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| **Your article** |
| The Egyptian School of Fine Arts |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| The Egyptian School of Fine Arts [Madrassat al-Funun al-Jamila al-Misriyya] opened its doors on 13 May 1908, a date cited by many art historians as marking the starting point of modern art in Egypt. The ESFA aimed to cultivate ‘Egyptian artists’ while modelling its curriculum on that of the French academy system, with rigorous training in drawing at its core. At the same time, the school claimed to produce graduates capable of turning their skills to professional advantage. A privately funded institution, it was highly influential in molding so-called first- and second-generation artists. The model of arts education adopted by the school and its relevance to the goal of realising an Egyptian artistic renaissance were themes addressed in early debates following the schoool’s establishment. An inaugural exhibition of student work took place between 13-20 January 1910 at the Royal Automobile Club in downtown Cairo. Many early graduates would go on to constitute Egypt’s celebrated Pioneer Generation [Jil al-Ruwwad] in the arts. The re-invention of the school as a state-run institution in the late 1920s played an important role in contemporary struggles between competing factions for control of the arts. |
| The Egyptian School of Fine Arts [Madrassat al-Funun al-Jamila al-Misriyya] opened its doors on 13 May 1908, a date cited by many art historians as marking the starting point of modern art in Egypt. The ESFA aimed to cultivate ‘Egyptian artists’ while modelling its curriculum on that of the French academy system, with rigorous training in drawing at its core. At the same time, the school claimed to produce graduates capable of turning their skills to professional advantage. A privately funded institution, it was highly influential in molding so-called first- and second-generation artists. The model of arts education adopted by the school and its relevance to the goal of realising an Egyptian artistic renaissance were themes addressed in early debates following the schoool’s establishment. An inaugural exhibition of student work took place between 13-20 January 1910 at the Royal Automobile Club in downtown Cairo. Many early graduates would go on to constitute Egypt’s celebrated Pioneer Generation [Jil al-Ruwwad] in the arts. The re-invention of the school as a state-run institution in the late 1920s played an important role in contemporary struggles between competing factions for control of the arts.  Located in a palace owned by its founder and patron Prince Youssouf Kamal in Cairo’s Darb al-Gamamiz neighborhood, the school was open to male Egyptians and foreign residents without regard for religion. It catered primarily to Egypt’s so-called efendiya class and boasted 109 full-time students by January 1911.  The school’s original faculty and staff included Guillaume Laplagne (Director and Professor of Sculpture); Paulo Forcella (Drawing and Painting); James-Albert Coulon (Design); Henri Piéron (Architecture); Mikail Farag (Math); and Mohamed Effendi Zohdi (Arabic Calligraphy). Laplagne (1908-1918) was succeeded in his position as director by Gabriel Biessy (1918-1927) and Camillo Innocenti (1928-1937). The artist Mohamed Naghi was the first Egyptian to head the school (1937-1939).  Until the late 1920s, the ESFA appears to have relied almost exclusively on the generosity of its founder to supply its budget. An early attempt to assimilate it into the Egyptian University failed and the school was later assigned to the oversight of the Ministry of Education. The school relocated twice in the 1920s, and was finally shuttered as part of a wide-reaching plan to reorganize arts institutions and consolidate their direction under the state. The Higher School of Fine Arts [Madrassat al-Funnun al-Jamila al-'Uliya] or [l’École Superieur des Beaux Arts] took its place in 1928 and a new generation of artists were introduced as teachers. After relocating twice more, the school moved a final time in September 1935 to a villa at 8, Sh. Isma‘il Muhammad in Zamalik, where it remains today. The school was renamed the Royal Academy for the Fine Arts [al-Kulliya al-Malikiyya li-l-Funnun al-Jamila] in 1951 and the Academy of Fine Arts [Kulliyat al-Funun al-Jamila] following the Free Officers’ coup of 1952. After being assigned to the Ministry of Higher Education in 1961, administrative oversight of the school was passed to Helwan University in October 1975. |
| Further reading:  (al-Jamila, Iskandar and al-Sharuni)  ('Ayyad)  (Azar)  (Laplagne)  (Naéf)  (File 0069-004463 (Abdin))  (File 0069-004464 (Abdin)) |