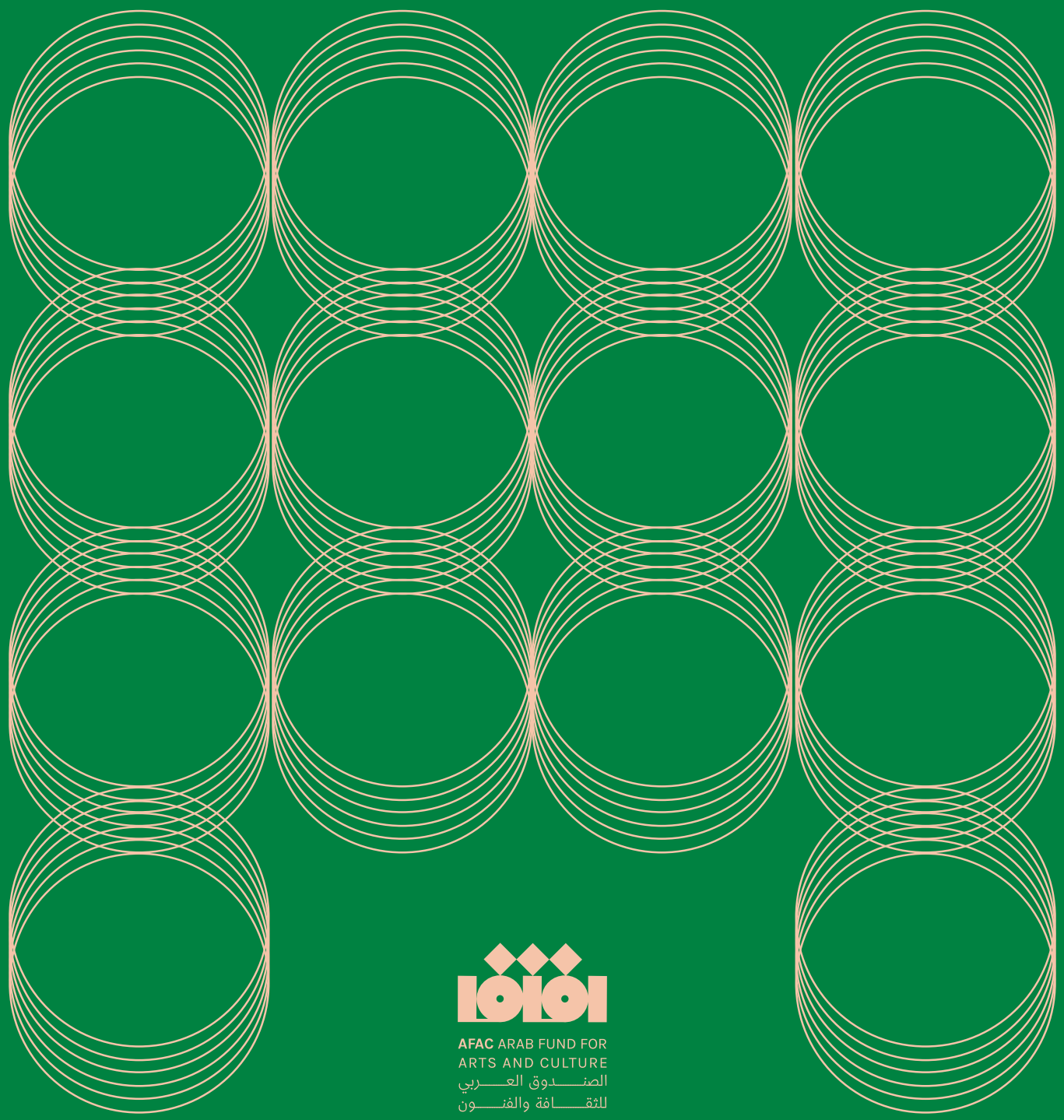


2023

# Annual Report



AFAC ARAB FUND FOR  
ARTS AND CULTURE  
الصندوق العربي  
للثقافة والفنون

## About AFAC

The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture - AFAC was founded in 2007 through the initiative of Arab cultural activists as an independent foundation to support individual artists, writers, researchers, intellectuals, as well as organizations from the Arab region working in the field of arts and culture. Since its launch, AFAC's programs have steadily expanded to cover cinema, documentary film, documentary photography, visual and performing arts, music, creative and critical writings, research on the arts, entrepreneurship, trainings and regional events. Based in Beirut, AFAC works with artists and organizations all over the Arab region and the rest of the world.

## Our Vision

AFAC strives to build a flourishing cultural and artistic scene across the Arab region that contributes to establishing open and vibrant societies, where young and seasoned voices engage with each other in the wake of the massive transformations being witnessed by the region.

In such a context, AFAC seeks for works of art and culture to contribute to the following goals:

- Take advantage of the grey areas and collapse of self-evident certitudes in our region to spur fresh thinking and innovative visions of the future.
- Search for tools to bear witness to the hopes and hindrances our region is living through, with techniques that go past traditional documentation to create new forms of experimentation in writing and ways of dealing with the image.
- Rediscover the complexity and diversity of our societies, and search for marginalized narratives in both the near and distant pasts.
- Promote engagement between Arab societies and their diasporas, especially after such a large number of Arab artists have become refugees or been forced into exile across the world, which has reflected on them personally and the art they produce, as well as on the various societies they are now working in.
- Expand the space for civic engagement through the offerings of intellectuals, artists, researchers and civil society organizations; a space for dialogue, questioning, critical reflection, and tolerance.

## How We Work

AFAC follows three core principles in its work:

1. **Autonomy:** AFAC is keen on diversifying its funding sources allowing us autonomy to work towards realizing our vision.
2. **Transparency:** AFAC adheres to transparency at every stage of work, beginning from the grants application forms which are accessible and open to all, up until the selection process itself, which is the responsibility of a committee of jurors chosen annually for each category.
3. **Dynamism:** AFAC carries out periodic evaluations of its work, taking into consideration deliberations between jurors, social and political changes, and the new creative genres that accompany them, which allow us to be constantly prepared to evolve or modify our programs.

## Strategic Areas of Work

Supporting the production of cultural and artistic work lies at the core of AFAC's work. Since our inception, numerous changes have taken place in our funding programs in response to the needs, gaps, and emergence of new forms of expression and storytelling. The fund for supporting novelists has transformed into encouraging other genres of creative writing, while the support for documentary filmmaking has expanded, adding a dedicated program for enhancing documentary photography.

The support that AFAC offers is not restricted to cultural and artistic work; it extends to cover research on the arts, to secure appropriate channels of distribution and to guarantee the sustainability of pioneering cultural organizations in the Arab world, whether by way of financial support or through training and mentorship. In accordance with this, AFAC's work is divided into five strategic areas: providing grants, developing training programs, building and sharing knowledge, broadening the pool of supporters for the arts, and cultivating appreciation for and engagement with contemporary arts and culture productions by connecting them with audiences.

- **Grants:** AFAC offers close to two hundred grants every year through open calls to submit applications. These grants are spread over nine programs: Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Documentary Film, Music, Creative and Critical Writings, Training and Regional Events, Cinema, and the Arab Documentary Photography Program.
- **Training and Mentorship:** In addition to the grants, AFAC sets up programs that offer training and mentorship to develop missing skills and practices, as is the case with the Arts and Culture Entrepreneurship, the Writers' Room, and the Arab Documentary Photography programs.
- **Knowledge Building and Sharing:** AFAC's extensive database includes more than 20,000 applicants and 2,268 funded projects, which has made it into a considerable source of information on cultural trends, modes of artistic production, social impact, geographic contexts, and all the relevant statistics. AFAC shares this information through reports, info-graphics, grantees' stories and studies that it commissions.
- **Broadening the Pool of Supporters for the Arts:** AFAC is committed to strengthening philanthropy for the arts, and to working with the private sector to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship in the field of cultural and artistic production. Our aim is to expand and diversify sources of funding for artists, writers, intellectuals and researchers, as well as organizations that present artistic and cultural content.
- **Building Audiences:** AFAC seeks to cultivate appreciation for and engagement with arts and culture production to reinforce the transformational power of creative expression.

## Board of Trustees

AFAC is privileged to have an esteemed Board of Trustees made up of the following members:

Dr. Ghassan Salamé, Dr. Nabil Qaddumi, Dr. Suzanne Wettenschwiler, Amr Ben Halim, Hani Kalouti, Roxane Zand, Oussama Rifahi, Mona Khazindar, and Rania Ashur.

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# Executive Summary

As we embark on our 17<sup>th</sup> year of active operations, we are celebrating the milestones that the arts and culture scene across the Arab region has achieved. Yet, we are also stricken with concern at the oppression, the constriction of liberties and the lack of security that the sector continues to suffer from at times. As such, we are more conscious than ever of the pivotal role and responsibility our organization must take on, in order to continue to support arts and culture projects amid the evolving challenges

at the local, regional and international levels.

Our general grants program has proven yet again its singular position in the region, creating opportunities for artists and practitioners to pursue diverse creative expressions, approaches, styles, topics, ideas and experimentation. And at the

same time, the program continues to be a pillar of steadiness, proceeding uninterrupted for the past 16 years. The program received 2,478 applications this year, the most we have ever received.

