



A P E A L

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Coordinator: Nadine Zaccour  
Editor: Nora Boustany

**subtitled:**

WITH NARRATIVES FROM LEBANON

## **APEAL MISSION STATEMENT**

The Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon (APEAL) is a non-profit organization dedicated to showcasing and encouraging Lebanese artists by projecting their artwork beyond conventional borders and onto a larger screen. One of APEAL's goals is to create a common platform and magnet for creativity by presenting eclectic collections gathered from a universe of gifted visual, literary or performing artists. APEAL strives to be a point of connection in vital cultural conversations between civilizations. Composed of Lebanese citizens, the group envisions launching exchange programs between artists from the Lebanese scene and counterparts elsewhere from universities and art academies. It is also dedicated to granting scholarships to promising talent, and contributing to the formation of trained curators and professionals to help put them on a par with their peers the world over. By creating this window, APEAL is helping nurture the seeds of Lebanon's artistic potential and preserving its cultural fabric in a vibrant, forward looking post conflict society.

## **APEAL MEMBERS**

### **Executive Committee**

Rita Nammour, President  
Nada El Khoury, Vice-President  
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### **London Committee**

Lady Palumbo, Chairperson  
Liliana Abboud  
Nayla Al Assaad  
Lama Koubrously

## FOREWORD: BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

In the spring of 2010, APEAL staged its first exhibition of contemporary art from Lebanon at the American University Museum Katzen Arts Center, in Washington DC.

We had our eye on three main goals.

- a. Primarily, we sought to project the cultural face of Lebanon.

In organizing an event that would stir an interest in Lebanon's contemporary art, we wanted to open up avenues that would help the West understand and discover that country. An amalgam of modern issues such as war, religion and its storied resilience, to name a few, has made Lebanon unfathomable. We wanted to set new foundations for a process that would enhance communication and create understanding between people.

- b. By promoting Lebanese artists outside their country of origin, our aim was to create a platform that will amplify their opportunities to showcase their creativity and output beyond Lebanon's natural borders. In a further nod to their artistic potential, we have offered artists in Lebanon a form of support that has not yet been offered institutionally by commissioning certain pieces.

- c. And last but not least, a main pillar of our investment in talent and our outlook to nurturing the arts in Lebanon is in granting scholarships to promising and gifted students of the arts who are deserving of material support to pursue their training and studies.

In summation, we have stepped into the art scene to provide a support structure for the arts in Lebanon. With whatever means at our disposal, we would like to act as a palliative to lacking governmental resources and public instruments to further and protect artistic expression, an essential element in any developing society.

The Washington exhibition last year, comprehensive and sweeping in its selection, attracted considerable public and media attention and raised the profile of Lebanese artists in America. As a result, it put our organization on the map which helped us increase our funding for continued activity. It also enhanced enthusiasm for similar endeavors of cultural exchange around the country.

This present exhibition focuses on works of art by 33 artists, some of them already established and other artists who have newly emerged on the scene, and who have gained recognition in top national and quite a few international competitions.

The show is taking place against a background of unprecedented changes and turmoil in the Middle East. Lebanese artists are not impervious to what is happening around them. While regional events have repercussions on events in Lebanon, its painters, sculptors, photographers, videographers and multi-media producers engage very intimately with the social issues and political circumstances shaping their own modern history. Their work reflects the times they are going through and serves as an indicator to the times ahead.

**RITA NAMMOUR**

President of APEAL

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We were able to put this exhibition together thanks to the tremendous efforts and hard work of a great team in Beirut as well as in London.

We would like to extend our thanks to Lebanon's Ambassador to the United Kingdom H.E. Mrs. Inaam Osseiran for granting us her patronage and offering us the good offices of her chancery and its outreach network into the Lebanese community in London.

We are also indebted to the Minister of Tourism Mr. Fadi Abboud, who was enthusiastic and extremely encouraging of our efforts. Without hesitation, he readily intervened on our behalf to facilitate shipping and airfare services by Middle East Airlines, Lebanon's national carrier. His recognition of the importance to Lebanon of our endeavor has made our task and our aims that much easier to attain. We also thank the Ministry of Culture for its expressed support and commendation of our London exhibit.

We are greatly indebted to Ms. Juliana Khalaf, the keen and energetic curator of the exhibition. Juliana's critical sensitivity was instrumental and essential in the choice of the themes which are at the heart of this project, and which gave our exhibition its structure and substance. She worked closely and selflessly with designers, writers and editors involved in the production of publications for the show. Her total engagement and exemplary dedication and energy in pursuing her vision have helped shape this event.

In collaboration with Mrs. May Thoumy, a graphic designer, Ms. Khalaf worked diligently on the layout of our catalog. The invaluable expertise and professional instincts of Ms. Khalaf and her assistant co-curator, Mrs. Nada Al Assaad, in overseeing the selection of the works of art were central to the evolution of the exhibit. We thank and salute their selfless dedication.

An auction planned to be held in Beirut following this exhibition to raise funds for our organization and its scholarship fund will be entrusted to Mrs. Al Assaad, an experienced auctioneer on the Lebanese scene.

We also wish to thank Ms. Nora Boustany for her editing and writing skills. Were it not for her irrepressible passion and stubborn streak, this exhibition would have been twice as difficult and only half as much fun.

We reserve our heartfelt appreciation and profound gratitude to our faithful sponsors without whom this exhibition would never have seen the light. These gracious benefactors include:

- Samir Hanna, CEO of Bank Audi Beirut
- Marwan Ghandour, Vice-Chairman Bank Audi Beirut
- Elie Khalil Khoury, CEO of Omnicom Media Group
- Jo Saddi, Chairman of Booz & Company
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- Mimi Saïd Khalaf
- Latifa Kosta
- Rita & Bechara Nammour
- Lara & Michael Fares
- Talal Shair, CEO of Dar Al-Handasah Consultants (Shair & Partners)
- Salim Sfeir, Chairman and General Manager of Bank of Beirut
- Anonymous Donors

To Eli Khoury and his team at Quantum Communications, Lina Silisty, Lara Hajj and Fady Aziz of sister company Brand Central, we reserve our deepest appreciation and gratitude for coming up with the design of graphics for our printed materials, and their execution to the highest possible standards. Most notably, we are thrilled at Mr. Khoury's elegant gesture in offering his Villa Quantum to show and celebrate selected works from our London exhibition.

We are also indebted to Hala Dib Zoghbi from Public Arena Beirut for the countless hours put in planning our communication and outreach efforts in Lebanon.

Our most grateful thanks go to legal counsel Choucri El Khoury and his team from El Khoury Law Firm, for handling all of APEAL's contracts and all legal matters that involve APEAL.

We extend our thanks to Gihad Achkar of Anis Commercial Printing Press in providing for the printing and binding of the catalog and in seeing it through.

To all contributing artists, we extend our thanks for agreeing to part with their artwork for the duration of this exhibit and for being so accommodating throughout our planning stages.

Gallery owners Mrs. Nadine Begdache of the Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Mr. Saleh Barakat of Agial Art Gallery, Ms. Lea Sednaoui of The Running Horse Gallery, Mrs. Naila Kettaneh Kunigk of Espace Kettaneh Kunigk (Beirut) and Galerie Tanit (Munich), Mrs. Odile Mazloum of Alwane Art Gallery and Mr. Khaled Samawi of Ayyam Gallery, were magnanimous in making pieces from their art collections available to us, allowing us to complete our selection.

Many other individuals gave their time and effort in various ways.

We are indebted to Fred Seikaly of Beirut Express for graciously answering our call and taking on the responsibility for packing and helping in many ways.

We also thank Gino Nader and Cyril Karaoglan of Nasco Karaoglan for providing us with the requisite insurance coverage. Their involvement and enthusiasm were total from the start.

We are very grateful to Middle East Airlines for covering shipping costs from Beirut to London and back.

We appreciate Gilbert Ghostine of Diageo's generosity in contributing refreshments and drinks.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every committee member in London and Beirut for their invaluable dedication to the project. We owe very special thanks to Mrs. Nadine Zaccour for her drive, enthusiasm and hard work.

## SPECIAL MENTION

Lady Palumbo is the honorary London chair of APEAL's exhibition "**subtitled:** WITH NARRATIVES FROM LEBANON". Her husband, Peter who is a fine connoisseur of the arts and a collector in his own right, gently guided us from the outset as we launched our London initiative. True to her Lebanese roots and heritage, Lady Palumbo made us feel most welcome in her adopted city, with a wonderful gesture of hospitality, by hosting a dinner at the Walbrook. To thank our generous sponsors, she planned an exquisite dining experience prepared by Albert Roux, one of London's leading chefs.

### **The British Lebanese Association**

APEAL is deeply grateful for the help and support of The British Lebanese Association which was established in 1984 to encourage friendship and understanding between the people of Great Britain and Lebanon and to further cultural development between the two countries. Under the leadership of its president Mrs. Lisa Zakhem, the BLA has opened many doors for us and has helped us consolidate a vital cultural connection with London.

## SURFACING

As Lebanon resurfaces from the depths of traumatic wars and into the sunlight of cultural expression, it carries in its fold many stories, yet untold. They are not simple and certainly not fathomable with the stroke of a pen or by newspapers struggling to keep abreast of incoming and outgoing governments in Lebanon and its rapidly changing Arab context.

Serious art critics in Lebanon are averse to assigning an effective role for art per se in the healing of its society. No matter how one looks at the outcome and through which prism, there is no denying by illustrious journals such as the New York-based ArtForum that there has been a “remarkable cultural resurgence of the past fifteen years” in Beirut. Lebanese contemporary art’s international reputation is growing and its impact and profile have captured the interest of collectors for its provocative as well as exciting trends.

Lebanese artists and their contemporary body of work in the past ten years or so have emerged with a unique visual voice that has broken the mould of nostalgic throwbacks to the past. The tranquil tapestries of village scenes and the stillness of unadulterated pastures no longer define the essence of the full Lebanese experience.

