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NIASD NEWSLETTER JULY 2008

1. Introduction

We are happy to inform you about the activities which have recently taken place in the Netherlands Institute for Academic Studies in Damascus (NIASD).

2. Institutional and Organizational

Concept-proposal for regionalization submitted to the Dutch Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (28 July 2008)

At the end of July 2008, the NIASD submitted a first draft proposal to the Dutch Ministry of Education, Science and Culture about possibilities for regionalization to Lebanon and Jordan so as to cover a wider area of the Middle East with facilities and activities. In June 2008 director Astrid Rijbroek and deputy director Taco van der Zwaag visited the Dutch Embassies in Beirut (26 June) and Amman (30 June) to exchange ideas in this respect.

Visit to the Netherlands Institute for Higher Education in Ankara (5-6 June 2008)

In June 2008 director Astrid Rijbroek and deputy director Taco van der Zwaag for the first time visited the Netherlands Institute for Higher Education in Ankara (NIHA). A specific goal of this visit was to learn more about *Common Future*, a higher education conference the NIHA organized in January 2008. Also, the visit provided a chance to meet with the full NIHA staff as well as to exchange experiences and best practices in institute activities.

NIASD present at the 50th anniversary of the Dutch University Institute for Art History in Florence (19-20 June 2008)

Director Astrid Rijbroek visited Florence to participate in the festivities organized on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Dutch University Institute for Art History in Florence.

3. Science and Education

NIASD Summer Course Arabic 2008 (6–31 July 2008)

On the 6th of July the NIASD Summer Course Arabic 2008 kicked off, this year with 50 students (42 from Holland, 7 from Belgium and 1 from Germany). Classes were given at



six levels: Beginners 1a, Beginners 1b, Beginners 2, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2 and Advanced. For all course students, the institute arranged for simple accommodation in houses in the old city of Damascus. Like last year, one of the NIASD guest rooms was transformed into a class room. In addition to that, two other classrooms were rented at NIASD's neighbours in Farabi Street, the Syrian Public Relations Association.



First session of the training course Project Development and Management, organized by the NIASD together with the Danish Institute in Damascus (DID), and delivered by the Maastricht School of Management (17-21 July 2008)



From 17 to 21 July 2008 at the Danish Institute in Damascus (DID), the first session of the training course Project Development and Management took place, delivered by the Maastricht School of Management (MSM). This course is initiated and organized by the NIASD and the DID together and gives fifteen Syrians working in small or medium sized organizations the opportunity to improve their skills with regard to the various elements of the project cycle, most notably the drafting of project proposals and the proper management of projects. In total, the training course



consists of seven two-to-five day sessions, delivered alternatively at the NIASD and the DID. The last session is scheduled to take place in August 2009. This relatively long duration of the course allows it to accompany actual



projects of the participants in real time in their various project stages. The second session of the course is scheduled to take place at the NIASD from 2 to 4 September 2008.

First seven MENA Scholarship recipients left for the Netherlands for courses at the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education in Delft (4 July 2008)

On the 4th of July 2008 a first group of seven MENA Scholarship recipients traveled to the Netherlands for various three week courses in the field of water management at the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education in Delft. In total 26 Syrians are awarded MENA Scholarships in 2008. This fall, the remaining 19 scholarship recipients will participate in various courses at the Maastricht School of Management (MSM), the International Institute for Geo-information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) and Wageningen International. The MENA Scholarship Programme is an initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs that provides scholarships for short courses in the Netherlands for Syrian mid-career professionals between 30-45, employed by local organizations in the fields of Water Management, Environmental Sciences, Business Administration and Management, Agriculture and Geology and Earth Sciences. This January 2008 speakers from UNESCO-IHE, ITC and MSM gave presentations at the NIASD about the various courses offered in this scholarship scheme.

