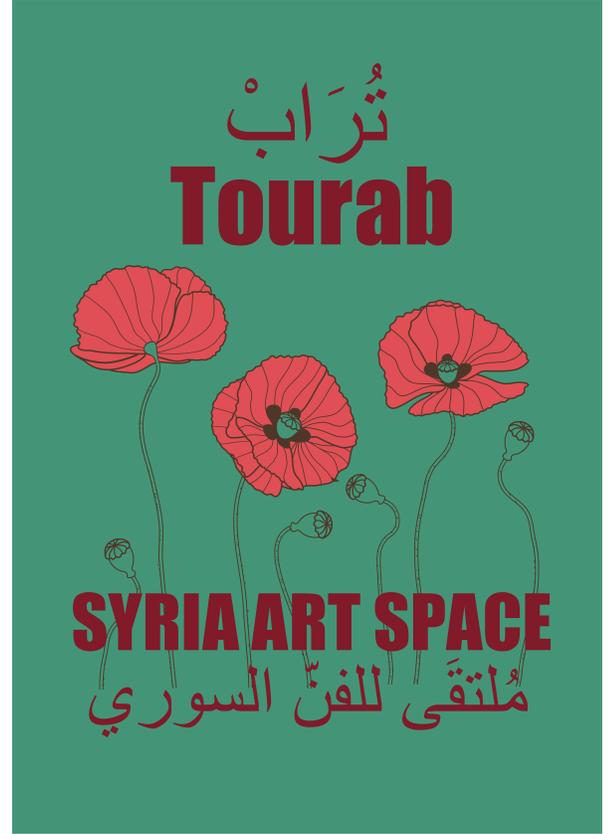


17th-27th APRIL, Galleries Ravenstein in Brussels.

”تُرَابُ جُسُومِنَا وَهِيَ التُّرَابُ  
إِذَا وَلَّى عَنِ الْآلِ إِغْتِرَابُ“  
أَبُو الْعَلَاءِ الْمُعَرِّي.  
(1057-973)

**TOURAB:** Syria Art Space



At this moment, when Syria is under massive and unprecedented attack by various militias, armies and weapons that have an economic interest in the cycle of destruction and reconstruction, the continuous cycle of death has taken more than half a million innocent lives and displaced over 7 million owners of land; the country is bleeding, with over two million injured and disabled; it is demanding the release of over 220,000 prisoners of conscience; it is suffering from a lost generation of 3 million students, 3.5 million people held in besieged areas and under food embargo, and 14 million internally displaced civilians in urgent need of humanitarian aid.

At this time **TOURAB:** Syria Art Space aspires to be relevant by embracing a new cultural narrative and stimulating a new interest in Syria based on the richness and diversity of its people's cultures, on its creative industries, on the creative and transformative power of its people, on the originality of their unique heritage, on its knowledge economy, on the emancipation of its artists' and creators' new ideas, on the innovation unleashed by their revolution in aesthetics, images, sounds, symbols, physical expression, values and ideals that will constitute the basis for creating new

jobs, on its fertile soils and its sustainable relationships with its neighbours and the world, based on shared wealth and a new and open culture.

All these natural resources have more impact on the future of Syria, its wealth in the context of its region and the planet, than any other single raw material, even oil.

I believe that this title implies a cultural challenge to the reconstruction agenda - alongside the Global Renewal and Climate Change agendas - and our burning questions are: How can arts and culture contribute to equity? To justice? To freedoms and to dignity? And to the development of innovative solutions to end the bloodshed? How can we push for strategies designed around the Creative Economies and take Renewal agendas and Climate Change policies into consideration so as to bring power back to the people of the lands?

By opening this cultural conversation with eminent independent leaders of the movement for change in Syria I hope to open a window onto an alternative model of global and neighbourly interests in Syria, based on its biodiverse environment, its people and the **grassroots** drive and energetic eagerness for positive change, its creative industries and innovative knowledge, all of which will be added to its present and future narratives.

In a rebalanced trialectics of Spatiality, Historicality and Sociality, **TOURAB** Syria Art Space divines the transformative power of arts to question, research, engage, partner, educate, critique, showcase and resist.

The space aims to overcome the barriers of time and geography by bringing unique people together to change realities and initiate new leading-edge arts movements.

It aspires to influence change and the toppling of walls of all kinds, as well as all fears of the different 'other'; this commitment is at the heart of its mission and its statement on freedom of expression.

This is to be achieved through language and enunciation, emphasizing the uniqueness of each artist and thinker, reflecting vulnerability, resisting impossibility and fighting to achieve impact through artistic expression.

**TOURAB** is a space in which "all forms of culture are continually in dynamic and organic connection with the planet Earth".

This is new and risky ground which shifts and challenges the histories that constitute it. It sets up new structures of authority and aspires to new political initiatives driven by the grassroots. And when the process of a creation-based economy gives rise to something

different and surprising, something new and stimulating, undefined and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation, of meaning and of representation is formed.

For this reason, when artists inhabit this space, they harness an artistic language that defies the bounds of possibility, creates alternative views and shifts thoughts, ideas and reflections into previously undiscussed territory. This allows them to provoke, challenge and give voice to unheard and vulnerable individuals and communities in Brussels, in Syria and the world.

**TOURAB** is an invitation to the Culture of Life... to Justice, Freedom, Dignity and Beauty.

**TOURAB** is the tons of cement rubble falling on hundreds of thousands Syrians which it buries alive

**TOURAB** is the ache of the burning cities and their poisonous air.

**TOURAB** is the sand covering those who rest under the sea.

**TOURAB** is the gardens turned to graves.

**TOURAB** is the dusty lightness of the wanderers and of those who left.

**TOURAB** is the land, the ground and its people.

**TOURAB** is the madness of destruction and reconstruction.

**TOURAB** is the mud of the fertile soils

**TOURAB** is the surviving force of its roots and blossoms.

**TOURAB** is the rock on which we build the Syria of the future.

**TOURAB** is the end and the beginning and the ever-changing cycle of Death and Life.

*“Our bodies are of earth, and they are the Earth”* said Abu Al-Alaa’ Al Maari, the Syrian philosopher and poet who lived in the eleventh century and died at the age of 83 in the city of Maaret Al Norman in Northern Syria, where he was born.

In 2013, a statue of Al-Maari in his Syrian birthplace was beheaded..

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[almasalem.com](http://almasalem.com)  
Independent Curator.

*Alma  
Salem*

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