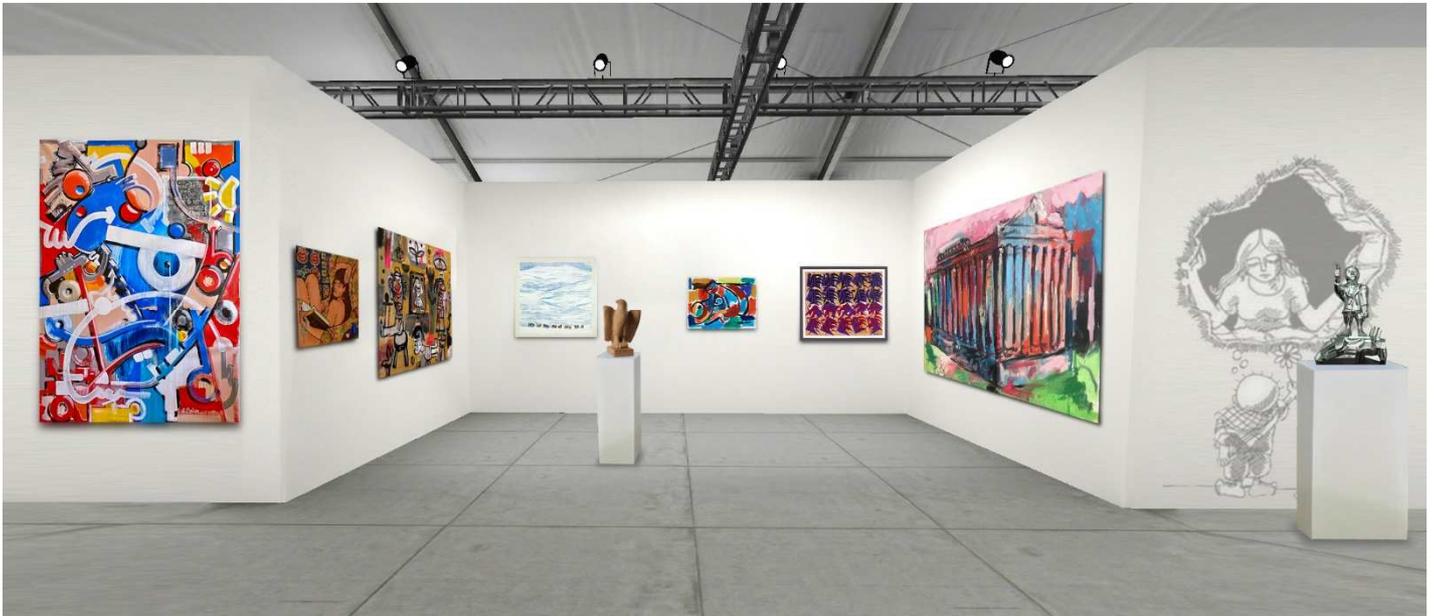


mark hachem

PARIS | BEIRUT | NEW YORK



“Bonjour Beirut”- The Beirut Art Scene

August 21st to September 4th, 2020

online exhibition on Artsy.com

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« Aujourd'hui n'est que la mémoire d'hier, et demain le rêve d'aujourd'hui »

Khalil Gibran

Mark Hachem Gallery launches an online collective exhibition on Artsy, a tribute to the Lebanese art scene. Lebanon has always been prized... an Eden that collapses under its own beauty, a forest of cedar trees cut down by those who protect it. But the Cedar sprouts into saplings tended by the moisture of hope with each catastrophe. Beirut sits as a jewel on the Mediterranean, a city of happiness and creativity. It's a phoenix in continuous rise, it denies its naysayers, it gathers humans into its beauty and energy, it beckons your call.



Helen Khal (1923-2009)

Alfred Basbous (1924-2006)

Hamed Abdalla (1917-1985)

Beirut in the 60s was the go-to place, the hotbed of artistic and intellectual life in the Middle East. A cosmopolitan city, Beirut consumed whomever landed on its shores. Artists from different nationalities and faiths got together and evolved, travelling back and forth between Beirut and Europe. This was Beirut's golden age and its glow was felt throughout the world.

