

Exhibition Paper identities

Community, nationality, individuality – from paper to digital

What is being Lebanese? Away from historical geneses usually practiced, the exhibition « Paper identities » organized by the French Institute of the Middle East (IFPO) and the Faculty of Law and Political Science (USJ university), Beit Beirut (2nd floor) will offer a brand new approach of national identities from May 11 to May 31.

Because if the nation is the hero of a story, it is from the moment its people are identified that this hero is created, and identity papers are what he wears. Therefore, moving from historical narrations to formal procedures, it is through the corridors of state administration that the exhibition will lead us. It proposes to reconsider the logic of identity as well as the forms of human identification and offers an exceptional gallery of identity papers dating back to the Ottoman Empire until nowadays.

« Who goes there? » instead of « Who am I? » is the most relevant identity question. Because the purpose is less to know ourselves – just as in philosophy – than to be located, recognized, registered, counted and categorized. The purpose of the identity question is to create different social groups out of an undefined humanity. Therefore, identity does not define what we are but who we are. The families, the communities, the nations, the individuals themselves are then created. History has proposed three different forms of identity production: social normalization – created by speech –, the administrative delivery of papers by the State, and digital identification while surfing the Internet. After a theoretical section illustrated by Rabee Kiwan's artistic works as well as some other circumstantial works, the exhibition will retrace these three eras. First, it will take us through the game of family ties, base of social structures. Then, it will reconsider the question of the nation and, through the identity papers that distinguish citizens from foreigners and the laws they are related to, will follow the administrative constitution of Lebanese identity. A gallery of portraits will show the social influence of the different administrative statuses (*kafela*, asylum, nationality, binationality, ...). Finally, it will ask the question of the future of identities in digital times as well as commercial and security exploitation of personal data, and invite visitors to a reflection on the future of identities.

Contact : g.devaulx@ifpoorient.org
71.386.310