Even when compared to 2020, 2021 and 2022 — years during which we had special and emergency programs including the North Africa Cultural Program (NACP) and the Lebanon Solidarity Fund — the number of applications in 2023 still represents the largest single year total of applicants in AFAC's history. While flattering and indicative of our growing reach, the fact that so many artists and cultural practitioners are turning to AFAC is also a reflection of shrinking resources across the globe and the challenges facing our setup and resources. While in previous years we were able to support between 10% and 15% of the applications that we receive, this year the percentage dropped to 7%, with 171 projects supported in total. This poses a number of questions. How can we secure more general funds to support more projects? What should we tweak in our programs in ways that would allow us to allocate funds to the general grants programs without losing its ethos and openness? How and where shall we turn in order to open new avenues to secure the necessary funds to continue operating our flagship programs?



This year, 147 AFAC-supported projects were completed. The projects spanned across a range of mediums and art forms: from film, photography, visual arts and performing arts to creative and critical writings, music and research. This figure is consistent with the average number of completed projects in recent years. And when compared with the average number of new projects we support, the number of newly supported projects and completed projects balance one another out.

In addition to our general grants programs and as part of our long-standing tradition of responding to specific needs and catering to nascent cultural scenes and practices, two pilot programs were launched this year: The Writers' Room and Critical Cultural Journalism programs. The first is a writing residency program that aims to develop original television series in partnership with the broadcast company OSN. The program received significant interest in its first open call, garnering 276 submissions. A jury ultimately selected six projects to support. The Critical Cultural Journalism program is a partnership with the regional media umbrella organization Febrayer Network. In its first edition, it has

brought together 16 early-career journalists interested in writing about film, literature, music and TV series.

We also launched a third program this year. Titled Women in Film, the program offered a series of workshops organized by AFAC and the Netflix Fund for Creative Equity that served as an introduction to the filmmaking industry for women interested in pursuing a career in film and are fresh graduates of film studies,

audio-visual studies, and film schools. The program garnered 238 applications from a wide range of countries, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt and Jordan. From these, a jury selected 45 applicants to participate in the workshops aimed at cultivating the creative process behind filmmaking.

In line with our belief in organizational reflection and learning, 2023 was a year of assessment for three of our programs. The first is the Arab Documentary Photography Program (ADPP), which has been in operation for nine years. We also wanted to reflect on NACP, after its first five-year cycle concluded in March 2023. And



finally, the Arts and Culture Entrepreneurship program (ACE) is undergoing an external evaluation of its four cycles.

After the evaluation of ADPP, we relaunched the program in October with an added component that is aimed at ADPP alumni, while preserving its core mission of supporting emerging photographers in the Arab region. NACP too launched its second cycle in January 2024 and will continue through 2027. This second cycle provides, on top of programming and institutional support as well as funding for regional alliances, capacity-building, training and mentorship opportunities to entities in the five focus countries of North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) and their partners in this sub-region and beyond. As for ACE, the evaluation is set to be completed in the first quarter of 2024, at which point we will re-imagine the program in light of the findings and recommendations.

Our efforts to build on producing knowledge and creating points of connection for practitioners in the sector to convene, exchange and discuss continued in 2023. We organized two conferences, one in Berlin and one in Rabat, and we

commissioned three research papers on music, performing arts and documentary photography that were completed this year. Our aim in organizing these interventions was that they would allow for deeper reflection on the state of the arts and culture landscape in the region.





# Grantmaking 2023

**In 2023, we continued to support the arts and culture sector in the Arab region and diaspora through our general grants program. The program, defined by its commitment to unrestricted opportunity creation, is vital to support the sector in growing sustainably and to encourage local artists, organizations, initiatives and collectives to thrive.**

**To spur this growth, a total of US\$1.85 million in grants was allocated across our seven grants programs.**

# Granting Schedule 2023

**1**

yearly call

**2**

cycles

**9**

programs

**2,478**

applications  
received



**Performing  
Arts**



**Visual  
Arts**



**Creative  
and Critical  
Writings**



**Documentary  
Film**



**Training  
and Regional  
Events**



**Music**



**Cinema**



**Arab  
Documentary  
Photography  
Program**



**Writers' Room**

# Applications 2023

**84%**

individuals

**61%**  
men

**39%**  
women

**12%**

institutions

**4%**

collectives

**88%**

non-AFAC grantees

**26%**

emerging artists/  
institutions/collectives

**74%**

established

## Geographic Spread 2023

**2,254**  
applications

from

**21**

Arab countries

Algeria | 76  
Bahrain | 10  
Comoros | 1  
Egypt | 624  
Iraq | 52  
Jordan | 93

Kuwait | 10  
Lebanon | 331  
Libya | 16  
Mauritania | 1  
Morocco | 194  
Oman | 10

Palestine | 234  
Qatar | 4  
Saudi Arabia | 20  
Somalia | 6  
Sudan | 67

Syria | 235  
Tunisia | 180  
UAE | 11  
Yemen | 79

+

**224**

from

**25**

non-Arab  
countries

## Increase in Applications 2022 vs 2023



**Visual  
Arts**

**224 vs 424**

**89%**  
increase



**Performing  
Arts**

**108 vs 249**

**131%**  
increase



**Documentary  
Film**

**134 vs 240**

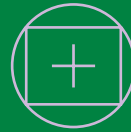
**79%**  
increase



**Creative  
and Critical  
Writings**

**195 vs 294**

**51%**  
increase



**Arab  
Documentary  
Photography  
Program**

**89 vs 228**

**156%**  
increase

**54.97%**  
increase

**in total  
applications**

**1,599**

**applications  
2022**

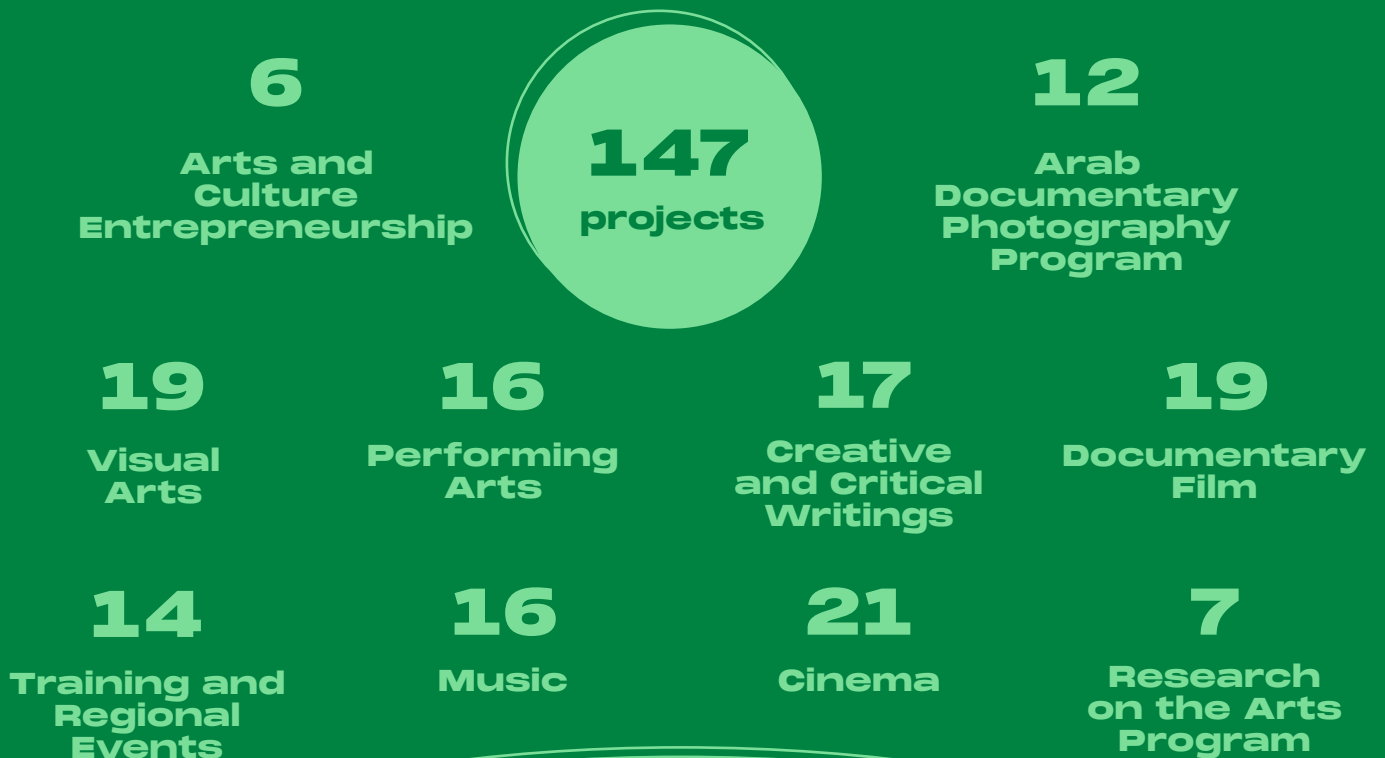
**vs**

**2,478**

**applications  
2023**

An increase of approximately 55% in applications was noted across all categories as compared to last year's cycles, which can be partly explained by the effective, tactical and action-driven communication campaigns that accompanied the calls this year.