Alfred Basbous was referred to as the “second Rodin” by Lebanese newspapers at the time of his first exhibition at Galerie Alecco Saab in 1958. Two years later **Helen El Khal**, pressed by her entourage, also delivered her first ever exhibition in the same gallery. In 1956, **Hamed Abdalla** left Egypt for Denmark, where he lived for 10 years before settling down in France for the next 25 years. In 1958 the French government invited Basbous, the poet Adonis and other Lebanese artists to come and produce art in France. Ten years later it is the same Adonis who played a vital role in making the “Det Skabende Ord”* exhibition happen in Beirut at **Gallery One – the first permanent art gallery in Lebanon**, founded by Yusuf and Helen El Khal, small world.

*“Det Skabende Ord” : “The Creative Word”



Hamed Abdalla, *Source*, 1953, 65 x 50 cm, Watercolour on silk paper

Abdalla's work starts with calligraphy that evolves into human figures. He illustrates each word with the actual letters that it is composed of and by doing so he limits the choice of shapes available to him. Above “*la source*” 1953 represents the first painting from this series that influenced the masterpiece “*Les porteuses d'eau*” 1956, emblematic work in oil at the Metropolitan Museum.



Alfred Basbous, *Eagle* 1987, Lebanese stone, 50 x 25 x 15 cm

From 1994 to 2004, **Alfred Basbous** organized the International Symposium of Sculpture in Rachana, Lebanon, where famous sculptors from around the world were invited to create, sculpt and exhibit their works alongside his own.

Throughout his life, Basbous won many awards including the "Prix de l' 'Orient" in Beirut in 1963 and the "Price of Biennale in Alexandria" in 1974. When he died in 2006, the President of the Lebanese Republic, in order to honor him, awarded him the "Medal of the Lebanese Order of Merit in Gold."



Hussein Madi, *Untitled 2019*, Acrylic on canvas, 135 x 135 cm

Hussein Madi's iconic style of oversized geometric figures, sensual yet with primal lines also reflects the influence of European modern art masters such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. On the other hand, his structured abstract works, with a timeless aesthetic and a harmony of colour and form include the repetition of motifs with rounded edges that draw on the abstract designs of Islamic art.

Madi has lived between Rome and Beirut from 1973 to 1986. Since then, he has been living in Beirut and continues to be one of Lebanon's most celebrated artists with a wide international recognition.



Chaouki Chamoun, *How beautiful of childhood to reinvent peace*, 2014, 112 x 112 cm, Acrylic on Canvas

From the riverbeds at its foothills to the heights of its snowy summit, Mount Sannine has fascinated Lebanese painter **Chaouki Chamoun** since childhood.

Born in the village of Sariine, in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, facing the east side of the majestic Mount Sannine, Chaouki Chamoun is one of Lebanon's most renowned living artists. Although he left his birthplace decades ago, it lives on in both his heart and his work. Though no written records exist, Chamoun estimates that his family's history in the village dates back at least a few hundred years.

"When the snow covers Sannine it makes me forget sadness in the eyes of earth."

