to the previous four decades of "exceptional stability and prosperity," during which people could expect to live as well as their parents or somewhat better, theirs was a time of extreme instability and sudden changes in fortune from which social ranking offered little protection (Thompson 2000:30). In such an anxious time, their clothing and household possessions (which were ever more likely to be imported due to the decrease in local production and the increase in European trade) took on new meaning, sometimes earning them a place in a higher social ranking than that of their birth and sometimes enticing them into serious debt (Khater 2001:39–43, 176).

Just a decade before Farroukh's exhibition a famine, resulting from the blockade of Beirut's harbor, led to Beirutis selling all their household resources in exchange for a few bushels of wheat. Caught in World War I, many families in the region were crippled economically, and, moreover, lost their bread-winning male population due to the Ottoman Army's conscription practice. The fact that many mothers and women successfully fended for themselves by taking on roles that challenged both men and women's customary positions in Beirut society caused a good number of Beirutis to conclude that the men had failed their part in what Deniz Kandiyoti has called "the classical patriarchal bargain" (Thompson 2000:38). The sense that gender roles and social ranking were slippery and required new resources spread quickly among the populace of Beirut and those who could, adapted.

The precarious social positioning of Beirut visitors to Farroukh's exhibition was matched by that

of the French authorities in the audience. The latter were deep in their own national economic crisis and eager to find in Mandate Lebanon a set of resources for their own prosperity and influence. They were primarily engaged in a struggle with Germany and Britain for leadership of European economy and culture (see Silver 1989; Silverman 1992). Documents from correspondence between the French administrators in Beirut and their superiors in Paris reveal the degree to which French authorities needed cultural influence to secure access to Lebanon's material and geographical resources. The quandary for French authorities, whose Mandate regularly came up for review at the League of Nations, was to prove that they were "benevolently caring for" the Lebanese and "not exploiting them," as one official put it (Ministère des Affaires étrangères 1921).

Given available information about exhibition-goers, Farroukh's caricature is not likely a realistic description of visitors who actually attended the 1933 show but rather an exaggerated vision combining the worst responses the artist received and denouncing people who reacted negatively as peasants unworthy of modern, civic space.<sup>9</sup> It is also a reminder to future visitors that they will be watched for exuding any signs of latent peasant status. The picture points to the role of the audience in exhibitions and the gravity of what was at stake in their performance. If art was "a picture of us" as Farroukh often said (e.g., Farroukh 1946:10), then seeing people seeing art was a critical barometer of national progress (cf. Makhlef 1935:6). Thus, by displaying a copy of a famous picture by a leader of art-making in France, Farroukh provided exhibition-goers with an opportunity to experience and exhibit a new identity for themselves as producers and appreciators of art in a world unlimited by geographical distances and material boundaries. By calling on its viewers to acknowledge what Benjamin (1968) would call an *aura* around a symbol of fine art, *Souvenir* indicates the roles that audience, distance, and reproduction play in affirming the persisting existence of that aura. Each viewer might become an origin for the existence of art (a source of doubling) or a point of its negation (a source of shadow), and each act of viewing might produce the identity of the audience (as peasant or urbane among other traits). This picture, unsurprisingly, was at the beginning of an

increasingly popular trend in the 1930s Beirut press of calling attention to the behavior of audiences at exhibitions.

### The Challenge of Copies to Theories of Art

Thinking of these pictures on deliberate display in Mandate Lebanon as arenas of performance indicates their importance for understanding the development of local identity and community. Performance theory calls attention to how both the text guiding an event and the audience for it are created in interaction. The meaning or identity of each emerges as the audience responds to the text and gives life to it, and as the text imbues the audience in a specialized setting with highlighted elements. The aura for any entity cultivated through performance encompasses both text and audience; it is mutual. According to this theory, exhibitions in early 1930s Beirut were places where both the identity of universal art and local audiences was at stake and created in tandem. Performance theory further calls attention to which entities do not undergo such transformative performances. Considering what was copied and what was not points to the selectivity by which “texts” for universal art-making were invoked and which ignored. For example, it is highly relevant that Farroukh copied the *Niké* and not the likes of the “subversive” Picasso or the “delinquent” Dufy.<sup>10</sup> He deliberately contributed to the localization of the latter in a part of the metropole and in a slice of time that he would not make universal.

Throughout his life, Farroukh quoted Hippocryte Taine on the relationship between artistic activity and national merit: “The neglect of artistic education among a people is a sign of a lack in their constitution and of a decline into hegemony” (cf. Farroukh 1938, 1967:82). Taking these pictures as first-hand documents of thinking through art, it is reasonable to assume that through his art activities and products Farroukh sought to imbue his own citizenry-in-the-making with the humanist and idealist virtues embodied, he believed, by Greco-Roman and late Renaissance Italian artworks. In other words, what we witness through Farroukh’s illustration of the *Niké* was completed by bodies of Lebanese and through his exhibitions where audiences became viewers of doubled Titians, is the production of subjectivity through relationship with an imagined and filtered external

source. Farroukh called this being “born anew” (Farroukh 1986:127–128). This relational subjectivity, based on a performance of taste, is worth considering further because it calls into question both spatial and physical boundaries that have implicitly guided much thinking about art-making. I consider the spatial boundaries first, then the physical.

