

"Artists in Residency Program in the Lebanese Public School System", a new outreach initiative by The Beirut Museum of Art (BeMA)

Other December 4, 2017



As part of its outreach programs' aim to decentralize art and engage local communities in contextual art projects, The Beirut Museum of Art (BeMA) launched its "Artists in Residency Program in the Lebanese Public School System".

Held in partnership with the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the program collaborates with artists to roll out seven residencies during the academic year (2017-2018), involving seven public schools suggested by the Ministry as a starting point. A first-of-its-kind initiative targeting Lebanese public schools, the program aims at engaging younger audiences and providing children and youth from different social and geographical backgrounds in Lebanon with opportunities to widen their horizons by employing art as a new form of expression and dialogue.

With a theme revolving around "Shared Imaginaries", the residency program consists of conducting a series of classroom sessions for 4th and 5th graders. For a period of 6 to 8 weeks, artists will lead students, with the support of the art teacher, into a creative process using each their own methodology. The artists' new practice will incite and guide students to express their opinions, ideas, and feelings towards social, cultural, environmental, or human-related topics by triggering their creative thinking and awakening their sensibility to art. Throughout the program, the students will be working on a specific artwork, whether a painting, a ceramic tile, a video art, or other, which will be showcased during a public event marking the end of the program and a pioneer collaboration between several Lebanese education advocates.

With a broad objective to ultimately prolong the governmental education policy by supporting the Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP)'s efforts in promoting concepts like dialogue, civic education, cultural diversity, and intercultural understanding, the program benefits other ends as well. At a practical level, it will enrich the classroom experience, introducing an inclusive practice that will allow students to experiment through different mediums, promoting multidisciplinary learning and encouraging the integration of art to the curricula. Beyond the development of artistic

skills, the program aims also at nurturing soft skills that highlight the ability of art to inspire better understanding of the world's complexities, and which are broadly applicable across disciplines and real life experiences.

During the launch of the program, BeMA's Founding Member and APEAL's Vice President, Sandra Abou Nader expressed her "great satisfaction towards the overwhelming welcome of the Ministry and the selected public schools that contributed to the introduction of this program to a generation in the making, exposing it to new positive experiments that will enhance the ability of students to think and to express themselves through arts, interaction, and dialogue". Abou Nader also stressed that "the most important part of this initiative resides in proving that school life goes beyond the boundaries of regular and classical subjects of a curriculum, to become a place that equips our youth with new tools of expression and dialogue. By introducing the artists' residency program in public schools in Lebanon, BeMA aims integrating art in schools' curricula as a communication tool between students of different cultural and social backgrounds, enabling the creation of new spaces of dialogue, innovation, interaction, and skills' development."

She went on adding that "despite the fact that BeMA launched several artistic outreach programs in Ras Masqa, Baalbeck, and Jezzine, this initiative is the first to target Lebanese public schools, reaching out to an audience whose vital role in defining the future of our communities we tend to neglect."

"The program kicks off today with 7 public schools in Mount Lebanon, the South, the North, the Bekaa, and Beirut. However, we intend to build on our successful partnership with the Ministry of Education to reach out to the maximum number of schools in Lebanon with the hope of forging the pathway for artistic education and integrating it in the curriculum."

From his side, Minister Hamadeh welcomed the initiative, thanking the Beirut Museum of Art for this "major breakthrough in public education, which reflects the museum's awareness for the sector's dire need for a breath of art." He reiterated his "high appreciation for BeMA's efforts in finding ways to channel art and refined taste to the Lebanese society."

He added saying: "Art in all its forms represents an essential factor in shaping the student's personality in a balanced and healthy way. Lack of arts in many public schools has led to a certain dryness in the academic environment and to a decline of interest in them. It's important to know that art and sport-related activities are essential components of a healthy education as well as innovation catalysts and major contributors of the shaping of humanitarian personalities."

"Given our deeply-rooted conviction in the importance of artistic education, we are eager to collaborate with the association through the memorandum of understanding issued by APEAL, which aims at engaging communities in cultural and educational programs for the service of building an art-oriented civic society and laying the foundations for the instigation of dialogue between the several parties."

"The artists in residency program that we are launching today offers young kids and students from different social backgrounds opportunities to acquire new skills and widen their horizon by being exposed to art and working closely with the artists contributing to the program.

This generous initiative is of great importance to the educational sector, and we highly appreciate the efforts that are being exerted to ensure its success. We eagerly await the positive impact it will leave on the students' personalities as well as the effects it will have on exploring their potential and talents, not to mention the opportunities it will grant them to meet, work, exchange, and innovate all forms of arts with artists and peers."

"When it comes to developing education curricula, a special importance should be given to art, whether painting, music, theatre, plastic arts or other. We hope we will succeed in implementing the Cabinet's decision related to training new art teachers and raising a new generation of principals specialized in artistic education, to give back life to public schools."

"We look forward to reaping the many benefits of this artistic initiative on our community through the involvement of its youth. We also hope that our schools become a hub for young artists and sports champions who would pave the way for a new artistic and social renaissance that would constitute a new scope for innovative cultural dialogue

based on mutual respect, law enforcement, restriction of violence, and the nurturing of joy and giving."

I would like to welcome and thank again this wonderful initiative as well as all the parties who have supported and funded this big project.

Curated by Maya Hage on behalf of BeMA, the Artists in Residency Program in the Lebanese Public School System will be implemented in the seven following schools: Kamal Jumblatt School in the Chouf area, Āloula Public School in Jbeil, Saida Public School for Girls, Tyr's Public School for Girls, Zahle's Mixed Public School, Emir Chakib Erslan Public School in Verdun (Beirut), and Rachel EddéSebeel Public School in Zghorta.

From Beirut to the North, the South, and the Bekaa, artists from CollectifKahraba, Studio Kawakeb as well as French-Iranian artist and architect Soraya Ghezlbash will escort students throughout the program, exchanging ideas and creativity in urban and rural remote areas of Lebanon, an experience that will represent a great learning opportunity for the students, the professional teaching staff in public schools, as well as the artists committed to this residency program.

More information, timeline, and residency programs date are available on <http://bema.museum>

About BeMA:

One of the most significant developments for Lebanese art and culture in a generation, Beirut Museum of Art (BeMA), is a new museum set to launch in Beirut in 2020.

Envisioned as a cultural hub highlighting modern and contemporary art from Lebanon and the region, BeMA will encourage Lebanese artistic creation while fostering dialogue and cross-cultural collaborations.

In addition to housing an extensive collection of modern and contemporary art, the museum will create opportunities for the production of new works through artist residencies, commissions and cultural partnerships. Committed to nurturing a dynamic and creative civil society, it will also host cultural and educational programs.

An independent institution, BeMA will be a site for discourse, creativity, academic research, and public education, engaging local communities. Drawing inspiration from the city itself, the museum's innovative design was developed by one of Lebanon's leading architecture houses Hala Wardé / HW Architecture following an independently juried competitions.
