This dissertation explores the ways in which an educational mission was central to the conceptualization, production, and consumption of the category of modern art in Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century. It is structured as a series of four case studies, each offering a rereading of a moment that has been repeatedly highlighted in the literature as a turning point in the development of modern art but that remains unexamined. Chapter One is a study of a fatwa by the leading Islamic reformer, Muhammad `Abduh, which is considered to be his declaration of support for representational art. In a close reading of this understudied text, I demonstrate the ways in which this fatwa has been misinterpreted and misappropriated; `Abduh never mentions "art" [al-fann] specifically but instead discusses the merits of pictorial representation [al-taswir] as a form of visual knowledge, a useful tool for preservation and learning. Chapter Two focuses on the establishment of the School of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1908. Relying on largely unexamined material, I describe and analyze the prevalent discourses that shaped the kind of education that the school offered, the perceptions its founders, faculty, and students had of its role, and ultimately the role of modern art and the artist within Egyptian society. The second half of the dissertation attends to the reception and consumption of art through the development of art criticism [al-naqd al-fanni] and the role of journals in educating Egyptian audiences. Chapter Three is a study of and Sawt el-Fannan [The Voice of the Artist, 1950-2], "the first monthly magazine for the fine arts." I focus here on the writing of art history and criticism as a means of educating Egyptian eyes to see and appreciate in a specific set of ways. The notion of taste [dhawq] and its complex social and moral functions demonstrate that what is at stake here is something much larger than an aesthetic sensibility. Chapter Four examines Al-Tatawwur, a journal published by al-Fann wa-l-Hurriyya [Art and Freedom] in response to André Breton and Diego Rivera's 1938 manifesto "Towards a Free Revolutionary Art." Al-Tatawwur professes a commitment to "protecting the freedom of art and culture." However, this often seems in tension with their almost militant educational and political mission. Throughout these four cases a series of recurring concerns emerge. First, painting and sculpture are presented as important first and foremost because of the ways in which they can be useful or beneficial. Their uses differ from chapter to chapter however each group approaches artistic production through the prism of function and benefit. Secondly, in each situation we find ourselves at a moment of crisis, in which a particular group feels threatened and thus attempts to reach out a larger public, as a means of reasserting their position and reaffirming their relevance. Repeatedly, artistic production seems to be the most appropriate way of doing this. The third central theme of this dissertation the educational quality and potential of the fine arts; despite their seemingly varied positions, the writers and thinkers I discuss attach an educational function to artistic production. There seems to be a unanimous agreement on the stakes, despite political orientation: the struggle is a civilizationizing one, and art is the barometer for progress. In tracing the establishment and development of modern art in Egypt, this dissertation offers a set of innovative perspectives and engages with a number of different fields of inquiry related to the cultural and intellectual history of Egypt. While a literary and linguistic Nahda, has been the subject of much study, the existence and importance of a visual Nahda has been largely absent.

Geographic Areas

Egypt

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Academic Units
Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies

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The main features of Ancient-Egyptian art were already manifesting themselves at that time: the pre-determined nature of the religious ideas, adherence to convention, symbolism, monumentality – features which attained the peak of their development after Upper and Lower Egypt had been joined together in a single state (end of the IV millennium BC) in the period of the Old Kingdom. The artistic creativity of the Ancient Egyptians was inextricably linked to religious beliefs and the requirements of the funerary rite. In particular, the similarity between the portrait and the individual portrayed stemmed from the belief that each individual had a "double" or Ka – an immortal living essence, which had to have a constant abode within the depiction of the deceased. Egyptian Beauty Egyptian Women Egyptian Movies Arab Celebrities Egyptian Actress Old Egypt Islamic World Islamic Art Arabic Art. This is an original 1922 sepia rotogravure of the Senussi College and a mosque in Jaghbub, Libya. Also shown is the town of Siwa, Egypt, and a traveling group resting in the Kufara Valley. The top caption writes, 'This [Jaghbub] is one of the hitherto almost unknown regions of the Libyan Desert, which was traversed in 1920 by a daring English woman, Mrs. Rosita Forbes. She is the only white woman who ever ventured amid those fastnesses, surrounded on every side by hundreds of miles of... In both early modern Japan and Egypt there also existed a small number of elite educational establishments, like fief schools (hankō) in Japan and palace schools (ṭibāq) in Egypt. Other than instruction in a few additional subjects like etiquette or the arts of war, however, the subjects that they taught were largely similar to those of the non-elite terakoya and kuttāb.