

# APEAL Hosts Benefit Gala for Modern & Contemporary Art Museum

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The Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon held a gala benefit dinner to celebrate its major drive in support of a new art museum for modern and contemporary art planned for 2020.

Over 400 collectors, art patrons and aficionados, leading officials and high profile business figures attended the glitzy event at the Habtour Hilton, which featured a lively auction of works by major Lebanese artists, a live modern ballet performance and a slew of inspiring speeches to kick off the first phase of APEAL's campaign labeled "A Museum in the Making".

World renowned patron of the arts, architecture enthusiast and former chairman of the Arts Council of Britain, Lord Palumbo added his voice to an illustrious roster of speakers, which featured APEAL President Rita Nammour, Saint Joseph University Rector Fr Salim Daccache and prominent banker and philanthropist Raymond Audi, who was honored for his contribution to Lebanon's cultural and artistic legacy.

Conveying his admiration to the distinctiveness of the Lebanese culture Lord Palumbo said, “In these troubled times of economic fear, uncertainty, and dislocation, it is essential not only to record, but to emphasize once again, that the Arts speak a universal language that is, in every way, an indispensable adjunct to any political initiative, in furthering international relationships and understanding, bringing harmony where there is discord, hope where there is despair, light where there is darkness, and creativity where there is chaos.”

Recalling the concept behind the creation of the museum, Mrs. Nammour said “The role of this Museum will not only be to hold our cultural wealth for generations, but to also act, without being political, as an agent of social change and development of our society, through its programs and activities.”

Saint Joseph University (USJ) has provided the site on which the museum will be built, a stone’s throw from Lebanon’s storied National Museum and at the intersection of Beirut’s diverse communities. The establishment of this new facility will spur economic activity and engage the Lebanese Diaspora with its cultural roots and vibrant artistic scene in Lebanon.

In turn, Rev. Fr. Daccache expressed Saint Joseph University’s keenness on the project. “I am happy to be with you tonight to bear witness that the University– Saint Joseph (USJ) and its entire community is with you to fulfill this dream, which will be carried out on USJ terrain called the land of the museum. It is this land that will embrace this grand idea.”

“This museum will not belong to the University (USJ) or to APEAL, but to all Lebanese communities. It is conceived as a factor of unity and national cohesion which is what the old masters have taught us.” he added.

APEAL executive board member Abraham Karabajakian argued in impromptu remarks that “culture is the strongest weapon” in the fight against “violence and misery.” And since the appreciation of art cuts through religious and ethnic divisions, it “should be a building block in our

national identity.”

The evening featured a live auction lead by Mr. Hugh Edmeades, a seasoned auctioneer from Christie’s London, who throughout 30 years of experience has conducted over 600 sales raising well over £70 million for charitable causes. The lots included paintings and sculptures donated by acclaimed artists, leading galleries and art collectors, namely Shafic Abboud, Dia Azzaoui, Marwan Kassab Bachi, Alfred Basbous, Michel Basbous, Ayman Baalbaki, Oussama Baalbaki, Chaouki Chamoun, Cesar Gemayel, Paul Guiragossian, Elie Kanaan, Nadim Karam, AbdulRahman Katanani, Azade Koker, Jamil Molaeb, Nabil Nahas, Omar Onsi, Marwan Sahmarani, Habib Srour, Jean Boghossian, and Akram Zaatari .

Mrs. Nammour presented Mr. Audi with APEAL’S Pride Award in acknowledgment of his outstanding achievement and distinguished dedication to preserving cultural spaces and raising the profile of Lebanese art at home and abroad.

“Getting awarded this honorary title means a lot to me, especially that it emanates from an association that has been at the forefront of excellence and has earned a formidable reputation and respect for the high quality of its standards.” said Mr. Audi in thanking APEAL.

Proceeds from the benefit gala and dinner, one of a series of future activities, will go towards the construction and cost of creating the museum. National and international benefactors will be targeted and engaged in this endeavor, Mrs. Nammour told assembled guests.

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