



Commitment in the Artistic Practice of Aref el-Rayess

The Changing of Horses

By *Natasha Gasparian*

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“Starting from the micro-context (Aref El-Rayess’ 1967 painting “The Changing of Horses”), Gasparian retraces the big picture, in an original and brilliant way, using the artist’s metaphoric work in order to illustrate the new intellectual context that the 1967 defeat created.” — Silvia Naef, Professor, Department of Mediterranean, Slavonic and Oriental Languages, University of Geneva

“Gasparian’s in-depth exploration of El-Rayess’s seminal painting “The Changing of Horses” is a brilliant study in the correlation between artistic practice and political engagement. It provides a distinct entry point into some lesser explored aspects of one of Lebanon’s leading modernist artists, set against a comprehensive archival backdrop that weaves together cultural and political histories alike. A timely contribution to the literature on modernism and its various manifestations across the Arab World, and Lebanon in particular.” — Dr. Sam Bardaouil, Founder and Director at Art Reoriented, Munich and New York

In her study of Aref El-Rayess’s *The 5th of June*, or, *The Changing of Horses*, Natasha Gasparian reveals that the picture was presented and received, allegorically or metaphysically, as an idealized narrative of national liberation. By tracing the caesuras and slips in discourse, she reconstructs an alternative reading of the artwork’s uncanny yet historically determinate character.

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About the Author

Natasha Gasparian is an art historian and critic. She has collaborated on writing, research, and curatorial projects with numerous institutions in Beirut, Lebanon, including Agial, Saleh Barakat Gallery, Beirut Art Center, and the Saradar Collection.

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