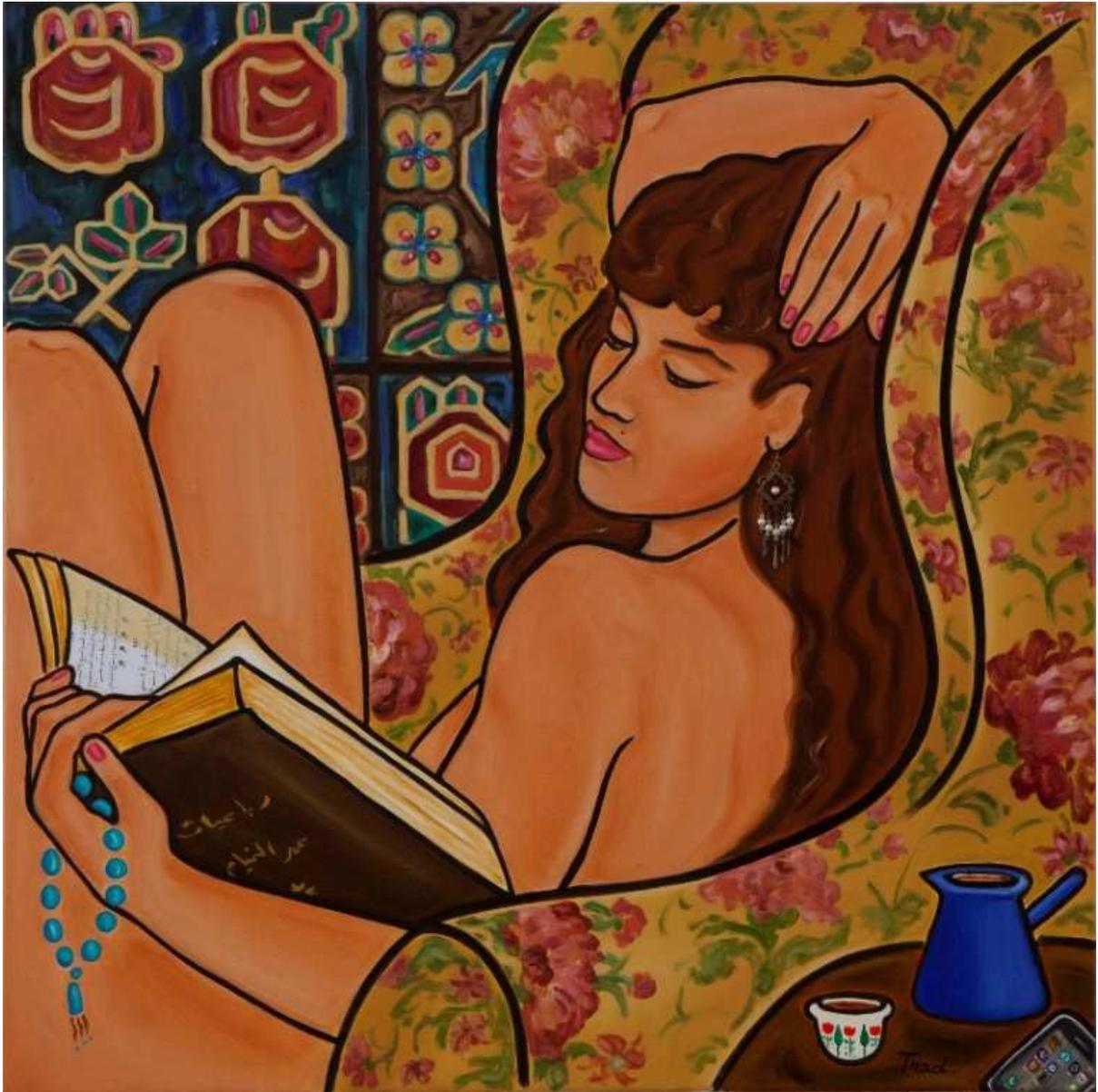


Left: Dia Azzawi, Handala "Good Morning Beirut," 2016, Stainless Steel, 67 x 45 x 30 cm