When, following the path of many nationalist art historians, I searched for the foundations of Farroukh’s Lebanese landscapes, I assumed that a certain locality defined his production, one grounded in physical space, if not isomorphic with the contemporary nation’s boundaries, then with some given political entity such as the Ottoman Empire. But locality is never a given product or simple background to social activity as Appadurai (1996) reminds us. Defining locality as a “complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts” (1996:178), Appadurai encourages scholars to explore the material processes of mapping, building, organizing, and cultivating that make of spaces socially meaningful places. He formulated his process-oriented notion of locality as a critique of the anthropological concept of cultural membership that simply presumes that territory (as a bounded ecological region) ultimately defines members’ subjectivity. “Drawn into the very localization they seek to document, most ethnographic descriptions have taken locality as ground not figure, recognizing neither its fragility nor its ethos as a *property of social life*” (Appadurai 1996:182, emphasis added). It is precisely such a priori binding of figures to a given social-physical ground that makes artworks appear to have only marginal relevance to social life rather than direct agency in its production. As art historian Nicholas Green has argued in relation to studies of another form of locality, landscape-painting:

There is here an implicit circularity which takes us from text to social conditions (which are thereby separated off) and back again, reproducing a figure-on-ground relation between the visual and what may be termed history, conditions of production, readers, and audiences. What follows from this prioritization of text-based analysis (also familiar in other areas of the humanities such as literary studies) is



often unconscious backing for the traditional notion of the art image as a fixed and closed entity whose meaning is self-contained within the four sides of its frame. [Green 1995:33]

Art images cannot be understood fully apart from their social setting, their audiences, but the social setting itself is a product of and acted upon by art images. The figure is not on the ground any more than the ground is separable from the figure. Meaning, then, is not exclusively produced by either.

Farroukh's copying, when theorized as a creator of locality, suggests how students of art production can escape these dualisms of figure/ground, and art image/social setting. Appadurai's understanding of locality bases the notion in structured practices rather than naturally bounded places. By pointing to the senses and practices of the local as the product of processes, locality compels attention to the ways performances situate their performers in a "community of kin," which may or may not correspond with a swath of land (Appadurai 1996:179). While Appadurai's goal is to re-evaluate the agency of the standard subjects of ritual studies—looking at naming rites, circumcisions, scarifications, fasting, festivals, and so on as agents in the production of locality rather than as results of the latter—his argument applies equally well to practices that are involved with the production of imagined social communities, such as art audiences and citizenries. These localizing processes, which are both "context-driven and context-generative," become analytically interesting as ritual techniques undertaken to create, in Appadurai's words, "local subjects" with locality "inscribed onto their bodies" (1996:179–180). In this state they experience a relationship to (social) space that is reliable and regular yet never entirely secure (Appadurai 1996:181, 186). It is the fragility and flexibility of that relationship that I seek to explore by tracking circulating objects and routes of circulation that inscribe locality even as they engage agents across boundaries. This brings me to the physical boundaries of art works.

Inherent in both universalist and nationalist art histories is the idea of bounded individuality. On the one hand, art objects are understood to be bounded, separable entities endowed with what Benjamin called "unique existence" (1968:221), or the irreproducibility of presence in time and space. This, Benjamin believed, is what distinguishes originals from copies, for no single object can be

both here and elsewhere. The "aura" of the original, Benjamin inferred, emanates precisely from this singular placement in time and space (1968). Related to this presumption of bounded objectness is the curious notion that for an artistic object to reveal something about the character or formation of its maker, its social setting, or its host nation, it must be organically connected to that entity, imbued with its personal traits, extending out from its internal existence, the way a thought is held to come out from the speaker's mind, a smell to emanate from an emitter's guts, an article of clothing to reveal the wearer's self-image or otherwise invisible social potential.

Expressing and revealing are both physical terms to describe a relationship of containment that presumes, again, objectness.<sup>11</sup> Anthropologists have long dissected such individualist notions of personhood that connect thoughts and minds, smells and bodies, clothing and class. Why, then, does art remain tightly bound to the idea of expression, that which is produced by a movement from an interior, invisible, inaccessible, out to an exterior where it gains social value? And why do we insist on bounded placedness by assuming that the aura of an art work can only be reduced with its reproduction? Indeed, it is noteworthy that in his analysis of reproductions, Walter Benjamin worked completely within the tradition of linear, directional time and Euclidean space (cf. Fabian 1983). This begs the question of the nature of the relationship between locality and meaning, between cultural expression and cultural identity. Must one precede the other? Can expression come from other places or times? Might auras in fact expand through movement? Skepticism about placedness and objectness should be applied to that entity most familiar, most similar, and apparently beyond need of analysis because original place is held to define its meaning entirely: the non-metropolitan production of universal art *à la métropole*. This is precisely what is challenged by Farroukh's putting himself in the Louvre in 1926 and putting his copies in exhibitions.

