

“Your life becomes your work, so you have to really love what you do.”

MIDDLE EASTERN ART
FINDS ITS VOICE

Raya Mamarbachi

AND THE DIGITAL DEED

Artscoops is an online platform for promoting Middle Eastern Art founded by Raya Mamarbachi.


I met the founder of Artscoops at Café Mandaloun in Beirut. The easy lighting and soft orange suede of the sofas lent themselves to familiarity. Raya Mamarbachi's greeting was no exception - a warm hug of a longtime friend and a smile to match. My prior impression of Raya was derived from a quick Google search which showcased bold and admirable descriptors: "business executive," "digital visionary," "success story." After a few reads, however, I noticed that what these articles missed were the nuances of her personable character.

Background photo: Paul Guiragossian, Untitled

As we began to discuss the inception of her idea for the Middle East's first online art platform, I quickly recognized the entrepreneurial spirit I had read so much of. In 2013, more than \$1 million worth of art was auctioned and sold at the Beirut Exhibition Center's "Syri-Arts" auction to raise money for Syrian refugee children. Raya was involved on the digital front, managing the website for the event and facilitating its online needs. As she witnessed firsthand the multiple purchases of art online, more often than not sight-unseen, she was struck with an idea: why not create a similar platform for Middle Eastern art?

Artscoops was Raya's response to the gap in Middle East's art market. By way of Artscoops, Raya created an avenue for promoting Middle Eastern art across the globe. Artscoops equips collectors of all interest-levels with a firsthand look into the region's bountiful art offering, without having to physically visit a gallery. The two-year-old start-up is well-developed and quite thoughtful in scope. From monthly curated shows online – think photography or Iranian art – to reaching beyond the walls of a gallery, showcasing the artists themselves, Artscoops is taking an industry of tradition and fully submersing it in digital. Currently, Artscoops is HOME to 700 artworks and more than 200 mid to well-known artists online.

Moreover, Artscoops is set to scale. The next steps for the company include introducing an online auction platform, an Artscoops app, a content management system to enable direct upload capabilities for galleries, and a second-tier market for those interested in resale. All of this is communicated in the most calm, cool, and collected manner.

 www.artscoops.com
 Facebook: ArtscoopsLB
 Instagram: artscoopslb

Zena Assi, Jounieh # 2



Ammar Al Beik, Abou Ghreib



Paul Guiragossian, Maternite



The entrepreneurial hat is quite fitting for Raya, who returned to Lebanon after an integrated marketing career and earning her MBA at Henley Management College in Henley. She explained that the biggest sacrifice in starting Artscoops was life itself: "Your life becomes your work, so you have to really love what you do."

And love what you do, she does. Artscoops requires frequent travel for Raya, but for her it is a highlight. She especially enjoys her work in Lebanon. Raya describes Lebanon's cultural offering as "encouraging" with its art scene on the rise. Her next big project, in fact, is a live auction on March 11 in Zaitunay Bay. When asked about what's next, Raya desires to someday return to school and specialize in art study. She also seeks to enter the field of coaching, especially with children and young adults.

Raya believes Lebanon is on the right track and she hopes for its people to return, much like she did, to contribute their talents, dreams, and inspirations to the local culture, ultimately giving it the special touch she so kindly greeted me with earlier in the day.

