

**On Unearthing the Archive(d):
Fragilities of oral history in the biography of Dar el Fan's founder Janine Rubeiz**

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This presentation considers some of the problems of access to sources and conduction of fieldwork in relation to the reconstruction of biographies. In particular, it focuses on the fragilities of oral history in Lebanon.

The attempts of reconstructing the biography of Janine Rubeiz (died 1992), the founder of Dar el Fan w-el Adab (House of Art and Literature, a polyvalent cultural space active in Beirut between 1967 and 1975) seek to highlight the importance of Rubeiz own life in relation to her cultural centre. Her personal life proves relevant in the understanding of the birth of Dar el Fan and of the development of its cultural program. Furthermore, it helps tracing the social fabric and the connections of the intellectual and artistic scene of Beirut during the 1960s and 1970s.

Editions Dar An-Nahar published a tribute to Janine Rubeiz and Dar El Fan in 2003, collecting a number of homages in memory of Janine and the place she founded. While this composes an important source, it also requires critical reflection. The research thus largely relies on archival material such as newspaper articles, obituaries, memorials, and oral history. Through the analysis of the first findings of the fieldwork in Beirut (February 2022-ongoing), which includes an interview with Rubeiz's daughter Nadine Majdalani Begdache and attempts of approaching family members and friends of Janine Rubeiz, complexities and intrinsic issues have emerged in relation to the sources of oral history and its associated practice.

The presentation aims at discussing the ethical implications of oral data collection in relation to audience and context. It sheds a light on the difficulties we encounter when an elderly audience is involved, especially that with a familial bond. It also observes how this intersects with the delicate historical and political context they have lived through and the impact of its remembrance. Questions and debates are opened in order to re-think methodologies and approaches to interact with fragile communities in the preservation and re-reading of their own memory.

Short Biography: Flavia Elena Malusardi is a PhD candidate in History of Art as part of the LAWHA project, with an international position between Università Cà Foscari (Venice) and OIB Orient Institut Beirut (Beirut). Her project investigates the role of gallerist Janine Rubeiz and her informal space Dar Al Fann (1967-1976) within the Lebanese cultural panorama. She holds a Master's degree in History of Art and Architecture of the Islamic Middle East from SOAS School of Oriental and African Studies (London) and an MFA in Visual Cultures and Curatorial Practice from Accademia di Brera (Milan). Her work focuses on the contemporary arts and visual culture of the Middle East and North Africa, with an interest in archival and collecting practices within post-colonial contexts. She lived in Cairo and Dubai, where she worked with international galleries and curators. She is the editor of Vista Sud, a bi-monthly column featured in Osservatorio Futura, and she contributes regularly to the visual arts section of Arabesque, first Italian magazine devoted to the study of culture of/from the Arab world.