Both nationalist art historians (e.g., Ali 1994; Bahnasi 1997; Benjamin 1990, 2003; Karnouk 1988, 1995) and recent theorists of art globalism (e.g., Marcus and Myers 1995; Morton 2000; Naef 1996, 2003; Taylor 2004) have worked, implicitly or explicitly, from the assumption that imported art

forms were brought from metropolitan capitals where they had been fully formed and simply planted, like seeds, in local soils that, at most, inflected the off-shoot's existence but had little impact on the mother-plant. Correspondingly, nationalist art histories have focused on art that seemed to express the quintessence of local experience (meaning enough difference to matter to the field but not too much as to make it unintelligible as a member of the field), while globalist art histories have recently shown interest in the art markets that handle and produce difference itself for the sake of circulation and the creation of value. A motivating assumption of studies that track the traffic in art imported from "native" communities is that it is somehow misunderstood upon absorption, for it has a pre-contact meaning stemming organically from the distant, self-contained context (e.g., Myers 2002; Price 1989; Steiner 1994; Torgovnick 1990). Consequently, artwork by the marginal that too closely resembles metropolitan production has almost invariably been dismissed as lacking significance for both local and global realities.<sup>12</sup> As Eric Gable remarked in his study of Manjaco effigies copying Portuguese images:

When Europeans 'copy' the cultural materials of colonial others they make originals. Their appropriation of the work of others is evidence of Europe's intrinsic capacity to create. By contrast, Africans copy because they have abandoned or lost their cultural mooring (their 'archaic notions') and the best they can produce as a result are 'banal works.' [Gable 2002:313]

If, in Paula Hountondji's words, "for Africans, the right to be unoriginal is an assertion of the right to be a fully enfranchised citizen of the world" (quoted in Gable 2002:314), then it is worth revisiting Farroukh's tenacious practice of copying to consider what was at stake for the ambitious artist and what his projects and other like-spirited ones may have contributed to the concept of universal art, or what Farroukh called *al-fann al-'ālamī*. Instead of focusing on the objects produced through such encounters, the original sculpture and paintings and the derivative copies, let us use them to see the relationships that produce them. Abandoning the assumption that art works are bounded objects, a study of their circulation can focus on their coming into being through relationships,

whereby marginalized Africans become citizens of the world and metropolitan French become originators of art.

### A Sure Gaze and a Deliberate Oversight: The Stone *Niké*

If the *Nikés* doubled with oil on Farroukh's canvas and with pen in his novel were copies, what is their original? The problem we find as we try to pin down an historical origin-point is that it keeps shifting. Following decades during which the image of the *Niké* has become associated with elegant automobiles (serving as the figurine on the hood of each Rolls Royce [Tritton 2008]) and competitive sports (serving as the form of the FIFA trophy cup for world soccer and the motif of Nike, the sports shoe brand named after her), it is now difficult to remember that the sculpture struck 19th-century viewers as uninteresting at best, and vulgar at worst (Von Mach 1903:307; c.f. Haskell and Penny 1981). When did the *Niké* become its original self?

Upon arriving at the Louvre in 1866 and being installed in the Salle des Caryatids, *Niké* received very little French interest, scholarly or otherwise. Remarkably, the first lengthy review devoted to the sculpture was written in 1891, and most of this account is given to explaining the technical details of excavation, transportation, and reconstruction. As author Olivier Rayet explains, the 25 year near silence on the sculpture was due to its fragmentation—it is said to have been found in one hundred pieces—and to the public's unlearned "indifference." Frenchmen simply overlooked the sculpture. Even those who did notice it, such as its excavators, G. Deville and E. Coquart did not think the *Niké* worth their effort: Coquart declared it "*une figure décorative d'une époque assez basse* (a decorative figure from a rather inferior era)" and Deville pronounced it "*médiocre* (mediocre)" (Rayet 1876:589). To an eye seeking Athenian sobriety and calm, no beauty inhered in the sculpture's intense working of drapery. It was simply exaggerated and distasteful.

The rupturing point in the sculpture's social biography of tastelessness is the acquisition by the French government of its prow-shaped pedestal in 1883. Only then could the intensive rippling of the sculpture's *chiton* be read to signify the speed of a marine vessel whipping towards its goal. Only then could the sculpture be interpreted (incorrectly) as a sign of a naval victory over ancient Egyptians, a set

of people who had come to represent for many 19th-century Frenchmen the antiquidation of both theocracy and monarchy (Porterfield 1998). Only thus could the *Niké*'s formal qualities be held to represent the virtues that won that defeat. Only thus could she be re-located to an aggrandizing site at the top of the Escalier Daru to herald another victory, that of French secular democracy (traced back to Greco-Roman origins) over the monarchy and the clergy (traced back to medieval European origins). Archaeological evidence acquired at that time suggested, to the contrary, that the sculpture was created between 220 and 190 B.C.E. in commemoration of a *Rhodian* victory over the Syrian Antiochos III. Tastefulness, however, involved drastic repositioning: *Niké* was now against Egyptians and within French history.

Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny note that the following year, W. Fröhner, the voice of the Louvre, declared the sculpture "near-Phidian" and thereby the equivalent of the *Parthenon* purchase in London and the *Niobe Torso* in the Vatican (1981:333). Thus, the production of the whole stone *Niké* in the Louvre as a national French icon embedded the origin of the sculpture in an art historical, Greco-Roman genealogy of human body representations. It also embedded her in the French national body, for as a national icon "The Winged Victory" now was held to embody and be embodied by the virtues of the swift, conquering, mobile French nation. In Ernst Von Mach's 1903 call for museum-goers to appreciate the *Niké* we can see the coalescence of practices and representations that situated their performers in a "community of kin" combining upper- and lower-class, learned and ignorant, worldly and villager. Looking at *Niké*, he wrote:

For the moment the cares of the world fall away, and one is filled with a sense of masterful confidence, listening to voices that deny the existence of the impossible. It is then that the essence of real victory is felt, which is the faith in the success of the noblest ideas. [...] Mutilated though the statue now is, it is as well liked by the peasant or tourist who happens to stray into the large hall of the Louvre as by the scholar who goes there. [Von Mach 1903:307]

Despite its apparent centrality to France, controversy eventually developed over ownership of the *Niké*. Although far more muted in terms of

press than that over the "Elgin Marbles," it raises the question of how its excavators and others imagined that the *Niké* was there for the taking.<sup>13</sup> What exactly was the role of Samothrace in this production of the Louvre's *Winged Victory of Samothrace*? According to the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* writer in 1876, the island and its people were lucky simply to have received French attention:

[T]he isle of Samothrace is *nothing but a big block of rock, uncultivated* and covered with woods, from which the summit, Haghoi-Géorghis, rises to 4,700 meters. *Sterile and lacking a port*, it has *never had any importance* politically nor commercially. [Rayet 1876:590–591, author's translation, emphasis added.]

Between the "big block of rock" and the monumental sculpture, between the "uncultivated," "sterile" land and the sculpture found in its soil, there was, apparently, no organic connection requiring recognition of a Samothracian identity to the sculpture. Its excavation by French Consul Charles Champoiseau in 1863 and the slow, turbulent process of interpretation (contesting Austrian claims) can be analyzed as localizing rites that inscribed French locality on the *Niké*'s body and inscribed the *Niké* in participants' experience of themselves. In justifying the acquisition of the *Niké* by the Louvre, Salomon Reinach amplified the French right by positioning the statue as a prize rather than as an object of exchange: "A Frenchman, M. Champoiseau, has very happily preceded the Austrian mission: it is due to the sureness of his gaze and his energy that we have the *Victory of the Louvre*" (1891:91, emphasis added).

In this assertion of origination, the *Niké* has been discovered to be properly of the Louvre and not Samothrace. Exactly as Benjamin has said of the mechanical reproduction (1968:221), this version of the *Niké* has been detached from the domain of tradition to be reactivated in the beholder's own special situation. Is this act any less strange than that of Farroukh posing the *Niké* as Lebanese? André Malraux (1978:69) reminds museum-goers that, given her new positioning, she is no longer oriented towards Alexandria but toward the Acropolis. This re-orientation reveals the politics promoted by the localizing practices that made the *Niké* the emblem of the French nation. Both "context-driven and context-generative" (Appadurai

1996:180), the sculpture's new orientation and investiture when analyzed as localizing practices indicate other agents present in the construction of her reassembling, meaning, and hence origin. What the fragmented condition, debatable quality, and contested acquisition of the *Niké* underscores, is that at this point, there was no inherent quality that assembled large numbers of trained art historians or cultured audiences to enjoy the image of the *Niké*. Just as there was no clear boundary of pre-extant cultural identity that she could be said to mark in her movement as an object through space.

### Originality through Distance and Doubling: The Postage Stamp *Niké*

Which *Niké* is the original of Farroukh's doublings: the rocks found in a temple compound; the acquisitions made to dispossess Austrian opponents; the sculpture that was placed in the Caryatids Hall; or that atop the Daru Staircase? Before attempting to answer this question, we must note that thus far the story of the social life of the *Niké* has been told only retroactively, looking back at the assembling processes that produced both the sculpture as object and an audience as subject. However, it is insufficient to track localizing interactions only as far as the production of a recognizable lived space. That would be analytically to leap the interactions that pursued other directions and worked towards creating other communities of kin. It would be to freeze the context-generative and see only the context-driven. At the same time that the *Niké* was being assembled as an original ancient Greek sculpture, it was also being assembled in another medium. As a stamp rather than stone, different forms of interactions occurred allowing a different development of meaning and community of kin, which this paper will now track.