# Closed Projects 2023



## Geographic Distribution

Algeria   9	Libya   3	Tunisia   10
Bahrain   1	Mauritania   2	Yemen   5
Egypt   26	Morocco   17	United Arab Emirates   1
Iraq   4	Palestine   14	France   1
Jordan   1	Sudan   6	Germany   1
Lebanon   37	Syria   9	

## Statistics 2007–2023

**20,669**

applications received since 2007

**2,268**

projects supported since 2007

**USD 35 million**

allocated in grants since 2007

# Grantees 2023

**171**  
grantees selected

**80%**  
individuals

**54%** men      **46%** women

**73%**  
first-time  
AFAC grantees

**169**  
from 12 Arab countries

Algeria   12	Morocco   13
Egypt   44	Palestine   25
Iraq   7	Sudan   6
Jordan   2	Syria   16
Lebanon   28	Tunisia   8
Libya   2	Yemen   6

**+**  
**2**  
from non-Arab  
countries

**32%**  
emerging artists/  
institutions/collectives

**68%**  
established



**18**

Visual  
Arts



**22**

Performing  
Arts



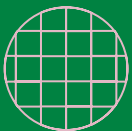
**25**

Creative  
and Critical  
Writings



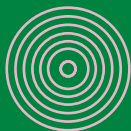
**29**

Documentary  
Film



**23**

Training and  
Regional  
Events



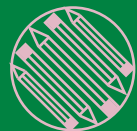
**22**

Music



**26**

Cinema



**6**

Writers'  
Room

# Readers 2023

This year, due to the high number of applications received, readers were chosen to screen and pre-select applications across all categories. Reader committees were formed for every grants program (29 readers in total). Some grant programs were assigned two reader committees, while others — like the Visual Arts program, which received a record number of applications — were assigned three reader committees.



## Visual Arts

Toleen Touq (Jordan)  
 Marwa Arsanios (Lebanon)  
 Ali Tnani (Tunisia)  
 Omar Kholeif (Egypt)  
 Basma Al-Sharif (Palestine)  
 Sara Ouhaddou (Morocco)



## Performing Arts

Kamal Khalladi (Morocco)  
 Wael Kadour (Syria)  
 Danya Hammoud (Lebanon)  
 Nedjma Hadj (Algeria)



## Creative and Critical Writings

Raji Bathish (Palestine)  
 Wajdi El Ahdal (Yemen)  
 Asmaa Sakouti (Morocco)  
 Hassan Daoud (Lebanon)



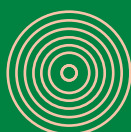
## Documentary Film

Marouan Omara (Egypt)  
 Sihem Sidaoui (Tunisia)  
 Ali Essafi (Morocco)  
 Joude Gorani (Syria)



## Training and Regional Events

Amine Azzouzi (Tunisia)  
 Dalia Daoud (Egypt)  
 Myriam Amroun (Algeria)



## Music

Huda Asfour (Egypt)  
 Kamilya Jubran (Palestine)  
 Othman Nejmedine (Morocco)  
 Deena Abdelwahab (Tunisia)



## Cinema — Feature Films\*

Ali Adawy (Egypt)  
 Fares Ladjimi (Tunisia)  
 Rami El Sabbagh (Lebanon)  
 Yasmine Zohdi (Egypt)

\*The Cinema readers for short films were also jurors — their names can be found under the Jurors section.

# Jurors 2023

**31**  
jurors

**11**  
countries



Jordan



Egypt



Tunisia



Yemen



Kuwait



Morocco



Lebanon



Bahrain



KSA



Palestine



Syria

**67%**  
previous AFAC  
grantees

**61%**  
women

# Jury Committees 2023



## Visual Arts

Reem Shadid  
(Palestine)  
Doa Aly (Egypt)  
Nidhal Chamekh  
(Tunisia)



## Performing Arts

Marianne Noujaim  
(Lebanon)  
Younes Atbane  
(Morocco)  
and George  
Bajalia (Palestine/  
Morocco)



## Creative and Critical Writings

Maya Abu Alhayat  
(Palestine)  
Soukaina Habiballah  
(Morocco)  
Ahmad Naji (Egypt)



## Documentary Film

Eliane Raheb  
(Lebanon)  
Mohanad Yaqubi  
(Palestine)  
Sara Ishaq  
(Yemen)



## Training and Regional Events

Yazan Khalili  
(Palestine)  
Samia Labidi  
(Tunisia)  
Omayma Abd Al  
Shafi (Egypt)



## Music

Widad Mjama  
(Morocco)  
Hasan Hujairi  
(Bahrain)  
Fadi El Abdallah  
(Lebanon)



## Cinema – Feature Films

Alaeddine Slim  
(Tunisia)  
Ayten Amin (Egypt)  
Sabine Sidawi  
(Lebanon)



## Cinema – Short Films

Nadine Salib (Egypt)  
Tania Khoury  
(Lebanon)  
Kais Zaied  
(Tunisia)

# Jury Statements

Jury statements, issued by each of our jury committees, are an important assessment of the state, trends and challenges of the arts and culture sector, as seen through the ideas and proposals submitted by our applicants. Jurors feel the pulse of the sector through the applications received, and identify the common topics of interest as well as the peculiarities that stand out, as revealed by the projects submitted. Below are excerpts from some of our jurors' statements for this year:

## Creative and Critical Writings Jury

"The quantity and quality of projects that linked the visual, literary and critical arts was striking, an indication of the way in which creative processes are increasingly open to the interaction of different artistic fields. The inclination toward exploring collective and spatial memory, away from excessive subjectivity, was also striking."

## Performing Arts Jury

"We were encouraged to see a good number of projects drawing on cross-regional collaborations and hope to see this trend continue both locally and in the diaspora. This year's pool of applications also demonstrated an uptake of applied performance methodologies in pedagogical and development contexts. This marks a clear recognition of the importance of the performing arts in varied contexts."

## Visual Arts Jury

"It was an enriching experience but also fraught with heavy questions. In this first year of what can be considered truly post-pandemic, it has been important and eye-opening to understand the concerns, questions, limitations, and interests of practitioners in and from our region. The pool of applicants for this year was from different generations but gave clear indications of the ongoing demographic changes in the region due to the political and economic conditions, namely the more recent migration and exile of many."

## Training and Regional Events Jury

"Throughout our selection process, we championed cross-pollination, supporting projects that transcended geographical and disciplinary boundaries. We celebrated alternative approaches to thinking about our practices and reimagining the sustainability of artistic and cultural projects."

## Cinema Features Jury

"An idea and practice of a free cinema emerged from most of the proposals, a cinema that emanates from our daily lives and embraces universal and topical subjects, such as people's relationship with memory, the passage from childhood to adulthood, the power of women, the relationship with the other, South-South migration, conflicts, wars."

## Cinema Shorts Jury

"Most of the projects submitted for this grant cycle find new and creative ways to tell powerful, nuanced stories. Despite a diversity in themes, a number of projects submitted tackle issues that are central to women. In most of them, the portrayal of men — and of fathers in particular — is wholly negative. There was also a broad interest in artistic explorations of environmental issues."

## Documentary Film Jury

"In the documentary film projects we reviewed, many filmmakers experimented with the boundaries of space and time. There was an interest in ecological and rural themes, moving beyond the living spaces of the metropole in order to question our relation to the land and ways to protect it. We also noticed a use of the archive as a tool for intergenerational dialogue, for a search for the beginning of things in order to question the past and to better understand the present and future."

## Music Jury

"The diverse projects that were submitted to AFAC's Music Grant have allowed us to take a thorough look at the state of non-commercial music in the Arab world. This look is far from comprehensive due to significant geographical disparity in applications. There is almost a complete absence of projects from certain countries for various reasons: perhaps war or a habituated inward focus, perhaps a lack of clear mechanisms for more regional exposure or an absence of local institutions that support the diversity of music scenes in their local countries and work to disseminate them beyond."

# Themes, Approaches and Artistic Languages



Notions of **time and space** were addressed in many of the projects selected for this year. In “La Chambre 7m<sup>2</sup>” de lutttes, Moroccan visual artist Montasser Drissi examines the struggles of migrant workers in French housing units in the 1970s. The project aims to create a visually driven art publication that combines text, images, photos and documents related to the bedrooms of North African migrants. Another visual arts project, “Dusk Air at Closing Time”, is a video project



Machines à dormir, sept mètres carrés de lutte.

exploring what it means to be “out of time” through site-specific interventions, historical-speculative narrative and an exploration of an urban grotto as a visual and spatial metaphor for the transmutation of the self, where different temporalities intersect and coexist. The documentary “Jungle Heat” by Salim Mrad from Lebanon, follows a small team of filmmakers on a journey across the sprawling jungle that is Lebanon today, moving from one scene to another in an “exquisite corpse” fashion, never deciding beforehand where the following scene will take them.