The social, emotional and environmental fallout from seventeen years of wars: Loss, displacement, exile and an unregulated drive of ambitious and ill-considered rush to reconstruction are now the rough and jarring realities crowding the psyche of the population. Aesthetics aside, artists’ muses have become discomfiting and cautionary reminders of what cannot be forgotten. On the surface, many Lebanese would like to throw themselves into a self-willed amnesia of what has ailed their society by seeking entertainment, consumerism and smart clothing in pursuit of a sense of well being.

In contrast, the creativity and sensitivity of the artistic community in particular have anchored it as a nagging conscience and conveyor of inconvenient but necessary truths, alongside civil society and non-governmental entities. The cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism that have colored forms of expression are still prevalent in the evolving skills of Lebanon’s artists, but they have distilled all of their acquired techniques into a quintessentially local experience.

Conceptual installations which mimic the actual through photographs and electric or mechanized contraptions and three dimensional objects are fictional yet they document, chronicle and convey certain collective frustrations or sentiments. The subject matter could range from power outages to reflections on the state of some of Lebanon’s dying industries.

The use of various mediums, be they paintings, photographs, sculptures or multi-media installations to depict or expose a problem or issue affecting Lebanese citizens or emigrants in the Diaspora, combine to make the variable strands of a new and fascinating tapestry. Its bold honesty can only enhance and strengthen the gateways of communication between nations.

The Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon has devoted its efforts and resources in its first two exhibitions in Washington last year, and now in London, to this trend. The works of art it has selected for "**subtitled:** WITH NARRATIVES FROM LEBANON" are metaphors for the Lebanese condition. Our preoccupation with highlighting Lebanon's cultural face to the world stems from a desire to focus on the long lasting testament to the country's vitality beyond the framework and dynamic of war and all its negative attributes.

APEAL's motives are not intended to whitewash, in the political sense, nor to step away from Lebanon's collective and sometimes tormenting memory. We have thrown our lot behind a growing phalanx of creators to promote, exhibit and capitalize on this post-conflict nation's artistic ferment to capitalize on its creative rather than destructive forces. It is an immense undertaking and an imperative choice. It is no coincidence that the prolific output of Lebanese artists has resulted in the positioning of some of their work in major league art markets. The need to bolster those seeking an education in the field of fine arts or museum management in Lebanon is long overdue. The ensuing cultural conversations from the exchange of students and art in these domains are mutually beneficial and enriching to any facet of global communication and understanding in our view.

Art from the Arab world has also grabbed headlines and risen to drown out the rhetoric of some of its dated leaderships. The Venice Biennale was a case in point during which major art critics singled out Arab pavilions for serious commentary and notice in newspapers such as The Financial Times and The New York Times to name a few.

The candor and subtlety of Lebanese artists and their regional counterparts in producing art that connects to what is happening now and without shying away from looking at life as it is around them define the universality of their work and their humanity.

**NORA BOUSTANY**

Former Correspondent and Columnist at The Washington Post

## DREAMY LANDSCAPES AND HARSH REALITIES

Artistic activity in Lebanon is diffuse and symptomatic of the elusive context in which it appears. In the absence of formal national art institutions such as national museums\*, Lebanon's art is presented mainly through art galleries and in private collections.

The idea behind this project was to gather Lebanese artists from diverse backgrounds to present their distinctive representations of a place and experience that has yet to be concluded. To define Lebanese contemporary art is not an easy task. It can be characterized by events that have marked the history of the country and, consequently, its artists. Through this exhibition, these artists are offered a platform from which they can show the world how they interpret their realities and translate them into the language of art. Swiss-Italian artist Alberto Giacometti aptly observed, *"The object of art is not to reproduce reality, but to create a reality of the same intensity."*

The inclusion of artists from different generations and backgrounds allows a multitude of ideas to converge and to unfurl the stories of a whole cast of individuals. In these selected paintings, photographs, mixed media, art installations, video art and works of sculpture, the narratives are distinctively Lebanese. *"The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life."* - William Faulkner (American novelist and author).

Our exhibition, "**subtitled**: WITH NARRATIVES FROM LEBANON". presents thirty-three Lebanese artists. The majority of those chosen are established in and outside Lebanon, but our show has also intentionally selected several promising young artists who have distinguished themselves at home and come to my attention. While all of them were chosen for their plurality and diversity of voices, categorizing them in five distinctive yet complimentary narratives juxtaposes their socio-political realities in one rich tapestry, and this against a backdrop of an unfolding and yet untapped contemporary history.

In **War-Torn Narratives** artists document the heavy impact of a painful past that endures the present. The war is not easily forgotten by Lebanon's artists although the country's emotional landscape appears, on the surface at least, to be buried in amnesia. Its legacy is still jarring, haunting and visible, like bullet-riddled buildings that jut out as eye sores, despite the veneer of a rapidly rebuilding city.

As war ends, what surfaces is the will to reconstruct the physical appearance of a nation, and, through that exterior healing, its broken morale. **Reconstructing Narratives** in post-war Lebanon reflects in a state where collective memory is fragmented at best, if not absent, and the writing of its modern history is still unresolved. Camille Zakharia's photo-montage series, entitled *Elusive Homelands*, exemplifies the strength of the Lebanese to reconstruct their lives successfully as immigrants. Zeina Assi's piece is a spoof on Lebanon's uncontrolled and unregulated building boom, a tongue in cheek depiction of the concrete jungle that Beirut has become.

Lebanon has long been renowned for its relatively liberal values and indulgent entertainment scene, compared to its more conservative Arab hinterland. The Lebanese have been distinguished by their ability to live it up in the worst and the best of times. The pleasant conditions that are typical of certain aspects of life in Lebanon always come with gradations of pain, giving rise to the surfacing of **Bittersweet Narratives**. In Chaza Charafedine's *Divine Comedy* a young man posing as Carmen Miranda in drag could not be more suggestive of the regional social and traditional pressures regarding gender and sexual orientation.

Lebanon's rich history has been shaped by many cultural influences, Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Islamic, Crusader, Ottoman Turkish, French, and Anglosaxon, to name a few. The resulting culture is idiosyncratically Lebanese, a fusion of East and West, of ancient and modern influences. In **Cultural Narratives**, artists use cultural products, like language, religion and other symbolic systems to analyze and break down the narrative of their cultural realities.

In **Blurred Narratives**, blurring the line between fact and fiction helps artists recount their narratives through more abstract techniques. Karen Kalou photographs the volatile landscape of Beirut during the rainy season, allowing her to create an impressionistic photographic rendition of dreamy landscapes out of her city's dilapidated scenes. Using brushwork and fire to mark a raw canvas, Srouji's *Terre/Mer* offers us a vision of childhood memories: Leaving a homeland on the verge of war by boat.

Like the Arab world's awakening that has shaken countries on its Arab borders and in North Africa, Lebanon is evolving in its own way by emerging from its dark past and by attempting to make artistic sense out of the debris that has ravaged it.

“**subtitled:** WITH NARRATIVES FROM LEBANON”. makes it abundantly clear that while numerous artistic narratives document the heavy impact of such a painful past, the resulting and enduring legacy passed down to future generations rests in the remnants of its culture.

## JULIANA KHALAF

Art Curator

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\* Lebanon's Nicolas Sursock Museum has been under restoration for the last years but continues to hold their annual Salon d' Automne (Autumn Exhibition) in various locations around Beirut. The museum, scheduled to open in 2013, is being renovated by renowned museum architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte.

## THE ONLOOKERS' TASK

In the eyes and minds of most Lebanese plastic arts practitioners, the war which started in 1975, with long or short respites, is an ongoing process. They spot its traces and signs everywhere. They just need to look around to get convinced by the glaring evidence: pristine nature destroyed by the unchecked invasion of cement, metal, and plastic; urban chaos; collective memory erased through the destruction of its landmarks; ruined neighborhoods; walls pasted over with posters extolling the martyrs of each and every political faction; sectarian fanaticism on the rise; stalled internal dialogue; cynical unfettered capitalism; conspicuous consumption in the face of an impoverished and impotent population; incapacitated state institutions; overall corruption; collapse of all ethical, moral and civil values. This is just the beginning of an inventory that would take too long to go over in detail.

As much as the poets, writers, musicians, and intellectuals who succeeded in keeping their lucidity and critical mind in this hornet's nest by taking the necessary distance and height from which to survey the whole picture, plastic artists have lost their illusions. Not all of them, evidently. Art and thought, like drugs, also are powerful means to camouflage or escape hard facts and realities. Those who have been selected for this exhibition are unwavering in staring at them, even when the landscape is blurred or hazy, as in Karen Kalou's shots of Beirut under the rain which epitomize with endearing simplicity the confusion and fuzziness of lines in which many Lebanese are content to live, although they would be reluctant to admit it.

Beyond the diversity of their techniques -- oil painting, acrylic, drawing, collage, mixed media, sculpture, photography, photomontage, video art, installation --, the artists at hand confront without blinking the war's "monuments" and relics -- Ayman Baalbaki's *Borj al Murr*; Oussama Baalbaki's *Untitled* Mercedes car; Fouad El Khoury's *The Flag*; Samar Mogarbel's *Chronicles from the Middle East* featuring the sculptures of five politicians' cars destroyed by car bombs.

Others overstep the mere recording of violence and horror to pinpoint the means and the responsibilities of the war. Benoit Debbané shows, with a tagger's crispiness, the famous *AK47* gun painted on a wall pasted over with death notices of militiamen killed in battle with the slogan "One-way street": no way to forge forward but through murderous violence. Alfred Tarazi chronicles the cost of the war and the whole history of Lebanon since Independence through a photomontage of militiamen and their political and military leaders looming against a gradually devaluated national currency. Their arms undergo the same process of inflation, from shotguns to machine-guns, and on to RPGs, mortars and canons.