Just as *Niké* was being created in the Louvre as a national French icon with Greco-Roman origins, she was being created by the French Postal Budget as one with folk origins. Since 1875, French stamps had carried the image of the seated female Sage whose non-political character, once a virtue, was now becoming a burden and whose form was criticized in 1900 as "not very aesthetic" (Ally 1900:26). According to Maurice Agulhon, a search ensued for a more modern, Republican, and French image for the postage stamp, one that would be more appro-



Figure 3. *La Semeuse du Liban*, from *Lebanon Through Its Stamps* by Chafic Taleb, 2001. Courtesy of Les Editions Dar An-Nahar.

priate to the Democracy (Agulhon 1989:28–29). Louis Oscar Roty's striding *La Semeuse* (the Sower) won at a public contest held in 1894 (figure 3). Her gender and class indicated that she was a new embodiment of the folk hero, Marianne (Agulhon 1989). But her Hellenistic drapery and a Phrygian cap represented for her makers "*la République en marche, semeuse d'idées et soleil levant* (the Republic on the march, sower of ideas and the sun rising)" (Agulhon 1989:29). And while detractors of the Sower found the throwing of the seeds *against* the wind absurd, and the positioning of the sun, the gender of the Sower, and her barefootedness all incorrect, fans recognized her not as an improper peasant but a peasant-goddess. Contrary to the earlier and contending images of the Republic, this one was comprehensible, graceful, and also rural.

*La Semeuse* seems to have represented the coalescence of several desired constituencies of the French Republic: people of the countryside, people "of the town, of progress, of work, and even of electricity" (Agulhon 1989:31). Furthermore, the



Figure 4. Victory of Samothrace as reconstructed by M. Zumbusch. Reprinted in Reinach 1891:93.

specific plastic handling of the figure brought to this combination the pedigree of ancient Greece: she is a direct descendant, if not a modern version, of the *Niké*. Although not officially articulated, Agulhon extracts this connection through analysis of the language used to praise her. (Certainly the tropes quoted by Agulhon rearticulate Von Mach's discussion of the *Winged Victory*.) The visual references to the Greek goddess are equally striking. Both are draped in wind-whipped *chiton* bounded with a belt, striding with the right foot forward, barefoot, and (in contemporary reconstructions) carrying a serene yet victorious visage (see figure 4).

*La Semeuse* can easily be seen as a modified copy of the *Winged Victory*, taking its meaning from the interpretations that excavation, competition, and imperial struggle had produced for the sculpture but also from the distance that reviewers were careful to remind readers the statue had covered to come to France. The stamp performed that distance in as much as it was made to move across spaces that exceed normal means of human communication. This sense of distance further suggests that the sculpture's value comes from its non-originality, its decisive distinction from the piece embedded in the Samothracian cliff. Thus, in a way, the sculpture in the Louvre is categorically *not* the

same as that found by Champoiseau, for the former is not embedded in the narrative of rescue, resuscitation, and reassembling. Indeed, it could further be argued that the Louvre's sculpture is itself merely a copy of the original work that joined stone, island, worshipers, and theology: it reproduces the form but is not made in the same fashion.

If the sculpture, the stamp, and the auto figurine are each copies, reproduction in the form of each produced simultaneously an authorizing original. The social production of the *Niké* as sculpture also produced an original historical meaning complete with reconstructions and positionings and able to bestow new identity on its viewers. The *La Semeuse* postal stamp produced an original sculpture with a history as a folk hero and a new communal identity for its users. And so on. Rather than seeing this deliberate doubling of sight as mere reproduction, we should consider it as production in the present, to explore how the circulation of images produces localities that are both context-generative and context-driven; to see, in other words, the mutuality of origins and copies.

Dominating the international postal routes, *La Semeuse* became the Republic's most widely distributed stamp, and sometime before 1914 she was introduced to the "French-Levant" postal offices (Taleb 2001:19–26), replacing the geometrical designs characteristic of Ottoman era stamps and the newer patriotic views of imperial monuments and portraits of Sultan Mehmed V Reshed (Reid 1984:233). Thus, before Farroukh ever saw the carved block of Parian marble on the Escalier Daru, assuredly he had seen her likeness countless times as the postal *La Semeuse*. Was the stamp, then, the origin of Farroukh's canvas and ink drawing, or was its source the object of excavation from Samothracia, or the object of interpretation and acquisition on the grand staircase? The reason for asking this question is to indicate the politics in assuming a specific origin. *La Semeuse* can be seen as a colonial imposition on Mandate subjects, incorporating their incomes in the French national treasury and enrolling them in a French civilizational project (cf. Porterfield 1998:65). In that origin is the production of a political difference based on recognition of divergent goals. *La Semeuse* can also be seen as a modified copy of the *Winged Victory*, as I argued above, in which case its meaning is in its broad incorporation of all post us-

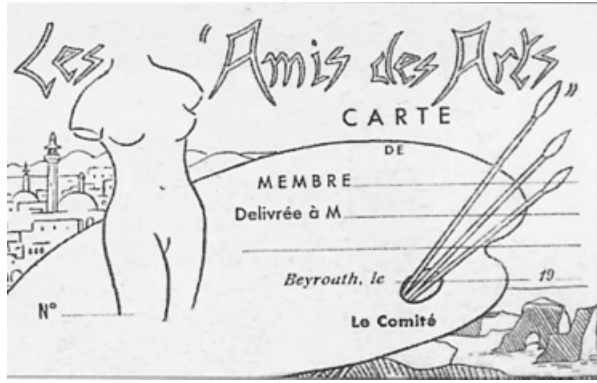


Figure 5. Société des Amis des Arts, Membership Card. Courtesy of the Hani Farroukh Archives, Beirut, Lebanon.

ers in one network. Clearly, another politics is implicated in this alternative origin. The meaning of *La Semeuse*, *Nikê*, and Farroukh's images should not be pre-judged, however, but traced in its emergence. Let us continue following the social life of copies set into circulation by people focusing on which pictures were absented from the forming locality through this practice of copying. We move from *Nikê* to the *Venus de Milo*.

