

Press release

October 2018

ART AND ARCHITECTURE BETWEEN LISBON AND BAGHDAD THE CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION IN IRAQ, 1957-1973

CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN MUSEUM, LISBON

26 OCTOBER 2018 – 28 JANUARY 2019

This exhibition explores the origins of the rare Iraqi art section of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum Modern Collection and of several unique architectural works built by the Foundation in Baghdad in the 1960s.

From 1957 to 1973, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation was an active participant in the development of cultural, educational, scientific and welfare infrastructure in modern Iraq, using a part of its revenues from oil exploration in the country to support the construction and equipment of facilities, services, training and artistic production. Its activities included the construction of more than a hundred structures – schools, universities, hospitals and museums – and the provision of scholarships to 600 Iraqi graduate students at home and abroad.

This exhibition explores the little-known history of the Foundation's involvement, using unpublished original documents from the Foundation's archives to examine three key moments: the construction of the Modern Arts Centre in Baghdad in 1962 (known as the Gulbenkian Hall), the first purpose-built exhibition space for modern art in Iraq; the Al-Sha'ab Stadium, a large sports complex in Baghdad that became a landmark in the Middle East, built by the Foundation in parallel with its Headquarters and Museum in Lisbon; and the Gulbenkian Cultural Week, organized to coincide with the inauguration of this complex in 1966 and which involved the presentation of 70 works by Portuguese and foreign artists in Baghdad, a set of works which would constitute the future Modern Collection of the Foundation.

The exhibition also unveils, for the first time in its entirety, the rare section of Iraqi works held in the Modern Collection, mostly purchased directly from the artists in Baghdad and Lisbon during the 1960s. Included in the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum Conversations cycle, this exhibition is a conversation between a then newly-created philanthropic entity and the country on which its existence was partially dependent. It is a conversation between cultural development and economic diplomacy, between works of art and archives, and between Iraqi and Portuguese art and architecture.

Curated by Patrícia Rosas and Ricardo Agarez, this exhibition is a collaborative project between the Museum and the Gulbenkian Archives and Art Library, with the support of the Foundation's Grants Department.

In parallel to the exhibition, a conference will be held by the Future Architecture Platform, an international platform of which the Gulbenkian Foundation is a member. Co-financed by the Creative Europe Programme, the conference will feature the participation of Mohamad Hafeda, a Lebanese architect specialising in conflict zones and a notable artist, designer and writer in his own right.

Five creative architectural collectives have also been selected by the Future Architecture Platform to discuss their ideas in a workshop to be moderated by Hafeda, which will culminate in a public debate. Collectives were invited to reflect on the themes of the exhibition *Art and Architecture between Lisbon and Baghdad* and to share their research and work in line with an interdisciplinary philosophy that responds to the emerging challenges in dialogues between East and West and with a special focus on the Middle East and ongoing conflicts there. Participating in this initiative are Wilhelm Scherübl, Teresa Leick, Philippe Jans and Charles Rauchs (TAB Collective); Akill Scafe-Smith, Maisha Akil Scafe Smith and Gameli Ladsekpo (Resolve); Francisco Moura Veiga and Ruben Alberto Valdez Juarez (Charta); and Martin Pohl, Michael Kraus and Tania Tovar Torres.

For more information <https://gulbenkian.pt/museu/en/evento/an-alternative-future/>

ART AND ARCHITECTURE BETWEEN LISBON AND BAGHDAD

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Iraq, 1957-1973

Curators: Patrícia Rosas and Ricardo Agarez

Founder's Collection

Calouste Gulbenkian Museum

26 oct 2018 — 28 jan 2019

Open daily from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Closed on Tuesdays