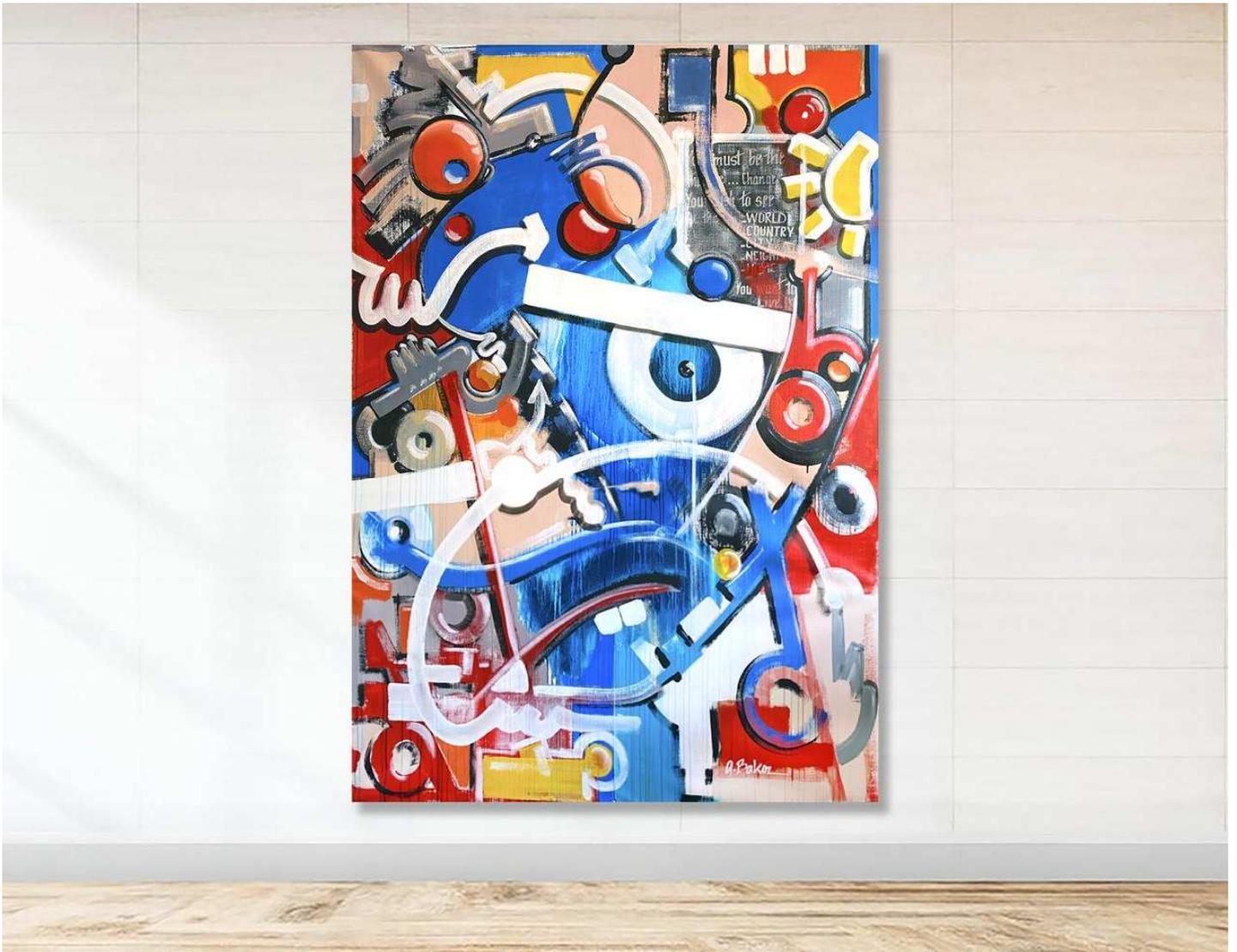
Right: archives "L'Ambassadeur" newspaper august 1982 drawing by Naji Al-Ali

The sculpture of **Dia Azzawi** animates a caricature made by the artist Naji Al-Ali in 1982 when the Lebanese war broke out which depicts a young girl being gifted a sunflower by a young boy as she stands peering out of a heart shaped crater in the wall of her ruined home. This emblematic surreal image of hope and love coined in the term ' Bonjour Beyrouth' is a poem by Khader Salameh, a poem that memorises in words the life on the streets of Beyrouth.



Mona Trad, *Omar Kayyam II*, oil on canvas, 80 x 80 cm

Mona Trad's work revolves around her homeland and the women of her homeland in particular, in hopes of delivering an image of Lebanon and its culture that is no longer defined by destruction and division, but rather beauty and love. Having that goal in mind, many of Mona's paintings have been constructed on wooden doors and windows that were collected from wreckages that were destroyed through the wars in Lebanon, providing a sense of rebirth for these inanimate objects that once held memories that spanned several spectrums.