**Migration and exile** – and the struggles that these entail in terms of feeling home, identity and belonging – were also significantly present in this year’s selected projects. “Empty Heavens” by Odai al-Zoubi from Syria is a collection of stories about Syrians in their countries of refuge. The collection engages with the limbo they live in, their attempts to understand themselves again. The Yemeni video art project “No Place for You Here” by Afraa Ahmed documents a return home after 10 years away in search of something like home in exile. The project represents a trial to face fears, reclaim a place and connect with roots and identity. In “Bitter Seed”, a documentary film by Algerian filmmaker Camélia Gadhgadhi, we follow Camélia and her father Lamine, as they navigate the city of Paris with opposing approaches to Algerian identity in exile: Camélia is proud and always curious to discover more about the Algerian culture, but Lamine is determined to erase all traces of it. Under the music grants program, Nour Sokhon’s debut album,

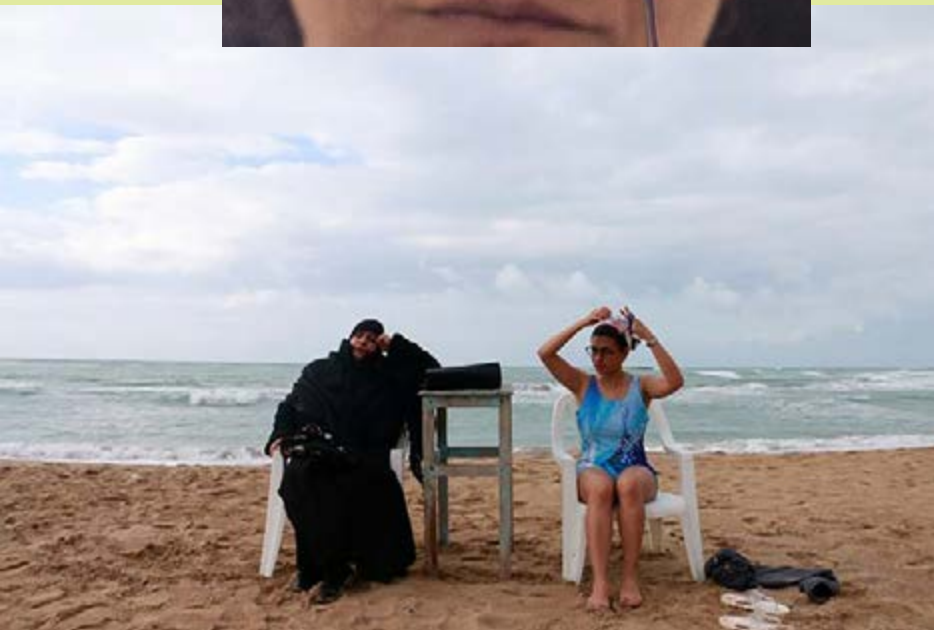
“Beirut Berlin Birds”, is a captivating sonic journey that explores the themes of migration, identity, and the search for home. Through field recordings and compositions, Sokhon creates an archive that captures the conversations surrounding leaving home or staying in Lebanon. Another music project, “Abba” is the debut EP of Sulafa Elyas, a 25-year-old Sudanese woman singer



and oud player. Today an asylum seeker, she pays tribute to where her heart remains: her home country. Under creative and critical writings, the project “Hillock Whose Sky is Not Crossed by a Moon”, by Atif Elhadj Saeed Hamza from Sudan, is a collection of five stories that are concerned with the psychological fragility of migrants stuck in host countries and what these conditions can produce in terms of extreme attachment or a loss of passion.



Another focus that cuts across many of our supported projects is on **women**, whether in attempts by project holders to empower women and actively fight for gender equality, or in their efforts to cast a light on the violence and repression they experience in our societies. In the Egyptian documentary film “Restore” by Amira Mortada Bayoumi, Amira decides to undergo reconstructive surgery to repair the damage from the female circumcision she was subjected to as a young girl. The film follows personal and social struggles, past and present, as Amira confronts the institution of motherhood and its ways of reinforcing oppression, as well as the traditions and taboos that have been imposed on her. “Dressing Room” by Bissane al-Charif from Syria is a performance that focuses on the wrinkles of women’s bodies as a way to re-observe their own bodies and the events they have lived. “Air-Conditioned Concrete Cans” by Nermin Habib from Egypt performs the social repression and psychological violence directed at women in contemporary society. The performance shows women encased



in concrete molds that prevent any freedom of bodily or verbal expression, staging the relationship between the body and cultural heritage and looking at these same bodies as a potential tool and site for healing and resistance. As part of our Training and Regional Events program, “Tabli”, by Sabrine El Hossa aims to empower women and promote gender equality in music by training women on advanced drumming. The visual arts grassroots initiative “Alolbah” by Leila Dimashqieh and Rand Abdul Nour aims to make art accessible to women in Jordan through workshops and intuitive art kits. With a focus on self-directed artists in underserved areas, the project has reached 600 women and girls, teaching them foundational skills and creative problem-solving.

Many projects across various programs focused on **climate change and ecological concerns**. Tunisian documentary film “Trash Cemetery” by Firas Rebiai focuses on Attar, a small community on the outskirts of Tunis that, while once known for its fresh air quality, is becoming engulfed by Borj Chakir, Tunisia’s largest landfill. The film follows Ridha Trabelsi, a popular singer in his mid-fifties who was raised in Attar, as he tries to fight for the community’s survival. Another documentary film, “She Was Not Alone” by Hussein al-Asadi from Iraq, is a poetic meditation on the life of Fatima, a nomadic woman who lives alone in Iraq’s wetlands

with her animals. As ecological collapse forces migration to the city, our collective fates become intertwined with hers: will she stay or be dispossessed of everything she knows and loves? Under the Visual Arts program, “A Portmanteau”, by Sudanese visual artist Hiba Ismail, offers an experimental convergence of an online audio archive and a print book that takes — though not exclusively — Port Sudan as its focus. The project is part of an ongoing endeavor to explore the sparse but rich landscape of Port Sudan through images and corresponding recordings, presenting a field guide to its flora and fauna, like an environmental allegory.



While many projects celebrate life, several revolve around the experiences of **loss and grief**. “A Mountain to Protect Me from the Water” by Malak Afouneh from Palestine, part of the Creative and Critical Writings program, centers on the experience of preemptive loss that takes place when we understand the inevitability of losing someone dear to us before it happens. The project focuses on three elements of loss which are common in Palestine and are characterized by a cruel decline in the quality of life before its end. The documentary film “Moondove” by Lebanese director Karim Kassem tells

the story of a turtle dove that goes missing in a mountain village and indirectly mirrors a sense of loss in the people living there.

While some projects reflect inward or look toward the future, others explore **collective and spatial memory**. Lena Osseyran’s “Unity of Breathing” is a theater performance breathing life into the memories of Beirut, looking to explore the shared breath that binds us together in a poetic embrace. “Between Our Hands” by Moroccan artist Bard Al Hammami explores the notion that space, understood to be present yet absent within works of art, is situated between memories of what has happened and what is happening. The



project is a search for tools to translate the external dimensions of a work of art, something foreign, that can intertwine with an artist's vocabulary and illuminate the space of an exhibit, the pages of a book or digital media. The project "Are you Iona Bobatov?" by Nour Dakarli from Syria, part of the Creative and Critical Writings program, is a collection of stories that deal with touching events and scenes from people's lives whose days have been clouded with the oppression that the war in Syria left behind, as well

as life under tyranny and the psychological effects it has had on how they face their present and recall their past and their memories. "A Journey of Sound Reclamation" by Razan Zeidani from Palestine, part of the Training and Regional Events program, aims to revive the spirit and memory of an abandoned place, by recapturing the lost sounds of the urban of souk in the old city in Nazareth, where the project will take place.





# Professional, Institutional and Programming Support

The background is a solid green color. Overlaid on this are several thin, white, curved lines that sweep across the page. These lines are arranged in a way that suggests movement and flow, with some lines curving from the bottom left towards the top right, and others curving from the top right towards the bottom left. The lines are of varying lengths and radii, creating a dynamic and modern aesthetic.

# Professional, Institutional and Programming Support

## Arab Documentary Photography Program (ADPP)



A meeting with the ADPP partners (Magnum Foundation and Prince Claus Fund) and the AFAC team was held in January 2023 to evaluate the program, assess its impact after nine years, its results and current needs and challenges of documentary photographers in the Arab region.

The program partners agreed to continue supporting the ADPP while expanding it to support work by ADPP alumni. Key takeaways of the meeting included the importance of nurturing the growing network of documentary photographers, including Arabic as a language for both the applications and the program itself, and the integration of ADPP alumni as mentors.

As such, the call for applications for the 10<sup>th</sup> ADPP cycle was launched on October 25 and ran until December 20, 2023. In parallel, a new component, the ADPP Fellowship was launched, aiming at advancing the careers of ADPP grantees and nurturing an ever-growing community.

While the ADPP open call caters to emerging photographers, the ADPP Alumni Fellowship is open to all previous ADPP grantees and may be used to develop an ADPP alumnus' individual project - a new work in progress or to complete work on an existing project - or contribute to strengthening the culture of documentary photography through creative activation of existing works, the production of events, or collaborations among colleagues. The ADPP Fellowship program thus aims to hone the skills of these photographers by providing them with the support and resources they need while also stimulating exchange between peers.