### Universal Art Understood through Lebanon

Sometime in the late 1930s a membership card began circulating in Beirut (figure 5). Inscribed solely in French and decorated with imagery joining Greco-Roman, Levantine, Beiruti, and academic art references it announced affiliation to a newly formed group of art-promoters that joined local representatives of the French Mandate, painters active in Beirut, and upper-class clientele.<sup>14</sup> In all likelihood, Farroukh himself penned the card, thereby offering as the basis for the group his vision of an art world in which converged these many components and announced itself as part of the fine art circuit by borrowing the image of the sculpture in the presence of whose aura he had felt himself reborn in 1927.<sup>15</sup> By inscribing one's name on the "delivrée à (delivered to)" line, one became a member of the *L'Association des Amis des Arts* (The Friends of the Arts Association), later *Société des Amis des Arts* (Friends of the Arts Society). Members are known to have included: Farroukh, fellow painter and "native son" Omar Onsi, French citizen and artist Suzanne de Larminat, ex-patriot French painter Georges Cyr, and Marie Haddad, an artist

who belonged to one of Beirut's most politically prominent families. Ultimately, however, signatures on the *delivrée à* line produced a list of members as variants of a chosen affiliation.

In this way the reproducible card produced one's identity in a set of people who had chosen as their symbols three basic features: 1) a carved female torso strongly reminiscent of the *Venus de Milo*; 2) a swathe of coastal, mosque-covered Beirut with its famous Pigeon Rocks; and 3) a trio of paintbrushes and a standard palette probably imported from Europe.<sup>16</sup> Visually, prominence is given in the card to the means of production, the palette and paintbrushes, with the sculpture overlapping it as muse or lineage, and the spatial and linguistic setting providing the specific arena. The image sets the stage for performers of art—the users of palettes, brushes, and codes of representation—to meet an audience positioned in Beirut and trained in looking by familiarity with already made works. With no artists included in the image, it is the means of performance and recognition that are envisioned as the basis for producing the friendship of art. Combining elements on its surface and circulating among holders, *L'Association des Amis des Arts* card endowed "des Arts"—what I read as another name for universal art—with a materiality that often eludes this concept. There is a presence crucial to this concept, for its physical representation at least, that is eventually absented in certain realms of the concept's performance in Beirut, and that is the copy.

The last exhibition sponsored by the Association in 1941 is the only one for which a catalogue survives. This exhibition occurred at the behest of General Georges Catroux himself and just months after Charles De Gaulle's Free France forces won the Lebanese Mandate territory from the Vichy forces, making it the first location for Free France. With state protocol, aristocratic pomp, and prestigious purchases (Al-Bayraq 1941:1), it was certainly a more successful show than Catroux or De Gaulle, for that matter, could have carried off in France at the time (Lebovics 1992; Silver 1989).

Clearly the exhibition was not of just Lebanese painting but, also, was a display of an embattled French mandate. To that end controversial exclusions were made that contravened previous *Association* practices.<sup>17</sup> Thus, unlike its membership card, the *Association's* exhibition contained no



reproduced art, though it did contain some works produced in France by French nationals. In other words, only works that moved through purchase and not reproduction were present. The politics of inclusion for this 1941 exhibition should be analyzed as part of the performance of a metropolitan French identity that could not occur but in France's colonial periphery. The logic of locating a specific set of works in Beirut as "Art," becomes clearer when one considers how Gabriel Bounoure, the advisor for public education to the general delegation of Free France, described the exhibition in his catalogue preface:

A Frenchman can say this, undoubtedly, without being accused of chauvinism . . . Not only is French painting the honor and glory of Europe, but it is fair to advance that one could not paint but *in Paris or according to Paris*. This pictorial mastery, twenty nations have recognized and acknowledged, because the *painters of twenty nations* for more than twenty years now have all come—to the point of forgetting the genius of their race—to draw from this gracious source, to receive this great lesson, and to take part in this creative movement, one of the most beautiful that the *universal history of art* has to register, write and celebrate.

France was never more conquering, neither in the time of cathedrals nor during the age of classicism, and never has one so needed it. [Bounoure 1941:4, emphasis added]

Remarkable in the 1941 catalogue essay is Bounoure's emphasis on the unity of French and 20 kinds of non-French in the medium of painting. The paradox facing France as an imperial power was that it required the foreignness of those "painters of twenty nations" to prove that their convergence on France gave the country the cultural right, when economic, political, and military strength were lacking, to act on its self-declared status as the "honor and glory of Europe" (Bounoure 1941:4). At the same time, the similarity of the art-making and collecting habits of non-French was the very material for producing this security of cultural identity and its universal applicability, both by force of conquering and of being needed. The actual canvasses displayed then were of utter importance.