Nadim Karam depicts the *Massacre* not as a localized event but as a perpetually ongoing process, whereas Jean-Marc Nahas, whose basic worldview may be reduced to the saying "Homo hominem lupus", extends the process to the hottest incoming news.

Zena El-Khalil, like Tarazi, but with a critical-satirical approach, identifies other politicians and countries responsible for the upheavals in Lebanon and the Middle East.

Hanibal Srouji's *Terre/Mer* is riddled with holes produced by fire in the material of the canvas. In his own way, he assumes the violence of the gun bursts on El Khoury's cedar tree in order to transcend it, transforming destructive fire into creative fire.

If the preceding artists confront the realities of war and denounce the culprits, Mario Saba, in his installation *The Temple*, goes to the immemorial roots of the local, regional, and East-West recurrent conflicts: each one of the three monotheistic religions is convinced to be the only true one. The episodes conjured up by the artists at hand are only the latest acts of a long-running bloody tragedy without end.

No wonder then for Tagreed Dargouth to take Benoit Debbané's slogan all the way up to the atomic bomb itself, especially as rumors of nuclear confrontations now abound in the Middle East. The title of the English nuclear project *The Rainbow* is all the more appropriate as this meteorological phenomenon is closely associated to Abraham, the presumed father of the three religions. It adequately describes the spectrum of sensitivities generated by the politico-sectarian saturation in the area.

While Beirut was engulfed in sectarian strife in 1984, El Khoury's striking photo *Portemilio* perfectly illustrates the indifference of the sun bathers but a few miles away, and insists on the number two: two palm trees, two chimney stacks, two bathers, two pairs of thighs, a couple sitting in the pool, four reflections in the water, unmistakably underscoring the duality, and even the schizophrenic split reigning supreme in the country.

This duality, Marwan Sahmarani tackles it in a different but significant way. His nineteenth century painters sport their red Ottoman headgear, signaling a duality of oriental nature and western nurture. Here, the duality is no longer between outside opponents, it cuts deep inside each and every Levantine man and woman.

The two women of Flavia Codsí's *Diverse-city*, one in a fashionable western dress, the other shrouded in her black overall veil, project outside an internal dichotomy. Linked by their shadows, they are different aspects of each other. The veiled woman, in the privacy of her home, will probably shed the black attire to reveal the other, fuchsia dress. And the chic woman will be obliged in certain circumstances to don modest clothing.

In her *Dame aux fruits* and in *My Sisters and Brothers*, Chaza Charafeddine gives a radical twist to duality through her men dressed up as alluring women and drag queens. This crossing over the borders of the basic duality between manhood and womanhood comes as a natural conclusion, so to speak, of the series of social, political, religious, cultural, biological, and psychological dualities.

In her idiosyncratic, ruthless way, Annie Kurkjian goes in the other direction, underscoring the duality and opposition of the sexes, and rejecting, by the sheer mass of her fleshy women, the norms and models of behavior and beauty macho men want to force upon them.

To refer to duality alone here is insufficient: you must speak of a multitude of faces and aspects metaphorically revealed by Lamia Ziadé's mixed media. It shows a "mezze", culinary mosaic image of the diversity and profuse contradictions of the Lebanese divided house. But its title *Zefet* (Tar) and the black background point to a sinister underlining.

Zena Assi denounces this same cancerous proliferation in Beirut's urban scene, another image of the Lebanese "mosaic."

No wonder Nada Sehnaoui, in her installation *To Sweep* featuring two hundred brooms, aspires to get rid of the effects of such a state of affairs: poverty, slavery, fear, war, dictatorship, corruption, exactions, repression, and so on.

Like Srouji creatively appropriating the effects of fire, Abdel Rahman Katanani appropriates corrugated iron, the basic material of the poor Palestinian camp he lives in, to transform it into a playful artwork. But the prancing boy clings to the keys of his parental house in the lost homeland.

Symbolically, Huguette Caland, in her far away California home, holds the keys to her childhood paradise through her persevering reconstitution, using mosaic effects, of the atmosphere of her native home in Lebanon.

Is it just by chance that Camille Zacharia redesigns his pictures of Lebanese migrants to Canada through the photomontage of mosaic fragments? Every migrant, here, belongs to a different religious community.

To Jessica Kalache's resident or migrant women, the religious images hung in mosaic fashion on the walls of their apartments are, in a way, the keys of home, but also, they believe, the keys of heaven.

Laure Ghorayeb's *The Family* and *Lebanese Migration* stick, through their meticulousness and their ornamental style, to the mosaic style characteristic of the artworks on migrant persons and families, as if the Lebanese mosaic had become part of the psychic structure of the painter. Ghorayeb's migrant, with pictures of Lebanese landscapes pasted on his cheeks, states: "Lebanon lies in my heart and my mind". The key is inside.

Ginou Choueri, an extensive traveler, takes the notion of mosaic to the very end by crowding in a helter-skelter assortment of cultural references. But the "home key" prevailing over all the rest is the coffee cup, symbolic of the migrant's nostalgia for the warmth of partaking a pleasant moment even during the worst times.

To the Diaspora Armenians, the “house key” is the image of Mount Ararat. In his characteristic photographic frontal style, Gilbert Hage has captured Ararat pictures in rich and modest homes of Lebanese Armenians. Here too, the duality recurs between two homelands, one actual and one recurring in their dreams, but also between Armenian and Lebanese. In one instance, the mosaic way of hanging pictures pops up again.

To conclude this tour, what better choice than following the shrewd guide Rabih Mroué narrating and commenting on the impossibly complex Lebanese make-up while driving his car in Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige’s video short?

After this eventful ride, we may need to go back and seek visual relief in Karen Kalou’s counterdualistic vision.

Of course, this is just one set of connotations and one network of connections between the works. Many others may be made. This task must be left to the onlookers.

## **JOSEPH TARRAB**

Art Critic

## EXHIBITIONS AS PANORAMA

“**subtitled:** WITH NARRATIVES FROM LEBANON” at London’s Royal College of Arts presents a contemporary statement and a visual narrative about three decades of art produced in the war-torn country, its scars and its aftermath.

Last year, APEAL (The Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon) provided a different contemporary view of Lebanon in its exhibition *Convergence - New Art from Lebanon* held at The Katzen Art Center in Washington DC.

Lebanese art is blessed by enthusiastic civil organizations like APEAL, which present to the general public in Lebanon and abroad well-researched collective exhibitions that bring a new insight and dimension to the art of the country.

Let me highlight some landmarks in the history of art exhibitions in Lebanon, touching on outstanding group, thematic, survey and retrospective art shows that we have witnessed during the past decades.

Group exhibitions started in Lebanon years before individual ones. The first group exhibition took place in 1920 at *Place de l'Etoile*, a hallowed area in present downtown Beirut, where Lebanon’s parliament has been located since its inception, as if commemorating the establishment of Greater Lebanon.

It was not until 1928, that the first individual show was organized by the Muslim Scouts in a private house. The following year, it was moved to the American University of Beirut. It displayed the work of the prominent Lebanese painter Moustafa Farroukh. The late artist painted pastoral and idyllic scenes of Beirut and surrounding landscapes in the thirties and forties in the style of academic European art rendered in pale pastel water colours and, sometimes, in oil.

The Ministry of Education organized the first impressive collective exhibition at UNESCO Palace for its inauguration in 1948. Only in 1957, did the Ministry start the *Spring Salon* which gathered together art works yearly until 1974.

The first large thematic group exhibition was *Steadfast*, realized by the newspaper *Syria* at the Saint-Georges Hotel in 1935. Much later, *Le Grenier des Artistes* paid tribute to Lebanon’s art scene with its portrait-themed exhibition *Le Portrait - A Travers La Peinture Libanaise* in 1972. Gallery *Les Cimaïses* showcased two remarkable themed exhibitions: *Les Artistes Témoins d'Eux-Mêmes*, which collected the bulk of self-portraits by Lebanese artists, and *The Nude in the Art of Jean Khalifé*, both in 1987.

Great credit regarding well comprised theme shows must be given to the Alumni Association of the Lebanese American University, which presented from 1993 to 1998 excellent theme exhibitions such as *Still Life in Lebanese Art*, *Pastel in Lebanese Art*, *Abstract Painting in Lebanese Art*, *The Human Figure in Lebanese Art*, and *Graphic Art in Lebanon*. Recently, in 2009, Gallery Maqam resumed the themed exhibitions with *Landscape - Cityscape*, and *The Responsive Hand*.

As for survey exhibitions, the Sursock Museum started in 1961 to hold yearly selective surveys of recent art production in Lebanon in its *Salon d' Automne*.

In 1986, the British Lebanese Association organized a remarkable and memorable show, entitled *The Orientalists in Lebanon (1700-1900)* in London. The most extensive and unbroken view of Lebanese art was presented in the exhibition *Lebanon - The Artist's View: 200 Years of Lebanese Painting*, also held in London in 1989, followed by its impressive sequel in 2004: *Lebanon - The Artist's View II (1975-2004)*.

The Art Center of the American University of Beirut addressed in 2001 *Contemporary Ceramics in Lebanon* and *Art Posters in Lebanon*, both were untried fields.

As for retrospective exhibitions, the Sursock Museum gave homage to Lebanon's' prominent artists Jean Khalifé (1992), Omar Onsi (1997), Gebran Khalil Gebran (2000), and Mustafa Farroukh (2003).

Recently, the Beirut Art Center, the Audi Foundation, and the Beirut Exhibition Center are continuing this trend through many well studied shows filling the absence of a contemporary art museum in the country.

This snapshot misses many significant exhibitions held recently and over the years. I have only tried to pay tribute here to the civil society in Lebanon for its dynamic and valuable contribution to the art scene through exhibiting Lebanese art in a studied curatorial manner. We give thanks to APEAL and its expert organizer for adding another angle to the panorama of art in Lebanon.