Ghazi Baker, 2020: *the year of living vicariously*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 196 x 145 cm

Currently working and living in Beirut, **Ghazi Baker's** style could be characterized as an exotic cocktail of lines, post-structuralism art, cerebral and deliberately anti-thematic. Always looking to highlight the process itself, his artistic influences include comic book art, music, movies, motorcycle culture, esoteric imagery, everyday life and the human condition.



Charbel Samuel Aoun, *Dark Matter* 2016, Stones, Cement, Pine Needles on Construction Wood, 140 x 190 cm

Witnessing the destruction of his hometown Beirut, watching its transformation and the process of its reconstruction, over the years **Charbel Samuel Aoun** saw his city mutate and morph because of the destructions. Many old and ancient buildings that defined the pre-war civic spaces were destroyed to be replaced by new structures, violently disrupting the urban fabric.

“Seeking a judge to dream with, to stand up for the rights of a population...

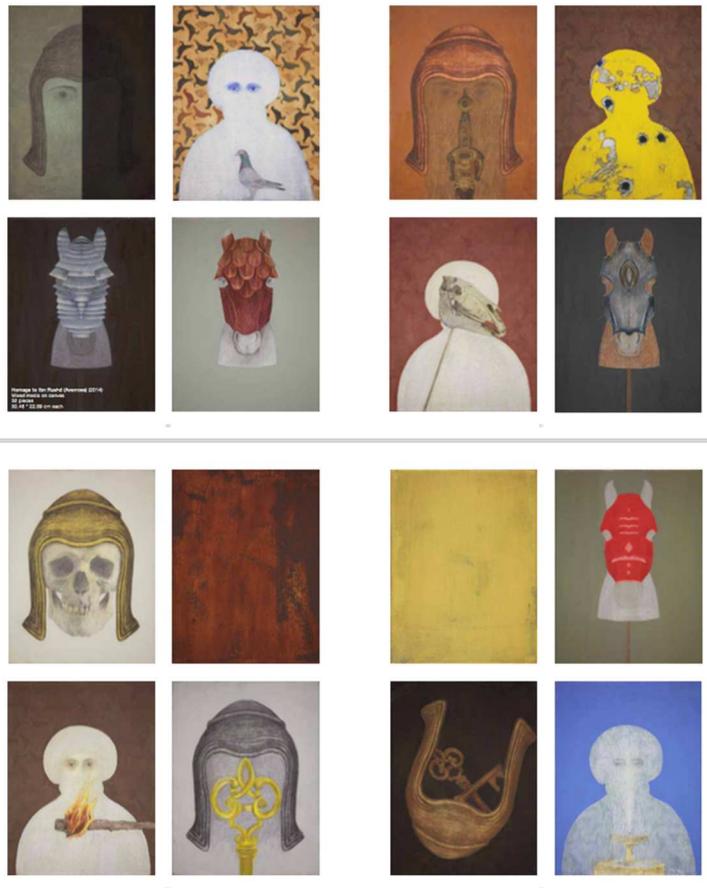
A judge to be free, daring against a rotten belonging, shouting for freedom, rightfulness, justice as that of the many, the many to dirt, but maybe to soil, for children as we were, are those to experience what we offer, what we accept, where again, a life we don't deserve till we move for purity.”

Charbel Samuel Aoun



Zena Assi, News of the world, 2018, 65,5 x 50 cm, mixed media on canvas

Colour, humans, animated conversations are auguries to happiness after devastation. **Zena Assi** makes portraits of city people. The cosmopolitan Beirut, anonymous creatures adorn her canvas, sometimes craning out of walls of apartments on narrow streets at times exploding out of a tin.



Left: Nazar Yahya, *Inheritance* 2016, 65,5 x 50 cm, bronze

Right : Nazar Yahya, *Hommage to Ibn Rushd (Averroes)*, 2014, mixed media on canvas, 30,5 x 23 cm (each)

Reconquista by **Nazar Yahya** is serie of artworks that looks at the destruction of a civilization by an invading force and looks back to the past of the Arab civilization of Al Andalus.

