

Natural Inspirations

Art and Biodiversity: Inspired by the photographs of Khaled Sleem and supported by IBSAR



Media: Watercolor on canvas. Size: 26 x 20 inches.



Media: Mosaic (Smalti, 24 Karat gold Smalti and Iridescent Glass) and Oil on Canvas. Size: 36 x 30 inches.

The “Art & Biodiversity, Wild Lebanese Orchids Series” is my new project of mosaics, sculptures, watercolors and oil paintings. It is my joy to study and admire the beauty of these wild orchids from my homeland in all of their shapes, forms and colors. I never knew that wild orchids exist in Lebanon. The orchid photographs of Khaled Sleem were so beautiful, interesting, and inspiring.

After reading about IBSAR, AUB and learning about biodiversity and the need for nature conservation, I decided on working to help, through art and my love of nature, other individuals to better understand the value of biodiversity and of being concerned about protecting our nature anywhere in the world.

QLF's Lawrence B. Morris visits AUB to discuss future plans with IBSAR



QLF's visit to AUB in April 2007.

Mr. Lawrence B. Morris, President of the Quebec – Labrador Foundation (QLF), the Atlantic Centre for the Environment, paid a visit to his long-time colleagues Drs. Fadia Homeidan, Marwan El Sabban and Salma Talhouk at AUB in early April 2007. IBSAR members and partners from Animal Encounter, Dr. Munir Abi-Said (former intern at QLF) and his wife Diane, met with Mr. Morris to discuss current issues in nature conservation and sustainable development in Lebanon. Mr. Morris indicated his interest to collaborate with IBSAR in projects in the region especially through the creation of a pathway for QLF/IBSAR interns. IBSAR shares the same goals and is stepping up efforts to create networks with partners like QLF in order to expand partnerships and collaboration through its internship program to increase AUB's role in promoting nature conservation on a global scale through local initiatives.

ARBI SARKISSIAN

IBSAR Spring seminars discuss post-assault air quality and plant-derived anti-cancer drugs



IBSAR's monthly seminars continue to engage and interest the community in contemporary and relevant issues. May's seminar, titled "Post-Assault Air Quality Assessment for Bombed Areas in Beirut", was held by Dr. Najat Saliba. It presented a study that discussed air pollution at

A picture from the seminar held by Dr. Najat Saliba and titled "Post-Assault Air Quality Assessment for Bombed Areas in Beirut".

RAMI ZURAYK



April's seminar entitled "Economic Barriers to Diversifying Away from Tobacco Production in Rural South Lebanon" given by Dr. Nader Kabbani.

bombed building sites and its impact on human health. The seminar showed how the understudy results will be used to determine the effect of particulate matter concentrations on the health of people living around the construction area and to assess potential acute/chronic health outcomes. As for June's seminar, it was titled "Challenges of Plant-Derived Anti-Cancer Drug Discoveries" and held by Dr. Nadine Darwiche and Dr. Hala Muhtasib. It discussed plant-derived anti-cancer drugs currently in clinical use or development, the process of plant drug discovery and development, factors behind the rising cost of new drug discovery and development, challenges in drug discovery from medicinal plants, and the future of plant-derived anti-cancer drugs.

ZEINA ABDEL KHALIK

Promotion of Lebanese Traditional Foods

IBSAR will be collecting the data necessary for "The Promotion of Lebanese Traditional Foods" project, a project headed by Dr. Rami Zurayk and funded by the Italian Cooperation and implemented by UCODEP (Ufficio Campagne di Oxfam International in Italia) (Italy) and Slow Food. The main objective is to identify and inventory 25 typical foods of Lebanon. These may include processed and fresh products, of animal or plant origin. Examples include: Freek, Shanklish, Darfiyeh, Ambarees, Fig trees, Salamouni wheat and Merwah grapes. A detailed profile sheet will be filled for each product on the basis of a combination of field visits and desk research. This research will adopt a participatory approach and will involve local producers as active participants in the inventory rather than as passive respondents.

The inventories shall be primarily based on field visits carried out by IBSAR student interns operating under the supervision of Dr. Rami Zurayk.

The purpose of the field visits is to:

1. Produce a complete profile for each product.
2. Introduce the project and document feedback from producers on their interest in selling their produce in Souk el Tayeb farmer's market.
3. Obtain samples of the products.
4. Obtain pictures of the products, the producers and the area of production.