## **CESAR NAMMOUR**

Art Historian





**WAR-TORN NARRATIVES**



## **BENOIT DEBBANE**

*Ak 47*, 2006

airbrush and mixed media on canvas

120 x 200 cm

*Ak 47*, which has the Arabic words "Direction of Traffic" above the machine gun depicted, guides the onlooker through the one-way road towards a violent past.



## ALFRED TARAZI

7LL - "A Nation's Inflation" series, 2011  
digital collage mounted on aluminum dibond  
edition 2/3  
100 x 100 cm  
Courtesy of the Running Horse Gallery

Through his documentarian depictions of the civil war, Tarazi takes on the role of a historian, reminding the post-war generation of the facts and realities of their past. With the Lebanese Lira used as a canvas, he juxtaposes prominent political figures of this dark history with its heyday pre-war issue, which preceded its devaluation. The banknotes not only depict geographic scenes as a guide to the old Lebanon but, more importantly, bring to mind the cost of war.

"What is never put into question is the cost of those wars, the cost of terror. How much does it cost to fuel a militia with weapons? What is the price of a rifle, of a bullet, of a canon shell, of a tank? How much money was actually spent to write the contemporary history of this country with blood? What we do know for sure is that one cannot lead wars without substantial financial backing and money is precisely what is depicted in the series "*A Nation's Inflation*." - Alfred Tarazi





**NADIM KARAM**

*The Massacre, 2011*

triptych

mixed media on canvas

200 x 360 cm

Courtesy of Ayyam Gallery

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*The Massacre* is a depiction of a striking summation of violent events that have largely constituted Lebanon's history over the last few decades.

“Woven into this story are my own experiences of being kidnapped and targeted by snipers during the civil war, and being a refugee with my family in 2006. *The Massacre* germinated in my sketch books when I was a student during the war, but took over 20 years to reach the canvas.”  
- Nadim Karam







## FOUAD EL KHOURY

*The Flag* - "Beirut City Center" series, 1982

inkjet on fine art paper

120 x 150 cm

edition 1/5

Courtesy of the Christa von Siemens Foundation

Fouad el Khoury's photography immortalizes the memory of Beirut in ruins. In this photograph, he concentrates on the ravages of war as reflected in a painted Lebanese flag on a bulleted concrete wall.



## SAMAR MOGARBEL

*Chronicles from the Middle East*, 2010

bronze sculptures

14 x 41 x 17 cm (5 pieces)

Courtesy of Agial Art Gallery

In *Chronicles from the Middle East*, Mogarbel pours her sensitivity to the horrors of the violence that swept over Lebanon into five sculpted car bombs, a gruesome indicator to political assassinations of the past decade.

“At each new angle, this installation provokes reflection about the history of a region or of a city and the incidents that formed it. Cars have played a decisive role in the fate of Lebanon and the Middle East and their people, be it as objects of desire, of prestige and luxury, leisure and freedom or as deadly weapons. The sculptures in this series relate to major car bombings, they stand out as monuments of destruction, as reminders, as silent witnesses to the wounds of a whole region.”

- Samar Mogarbel



## MOUNIRA AL-SOLH

*Rawane's Song*, 2006  
video, 7 mins

As a text from *Rawane's Song* reads: "I have nothing to say about the war; don't feel that I'm typical Lebanese; nor typical Arab; have nothing to do with the Palestinian cause; know almost nothing about politics." Whereas most Lebanese artists who deal with the issue of war are explicit on the subject, In *Rawane's Song*, al-Solh makes it a point to refuse to talk about it, but finds her efforts are in vain and the subject, in whatever way communicated, is impossible to avoid.

*Rawane's Song* was screened in several film festivals, amongst them Video Brasil where it was awarded the jury's prize for 2007.

I got JEALOUS of those Artists who were able to do an artwork related to identity matters and I was particularly pissed off by the ones who came from a war background and knew how to talk about it.



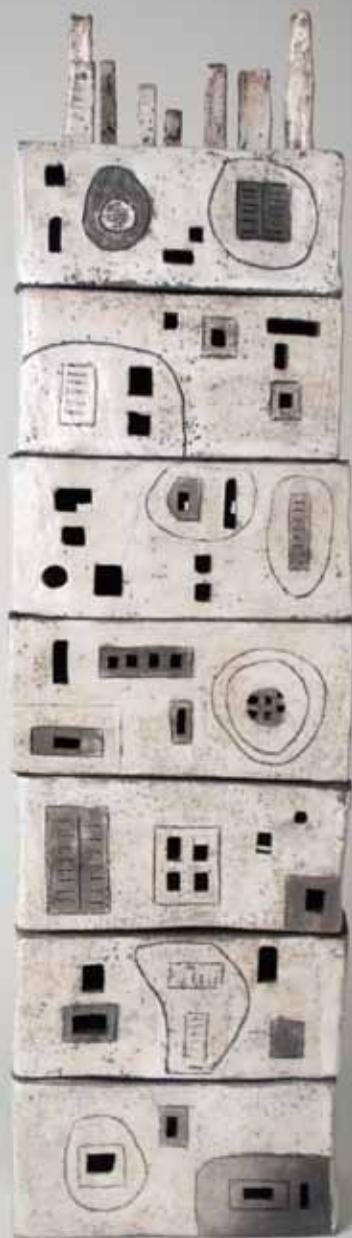


## RECONSTRUCTING NARRATIVES

## MARY-LYNN MASSOUD & RASHA NAWAM

*Ashes*, 2011  
ceramic raku ware installation  
100 x 100 cm

Massoud & Nawam use the Raku technique to create unique hand molded sculptures to mimick the buildings that exist in Beirut. The delicate technique adopted symbolizes the brittle state of the city.



## SAMIR KHADDAJE

*Septembre 2008*, 2008-2011

video installation and projection, 8 mins

*Septembre 2008*, a photocopied black and white journal, is projected on screen as Khaddaje flicks through a sequence of visuals made up of archival photographs and segments of his painted artworks. Sporadic daily entries of thoughts and images that consume his mind, instigate his five overwhelmed senses; sight, sound, taste, smell and touch. Through these senses, he expresses his existential disposition towards war, love, life and death. All life's unanswered questions are muddled into one state of mind to reach the final conclusion of... "Nothing".

Samir khaddaje  
septembre 2008

## ZENA ASSI

*My City in Carrelage*, 2011  
mixed media and collage on canvas  
220 x 180 cm  
Courtesy of Alwane Gallery

Assi uses acrylic, oil, ink or spray cans, collages of found images, as well as photocopies of her own paintings that she assembles on canvas. By employing a multitude of mediums, she highlights the exaggeration of urban crowding and haphazard development in Beirut.





## HUGUETTE CALAND

*Apple Green and Green Tomatoes*, 2010

mixed media on canvas

159 x 435 cm

Courtesy of Galerie Janine Rubeiz

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In *Apple Green and Green Tomatoes*, Caland creates an elaborate narrative of her childhood memories. Born the daughter of the first Lebanese president Bechara El Khoury (elected in 1943), she lived through the major changes that shaped modern Lebanon. Though she has lived abroad since the 70's, Caland returns to her family, home, and land, through her colourful patchworks.





## CAMILLE ZAKHARIA

*Albert Hajj* - "Elusive Homelands" series, 1999-2000

edition 1/1

photocollage on arches paper

76 x 57 cm

Through photomontage, collage, and print, Zakharia reconstructs his encounters with people and places. His work is influenced by his examination of social patterns, and the dynamics of identity, place, and belonging, in the context of a globalized world. His *Elusive Homelands* series documents the lives of Lebanese families that immigrated to Canada for a better life. Whether due to famine, civil strife, or the lack of opportunities in a small country, Lebanon actually finds itself with 4.2 million inhabitants compared to 14 million emigrants in the Diaspora.



IN MEMORIAM  
**MARIO SABA**  
1964-2011

While in full creative mode in preparing his latest installation for our exhibition, Mario Saba, 47, passed away on August 26, 2011, two months before the scheduled opening at the Royal College of Art.

Thoughtful, sensitive and philosophical Saba embraced the full spectrum of feelings associated with war, dreams in ruins, shattered ambition and the darkest corners of that experience. Entitled *The Temple*, this ongoing work, a complex installation of mechanical shapes, print collages and dissonant noise and sounds was a project he planned on adding to and perfecting as time went by.

His springboard for such experimental installations was usually a painting of architectural renderings inspired by a busy urban scene, which he overlays with abstract symbols and mixed media. He has used metal, the insides of electronic appliances, video and sound to create utopias of war that reference ancient myths such as the city of Babylon.

This tree of life project, this defining work of his career and philosophical thought, stood out at the Katzen Arts Center the American University Museum in Washington, DC in April 2010, where APEAL launched its first show of contemporary Lebanese Art. Washington Post art critic Philip Kennicott noted that “the most opaque and confusing works are the most evocative” when the hurt of war produces art. He described Saba’s *The Temple* as a “wild cacophony of dark thoughts about war and humanity.”

“Wires, twisted metal and old electronic appliances form “a tree of knowledge” in which a video screen, placed like a vulture, shows images of atomic mushroom clouds devouring the world with a cormorant’s appetite. There are religious motifs as well, references to the chalice and the altar, and dark intimations that utopia is always descending into the Babel of war, chaos and destruction,” Kennicott wrote. “It is a vital work that struggles to mean something beyond the surface energy of its anger and angst,” he added. Saba considered this ongoing work as his search for “the ultimate truth” which he hoped to share with the world through our travelling exhibitions.

As Saba was exploring and setting up such an installation for our London exhibit, a work he planned to recreate in London, he was taken away from us much too soon. Saba never missed an opportunity to express his gratitude for what APEAL was trying to accomplish. He revealed in simple pleasures never seeking fortune or fame, content with his ability to express himself artistically after the ravages of war, thrilled with making his son happy and grateful for his parents’ old house in Tripoli.

