ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank the writers and artists who generously spent time engaging in conversations with me and helping me obtain written as well as visual material for this book. In particular, I would like to thank the late Arab novelist Abd al-Rahman Munif, his widow Suad Kawadri and their children Azza, Yasser, Hani and Leila. I am also indebted to Marwan Kassab-Bachi, whom I visited in his studio in Berlin and met at his exhibitions in Damascus; Dia Azzawi, who generously opened his studio and art collection to my inquiries in London; and Etel Adnan and Simone Fattal, who have become close friends in Beirut as elsewhere.

This book is a revised and shortened version of my DPhil thesis (University of Oxford 2005). I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee at Oxford for their insightful comments, especially my supervisor Robin Ostle, who has been most helpful and encouraging in his advice, and my internal and external examiners Walter Armbrust and Venetia Porter, curator of the collections of Islamic art and contemporary and modern art of the Middle East at the British Museum. My sincere thanks also go to Geert Jan van Gelder of the Faculty of Oriental Studies and Marius Kwint, then of the Department of History of Art at Oxford, as well as to the members of the Middle East Centre and its library at St Antony's College. I further thank the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Gerda Henkel Foundation and St. John's College at Oxford for the generous scholarships they granted me to pursue my studies at Oxford. My thanks are extended to the Association of the Friends of Islamic Art and Culture (Gesellschaft der Freunde Islamischer Kunst und Kultur e.V.), which awarded me its first Annemarie Schimmel prize for my thesis at the Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich in 2008. I am particularly indebted to Claus Peter Haase, former director of the Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, for his flattering and motivating laudatio.

Research for this book was conducted in Beirut, Damascus, Amman, Berlin, Oxford and London. I am grateful to the University of Oxford and especially St. John's College, which have opened their doors to me since I came to Oxford in 2002. I also thank the American University of Beirut (AUB), which has been my home and point of departure for many years, as a student in 1995/1996, an associate researcher in 2000/2001 and an assistant professor since 2006.

I thank Maha Yahya and Jens Hanssen for inviting me to guest edit a special issue of the MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies entitled "Writing a tool for change: Abd al-Rahman Munif remembered," which was published as vol. 7 in Spring 2007. Since finishing my DPhil, I have embarked on two new research projects that have developed out of topics I was faced with while working on my thesis but that were beyond the scope of the thesis: one is on contemporary book art, the other on collecting practices in the Arab world. Both have resulted in publications that I worked on before I was able to return again to my thesis to turn it into a book. As regards the project on contemporary book art, I would like to refer to my article "Contemporary Book Art in the Middle East: The Book as Document in Iraq," in: Art History 35/4 (2012). As regards the project on collecting practices, I would like to mention the book I edited together with my colleague John Pedro Schwartz at AUB entitled Archives, Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World, Fernham: Ashgate, 2012.

I thank my colleagues, friends and family who have followed my work with much interest, critical comments and great friendship at various stages, especially Hani Munif, Maher Jarrar, Kamal Boullata, Walid Sadek, John Pedro Schwartz, Karam Nachar, Sune Haugbolle, Lindsay Whitfield, Katharina Werner, Marianne Schmidt-Dumont, and Helmut Mejcher. I especially thank my husband Mohammad Ali Atassi, whose encouragement has been beyond words, and our children Nour and Karim for sharing their mother with books and a computer – they have developed a fondness of their own in both.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the Reichert Verlag, in particular Sigrun Kotb, and the editors of the series Literatures in Context (Literaturen im Kontext), Verena Klemm, Angelika Neuwirth and Friederike Pannewick, for their interest in this book and many helpful comments. Their openness to and encouragement of new approaches in the study of Arabic literature has been a source of great inspiration.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

The transliteration of Arabic terms and book titles follows the transliteration system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*. However, Arabic names are written without diacritical signs, as the authors and artists in question themselves have written their names or as has become standard in English, for example Naguib Mahfouz not Najīb Maḥfūz and Abd al-Rahman Munif not 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf. This implies that names can be written differently from the way they are written in the titles of books and articles cited. To avoid confusion, I therefore added the names written in transliteration with diacritical signs in brackets to the bibliography. All translations from Arabic are my own unless otherwise indicated.