

**MIDDLE EAST PHOTOGRAPH PRESERVATION INITIATIVE (MEPPI) HOLDS SYMPOSIUM IN BEIRUT THAT ADDRESSES THE IMPORTANT HISTORY AND THE FUTURE OF MIDDLE EAST PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS**

***The Photographic Legacy of the Middle East and North Africa: Priorities for Sustainability***

May 3 and 4, 2017, 9:00 to 17:00

Sursock Museum Beirut, Auditorium, Level -2

In English and Arabic with simultaneous translation

**LOS ANGELES/BEIRUT** – The history of photography in the Middle East and North Africa is rich and unique, offering fascinating glimpses of life, culture, and artistic expression in the region which the Arab Image Foundation has been following up on since 1997. Nonetheless, and given the substantial number of collections in the Middle East, the region still lacked instruction about their safekeeping. **The Middle East Photograph Preservation Initiative (MEPPI)** is an effort to build the capacity of individuals and institutions in the care and preservation of photographic collections in the Middle East and North Africa. To mark the culmination of MEPPI, a symposium held **May 3 and 4 at the Sursock Museum in Beirut, Lebanon** will consider the future direction and sustainability of photographic preservation in the Middle East and North Africa.

Given the remarkable history of photography in the region, MEPPI partners have noted the urgency of safeguarding this shared photographic legacy. From 2009 to 2017, MEPPI trained over seventy participants from 52 institutions in protecting their collections, representing sixteen countries – Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The symposium includes presentations and panel discussions that highlight the varied collections of photographic holdings in the region, providing examples of effective stewardship and preservation activities, and identifying challenges and opportunities for the preservation of photographic collections. Symposium partners include the Arab Image Foundation, the University of Delaware, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Getty Conservation Institute.

“The sustainability of MEPPI’s efforts depends upon a wider recognition of the value of photography as a historic and contemporary record, as well as support for preservation in this region,” says Kathleen Dardes, head of Collections at the Getty Conservation Institute and MEPPI project leader for the GCI. “Therefore, a critical complement to the training offered through MEPPI is engagement with a broader group of professional colleagues, including directors, policy and decision-makers, scholars, and others.”

As of today, close to 300 photograph collections have been identified through MEPPI’s efforts, and the research undertaken has yielded new information about collections in the region, including their size, significance, mission, condition, and accessibility.

MEPPI has also dedicated resources to the development of an online directory of key collections in an English-Arabic bilingual platform. Additional information about MEPPI can be found at [http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our\\_projects/education/cons\\_photo/meppi.html](http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/education/cons_photo/meppi.html).

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