Soft-spoken, humble and driven by his vision to bring some meaning to the devastation that baffled so many, Saba touched many of us with his work and his life which ended abruptly and too soon. He was unique, graced with an innate talent and a probing mind. He shall be greatly missed.



Highlighted by religious motifs, Saba's modern Temple of Babel makes allusion to the present challenge of building a utopian world in search of the ultimate Truth.

*The Temple*, 2011  
video and mixed media installation

## JEAN-MARC NAHAS

*Dara'a*, 2011  
mixed media installation  
250 x 400 cm

Through his mixed media installation, Nahas portrays and gives voice to the forgotten women of the social revolutions sweeping across the Arab world.

This installation was inspired by the 2011 events that took place in Dara'a, Syria. "I want to portray the figure of the woman and mother as the real victim of these violent events. They work so hard to keep their family's alive and healthy only to have to suffer their loss through wars and revolutions." Nahas chooses to hang these portraits on clothing lines as such traditional domestic chores define the daily routine of many of these women.







**BITTERSWEET NARRATIVES**

## CHAZA CHARAFEDDINE

*Dame aux fruits* - "Divine Comedy" series, 2010  
photography, inkjet print on fine art paper, mounted on aluminium  
edition 5 of 5  
50 x 46 cm  
Courtesy of Agial Art Gallery

Charafeddine's *Divine Comedy* series explores the treatment of beauty in early Islamic art representations (Mughal and Persian miniatures produced between the 16th and the 18th centuries). Charafeddine investigates same sex sexuality by selecting models with androgynous features to reproduce the aesthetic of that period. The series is also comprised of miniature portraits of men dressed in drag that are combined to create a family tree of "brothers & sisters". The natural family unit, consisting of a mother, father and their offspring, is being challenged. In a region which for the most part denounces and shuns homosexual acts, Lebanon is one of the few countries which has become a more open haven and hub for such orientations.



## NADA SEHNAOUI

*To Sweep*, 2010  
Installation

Sehnaoui uses the weaved natural broom, a housekeeping staple in most Lebanese homes, to highlight its symbolic role, the ritualized sweeping of dust and undesirable dirt or cobwebs.

“To sweep seems like one of the basic acts in our lives. From the simple daily life chore to clean ones’ home to the more painful attempt to sweep after bombardments and wars of all sorts, to sweep is an act that seems essential to start again, to rebuild one’s life, to survive after a tragedy. Interestingly many wishes of the installation *To Sweep* have come true in the past months, like to sweep dictatorship, torture, fear... hopefully the rest will follow.” - Nada Sehnaoui



## ABDUL RAHMAN KATANANI

*Family Jumping Over Barbed Wire, 2011*

wood, iron and tin

installation

Courtesy of Agial Art Gallery

Katanani sprinkles his shiny corrugated iron figures mounted on wood with colourful objects gathered in the camps, such as tin, cardboard, bottle caps, old clothes, even barbed wire or pounded cans and utensils as material to create wall sculptures. Stylized and whimsical, the wall art he creates turns into a realistic and vivid portrayal of the camps' often contradictory emotions. One is made to feel the camps' suffering and endurance through a figurative lightness of being through play with the usual contextual junk or debris found in such desolate concentrations of refugees. Children or teenagers at play or some sporting activity reflect the resilience of the human spirit, even in a context of deprivation, despair and hopelessness to give expression to moments of levity. Escape laces Katanani's work with a subtle undertone of pain in playfulness. The scenes he selects masterfully invoke the innocent yearnings of belonging to a familiar place, a playground, a homeland.



## ZENA EL-KHALIL

*Peace Will Guide The Planet And Love Will Steer The Stars -*  
"Ou Ali Mama'ou Khabar?" series, 2010

acrylic and glitter on canvas with ribbons, on compacted insulation board  
155 x 200 cm

Courtesy of Galerie Tanit and the artist

In the summer of 2006, the Israeli army dropped thousands of flyers all over Beirut. Some were warnings to civilians and others were political caricatures. Inspired by these caricatures, El-Khalil's highly politicized works are often masked by the delicate and feminine materials she uses to construct them. Each piece is unique and assembled by pushpins and other temporary adhesives, thus mimicking the instability of Beirut and the ad hoc intervention by the neighbouring countries. *Ou Ali Mamaou' Khabar?* was commended by the Freedom to Create Prize (Singapore).





**FLAVIA CODSI**

*Diverse-city*, 2011

oil on canvas

196 x 362 cm

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Codsi carefully reveals the character and the secret emotions of her subjects in life-size oil paintings that appear realistic. Drawing attention to the subtle, pictorial elements to create the illusion of a reality, she incorporates emotional, social and psychological thematic elements as an extension of the painted visual semblance. In *Diverse-city*, Codsi recreates a telling encounter in which two women intersect through their own shadows, one dressed in a revealing dress, the other in a full abaya or cloak. By using the same model to portray both characters, she immortalizes a common sight through this commentary on the social diversity encountered in her city.





## AYAH BDEIR

*Elusive Electricity*, (Ejet, Ejet), July 2011

neon, steel, motion sensor, cables, custom electronics

In collaboration with Hirumi Nanayakkara

70 x 260 cm

*Elusive Electricity* is an interactive installation that examines people's frustrations with Lebanese electricity, an infamously broken erratic and dysfunctional infrastructure that they have learnt to live without, with, or in spite of. Over the past 25 years, electricity shortages in Lebanon have reached up to 20 hours a day. Power failures and the restoration of light have settled into people's everyday routines like a sinister imaginary persona which disappears, then suddenly comes to life that commands and dictates the rhythms of life across social, financial and sometimes political lines, and seems to constantly be playing hard to get.

*Elusive Electricity* embodies this immaterial persona, recreating the feeling of excitement, speculation, confusion and ultimately tension associated with whether or not electricity "has come", a question that can come up over a dozen times a day in an average home. The piece shines a bright neon light intriguing the passer-by, but as one comes closer, the light flickers, dims, buzzes, and ultimately pops: power is out and the room is dipped plunged into darkness. Electricity is elusive, now it is here, and then it's all gone. The resulting reaction is aggravation that subsides into numbing calm, and hope it will come back soon, albeit the anticipation of its return unannounced and perhaps only temporarily -- but it will always be welcome.





## ANNIE KURKJIAN

*untitled*, 2009  
acrylic on canvas  
90 x 170 cm

Kurkjian's work reflects the conscious struggles of the mind. Her two-dimensional depictions shed light on the condition of human solitude and the constant pressures of the alter-ego, usually represented as a monster or a warped figure. In this work, Kurkjian treats the theme of physical beauty and the pressures of socially prescribed aesthetics in a derisory, humoristic manner.







**CULTURAL NARRATIVES**

## JESSICA KALACHE

*Leila. New York, 2008*  
photograph (digital C-print)  
edition 2/10  
61 x 51 cm

Kalache's photograph is taken in her mother's home in New York. The religious icons displayed on the living room wall are of Lebanese saints and Holy figures. The photographs are part-documentary and part-staged, revealing the strong attachment of Lebanese expatriates to their national identity and culture.

"The image offers a brief caption and an objective view into the subject's personal space, allowing the observer to draw their own conclusions about her social, cultural, and economic realities." - Jessica Kalache



## GINOU CHOUEIRI

*The Muse*, 2011  
acrylic on canvas  
150 x 150 cm

Choueiri's work is influenced by folk tales that spread through the social discourse surrounding her upbringing.

Choueiri's *The Muse* relies on representations and symbols from the Genie and the Lamp, coffee cup readings, angels, Hindu goddesses, Tibetan mandalas, and ancient Egyptian sacred cats.

"Having lived in many different countries all my life, my visual language comes from a mishmash of cultures that have influenced me." - Ginou Choueiri



## LAURE GHORAYEB

*L'émigration Libanaise*, 2011

ink on paper

107 x 150 cm

Courtesy of Galerie Janine Rubeiz

In *La Famille*, Ghorayeb captures the importance that the family unit still holds in Lebanese culture. Paralleled with *L'émigration*, Ghorayeb is dealing with the socio-psychological consequences of emigration on the modern Lebanese family unit. The collage of pictures represents nostalgic images of home, and family memories they strongly hold onto as an incentive to succeed well enough to return.



## JOANA HADJITHOMAS & KHALIL JOREIGE

*Barmé* (Rounds), 2001

7min 30s

Arabic with English and French subtitles

In *Rounds*, a man alone in his car drives about town. During the whole trip, facing the camera at times, he describes his surroundings, which we do not see, and comments about traffic, town planning, the history of Lebanon, contemporary society, songs heard on the radio or memories of war. *Rounds* is an insiders' view of Lebanon's contemporary issues.



## MARWAN SAHMARANI

*Tribute to a Painter, 2011*

oil on canvas

70 x 50 cm (9 pieces)

Sahmarani's oil on canvas rendition of eight artists from the Levant brings to question the documentation of art history in Lebanon. He honours these well-known or amateur painters who lived in the nineteenth century at the centre of this work as an homage to history, art and portraiture.