Through these two tracks, the program is meant to further strengthen the network of close to 90 documentary photographers that was formed throughout the past 9 years, and to consolidate its impact on the power to document, educate and advocate through photography.

Additionally, the 12 projects of the 9<sup>th</sup> ADPP cycle were completed and released in



September. With captivating and eye-catching compositions, the artists of this cycle move us through the region and beyond; from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Iraq, and Palestine all the way to Algeria and Morocco.

Through a personal, poetic, and intimate lens, they take us on a journey sharing stories about exile, grief, living within the war, alienation, mental health struggles, generational gap, and feeling stuck: “As I Lay Between Two Seas” by Ali Al Shehabi (Bahrain), “At a Peter Pan Moment” by Sara Younes (Egypt), “Indefinitely” by Lamees Saleh Sharf Eldin (Egypt), “Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle” by Imane Djamil (Morocco), “Doumari” by Gabriel Ferneini (Lebanon), “My Phantom Walks With Me” by Nidal Rohmi (Palestine), “Your Life is a Career (The Boutefteens)” by Ahmed Merzagui (Algeria), “Therefore, I Cut.” By Sara Kontar (Syria), “You Can See Me But I Can’t” by Celia Bougdal (Algeria), “Under the Sun” by Mohammed Namor (Syria), “But you won’t notice” by Mennatalah Khaled (Egypt), and “The Taste of Clay” by Karrar Nasser (Iraq).



## North Africa Cultural Program (NACP)

The first cycle of the North Africa Cultural Program ran from 2019-2023, coming to a close last March. To mark this milestone, a regional meeting was held in Tunis in February, bringing together more than 80 cultural practitioners from 54 organizations from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

The four-day meeting offered the chance for all participants to explore the most significant changes

achieved and to delve into the experiences of the past years to imagine new possibilities for sustaining the arts and culture sector in North Africa and beyond. As such, participants examined and discussed the impact of their work at the foundational level for collaborations, including the question of audiences and meeting targets. The meeting included presentations, public panels, an exhibition and visits to peer organizations and partners in Tunis.

AFAC’s efforts to support the fostering of a vibrant, independent and open arts and culture landscape in North Africa will continue with the second cycle of the program (2024-2027). The North Africa Cultural Program Cycle II is designed to offer two funding schemes with several grant options under each pathway:





**The National Cultural Opportunities Fund (NCOF) for:**

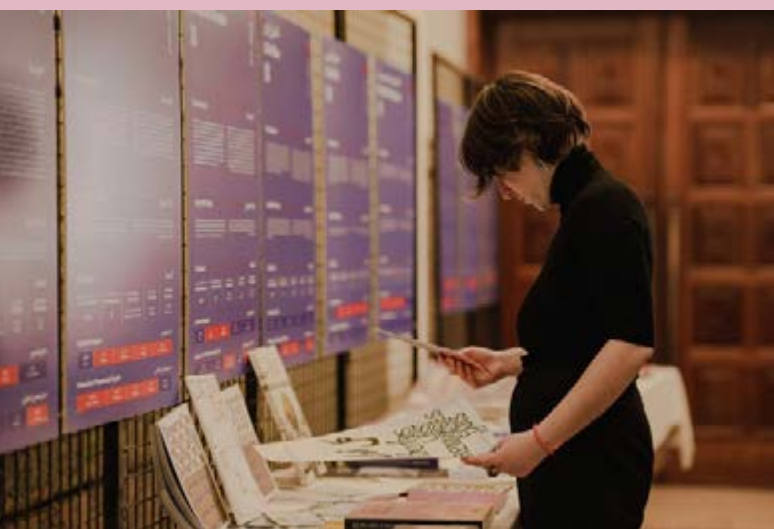
- **Core Institutional and Programmatic Support Grant** for new organizations operating in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia
- **Continuity Grant** for NCOF grantee organizations of NACP Cycle I
- **Local Alliances and Collaborations Grant** for NCOF grantee organizations of NACP Cycle I in addition to new partnering entities

**The Regional Competitive Cultural Fund (RCCF) for:**

- **Seed Funding Grant** for pilot collaborations in North Africa and the African continent and/or Arab region
- **Established Collaborations Grant** for already established collaborations or organizations with a strong collaborative track record

Through a combination of open application processes and invitation-based calls, both funds aim to strengthen independent arts and culture entities, including institutions, collectives, networks, and spaces. They place an emphasis on regional partnerships and, in particular, a focus on engaging young audiences and extending outreach to underserved or remote areas beyond urban centers. Furthermore, NACP provides tailored capacity-building, training and mentorship opportunities to organizations and projects.

The second cycle of the program launched in early January 2024.



## Arts and Culture Entrepreneurship (ACE)

The Arts and Culture Entrepreneurship (ACE) program is a special program by AFAC in partnership with Drosos Foundation and supported by the German Federal Foreign Office. It fosters a collective space for reflection on sustainability and is designed to inspire, invigorate and strengthen small and medium cultural institutions that are based and working in the Arab region and whose initiatives are doing community engagement.

ACE concluded its fourth and final cycle this year, with all eight cultural entities in the fourth cycle finalizing their projects and closing their grants.

The program is currently under an external evaluation that will conclude in the first quarter of 2024. In total, 32 entities and 64 cultural managers participated in the program. At the close of the program, we believed that it could serve as a model for other cultural entities in the region.

As such, AFAC published a bilingual training toolkit for application in other contexts based on the specific work of the ACE Yemen program, which fell under the larger UNESCO initiative *Promoting Livelihood Opportunities for Urban Youth in Yemen*.





# New Programs and Initiatives



# New Programs and Initiatives

**276**

applications received

from

**18**

Arab countries

**56%**

from Egypt

**11%**

from Lebanon

And from Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen

**6**

projects selected

**Jurors**

**Yam Machhadi**  
(Syria)

**Hicham Lasri**  
(Morocco)

**Mariam Abou Ouf**  
(Egypt)

**Amin Dora**  
(Lebanon)

## Writers' Room

The Writers' Room program was launched in May 2023 in partnership with the OSN broadcasting network. The program aims to be an incubation space until projects can be developed into full fledged limited series. During the incubation period, the program will provide mentorships, follow-ups and input from specialists and experts during and in-between residencies.

Additionally, the program offers a framework for series writing in the region rooted in the premise of the "writers room" as a means for peer-to-peer learning and the steering of the creative process. Selected participants will be granted an OSN-exclusive first look at their projects and the opportunity to be selected for their work to be further developed beyond the residency program.

The open call ran from May 10 to July 11. At its close AFAC had received 276 applications from 18 Arab countries, including Libya, Oman and Saudi Arabia. The highest percentage of applications came from Egypt (56%) followed by Lebanon (11%).

The Writers' Room jury meeting took place in Beirut in mid-September. The jury committee was made up of Syrian scriptwriter Yam Machhadi, Moroccan writer and director Hicham Lasri, Egyptian director Mariam Abou Ouf, and Lebanese director Amin Dora. They deliberated for two days to select the six projects. A series of three residencies are planned for February, May and July 2024, led by Writers' Room mentors filmmaker Bassem Breche and screenwriter and producer Maha El Wazir.



Excerpt from the Writers' Room jury statement

**"The balance between stories stemming from a personal vision on the one hand, and comprehensive stories on the other, left a positive impression, as it intensified the discussion about the dramatic material presented; but the absence of the specificity of the place and its identity made many projects lose their local character, along with its rich details and distinctive cultural features; an encouraged attribute in a program like the Writers' Room."**

**238**

applications  
received

**45**

participants  
selected

**Jurors**

**Deema Azar**  
(Jordan)

**Danya Alhamrani**  
(KSA)

**Amal Ramsis (Egypt)**  
**Hala Galal (Egypt)**  
**Maysaa Almumin**  
(Kuwait)

## AFAC X NETFLIX Women in Film: Introduction to the Creative Process

Women in Film: An Introduction to the Creative Process is a series of workshops organized by AFAC and the Netflix Fund for Creative Equity to offer an introduction to the filmmaking industry for emerging filmmakers and film graduates residing in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE.

The call for applications ran from August 17 until September 14. At the close, AFAC had received 238 applications. A jury selected 45 women to take part in the workshops, which took place in November and December in Cairo, Dubai and Jeddah. The workshops series aimed to introduce participants to the creative process behind making a film, with a focus on fictional scriptwriting.



## Critical Cultural Journalism

The Critical Cultural Journalism (CCJ) program builds on the 2022 collaboration between AFAC and the Febrayer Network (a network of independent regional media organizations: Al-Jumhuriya, Megaphone, Mada Masr and Sowt) during which a specialized track in arts and culture was added to Febrayer's year-long Counter Academy for Arab Journalism (CA) curriculum. The partnership is an expansion into a stand-alone intensive six-month program that aims to revive the role of cultural journalism in creating a critical discourse around cultural productions as well as facilitating audience access and engagement with cultural products.

In its pilot edition, CCJ welcomed applications from graduates of The Counter-Academy for Arab Journalism and the nomination of journalists from Febrayer's member platforms. The program launched on October 3 at a five-day in-person workshop in Deir al-Qamar in Lebanon, during which the 16 selected journalists participated in intensive courses and discussions on contemporary art, cultural theory and critique. The courses and discussions were led by Ahmed Refaat, Maan Abu Taleb, Nael Toukhy, Rana Elnemr and Zeina Halabi.