IBSAR holds its first Advisory Board meeting

IBSAR hosted its first International Advisory Board meeting in Lebanon for a two-day meeting held on May 21 and 22 on the university campus. During this meeting, the board met with our three committees, faculty, Research Assistants and students and discussed strategic direction, activities and fundraising matters. The external review process conducted by the board included meetings with the President and Provost. The Advisory Board also elected Dr. Mike Maunder as Chair of the board, a position held for two years.

IBSAR's International Advisory Board includes:

Dr. Abdul Hamid Hallab, Special Advisor to the President of the American University of Beirut, Lebanon.

Dr. Simon N. Haydar, Program Manager, Neuroscience Wyeth Pharmaceuticals Princeton.

Dr. Mike Maunder, Director, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, Florida.

Mr. Walid Nasser, Lawyer, Walid Nasser and Associates, Lebanon.

Dr. Michael Wink, Dean of Research; Faculty of Life Science Heidelberg University.

Dr. José A. Zaglul, President of EARTH University, Costa Rica.

Ms. Ann Zwicker Kerr, Coordinator of the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Enrichment Program, University of California in Los Angeles.

New Advisory Board member

During the meeting, we welcomed a new member to our board: **Dr. Franklin Chang Diaz**, Chairman and CEO of Ad Astra, inventor of the Variable Specific Impulse Magnetoplasma Rocket (VASIMR, U.S. patent 2002) and other advanced propulsion technologies, founded the Ad Astra Rocket Company (AARC) in 2005, after 25 years of service as a NASA astronaut. AARC is dedicated to the development and commercialization of the VASIMR and related technologies.

We are working closely with the board to follow up on ideas and suggestions made during the meeting.



Professor Dr. Michael Wink, President John Waterbury and Khaled Sleem.



New Advisory Board member Dr. Franklin Chang Diaz.

International Biodiversity Day at AUB (IBDAA)

On May 22, facing West Hall and in the presence of IBSAR Advisory Board members from abroad, International Biodiversity Day at AUB (IBDAA) was held for the first time. The event was organized by IBSAR in collaboration with the Chemistry Department, USFC, BSS, CSS, and Environmental Club. IBDAA encompassed a forum featuring some 100 posters, followed by a reception announcing the top three winners.

The event date coincided with the International Day for Biological Diversity (IBD), on which all countries are called upon to draw attention to critical issues facing the planet today. As for the winners, tied for first place were "Why Should He Be Bitten by Mosquitoes, He Who Has Sage in his Garden?"

by Hayat Adib and Khairat Al-Habbal and "Olive Oil Creamy Butter" by Mohammad Adada and Faye Sarkis.

Distinguishing the IBDAA event was its inclusiveness of *all* the academic community. The students of Chemistry 206 and 216 (taught by Professor Najat Saliba and whose Spring 2007 theme was 'bioprospection'), seized the prime share of participation. Posters covered such topics as marine biodiversity, our reptilian heritage, and AUB's Natural History Museum. Says IBSAR Director Dr. Salma Talhouk: "We're always trying to raise interest in biodiversity in youth. Biodiversity as a concept can be quite abstract, so what we try to do, rather than address it as a main focus, is to address it through more familiar topics and practices, ones in which students are already directly involved". In concept and practice, IBDAA served to anchor Lebanon as a biodiversity center and to raise interest in biodiversity throughout the AUB community and beyond.



Provost Heath speaking to a student who is presenting her poster.

IBSAR brings ATP forest restoration consultants to Lebanon

Arbi Sarkissian, IBSAR Intern, coordinated a visit of experts from Armenia Tree Project (ATP), an environmental NGO that has been greening Armenia since 1994, to Lebanon. The guests were hosted at AUB's Faculty of Agriculture and Food Science Research Station AREC and held meetings with IBSAR faculty members and staff including Ibrahim el Salibi, Khaled Sleem and Rony Chamoun and gave educational presentations and a tree planting workshop in Aanjar in May 2007. This collaborative project falls within IBSAR's role of promoting native vegetation and encouraging community participation in reforestation. Currently, the main



ATP tree planting workshop in Aanjar.

reason for deforestation in Lebanon is unregulated development in unprotected areas, both rural and urban.

ATP's Mrs. Garibyan, a community tree planting specialist, and Mr. Ghandilyan, a specialist in tree nursery implementation and rural reforestation, saw the potential for establishing community-based nurseries to supply communities with trees. Both encouraged the development of an Aanjar nursery as a prototype model for producing trees and properly implementing community tree planting and reforestation projects.

As for locals, they were delighted to receive the ATP consultants, each of whom gave a one-hour presentation. The following day, a tree planting workshop was held, in which some 25-30 young community members and some 10-12 adults joined in the planting of 40 natives in two locations. The overall response to the workshop was very positive.