## GILBERT HAGE

*Eleven Views of Mount Ararat*, 2009

archival print on fine art paper

110 x 90 cm (11 pieces)

Courtesy of Espace Kettaneh Kunigk (Tanit) and the artist

In his *Eleven Views of Mount Ararat*, Hage reveals the interiors of 11 Lebanese-Armenian homes. Each photograph captures 11 different landscapes of Mount Ararat, hanging on the walls of Armenian families, as a precious reminder of homeland and identity. "My aim in this project: to explore the relationship between loss, absence, and the image through this mountain rooted in Armenians' [uprooted] individual and collective memory." - Gilbert Hage



## LAMIA ZIADÉ

Zefet, 2009

vinyl and woven fabric

161 x 141 cm

Courtesy of Galerie Tanit and the artist

“The idea of painting a mezzé (traditional Lebanese meal served in restaurants) germinated in my mind in the fertile Bekaa valley where I was walking around on my way to Hasbaya. It was summertime, it was very hot. I made a stop at an *ahwé* (outdoors coffee shop) to have a Pepsi with ice. On the walls of the terrace were painted: fruits, vegetables and some of the dishes that usually compose a *mezzé*. It was so nice that I wanted to do the same... Which... I did, in my way, as soon as I was back home.” - Lamia Ziadé







**BLURRED NARRATIVES**

## KAREN KALOU

*The Day the Light* - "Rain Series", 2011

digital print mounted on aluminum

edition 3/5

50 x 75 cm

Courtesy of the Running Horse Gallery

In her *Rain Series*, Kalou produces an impressionistic approach to photography. Kalou's technique consists of photographing Beirut through glass windows during rainfall. Through this technique, she creates dreamy landscapes of the city's harsh realities.



## HANIBAL SROUJI

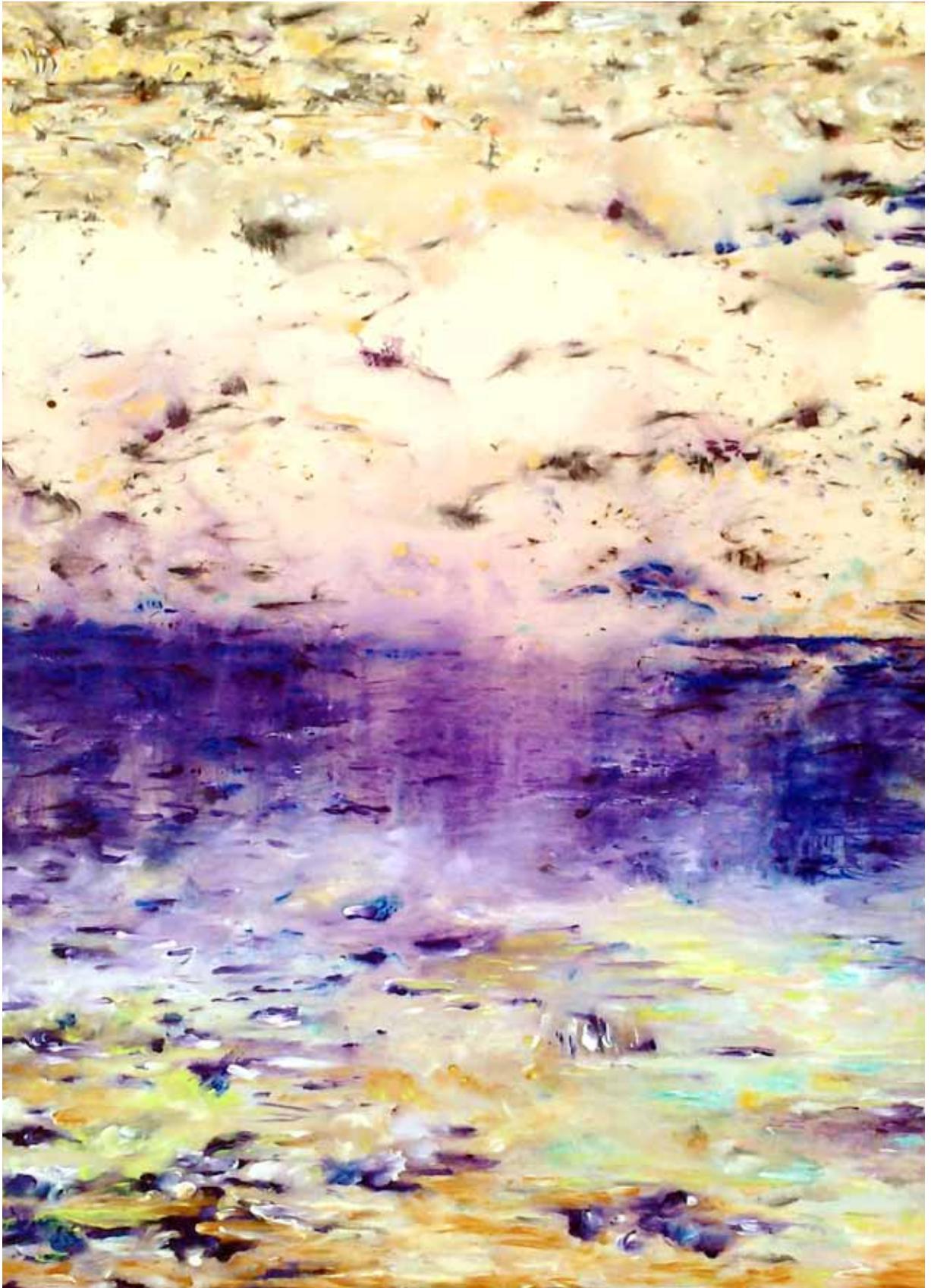
*Terre/Mer*, 2011

acrylic and fire on canvas

242 x 142 cm

Courtesy of Galerie Janine Rubeiz

Using abstract brushwork and fire to trace on raw canvas, Srouji's *Terre/Mer* - (Land/Sea) portrays a lyrical vision of his childhood memory of leaving on a boat as his homeland was drifting into civil war. "An inverted vision," he explains, "when you are at the shore, the land is at the bottom - overlaid by the sea but when in a boat: the water is at your feet overlaid with land... a personal journey between past and present, symbolic feelings, fiction and reality."- Hanibal Srouji



## NANCY DEBS HADAD

*Silk*, 2010

digital print mounted on aluminum

edition 1/6

60 x 90 cm

Courtesy of Espace Kettaneh Kunigk (Tanit) and the artist

Debs succeeded in giving life to mechanics. The artist went on a safari in the heart of Lebanon's jungle of old factories. She captured imaginary animals, totems and figures. In an interplay of shade and light and with close-ups of old machinery and washed out colors, Debs' lens captures a patina which brings the metal to life. A eulogy to a dying industry on the brink of extinction.



## **OUSSAMA BAALBAKI**

*Untitled, 2011*

acrylic on canvas

170 x 200 cm

Courtesy of Agial Art Gallery

Baalbaki's work offers viewers a kind of metonymic image of their own situation. By use of a monochromatic palette, he intensifies the expression of a wide variety of emotions, intentions and meanings. He freezes a frame and immortalizes a moment, a relic of a blurred memory.





## AYMAN BAALBAKI

*Bourj al Murr*, 2011

acrylic on canvas

208 x 143 cm

Courtesy of Mr. Saleh Barakat

In a city that is rapidly rebuilding itself from the ruins of war, still standing is the abandoned Bourj al-Murr, a towering and ugly shrine to a turbulent and blind past history that should not be forgotten and never to be repeated.





## **TAGREED DARGHOUTH**

*The English Rainbow, 2011*  
acrylic on canvas  
120 x 80 cm (7 pieces)  
Courtesy of Agial Art Gallery

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The theme of Darghouth's *The English Rainbow* refers to the highly classified nuclear project RAINBOW, undertaken by the British government after World War II. The English Rainbow is a series of paintings, each of which is a glimpse of the very instant of a nuclear bang, that are executed in the seven colors of the rainbow. "Violet Mist", "Red Rose", "Green Flax", "Yellow Sun", "Blue Danube" are some of the code names that were given to the nuclear bombs. Darghouth inspects the reason and the absurdity behind these names usually utilised to connote joy and hope.





# BIOGRAPHIES

## **ASSI, Zena**

Assi was born in 1974 in Lebanon and lives and works in Beirut. She studied fine arts at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts (ALBA-Beirut) and currently teaches art in various universities in Beirut. In Lebanon, she regularly exhibits her work in numerous cultural institutes such as the Sursock Museum. Assi has taken part in international exhibits in Bahrain, Cairo and the UAE. Her mixed media works on canvas focus on the daily lives of Beirut's citizens and the relation between people and their environment.

## **BAALBAKI, Ayman**

Born in the village of Odeisse in South Lebanon in 1975, Baalbaki graduated from the Lebanese University in Beirut in 1998. He went on to graduate work at L'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, France where he also obtained his doctorate in the Art of Images and Contemporary Art. Baalbaki has held several exhibitions in Lebanon, France and the Arab World. He won the first prize in a 1996 competition for the reconstruction of Beirut sponsored by Lebanon's Ministry of Culture. The essence of some of Baalbaki's artwork stems from the Lebanese civil war and its reality. His paintings and art installations reflect aspects of his life as an internal refugee in Beirut and the reconstruction efforts in the post-war era.

## **BAALBAKI, Oussama**

Baalbaki was born in Lebanon in 1978. He attended the Lebanese University School of Fine Arts and has been featured in numerous exhibitions in Lebanon at various cultural institutes and museums such as the Sursock Museum. Baalbaki also took part in the Lebanese Plastic Arts exhibit in Algeria. His paintings' subject matter and style stem from a monochromatic expressionist realism.

## **BDEIR, Ayah**

Bdeir, born in 1982, is an engineer and interactive artist. She lives and works between Beirut and New York. Bdeir has an undergraduate degree in computer engineering and sociology from the American University of Beirut and received her Masters of Arts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab. Her work has been exhibited at numerous venues around the world including the New Museum (NYC), ArsElectronica (Austria), Badcuyp (Amsterdam) and this past July at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA, NYC). In 2008, Bdeir was awarded a fellowship at Eyebeam Art + Technology Center and taught graduate courses at New York University and Parsons School of Design. She has an ongoing affiliation with Eyebeam as an honorary fellow. Bdeir is a creative technologist, using experimental tools to look at deliberate and subconscious representations of identity, while sidestepping the creation of boundaries set by disciplines or cultures.

