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**New Museum Collaborates with Bidoun Magazine for
Museum as Hub: Bidoun Library Project**

New York, New York...The New Museum has collaborated with the magazine ***Bidoun: Arts and Culture From the Middle East*** which has organized an exhibition for the Museum as Hub. The exhibition “**Museum as Hub: Bidoun Library Project**” will be in view in the New Museum’s fifth floor from **August 5th through September 26, 2010**. For the opening day of the project, *Bidoun* has invited booksellers usually found outside the New York University library to set up shop in front of the New Museum on the Bowery an extension of their project. The New Museum will host a free evening event on Thursday, August 5, from 7 to 9 pm to include selected readings and video clips from the Bidoun Library collection to celebrate the project’s launch.

The Bidoun Library Project at the New Museum is a highly partial account of five decades of printed matter in, near, about, and around the Middle East. Arrayed along numerous book shelves are over 700 publications ranging from pulp fictions and propaganda, monographs and guidebooks, and pamphlets and periodicals, on subjects like the oil boom to the Dubai bust, the Cold War to the hot pant, Pan-Arabs to Black Muslims, revolutionaries to royals, and Orientalism to its opposites.

For its North American debut, the Bidoun Library focuses on the twentieth century: more specifically, the period after the Second World War, set against the context of the Cold War, when the Middle East as we know it came into its own. It was the heyday of the printed page, perhaps the last period in which the predominant forms of the written word were the book, the newspaper, and the periodical magazine. Looking back, the printed matter of the last century appears increasingly opaque as it recedes further and further from active circulation. A library, then, is entropy.

The motif of the exhibition is *the object of the book*—the book as object of material production, and the book as a vector for material objectives. Both notions were at play in the publishing projects of the Cold War, when the First and Second World Wars contested at the level of word and image. The Russian International News Agency produced Central Asian photo books; so did the US State Department. The politico-cultural magazine *Tricontinental*, produced in Havana by the Organization of Solidarity of the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and disseminated on university campuses across the Third World, mirrored the magazine *Transition*,

produced in Africa, edited by an Indian, and funded by the CIA.

Most of the titles on display were acquired specifically for this exhibition, the shape of the collection dictated primarily by search terms on the World Wide Web rather than any intrinsic notion of aptness or excellence. Searching for “Arab,” “paperback,” “1970s,” and “<\$3,” Bidoun acquired dozens of books about the Oil Crisis, the cruel love of the Sheikh, and the lifestyles of the nouveau riche. A similar search for “Iran” produced its own set of types and stereotypes. They did not set out to find the *best* books about, say, the Iranian revolution; in a sense, they looked for the worst. Or rather, they tried to look at what was there.

Since 2008, the Bidoun Library has been exhibiting source materials and artist projects that pertain to, grow out of, or extend the work of the quarterly magazine *Bidoun: Arts and Culture From the Middle East*. Like the magazine—and like the Museum as Hub itself—the Bidoun Library is at once a space, an archive, and a network of collaborators. Since its inaugural installation in Abu Dhabi in 2008, the Bidoun Library has partnered with an array of international art institutions and collectives, including the Lebanese comics journal *Samandal* and the Turkish artist’s book publisher Bent, as well as Art Dubai, Ashkal Ahwan: The Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts, and 98weeks Project Space in Beirut.

Following its New York debut at the New Museum, The Bidoun Library Project will travel to Museum as Hub partner the Townhouse Gallery in Cairo, Egypt.

This exhibition is organized by the magazine *Bidoun: Arts and Culture From the Middle East* (bidoun.com). The Bidoun Library is presented in partnership with Abu Dhabi Art. Bidoun would like to recognize the support of the Emirates Foundation, the Bohen Foundation, and the Foundation for Arts Initiatives. Museum as Hub is made possible by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts. Endowment support is provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Skadden, Arps Education Programs Fund, and the William Randolph Hearst Endowed Fund for Education Programs at the New Museum.

Librarians

Babak Radboy, Tiffany Malakooti, Nelson Harst, Sohrab Mohebbi, Michael Vazquez, and Negar Azimi

Lenders

Kurt Thometz, Achal Prabhala, Raymond Foye, Robin Mackay, Ali Radboy, Mitra Sedaghat Manesh, Fatima Al Qadiri, Mohammed Al Qadiri, Nima Jahromi, The Brooklyn Public Library

Volunteers

Christopher Lopez-Thomas, Joseph Waller, Barrett Hanrahan, Nathaniel “Dodge” Greenley,

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Vartan Avakian, Aldona Watts, Ghazal Hashemi, Ofurhe Igbinedion, Gloria Maximo, John Greenberg, Jen Reinhardt, Khalid Al Gharaballi, Nesa Azimi, Avena Gallagher

Public Programs

Thursday, August 5, 7 p.m.

“Museum as Hub: Bidoun Library Project” Opening Event

Free

To mark the opening of “Museum as Hub: Bidoun Library Project,” the magazine *Bidoun: Arts and Culture From the Middle East* presents selected readings and video clips from the Bidoun Library collection. In addition, for the opening day of the project, Bidoun has invited booksellers usually found outside the New York University library to set up shop outside the New Museum as an extension of their project and as a provocation.

Friday, September 10, 7 p.m.

Margins of Error

\$6 members/\$8 general admission

An audio-visual extravaganza of The Bidoun Library Project, this event features a historical reenactments, misreadings, poorly transferred film screenings, and a slideshow. Presented by the editors of *Bidoun*, with special guests Fatima Al Qadiri and Anand Balakrishnan.