Lecture Dr. Fatina Kourdi (Head Architecture Department, Kalamoon University) at the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS) in Rotterdam (26 June 2008)

Following the participation by Mr. Forbes Davidson (Senior Expert Urban Policy & Planning at IHS) in the NIASD expert meeting on stakeholder participation in urban planning in March 2007 and his lectures on urban planning at Damascus University in October 2007, NIASD and IHS cooperated in this field again by organizing a



lecture by dr. Fatina Kourdi (Head of the Architecture Department, Kalamoon University, Syria) at the IHS institute in Rotterdam on the 26th of June 2008. Dr. Fatina Kourdi spoke about planning in the context of a World Heritage site: the old city of Aleppo, Syria. A central theme of her lecture was balancing heritage preservation and social-economic demands, such as housing needs, in urban planning processes.

During her stay at IHS, dr. Fatina Kourdi also held talks with Mr. Nico van der Windt (Director IHS), Mr. Jan Fransen (Head Training and Education IHS) and Mr. Forbes Davidson on potential areas of future collaboration between the IHS and Kalamoon University, including staff and student exchanges, short courses and developing a Masters program.



Lecture programme “Cultural Diversity in Dutch Literature” with Sjoerd-Jeroen Moenandar (University of Groningen) and Dutch author Abdelkader Benali (15 July 2008)

On the 15th of July 2008 a lecture program was organized by the NIASD on “Cultural Diversity in Dutch Literature”. Sjoerd-Jeroen Moenandar (a researcher of Groningen University on representations of meetings with Muslims in Dutch Literature) discussed various works of Dutch literature, both old such as *Esmoreit* and recent, in which love affairs between

muslims and non-muslims play a role and in which cultural differences are articulated. He also portrayed various Dutch writers of Arab/Berber/Iranian origin. Abdelkader Benali (an award winning Dutch author) talked about his migration to the Netherlands and growing up there, his urge to write stories down and writing in Dutch. Benali also recited some of his poems. After that, Sjoerd-Jeroen Moenander gave an analysis of the works Abdelkader Benali, on which analysis the latter commented.

Start promotion NIASD Summer Course ‘Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture – a heritage of religious interaction in its social and cultural contexts’ (July 2008)

During the last three months researchers from Leiden University worked closely together with the NIASD to further the preparations and design of a new NIASD Summer Course, on Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture. This new NIASD course is supported by the Faculty of Arts of Leiden University and scheduled to be delivered between 21 June and 16 July 2009. The promotion for this summer course started in July 2008. For more information and to apply for this course, see www.niasd.org.

NIASD library catalogue published online (May-June 2008)

Since one month, the catalogue of the NIASD library can be consulted online, through www.niasd.org [under Science and Education, under Library]. On this library page of our website also a great number of weblinks to online library catalogues in the Netherlands has been published, including the catalogues of the National Library and the libraries of various Dutch universities.

Joint workshop on landscapes and city images at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Damascus University by Theo de Feyter and Sawsan Al-Zoubi (26-30 May 2008)



From 26 - 30 May 2008, Dutch painter Theo de Feyter and Syrian painter Sawsan Al-Zoubi delivered a joint workshop with 22 Syrian students of the Department of Optical Communication of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Damascus University. The main theme of this workshop was drawing landscapes and city images after nature. The

paintings and other art objects of the workshop students were exhibited at the NIASD from 1-5 June, 2008.

Student-intern Kathelijne Smits at the NIASD (3 June – 31 July 2008)

On the 3rd of June 2008, the NIASD welcomed Ms. Kathelijne Smits as a new intern at the institute. Kathelijne finished her Bachelor in Human Geography at the University of Amsterdam and is now doing a Master in Political Sciences, specializing in International Relations. Kathelijne drafted an information document on the European external policies towards the Mediterranean, prepared this newsletter and was furthermore responsible for the proper execution of the NIASD Summer Course Arabic 2008.

NIASD assistance to the archaeological team of prof.dr. Peter Akkermans of the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University (June 2008)

For the yearly Tell Sabi Abyad excavation team led by prof.dr. Peter Akkermans, the NIASD prepared its Nissan Patrol Jeep, prepared and shipped working materials and official documents to the town of Raqqa and welcomed the archaeologists in its guest rooms for several days.