### **CALAND EL KHOURY, Huguette**

Caland was born in Beirut in 1931. She studied art at the American University of Beirut for four years until 1968 and moved to Paris in 1970. She has lived alternately in Paris and New York and worked under Romanian sculptor George Apostu. Her paintings have been exhibited at the Pacific Design Center and at the Atricultural Art Center, in Los Angeles. Since 1993, her work has been shown in Beirut, Rome, Tokyo, Paris, Monte Carlo, Barcelona and Italy. Caland's work hangs in collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain in Paris and is part of permanent exhibitions in Monaco and Beirut. Caland has dabbled in other fields of creativity in addition to her painting such as the illustration of books, sculpting and screen-writing and she has designed a line of clothing for famed French designer Pierre Cardin. Through her renowned geometric patchwork on canvas, Caland tells the stories of the people and places that have touched and inspired her. She resides in Los Angeles where she has lived since 1988.

### **CODSI, Flavia**

Born in 1961, self-taught Lebanese painter Flavia Codsí worked as interior designer and free-lanced interior perspective drawings all through the Lebanese civil war. Between 1994 and 1996, she won three consecutive prizes from the Sursock Museum's Salon d' Automne in Lebanon. Since the late nineties, Codsí has exhibited and participated in numerous collective exhibitions, in Sharjah, Dubai, Sydney and London, where she was notably featured in Lebanon, the Artists' View II, in 2004. She was awarded the first prize of the Lebanese Diaspora International Art Exhibition in Beirut in 2010. Her realist oil on canvas works reveal the subtle sensitivities of her life-size characters.

### **CHARAFEDDINE, Chaza**

Born in 1979, former dancer turned art curator, Chaza Charafeddine lives and works as a visual artist in Lebanon. Her body of work constitutes photographic collages. Her current focus is inspired by the Islamic art of the Mongolian period and by Persian miniatures produced between the 16th and 18th centuries. Her ultimate goal is to draw comparisons between the aesthetics of popular imagination and the concept of the perfect beauty.

### **CHOUEIRI, Ginou**

Choueiri was born in Beirut in 1976. After completing a degree in marketing at the University of Connecticut, she returned to Beirut and started working in advertising. Seven years later, she traveled to Barcelona to participate in Metafora's International Art Workshop and has been a visual artist ever since. Her work has been exhibited in Europe and the Middle East in venues such as the Contemporary Cultural Center of Barcelona, the Mario Merz Foundation in Turin, Italy, the Beirut Art Lounge, and the Mark Hachem Gallery (Beirut). Currently based in Beirut, Choueiri uses familiar symbols as her visual vocabulary to create her art installations and works on canvas.

### **DARGHOOTH, Tagreed**

Born in Saida in 1979, Lebanon, Darghouth earned a diploma in art education and studied fine arts at the Lebanese University in Beirut. She, then went on to study space art at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. She was awarded the first prize at cm3 by the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris in 2003 and the second prize of Darat al Funun's Summer Academy in 2000 in Jordan. Since 2004, Darghouth has exhibited in Beirut, Istanbul, Dubai, Qatar, Amman, Paris, and Buenos Aires. Darghouth's figurative paintings force her public to confront difficult and controversial subjects, such as the desire of the Lebanese society to acquire Western features through the excessive use of plastic surgery, and the shocking conditions of female domestic helpers.

### **DEBBANE, Benoit**

Debbane was born in 1974 in Beirut where he lives and works. He studied architecture at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA-Beirut) and currently works as a freelance illustrator for various advertisement agencies. The majority of Debbane's artwork is graffiti inspired. He is part of the growing popular culture shaping his generation living in Beirut.

### **DEBS HADAD, Nancy**

Born in 1967, in Nigeria, Debs has been photographing factories since she was a teenager living in Africa. She studied photography at the Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK) in Lebanon. She now lives and works in Lebanon where she regularly exhibits her work in numerous cultural institutes such as the Sursock Museum, Unesco Palace and the Centre Culturel Français. Remaining faithful to the tradition of photography and without any digital retouching, Debs immortalizes the dying industrial world of her hometown and has ambitions to document the factories on the brink of extinction around the world.

### **GHORAYEB, Laure**

Born in 1931 in Lebanon, Ghorayeb creates intricate detailed ink drawings that represent chronicles of her life and the events and people that marked her. Since the sixties, Ghorayeb regularly exhibits her drawings in Lebanon, in solo and group shows. She has also been featured in Biennales in Paris, Bagdad and Alexandria (Egypt), and has taken part in collective exhibitions and art fairs across Europe and the Middle East, including ArtParis, ArtParis Abu Dhabi (2007) and Art Dubai (2009-2011). In parallel to her artistic career, Ghorayeb regularly contributes art reviews to the Lebanese press, and has published poems, novellas and art books.

### **HADJITHOMAS, Joana and JOREIGE, Khalil**

Hadjithomas and Joreige, both born in 1969 in Beirut, have worked together as artists as well as filmmakers, shooting fiction films and documentaries. Their work has been shown at the Modern Art Oxford, Frankfurter Kunstverein (Germany), De Appel (Amsterdam), Charlottenborg (Copenhagen) and Galerie In situ (Paris). Their two documentary movies, *Khiam* from 2000 and *El film al mafkoud* (the lost film) from 2003, have received international recognition, and have been screened in several film festivals, art centres and international art museums. They are also lecturers and authors of several publications including: *Beyrouth: Fictions Urbaines*, *OK I'm Going to Show you my Work*, *A state of Latency*, *Latency*, *Like Oasis in the Desert*, *The Battle of the Hotels*. They both teach at St Joseph University in Beirut, Joana gives screenwriting courses, Khalil esthetics and experimental video. Their movies are anecdotal and are centred on the relationship of the individual and his society.

**HAGE, Gilbert**

Hage was born in 1966, and is a photographer living, working and teaching in Beirut. Since 1989, he has taken part in exhibitions in Berlin (Haus der Kulturen der Welt in), Vienna and Madrid. In 2006, he participated in exhibitions "Arabise Me" at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and this past year at the 2011 Sharjah Biennale. Hage's photographic projects include *Strings* (2008), *Pillows* (2007), *Screening Berlin* (2006), *242 cm2* (2006), *Homeland 1* (2006), *Phone [Ethics]* (2006), *Here and Now* (2005). Hage is also the co-publisher and co-editor, with Jalal Toufic, of Underexposed Books. His body of work is a continuation of his research where he studies the concept of globalization and identity, the notions of power, history, and geography.

**KALACHE, Jessica**

Born in Beirut in 1983 and having grown up abroad, Kalache's interest in photography was greatly influenced by the ways in which images were used by news media to depict the socio-political conditions of post-war Lebanon. Having realized the power of imagery to sway public perception, at the age of 13 Jessica took to creating her own photographic archive of Lebanon throughout her upbringing between there and the U.S. After earning a B.A. in political science from New York University, where her ideas concerning the role of images were further shaped by theoretical studies in comparative and international relations, she pursued an intensive program of conceptual and technical academic work at the International Center of Photography in New York. She continues to develop projects that represent culture and identity through a sociological lens.

**KALOU, Karen**

Born in 1979, Kalou has been photographing since 1996. After completing her Bachelor's degree at Concordia University in Montreal, she went on to study commercial photography at Dawson's Institute of Photography, and she has since been working in the field across the Middle East. Karen, as part of Karen & Josette is a prize winner of The Deutsche Bank Creative Award 2010 and has held solo and group exhibitions in Beirut.

**KARAM, Nadim**

Born in 1957, Karam obtained his degree in architecture from the American University of Beirut and his doctorate in architecture from Tokyo University in 1989. He founded the Atelier Hapsitus, a multi-disciplinary company in Lebanon which has created large-scale urban city projects in Beirut, Korea, Prague, London, Tokyo and Nara, the capital of Honshu Island in Japan. Karam's work has been exhibited in the Liverpool, Kwangju Art and Venice Architecture Biennales and he curated Lebanon's participation in the first Rotterdam Biennale. He has taught at the Shibaura Institute of Technology in Tokyo and at the American University of Beirut. He has also served as dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Art and Design at Notre Dame University in Lebanon from 2000-2003. His 1997-2000 urban art project for central Beirut was one of five worldwide that were selected by the Van Alen Institute in New York in 2002 to highlight their contribution to the rejuvenation of city life and morale following disaster, in reference to Lebanon's war. He received three Australian awards for his commission by Victoria State in 2006 for *The Travelers*, a permanent installation. A current ongoing project entitled *The Cloud* is inspired by the Gulf city of Dubai. Karam is the author of three publications entitled *Voyage* in 2000, *Urban Toys* in 2006 and *The Cloud, the Desert and the Arabian Breeze* in 2007.

### **KATANANI, Abdul Rahman**

Born in Beirut in 1983, Palestinian artist Abdul Rahman Katanani's work intensely depicts the surroundings of his fellow Palestinian refugees, yet never delivers evidently sad or depressing messages. Katanani has been exhibiting in caricature and art shows in Beirut, Paris and Kuala Lumpur since 2001. He was twice awarded prizes by the Sursock Museum in Beirut at the occasion of their Salon d' Automne in 2009, the Young Artist Prize and in 2008, a Special Mention of the jury. He is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University.

### **KHADDAJE, Samir**

Khaddaje was born in 1939, in the Chouf mountains of Lebanon. A professional draftsman, he developed an interest in the arts and quickly assimilated the European artistic practices of the twentieth century through many visits to European capitals where he participated in collective painting workshops and group theatre events. The evolution of his personal style in painting was halted by the continued aggravation of the civil disturbances in Lebanon. Khaddaje moved to Paris in 1990 where he was granted a work and a living space in the basement of the Cognac-Jay Hospital. His first individual representation of war, after years of silence, came out as strident bursts of shrapnel. It was displayed under the aptly chosen name of "Eclats" in 1992, in the exhibition hall of Montreuil, a space large enough to accommodate the 300 mostly very large paintings he had created during his first years in Paris. Numerous exhibitions and installations followed in France, England and Lebanon.