Thinking of the exhibition as a performance calls attention to what was at stake for the participants: the continued emergence of France, of art, of pictorial mastery, of racial genius (or origin), of

empire, to refer only to those stakes raised by Bounoure. For Farroukh, thinking through Taine, the stakes were independence (earned by having art), the production of taste and citizenry, the forwarding of his career, and so on. These stakes are the same articulated by Omar Fakhoury at the Muslims Scouts show where Farroukh's doubled Titian had hung. Visibly excluded from the performance in December 1941, however, was any tangible sense of the role of copying in production indexed by *Venus de Milo* on the *Association's* card or the *Niké* in Farroukh's novel. Yet, one can still detect the role of the non-French participants in providing a body for the materialization of certain concepts, such as universal art, and in becoming the basis for French self-production at the same time that the engagement of imported art works and practices provided an arena for realizing new identities. Here work in art should be seen as political assertions made by various actors with varying interests and not as reflections of an essential reality or fixed identity.

When I first came across Farroukh's study of the *Niké* in my research into the production of a Lebanese art world, I glanced at it briefly to appreciate its technical skill and then passed on in search of the origins of "Lebanese landscapes," the topic for which Farroukh is justly famous. Through unconcern and other triage procedures, many copies that were constitutional to the making of local art worlds have been lost to History. Such absented pictures pose a challenge. If we assume essential cultural difference, of which art is usually taken to be the authentic expression, how are we to understand such patterns of deliberate and consistent overlaps and doubled sights (cf. Mitchell 2000; Clifford 1988)? The absence of select pictures prevents us from noticing certain aspects of present pictures. Most particularly, it blinds us to the political act that defines their origins. Because I seek a method that does not assume originality to be isomorphic with biographical individuals or geographical places, I want to call into question both local and imported, both original and borrowed aspects of present pictures by considering their absented peers. If we assume that the meaning simply fits the source, how can we ever grasp the significance the copied *Niké* picture had to an artist who was seeking to create something called "contemporary art in Lebanon (*al-fann al-mu'asir fi*

*lubnān*)” (Farroukh 1967; cf. Lahoud 1974) and thus to define something that was neither folk art (*fann sha’bī*), nor decorative art (*fann handasī*), nor simply European art (*fann urūbī*)? Farroukh’s ambition, shared by many colleagues in the early decades of the 20th century, provides an opportunity to question the assumption of essential cultural difference and the relationship of art production to it. His sought out interactions prompt a non-bounded art historical inquiry that can investigate the production of binding, or identity and community, and the placedness of universal art through interactions.

Amidst the canons of war over Europe, empire, and economic dominance, a canon of art was imagined, performed, and materialized. Painting “according to Paris,” as Bounoure understood the *Salon des Amis* exhibition, or “fully conceived with our Western vision and methods” as curator Léonce Bénédicté described in 1921 the Algerian Mouloud Mammeri’s work, was neither something to be found in France nor in Lebanon if we strictly circumscribe our view to original, ethnically authentic actors (Benjamin 2003:228). Nor again is it French art taken up by Lebanese. This paper has been an exploration of the betwixedness of that which appears to be about separation. Origins, it has argued, are created through interactions. Employing visual documents as first-hand sources, it has been an instigation to abandon the focus on objects and look instead for *relationships* cultivated through structured performances. Seeing art-making as the result of such practices encourages analyzing the identities involved as the ambitious, fragile creations of interaction. When the distance between identities and localities is not assumed to be inherent, missing *Nikēs*, *Venuses*, and other doubled sights encourage thinking of taste not as an inherent force overcoming physical separation but as socially crafted familiarity in codes which gets performed at interactions where actors may yet have different goals. The training in tastefulness which art exhibitions, replications, and importations instill bestows tastefulness on entities as a kind of locality.

