Middle Eastern and North African Art against Authoritarianism

Deadline: Jan 31, 2023

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The book, with the title MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN ART AGAINST AUTHORITARIANISM: AESTHETIC ACTIVISM AFTER THE ARAB UPRISINGS will be published in 2023 in the new IB Tauris academic book series: Political Communication and Media Practices in the Middle East and North Africa. WE ARE LOOKING FOR CHAPTERS ON TURKEY, SYRIA, EGYPT AND PALESTINE.

The book examines the roles that art can play in the collective labor of creating and defending "another aesthetics" and social reality in the contemporary Middle East and North Africa. By analyzing a variety of art practices that are articulated with different collective struggles in the region, this book elucidates the vitality and creativity of anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian artistic production whose praxis is enmeshed with grassroots movements across MENA.
In the Middle East and North Africa not only the Arab Spring left its political imprint on social life in the countries concerned, but it also marked a change in the democratization of artistic expression and understanding of the role of art in the protests (Walid and Soliman. 2013, Khatib 2013). In the last decade, there has been growing interest in art activism in the MENA region and the political significance of aesthetic representation (amongst others, Abaza 2016, El Hamamsy and Soliman 2013, Richter-Devroe and Salih 2014, Valassopoulos and Mostafa 2014). However, the question of how political aesthetics can develop resistance strategies against the authoritarian specter of near-absolute control and massive oppression in the aftermath of the uprisings in the region remains unexplored. Looking to the future, art activism represents an important terrain of study for understanding political dynamics, trends, and outcomes in the ongoing struggles between revolutionary movements and counterrevolutionary forces in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in the context of authoritarianism.
As many scholars have argued there is a persistent need to expose the various forms of repression that characterize the neo-liberal order today but there is also an urgent need to expose the forbidden truths about the nature of political authority. -- If art activism under authoritarianism is possible, can it not just resist but be resilient and foster emancipatory politics and possibilities for thinking and living in another world?
A decade after the Arab Spring, under persisting neocolonial ideology and authoritarian politics that censor and limit the conditions that make collective imagination, democratic participation and grassroots mobilization possible, aesthetic activism is increasingly a conditioning factor for social resistance. With examples from across MENA, this edited volume questions the aesthetic framing of politics that directs our gaze away from social struggles from below and toward the political theater of the state apparatus on the one hand, and discusses how activist aesthetics can cultivate a transformative potential for the idea and practice of a democratic life on the other.

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--In the current socio-political transformations in the region, can art reveal and subvert various paradigms of structural oppression and corruption that continues for decades in MENA?
--Can art be meaningfully transformative, creative and revolutionary under an authoritarian regime?
--If art activism under authoritarianism is possible, can it not just resist but be resilient and foster emancipatory politics and possibilities for thinking and living another world?
--How have been the artists in the MENA interpreting and developing the aesthetic and political discourses and tactics that the Arab Spring has produced?
--How new artistic and aesthetic activism take up knowledge, discourses, and tactics that the latest uprising in the MENA region have produced, elaborate upon them, and translate them into new politics of social resistance against authoritarianism?
--How can art forms of activist practice and new modes of social organization that seek to challenge existing hierarchies of power in MENA?
The analysis of examples could include but not limited to the discussions of the reclamation of the visibility and speech in the public space; the formation of collective solidarities; the representation of suppressed identities and narratives and the creation of a new value system for art."

INTERESTED AUTHORS ARE REQUESTED TO SUBMIT A PAPER OF 5500-6500 WORDS AND A SHORT CV TO TIJEN TUNALI TIJEN.TUNALI@CC.AU.DK NO LATER THAN JANUARY 31, 2022.

Reference:
CFP: Middle Eastern and North African Art against Authoritarianism. In: ArtHist.net, Nov 27, 2022 (accessed Nov 9, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/38024>.