The next phase of the program, consisting of courses on an e-learning platform, was set to start on October 13 but was postponed due to Israel's ongoing aggression on Gaza, the genocide unfolding in Palestine and our sense that we needed to prioritize participants' well-being in this difficult moment. The online phase will start with courses in Critical Theory, Contemporary Critical Currents in the Region, and Critique Writing before moving on to three specialization seminars on Cinema Critique, Music Critique, and Television Series Critique. In parallel, lectures on topics such as aesthetics and culture will be organized every other Thursday to ensure a conversation and reflection on contemporary and regional questions. The participants will meet

in-person over two week-long workshops where they will focus on a topic of their choice to develop into a final written project with the assistance of experienced editors.



# Knowledge Production and Dissemination



# Knowledge Production and Dissemination

Throughout 2023, we continued on the course we had set in 2022 for our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. With a series of activities such as conferences and research papers, we celebrated connectivity and togetherness and delved deep into sub-sectors in the Arab region's arts and culture landscape, in order to design support schemes that match needs on the ground.

## Conferences: Cultures of Scandal and On Entering the Garden



### Cultures of Scandal

In January 2023, AFAC in collaboration with ICI Berlin and in partnership with EUME/ Forum Transregionale Studien organized the *Cultures of Scandal* conference, which was curated by Tarek El-Ariss and Rasha Salti. The conference departed from the transformations in digital culture as well as the highly polarizing crises around cultural events that surged as disruptive manifestations in the past few years in Europe and in the Arab region. What do the strategies of denouncement and mobilization aim to produce or destroy? What are they manifestations of? How do these campaigns impact practitioners and institutions, and what can they generate?

Below is the conference description:

“Since the beginning of the new millennium, leakers and whistle-blowers have been hailed as heroes in prompting the redress of democratic governance gone wayward. The emergence of WikiLeaks initially reinforced the necessity to correct the role of mainstream journalists and media as the “fourth estate” or as the critical watchdog holding regimes (elected or autocratic) and big business in check and keeping them from abusing power, manipulating citizens and/or consumers, and maintaining the order that best suits their interests. Social media networks as well as digital media sites have multiplied the arenas in which leaks and scandals become manifest, bearing the promise of radical transparency. In over two decades, this genre of journalism has thrived across the ideological spectrum, from the extreme right to the radical left, and has transformed perceptions of the media as well as the way in which publics construct worldviews and seek, find and interpret news.

Nowadays, scandalizing, leaking, revealing, and unveiling are used almost exclusively to produce affect, to mobilize a constituency in the denunciation of traitors, in the claiming of moral high ground, in the cancellation of an



‘other’, all in the time-space of a mousepad click. Surging like meteoric flashes, scandals dissipate as soon as they have erupted, leaving a trail that coalesces as undecipherable toxic residue in a repository of affects that cannot form the soil for a lucid, concrete, or elaborate political subjectivity. A string of leaks, scandals, and hacks cannot be the basis for resistance against the contemporary currency of fascism (racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and misogyny), the insatiable plunder of living resources, and the extreme accumulation of wealth.”

The conference presented contributions from Mada Masr co-founder Lina Attalah, La Colonie founder and artist Kader Attia, gender studies and critical theory assistant professor Layal Ftouni, writer Rana Issa, communication and liberal arts assistant professor Heather Jaber, lecturer and researcher Christian Junge, Forum Transregionale Studien managing director Georges Khalil, Arabic literature professor Friederike Pannewick, anthropologist Stefan Tarnowski and Middle East studies professor Hanan Toukan.

Panel discussion titles included “Mobilizing Shame: Outrage, Resistance, Virality” and “Affective States/Archival Records” which were presented alongside film screenings and book discussions. A selection of the sessions are available to view [here](#).

### On Entering the Garden

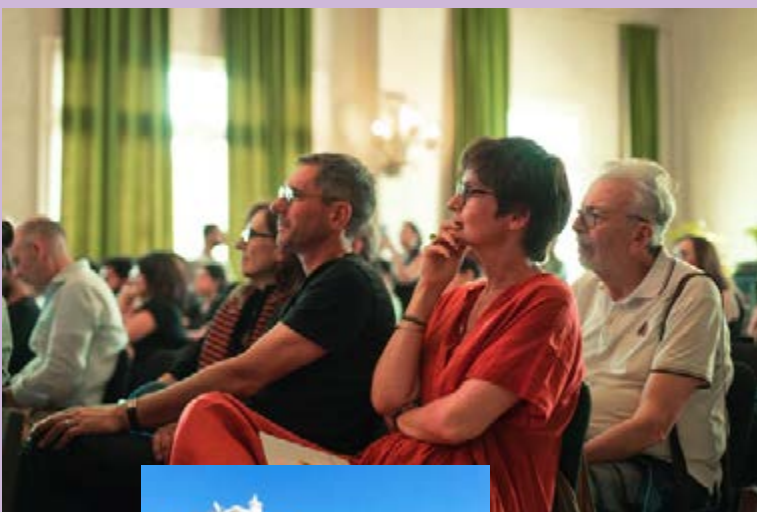
The end of the summer 2023 saw another conference take place, this time in Rabat, Morocco. Titled *On Entering the Garden*, the conference offered a space to question and examine concepts of knowledge production and community formation in the Arab region and its diaspora in times of loss and environmental collapse.

Below is the conference description:

Approaching Arab culture and arts from the perspective of “the garden” allowed us to continue the critical examination of knowledge production and community formation in the region and its diaspora at a time characterized by experiences of loss and environmental collapse. Turning to the garden was an attempt to reactivate the senses and configure new modes of knowing and imagining at this historical juncture.

One of the most pervasive and vital tropes in Arab culture, the garden traverses poetic, literary, musical, visual and architectural imaginaries from antiquity through the modern era. From representations of desert oases (Wahat) to incarnations of paradise (Janna), gardens have given life to a language and a faith and lent their names to cities across the region (like Riyadh and Aden, to cite two examples).

Whether wild or human-made, gardens appear prominently in the classics of Arabic literature as the privileged stage of myriad transformative carnal, physical, and spiritual encounters. We find gardens in the playfully subversive stories of the Arabian Nights, in Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Nefzawi’s manual of erotology *The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delights* and in Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi’s sufi uplifting of spiritual love in *Alhambra’s gardens in The Bezels of Wisdom*.





Starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Nahda, the garden has been the primary metaphor for modern society and community. Merely recalling the titles of Nahda journals and newspapers like Al-Jinan (The Gardens), Al-Junaina (The Little Garden), and Hadiqat al-Akhbar (The News Garden), the importance of the garden for thinking about Arab culture in the modern age is obvious. More specifically, the relation between art and culture as the garden's harvest is a key site of Nahda thought as attested by newspapers such as Thamarat al-Funun (Fruits of the Arts). The notions of art and culture that we have today could be traced back to these publications and conceptualizations

of a community that had to contend with great challenges from the fall of empires, the rise of new technologies, and the advent of colonialism. Revisiting them today by entering the garden is necessary to assess our current condition and reflect on our future prospects.

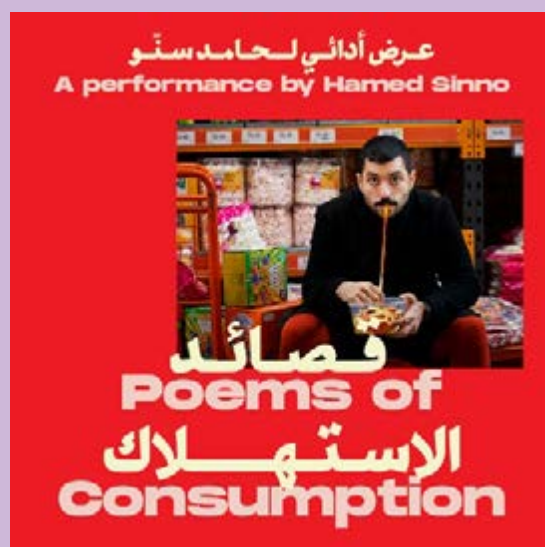
*On Entering the Garden* was also curated by Tarek El-Ariss and Rasha Salti. Participants included Rim Battal, Adnane Baraka, Hoda Barakat, Hicham Bouzid, Rana Elnemr, Myriam El Haïk, Driss Ksikes, Souad Labbize, Farouk Mardam-Bey, Salim Mrad, Yasmina Najji, Stefania

Pandolfo, Grégory Quenet, Peter Limbrick, Zahia Rahmani, Hamed Sinno, Abdellah Taïa, and Youssef El Tekhin.

By bringing together these interlocutors, the conference addressed and unpacked a range of questions. What is the Arab garden of knowledge and culture in the age of the Anthropocene? Can the garden generate new discourses on sustainability, the environment and diversity? What new modes of sensing and imagining emerge on entering the garden?

The recordings of the conference's sessions are available [online](#).

*On Entering the Garden* was organized by AFAC in collaboration with Kulte Center for Contemporary Art & Editions and in partnership with the Fondation Hiba.