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#### Notes

1. Though the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) transliteration from the Arabic is Mustafa Farukh, I follow here the artist’s preferred spelling as signed to the majority of his canvasses. Hereafter I will include the encyclopaedic transliteration after the first appearance of each Arabic name and then use the form by which the persons referenced themselves.
2. Farroukh’s visit to the Louvre is described copiously in his posthumously published autobiography (1986: 126–131).
3. For example, it is known from surviving exhibition catalogues and photographs that Farroukh displayed a copy of the Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* in 1927 and 1929 as well as copies of the *Venus de Milo*, a mask of Beethoven, and a piece listed as “*Souvenir (copie)*” at that latter exhibition (see Al-Nsouli 1927; Exposition M. Farrouk 1929; Exposition du Peintre Farrouk 1933). Khalil Saleeby is said to have exhibited early in the century a *Venus de Milo*, though it is not clear from the records where the exhibition occurred (see Saleeby 1986:15).
4. What I am representing here are the ways in which contemporary actors in the production of Lebanese politics consistently interpret public messages. Thus, Gemayel’s remarks, though retracted later, were widely discussed in the Lebanese media as referring to a general perception of Maronite (or broadly Christian) tastefulness, civilizedness, cultural superiority, and resemblance to lifestyles associated with western modernity. Regardless of the degree to which listeners accept these perceptions, most people from across the political spectrum seem to agree that tastefulness (aesthetic judgment resulting from mental finesse), civilizedness (reliable conformity to a set of modern, urban practices), and certain forms of political behavior associated with western democracies are inherently connected. The response has been not to contest their connectedness but to prove that the allegedly uncivilized are just the opposite. For more on this connection made by pious Shiites, see Lara Deeb’s (2006) enlightening discussion, especially pages 14–20.
5. The titles listed here refer to works that are now with either Farroukh’s son, Hani, or daughter, Hana. At least three more exist for which I have not been able to locate a referent piece. The picture I am referring to as *Au Crépuscule* is generally called *La Baigneuse* because it resembles one of that title that can be easily found on the internet (e.g., Studio Antiques and Fine Art Incorporated 2008). However, sources suggest Chabas’ picture



- was in fact a copy of an earlier one in his oeuvre titled *Au Crépuscule* (Studio Antiques and Fine Art Incorporated 2008). That title appears in the catalogue for the exhibition to which the ink-drawing itself refers (Exposition du Peintre Farrouk 1933).
6. It is not known in what paper the cartoon was published. Farroukh regularly contributed during this period to many Beirut papers, including *Al-Nida'*, *Al-Makshuf*, *Bayroun*, and *Al-Da'abour*.
  7. Interestingly, it is precisely this logic that has resulted in a consistent mis-reading of obvious visual cues on one of Lebanon's most famous pictures about art-viewing, Omar Onsi's *A l'exposition*, such that women wearing black veils are seen as having "just come down from the mountain" though their high heels, silk stockings, and other elements of Parisian fashion would almost certainly negate that possibility (see Barbicon Centre for Arts and Conferences 1989:148).
  8. This information is available mostly in sign-in books and sales receipts preserved in the private papers of the artists active during that era, but also in newspaper reviews of the exhibitions and their audiences.
  9. This information is available mostly in sign-in books and sales receipts preserved in the private papers of the artists active during that era, but also in newspaper reviews of the exhibitions and their audiences.
  10. See Farroukh's discussion of the French art world and particularly the work of Dufy and Picasso in his autobiography (1986:129, 179–181).
  11. See Lakoff and Johnson (1980:29–32) for a thought-provoking discussion of "container metaphors."
  12. It is interesting to contrast this avoidance with the attention received by metropolitan work that strongly resembles non-metropolitan (African, Asian, South American) work, but this topic extends beyond the bounds of this paper (see Pollock 1992; Torgovnick 1990).
  13. A local museum now stands in Samothrace housing what the French, Austrians, and Americans did not take, and in it are displayed three "valuable items belonging to the Louvre," on permanent loan in exchange for the Louvre's permanent borrowing of several fragments of the *Nike's* body, including her right hand (Lehmann 1960:79).
  14. The history of this group remains to be written. My information comes from reading contemporary journals such as *Al-Makshuf* and *Al-Bayraq*.
  15. The attribution to Farroukh is made on stylistic similarity with many of Farroukh's ink drawings as were widely published in the local press (see Farroukh 1980). This explanation would also account for the existence of the unsigned card in his personal archives, as maker not signer.
  16. Prior to the French Mandate the majority of material goods imported to Beirut came from Italy, particularly from Venice. However, the Mandate quickly instituted economic and industrial dependence of Greater Lebanon on the Mother Country, as a means for the economic stimulation of the latter. It seems likely, therefore, that these palettes and paintbrushes, equally abundant in France and Italy were part of the French import industry by the time of this card's making.
  17. These observations were made by journalist Fu'ad Hubaysh in his increasingly piqued discussion of the exhibition as the weeks passed between its announcement and its eventual closing in *Al-Makshuf* (1941a, 1941b, 1941c, 1941d, 1941e). Hubaysh argued that the exhibition should demonstrate the spread of arts (in the plural) in Lebanon (Al-Makshuf 1941a:4) and the character of the artists' "most current self-expressions" (Al-Makshuf 1941e:1).

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*Abstract*

The role copies of "Western" art play in constructing hybrid local/universal ideologies of modernity has not been studied. This essay demonstrates the centrality of the copied Nikê to the co-construction of metropolitan France and marginal Mandate-era Lebanon. It suggests an art-historical and ethnographic methodology for tracking imagination and the cultivation of taste that is not bounded by nation, culture, or geography. Tracing the circuits traveled by the Nikê reveals that origins and claims of universalism in art are the result of transnational, intercultural, historically specific interactions. The ideology of taste enacted in colonial Lebanon informs Lebanese cultural and political discourses today. [Key words: Modern Arab Art, Lebanon, Colonial Art Circulation, Copies, Identity]