### **EI-KHALIL, Zena**

Born in 1979, El-Khalil has lived in Lagos, London, New York City and Beirut. A visual artist, writer and cultural activist; she holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts in New York City and a Bachelor in graphic design from the American University of Beirut. El-Khalil works in a variety of formats and mediums: Painting, installations, performance, mixed media, collage and writing. She has exhibited internationally, in New York, San Francisco, Miami, London, Paris, Tokyo, and Dubai. She has also held solo exhibitions in Lagos, London, Munich, Turin and Beirut. El-Khalil also conducts a yearly performance entitled, "The Pink Bride", where she participates in the Beirut International Marathon wearing a big pink wedding dress. She also actively promotes emerging and under-represented Arab artists through several projects like xanadu\* a non-profit art collective started in New York (xanaduart.com) in 2001, now based in Beirut, of which she is a founder and co-director. Themes that are central to her work include issues of violence as well as gender using materials found throughout Beirut. In 2008, el-Khalil completed her first novel, *Beirut, I Love You*.

### **EI KHOURY, Fouad**

El Khoury was born in 1952 in Paris to Lebanese parents. After completing his degree in architecture in London in 1979, he turned to photography, producing *Beyrouth Aller-Retour*, a report on daily life in war-torn Lebanon (1984). His work on the urban landscape of Marseille in 1986 resulted in an exhibition at the Musée de la Vieille Charité and in a sustained interest in photographing cities. In 1989, he joined the Rapho agency and won the Prix Medicis Hors les Murs, before spending a year in Egypt retracing "the Steps of Gustave Flaubert and Maxime Du Camp." In 1991, he took part in a collective mission in downtown Beirut in the aftermath of the war, and his work was published in an album *Beirut City Centre*, followed by an exhibition at the Paris Palais de Tokyo in 1993. Soon after, he initiated several stays in Gaza and the Occupied Territories, resulting in the publication of *Palestine, l'envers du miroir* (1996), and the shooting of his first film

*Jours Tranquilles en Palestine* produced by Arte for the 50th anniversary of the creation of Israel. He then published two other books: *Liban Provisoire* (1998) and *Suite Egyptienne* (1999). The Paris-based Maison Européenne de la Photographie held a retrospective of his work in 2002, including his film *Lettres à Francine*. He is a co-founder of the Beirut-based Arab Image Foundation.

### **KURKJIAN, Annie**

Kurkjian was born in Beirut in 1972. After working as a bank clerk, she returned to college to study fine arts. Her body of work is linked to philosophical theories, theological thought and symbolism, literature and poetry. She returned to school to pursue another degree in psychology, at which point she worked very closely with autistic patients. Her works on canvas deliver poignant messages on the human state of mind and the constant battle with the alter-ego.

### **MASSOUD, Mary-Lynn & NAWAM, Rasha**

Born in 1981, Massoud studied ceramics at La Manufacture de Sèvres in France. Since completing her degree, she has been working and teaching in Beirut. Her ceramic works have been part of a number of group exhibitions in France, Lebanon and Jordan.

Born in 1962, Nawam is a graduate of the American University of Beirut and studied ceramics in Lebanon at Nathalie Khayat's studio and in the US. She combines her work in ceramics with a career in real estate management and has participated in group exhibitions in Lebanon and other countries.

Both artists work together to produce handcrafted earthen works that are both functional and creative.

### **MOGARBEL, Samar**

Born in 1958, Mogarbel lives and works in Beirut. Her ceramics have been exhibited at various art galleries in Lebanon as well as in international art shows, including the Shanghai Biennale, and the Cairo Biennale. Her work is part of various public museum collections, including the Kraftagan in Malaysia, the Millesgarden Museum in Sweden and the Sursock Museum in Lebanon. Mogarbel has dabbled in other fields of creativity in addition to sculpture. She has tried her hand at short screen-writing and production, as well as excavation and restoration digs and projects at Beirut heritage sites. She currently teaches ceramics at the Lebanese American University in Beirut.

### **NAHAS, Jean-Marc**

Nahas was born in Beirut in 1963. He studied at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He returned to Beirut in 1988 where he has sought to create a dynamic art movement with fellow Lebanese artists. In his work, Nahas does not aim for the aesthetic but for the reality and intensity he can evoke through his illustrations. He searches for colour and seeks inspiration from human beings though he considers himself a misanthrope. Crowds are always present in his work as an antidote to loneliness. He would like to be able to say as one big master said before him that all his life he has been working on one painting only. Themes of war and violence dominate his work, especially his sketch-style narrative patchworks.

### **SABA, Mario**

Saba was born in Tripoli, Lebanon, in 1964. He studied decoration and architecture and then went to Russia to pursue an interest in painting. He returned to Lebanon and read psychology at the Lebanese University. He considers himself an experimental artist who broaches all kinds of techniques and explores various approaches in his artwork. Saba has tried his hand at mixed media, art installations, conceptual structures, photography and various other media. He has tried to adapt different approaches to his projects to better express through art the meaning of war memories.

### **SAHMARANI, Marwan**

Sahmarani was born in Lebanon in 1970. He left Beirut in 1989 for Paris and studied at the Ecole Supérieure d' Art Graphique. He now lives and works in Montreal. His work has been exhibited in Beirut, Montreal, Dubai, New York, Washington DC and Ireland. Sahmarani's oil paintings, drawings, ceramics and performance artwork are reflective of the mediums themselves and of sociopolitical issues in the Middle East. In 2007, Dubai's The Third Line gallery showcased his series entitled *Can You Teach Me How to Fight?* The paintings and drawings of this exhibit retraced battles occurring in the Middle East between the 10th and 14th centuries. He was the 2009 recipient of the Abraaj Capital prize of Abu Dhabi.

### **SEHNAOUI, Nada**

Sehnaoui was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1958. She studied at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Université de Paris IV Sorbonne, in Paris, where she read history. She attended Boston University for her graduate studies in film production after obtaining a graduate degree in sociology at the University of Paris X Nanterre in Paris and a diploma in cinematography at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris III. Her installations question the use of public spaces in relation to collective memory and democracy-building. She is a visual artist whose paintings and installations deal with war, personal memory, collective amnesia, identity and the recording of history.

### **SROUJI, Hannibal**

Srouji was born in Lebanon in 1957 and studied fine arts at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Nîmes, France. He has taken part in numerous exhibitions around the world, namely at Europ'Art in Geneva in 1997, Art Paris, Carrousel du Louvre in 2000 and Star't 2000 in Strasbourg, France and The Gallery in Cork Street in London in 2004. Srouji's artwork is part of various private collections in Lebanon, Canada and Algeria. He is the recipient of several awards and honors, among them La Bourse de Recherche et Perfection from the Quebec Ministry of Culture from 1985 to 1987, the Grand Prix du 49ieme Salon de Saint-Cloud from the Avelines Museum in France and the Mérite et Dévouement Français' Arts Silver Medal.

### **AL-SOLH, Mounira**

Al-Solh was born in Beirut in 1978. She studied painting at the Lebanese University in Beirut, and fine arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. Her work is multidisciplinary, including video, installation, writing, photography and painting. Al-Solh has been working on themes related to Lebanese immigrants and Lebanese socio-political and religious conflicts. Her approach is not documentary but fictional, even fantastical. While transforming dramatic situations into ironical ones, she seems to be making conscious parallels between socio-political issues and aesthetics. She recently received the Uriöt Prize from the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Her video *Rawane's Song* was screened in several film festivals, amongst them Video Brasil which gave it the jury's prize for 2007.

**TARAZI, Alfred**

Born in 1980, Tarazi lives and works in Beirut, where he studied graphic design at the American University of Beirut. Since 2006, he has participated in group shows in Lebanon, Kuwait, Dubai, Lisbon and London. He also exhibited at the Slick Art Fair in Paris in 2010 and at Art Dubai in 2011. He is a member of Atelier Hapsitus; a multi-disciplinary group founded and led by Nadim Karam. Tarazi has participated in the creation of large-scale temporary and permanent projects for various cities. He is also the Instigator of The Feel Collective, a group of cultural activists which aims to provoke and infuse its social environment with creativity. Tarazi works in a variety of media-photography, sculpture, collage, mixed media installations. However, a common thread links his many artistic endeavours, namely the processing and recounting the memory of Lebanon's civil war memories.

**ZAKHARIA, Camille**

Zakharia was born in 1962 in Beirut where he studied engineering at the American University of Beirut. Ever since his departure from Lebanon in 1985, he used his prized camera to document his experience as an expatriate. By 1997, he was based in Halifax, Canada, where he pursued his Bachelors' degree in fine arts at the NSCAD University. Camille Zakharia has exhibited across North America, Europe and the Middle East. Among those, his work was shown at the Venice Biennale for Architecture in 2010 under the Bahrain Pavilion, and at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. His works on emigration are part of the permanent collection at the Canadian Museum of Civilizations in Quebec.

**ZIADÉ, Lamia**

Ziadé was born in Beirut in 1968 and currently resides in Paris, where she moved to at the age of eighteen. Ziadé started her career as a fabric designer for fashion houses such as Jean-Paul Gaultier and as a designer of album covers and movie posters. She is also a prolific illustrator, having contributed to numerous international fashion and news magazines and illustrated five books for children and one for adults. In 2010, she also published *Bye Bye Babylon (1975-1979)*, an illustrated novel set in the same period. Ziadé has had solo shows in Beirut, Paris, Los Angeles and Munich. She has also taken part in numerous group exhibitions and art fairs, such as the FIAC (Paris, 2006), ArtParis (2008), Pulse (New York, 2008), Slick (Paris, 2007), Shanghai Art (2007), and the Armory Show (New York, 2010).

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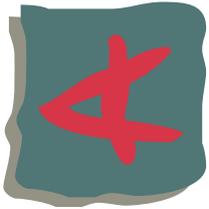
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