## Commissioned Research: For a Critically Engaged Arts and Culture Sector

In an active attempt to gauge the artistic landscape across the region, a series of commissioned research papers were launched in the fields of performing arts, music, and documentary photography. These research papers, which are now completed, are meant to serve as beacons, informing on trends, topics, and phenomena related to artistic and cultural practices and productions in the region.



### Performing Arts Research

In order to document performing arts practices in the region and in the diaspora, a group of researchers came together for the first time in October 2022 under the leadership of Moroccan researcher and dramaturge Driss Ksikes.

The resulting research paper tries to understand the conditions of production and distribution as well as the socioeconomic challenges facing the development of practice. And from this starting point, the paper looks at the link between networks and alliances, and audiences and digitalization. The research is trying to address a general lack of serious engagement with the political and economic context of performing arts in Arab countries, without siloing

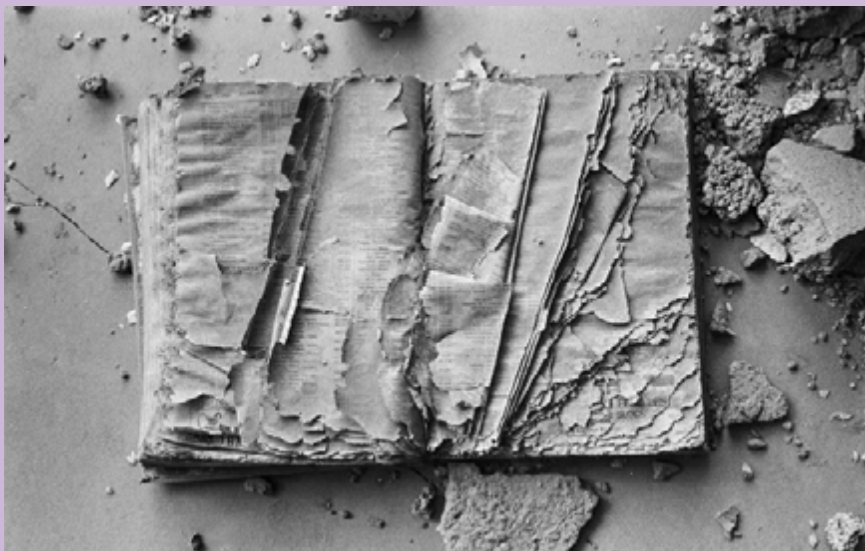
them but putting these contexts into dialogue with the world.

Furthermore, a series of meetings will be organized in various Arab cities, to present the performing arts research and its outcomes and to discuss local support needs.

### Music Research

The music research, undertaken by a group of researchers from Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Palestine and led by Egyptian singer, critic and researcher Fayruz Karawya, aims to form a holistic and detailed view of the music industry in the Arab region over the last ten years, including the changes that it has gone through, its tools and infrastructure.

The research explores the rapid transmutations in music practice and creation and the impact and challenges they impose on the local actors, as much as the opportunities they may allow. Within the overarching objective of empowering civil societies in the past three decades, artistic and cultural institutions and groups in the Arab region have sought financial and technical support to acquire a relative degree of sustainability and independence. Nurturing long-term sustainable growth for cultural actions in both subversive and mainstream modes of practice and production in the region is a challenge. The research surveys various cultural and artistic actors to understand the impact of donors and funding agencies of culture on the dynamics and functionality of these institutions in the music field. A rigorous analysis of the role of local music foundations and facilities was crucial to evaluate the trajectories of the past and empower a strategic vision for future interventions.



## Arab Documentary Photography Research

This extensive body of research encompassing the history and evolution of documentary photography in the Arab region — which also casts light on the Arab Documentary Photography Program (launched by AFAC in 2014 in partnership with Magnum Foundation and Prince Claus Fund) — was conducted by Lebanese visual artist, researcher and photographer Maha Kays.

The first part of the research lays out the Arab documentary photography landscape alongside a sociopolitical and historical overview in the following periods: 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1948, 1948 to 1990 and 1990 to present, including a focus on the Arab Spring.

In the second part, namely the ADPP case study, Kays proceeds to present the program, its structure, content, projects, challenges and obstacles, and community. Allowing 90 Arab photographers to present their work, the ADPP program “became a real opportunity to amplify projects that challenge stereotypes about (and within) the region,” Magnum Foundation Director Kristen Lubben is quoted as saying.



The importance of this initiative lies in the development of a network of diverse photographers and the stimulation of dialogue between them and photographers from abroad who are engaged in and working on the region.

Through extensive interviews with the program’s mentors, coordinator, partners and grantees, Kays has laid out the ins and out of the program, its role in supporting the underdeveloped genre of documentary photography in the region, and its impact through the creation of a community of practice, which continues to grow with every ADPP cycle.

The research text will be published and made available for research and education purposes.



# AFAC in the News

In 2023, AFAC enjoyed a strong presence in regional media, whether for the **On Entering the Garden** conference in Rabat, the **Writers' Room** program launch in collaboration with OSN, the **Netflix–AFAC Women in Film** open call, or other ventures.

Below is a selection of press clippings featuring AFAC in 2023:

May 9, 2023

## Broadcast PROME

OSN and The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture launch Writers' Room programme

May 10, 2023

## Arab News

OSN and the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture team up for Writers' Room program

August 14, 2023

## The National (UAE)

Netflix and Arab cultural fund to train female filmmakers in region

August 29, 2023

## Le Maroc Diplomatique

La rencontre culturelle "On Entering the garden", du 31 août au 2 septembre à Rabat

August 31, 2023

## L'Orient le Jour

AFAC, ou le jardin arabe sous toutes ses boutures

August 14, 2023

## Screen Daily

Netflix, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, launch female-focused training programme

August 29, 2023

## Tel Quel (Morocco)

La rencontre culturelle "On Entering the garden", du 31 août au 2 septembre à Rabat

August 23, 2023

## Le Matin (Morocco)

"On Entering the Garden" : le jardin comme matrice de la culture et des arts arabes



# Grantees News and Recognition

**Egyptian Creative and Critical Writings grantee Ghadeer Ahmed's short story was nominated for the True Story Award in Switzerland.**

**Nine AFAC-supported films participated at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) in November: "2G" by Karim Sayad (Algeria) and "Donga" by Muhannad Lamin (Libya) premiered in the Frontlight section, while "Bye Bye Tiberias" by Lina Soualem (Palestine), "Machtat" by Sonia Ben Slama (Tunisia), "The Mother of All Lies" by Asmae El Moudir (Morocco), and "Three Promises" by Yousef Srouji (Lebanon) participated in the Best of Fests section. "Capital" by Basma al-Sharif (Palestine) took part in the Corresponding Cinemas section. Lastly, "Embodied Chorus" by Mohamad Moe Sabbah and Danielle Davie (Lebanon) premiered in the Luminous section, and "Chasing the Dazzling Light" by Yaser Kassab (Syria) premiered in the Envision section of the festival.**

**Yemeni visual artist Salwa Aleryani showcased her AFAC-supported project "Variations on Pressure, Or a Thought for Your Penny" in her solo exhibition "Far from Closing the Circle" in Freiburg, Germany.**

**Egyptian photographer Rehab El Dalil released her photo book during Cairo Photo Week in February, as part of her ADPP project "The Longer of the Stranger Whose Path Has Been Broken".**

**"The Secret Garden" by Nour Ouayda (Lebanon) premiered in the Copenhagen International Documentary Festival in March.**

The interactive dance performance "The Waterproofed Artist" by Youness Atbane from Morocco premiered at the D-CAF festival in Egypt in November.

ADPP alumnus Sudanese visual storyteller Salih Basheer's photobook 22 Days in Between won the Photo-text Book Award at Les Rencontres d'Arles in July.

ADPP alumnae and Visual Arts grantee Yemeni photographer Thana Faroq released her visual diary "How Shall We Greet the Sun" in Amsterdam in October.

Seven AFAC-supported films were shown at the Cannes Film Festival in May: "The Mother of All Lies" by Asmae El Moudir (Morocco); "Goodbye Julia", Mohamed Kordofani's debut film, and the first Sudanese film to enter an official competition in the Cannes Film Festival; "Hounds" by Kamal Lazraq (Morocco), also a first for the director; "Deserts" by Faouzi Bensaidi (Morocco); "The House is on Fire, Might as well Get Warm" by Mouloud Ait Liotna (Algeria); "Machtat" by Sonia Ben Slama (Tunisia); and "The Sea and Its Waves" by Lina Kassir (Lebanon).

Three of these films won multiple awards at the festival: "Goodbye Julie" won the Freedom Prize, while "Hounds" won the Jury Prize and "The Mother of All Lies" won the Best Director prize and the Prix de l'Oeil d'Or for Documentary Film.

Two AFAC-supported films participated in the 2023 edition of Sundance Film Festival in January: "Simo" by Aziz Zoromba (Egypt) and "5 Seasons of Revolution" by Lina (Syria).

Four AFAC-supported films were selected by their respective countries as first entries for the 96th Academy Awards for Best International Feature Film: "Hanging Gardens" by Ahmed Yassin Al Daradji (Iraq), "The Mother of All Lies" by Asmae El Moudir (Morocco), "Bye Bye Tiberias" by Lina Soualem (Palestine) and "Goodbye Julia" by Mohamed Kordofani (Sudan).