HANIA JURDAK

IBSAR's orchid workshop brings biodiversity awareness to local community



Khaled Hamdan (first on the left) and Khaled Sleem (first on the right) with the workshop participants.

The orchid family has a special way of life and interaction with nature. Ordinary people either don't know about their existence in the Lebanese wild, or they don't know where to find them or when. After completing his thesis, Khaled Hamdan (Ecosystem Management) under the supervision of Drs. Salma Talhouk (Director of IBSAR), Jala Makhzoumi (Department of LDEM) and Khouzama Knio (Biology Department), prepared for a workshop at Al-Shouf Reserve to expose local communities to wild orchids and explain their way of life and endangered situation.

The workshop, held on 26 May 2007 by IBSAR members Khaled Sleem and Khaled Hamdan, had as its target audience 25 volunteers, most of them high school students, from the villages surrounding the Reserve. Also present were representatives of NGOs, including Al-Shouf Cedar Society, which manages the Reserve in cooperation with APAC (Appointed Protected Area Committee)

under the umbrella of the Ministry of Environment and which works on different conservation projects in the Reserve.

Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve, Lebanon's largest, contains over 500 plant species. The orchid study the workshop encompassed was the first orchid-specific one to be conducted in the Reserve and to focus on orchid presence, status, and distribution. Lebanon, interestingly enough and perhaps not widely known, has some 60 different orchid species.

The workshop meets the main research objective and monitoring program in the Reserve: biodiversity conservation. The workshop aimed at raising local people's awareness of the importance of Lebanese orchid conservation; at teaching them the practice of scientific survey methods to assess orchid existence via the Global Positioning System; and at presenting proper means of preserving orchid samples without damaging their existence.

The workshop also aimed at presenting a sense of the beauty of this family of plants by showing a set of photos taken from the wild, to generate enthusiasm about orchids. Some of the participants showed interest in working with IBSAR to continue studying orchids. Only by involving people can we protect these species from extinction.

KHALED HAMDAN

Interns and Conservation

IBSAR summer internships train AUB students to contribute to nature conservation and sustainable livelihoods

Yasmina Choueiri, Lynn Abdouni, Hania Abi Khuzam, Sana Khalil and Cynthia Gharios are new interns that joined the IBSAR internship program this summer. All are studying Landscape Design and Eco-System Management at AUB under the supervision of Dr. Jala Makhzoumi, except Lynn, who is a Graphic Design student. The five interns are contributing their much-needed time and energy in helping the Center reach short and long-term goals with projects that include urban greening of Beirut, community tree planting, and initiatives aimed at protecting the Baabda forest.



Clockwise first row: Walid Shaar, Khodr Hajj Hassan, Rami Zurayk, and Samer Saadeh. Second row: Arbi Sarkissian, Cynthia Gharios, and Sami Abdul Rahman.

In addition, Dr. Rami Zurayk (department of Landscape Design and Eco-System Management, and member of IBSAR) has offered paid IBSAR internships to five AUB students from the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences (Walid Shaar, Sami Abdul Rahman, Atallah Louka, Samer Saadeh, and Khodr Hajj Hassan) to work under his supervision on a project to inventory 25 typical foods of Lebanon. IBSAR aims to provide a platform for faculty and students from numerous departments within AUB to promote nature conservation and sustainable futures.

Interested in the IBSAR internship program? Email us at ibsar@aub.edu.lb.

ARBI SARKISSIAN

IBSAR as an active interfaculty center is always witnessing new developments. This summer, IBSAR would like to congratulate...

- Our Advisory Board member Dr. José Zaglul, President of EARTH University who is now a Trustee on the AUB Board.
- Dr. Najat Aoun Saliba for her promotion to the rank of Associate Professor (Department of Chemistry) and Drs. Nadine Darwiche and Khouzama Knio to the rank of Professor (Department of Biology).

Interested in knowing more about IBSAR?

Visit our bi-lingual website at

www.ibsar.org or contact us at ibsar@aub.edu.lb

IBSAR – AUB The Center for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Futures

The American University of Beirut

PO Box: 11- 0236

Beirut, Lebanon

T: +961 1 350 000, Ext: 4509.

F: +961 1 340 460, Ext: 4505.

ibsar@aub.edu.lb

www.ibsar.org

SARAH SHEBAYA

Send your news, articles, and editorial comments to
ibsar@aub.edu.lb

Visit the IBSAR website at www.ibsar.org.