'Astrolabe' workshop by Wilfred de Graaf and Jules Lamers of Utrecht University at the Institute for the History of Arabic Science of Aleppo University (4 August 2008)

In cooperation with the Dean of the Institute for the History of Arabic Science of Aleppo University (IHAS), prof.dr. Moustafa Mawaldi, the NIASD arranged for the delivery of a so-called 'Astrolabe' workshop at the IHAS



by Mr. Wilfred de Graaf and Mr. Jules Lamers of Utrecht University, on the 4th of August 2008. The Astrolabe is a medieval astronomical instrument developed and renowned in the Islamic World. The workshop, developed by prof.dr. Jan Hogendijk of Utrecht University and Leiden University, started with an introduction to the history and use of the Astrolabe, after which the workshop participants had to make exercises, working with models of the Astrolabe themselves.

4. Culture

NIASD Film Programme 2008: 'Football, Taxi Drivers and Folk Music' (27–29 May 2008)

From the 27th until the 29th May 2008, the NIASD screened two Dutch feature films (*In Oranje* and *Nachtrit*) and one Dutch documentary (*André Hazes, zij gelooft in mij*) at the institute with Arabic subtitles. These three productions were programmed under the film programme title 'Football, Taxi Drivers and Folk Music'. In the course of the three days each film was screened twice, either at 17:00h or at 20:00h. In between the screenings on the 27th of May, Dutch film director Mr. John Appel gave an introduction to his award

دمشق: أفلام تعرض بحضور مخرجيها



نجم كبير

ن للأفلام،
يد، وجائزة
م الأطفال
نمائي مع
يل صاحب
الذي،
نان الدولي
س ١٩٥١-
ندا، المولود
نكة، والذي
ثق والديه.
ة لوصف

(هي تؤمن بي) أغنية اندريه الشهيرة
والمفضلة لدى عائلته، تختصر قصة حب
حزينة وتعبير عن حياته وتجربته الخاصة.
جون أبل قدم توضيحا حول فيلمه
الذي حظي باحتفال ثماني كبير في افتتاح
أسبوع الأفلام الوثائقية في هولندا، ولاقى
نجاحات كبيرة وأصداء قوية عند الأوساط
المنقضة، والناس العاديين. يقول أبل: عبر
الفيلم عن مشاعر صادقة وصریحة
لمطرب شعبي بطريقة غير تقليدية لدى
الهولنديين، مضيفا أن الشعب الهولندي
لا يعبر عن مشاعره بل يخفيها، وعندما

حصل على جائزة غودون غالفيرين في
مهرجان الفيلم الهولندي، ينطلق الفيلم
من حادثة سيارات الأجرة، التي جرت في

لقد قدم الهولنديون لهذا المغني الكبير
حفلا وداعا كبيرا ومؤثرا في ملعب آياكس في
أمستردام إذ قام خمسة ملايين شخص وبيت

winning documentary film "André Hazes, zij gelooft in mij". His presentation was also covered in the Syrian magazine Al-Qandeel 15 June 2008 (see picture). Including these three productions, the total number of Dutch films and documentaries translated into Arabic since the start of the NIASD film programme in April 2006 is 25.

Joint art exhibition Sawsan Al-Zoubi and Theo de Feijter (25 May – 5 June 2008)

The Faculty of Fine Arts of Damascus University together with the NIASD presented a joint art exhibition under the title 'Damascus Ahead!' at the Salat Al-Shaeb gallery with recent paintings of Syrian artist Sawsan Al-Zoubi and Dutch artist Theo de Feyter. The works of both artists had the city of Damascus as their subject matter, but each of them



gave a strikingly different perspective on it. A catalogue with an overview of all works exhibited was published too. NIASD director Astrid Rijbroek wrote one of its prefaces.

5. Co-operation

During the past few months NIASD staff met several times with consultants involved in the EU-project Upgrading the Higher Education Sector in Syria, with civil servants of the Syrian Dutch Water Cooperation project and with Hamdi Qenawi of the Karim Rida Said Foundation. In June Mr. Takkenberg of UNHCR stayed at the NIASD for a few days.