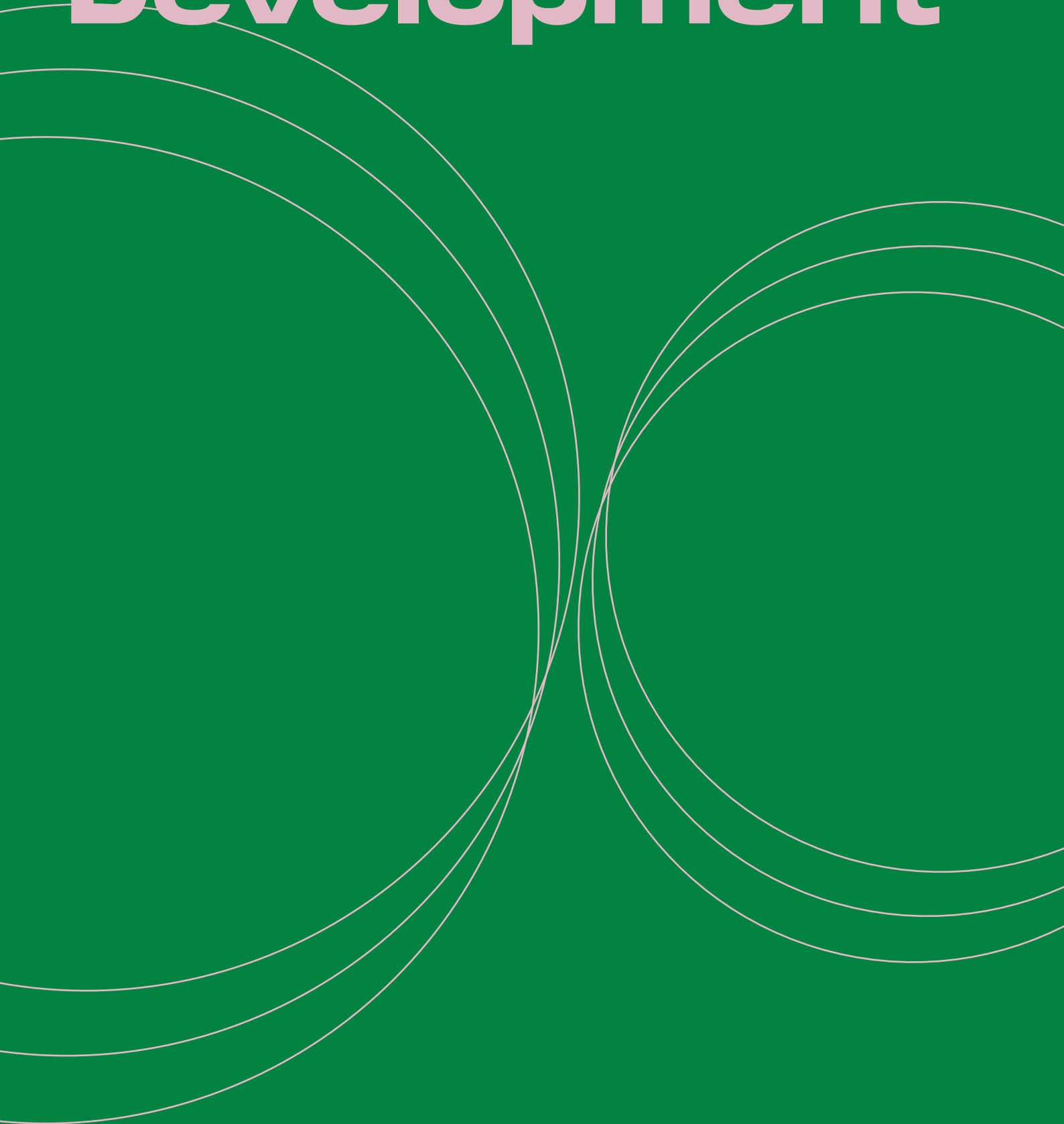
Two ADPP photographers received World Press Photo Awards 2023 in April: Mohamed Mahdy (Egypt) and M'hammed Kilito (Morocco).

The works of ADPP photographers Salih Basheer (Sudan) and Rehab El Dalil (Egypt) were exhibited in New York at the Photo Fairs exhibition in September.

Seven films supported by AFAC participated in the Venice Film Festival in August: Behind the Mountains by Mohamed Ben Attia (Tunisia), Bye Bye Tiberias by Lina Soualem (Palestine), All Before You by Annemarie Jacir (Palestine), Sudan, When Poems Fall Apart by Hind Meddeb (Tunisia), Happy Holidays by Scandar Copti (Palestine), She Was Not Alone by Hussein Al Asadi (Iraq), and Thank You for Banking With Us by Laila Abbas (Palestine).



# Fundraising and Development



# Fundraising and Development

The year 2023 was marked with uncertainty in relation to resource mobilization. Most of our major donors are undergoing internal changes and strategy shifts, resulting in pausing the grantmaking processes or adopting short-term support schemes. Nevertheless, the DOEN Foundation, which is among our long-standing partners, renewed their support for three years with an amount of 1 million euros over 2023-2025.



The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) concluded their audit and evaluation of Phase 1 of the North Africa Cultural Program mid-year and renewed their support for another four years (2024-2027) with an amount of US\$5.775 million. With the Prince Claus Fund, a new agreement was signed to support the next three years of the Arab Documentary Photography Program in the amount of 450,000 euros for 2024-2026.

At the level of new partnerships, Netflix provided a grant in the amount of US\$250,000 to support a training program for emerging women talents in the film

industry across Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Egypt, and Jordan, while OSN are supporting our Writers' Room series writing program with US\$152,000 over 2023-2024.



# Finances



# Financial Allocations

**Total allocations:** 4,067,307 USD

**Grant activities:** 4,302,037 USD

**Fundraising and communications:** 333,853 USD

**Overheads:** 445,875 USD

**Difference of exchange:** 6,772 USD

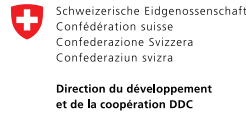




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- p. 5: Ameen Abo Kaseem, “How Was Everything, Before All This Ruin”, ADPP, Syria, 2021
- p. 6: Faouzi Bensaidi, “Deserts”, Cinema, Morocco, 2019
- p.7: Nidal Rohmi, “My Phantom Walks with Me”, ADPP, Palestine, 2022
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- p. 9: Ahmed Qabel, “Cairo, Return”, ADPP, Egypt, 2022
- p. 21: Montasser Drissi, “7m2 de luttes” Visual Arts, Morocco, 2023
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- p. 22: Bissane Al Charif, “Dressing Room”, Performing Arts, Syria, 2023
- p. 22: Amira Mortada Bayoumi, “Restore”, Documentary Film, Egypt, 2023
- p. 23: Hussein Al-Assadi, “She Was Not Alone”, Documentary Film, Iraq, 2023
- p. 23: Karim Kassem, “Moondove”, Documentary Film, Lebanon, 2023
- p. 23: Razan Zeidani, “A Journey of Sound Reclamation”, Training and Regional Events, Palestine, 2023
- p. 24: Badr El Hammami, “Between Our Hands”, Visual Arts, Morocco, 2023
- p. 25: Lamees Saleh, “Indefinitely”, ADPP, Egypt, 2022
- p. 27: ADPP Workshop in Beirut, April 2023
- pp. 28-29: NACP Closing Meeting in Tunis, February 2023
- p. 30: Inside pages of the ACE toolkit
- p. 31: Ieva Saudergaite, “my canary sings to me”, ADPP, Lebanon, 2021
- p. 34: Netflix Women in Film workshops in Cairo and Dubai, November/December 2023
- p. 35: Critical Cultural Journalism retreat in Deir el Qamar, Lebanon, 2023
- p. 37: Cultures of Scandal conference, Berlin, January 2023
- pp. 38-39: On Entering the Garden conference, Rabat, August/September 2023
- p. 40: Karrar Nasser, “The Taste of Clay”, ADPP, Iraq, 2022
- p. 41: Fouad Elkoury collection
- p. 42: Samar Abu Elouf, “The Light from Hell”, ADPP, Palestine, 2021
- p. 44: Karrar Nasser, “The Taste of Clay”, ADPP, Iraq, 2022
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- p. 53: Lamees Saleh, “Indefinitely”, ADPP, Egypt, 2022

## Institutional Donors:



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## Donors from the Private Sector:

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## Individual Donors:

AFAC is grateful for the generous contributions of individual donors.

## Programs' Partners:



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للعلوم الاجتماعية  
Arab Council  
for the Social Sciences  
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AFAC is registered in Lebanon under decree 6388 dated 24 September 2011, as the Lebanese branch of the foundation AFAC, registered in Zug, Canton of Zug, Switzerland on 23 June 2006, under article 80 of the Swiss Civil Code. Previously, AFAC was registered in Jordan as the Jordanian branch of the foundation AFAC, under registration number 2099, dated 11 April 2007. AFAC is audited yearly by PricewaterhouseCoopers in Zurich, Switzerland.



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