Through his work, Nazar is showing us how this relates to the current destruction of societies in the Middle eastern world. Nazar looks at this subject from his viewpoint of loss: Nazar had to leave his home in war-ravaged Iraq, and recently made his home in Houston, Texas. His understanding of loss and the pain of leaving his homeland is clear in the sadness shown in the subject matter presented in this series.



Raouf Rifai, *Karakouz*, mixed media on canvas, 150 x 150 cm

Raouf Rifai's Darwiches are almost always accompanied by a rich array of explicit and implicit Middle Eastern symbols. A central aspect of Rifai's aesthetics is his lifelong concern with the possibilities of parody and wit; our awareness of this factor opens to us the cultural dimensions of Rifai's art.

"My art's main subject is Humanity; it is nourished by the history of our civilization and our heritage. My work is a mirror re-flexing the reality of our Middle Eastern society's transitions and evolution."

Raouf Rifai



George Merheb, *Untitled 2018*, mixed media on canvas, 82 x 82 cm

George Merheb, always, is commemorating those festivities which made the Mediterranean the center of the world : Baalbeck, Carthage, Athens, Pompei, Rome, Byblos. It s about the joy and the tears, the beauty and the mask, venus and deception, the good times and the bad times, glamour and flamboyance. This refined artist gets inspired from the small things of life that constitute his micro-environment : his village of Kfarchima, his vaulted house, the terracotta tiles on the ground, the tarnished stucco in his sun-bathed studio, the scent of jasmin and thym, the ever present amphoras and the archeological remnants of the glorious days.



Bassam Kyrillos, *Understanding Chaos I* 2017, Aluminium, 40 x 26 x 11 cm

Bassam Kyrillos creates sculptures of an alternate urbanity ; a place bearing witness to its history and simultaneously regenerating itself. These structures bear the marks of war and also burst with organic potential, searching for strategies of survival that are essential to the continuation of life. Using metal, cement and soil, which are markers of place and habitation, Kyrillos forges sculptural monuments which honour the devastation and hope that exist at the foundations of life.



Marwan Chamaa, *Ba7ibik ya Hilwa*, 2009, oil on canvas, 110 x 150cm

In the late 80s during college **Marwan Chamaa** experimented with a select group of artists on different types of media and techniques which led to the establishment of Art Factory, a graphic design production house. Unfortunately, the company itself fell victim to the Lebanese civil war, but its creative spirit still lives on in Marwan's work.

A painter, designer, and storyteller, **Marwan Chamaa** produces neo-pop art. His artworks convey contemplation about consumerism, and communal identity. In 2014, the French magazine, *St. Tropez House*, dubbed Marwan in their August 5 issue as the “King of Middle Eastern neo-pop art”.



Charles Khoury, *Untitled 2018-2019*, Acrylic on jute, 100 x 170 cm

Charles Khoury is a member of the Salon d'Automne of the Sursock Museum, the International Association of Fine Arts - Unesco in Paris, and the Association of Lebanese Artists. His art is a mixture of intertwined primal shapes and playful colours.



Shadi Abousada, *Gemmayzeh at Night*, 2016, mixed media on canvas, 120 x 100 cm

Shadi AbouSada's paintings come from a time that doesn't bare seriousness and where hallucinations have become the closest thing to reality. To him, dreams have become hung on walls and have kept these walls from being a soulless deaf object. Those walls and those dreams are the source of his inspiration, and those memories that remain like shadows untouched, those copied speeches and newspapers, that memory of love to a soldier, the recurring history, the destruction of childhood and humanity.



Samer Mohdad, *Beirut Martyrs square in 1991*. From the series "Beyrouth Mutations" published in a book by Actes Sud in France 2012, Print on baryte paper, 110 x 135 cm



Samer Mohdad, *Kortoba village, Mount Lebanon, 2005*. From the series "Mes Ententes" published in a book by Arab Images in 2005, Print on baryte paper 80 x 120 cm

Throughout 35 years of photography, **Samer Mohdad** has endeavored to picture the profound mutations of the Arab world and to document the sociocultural and the human face of the Near and Middle East.

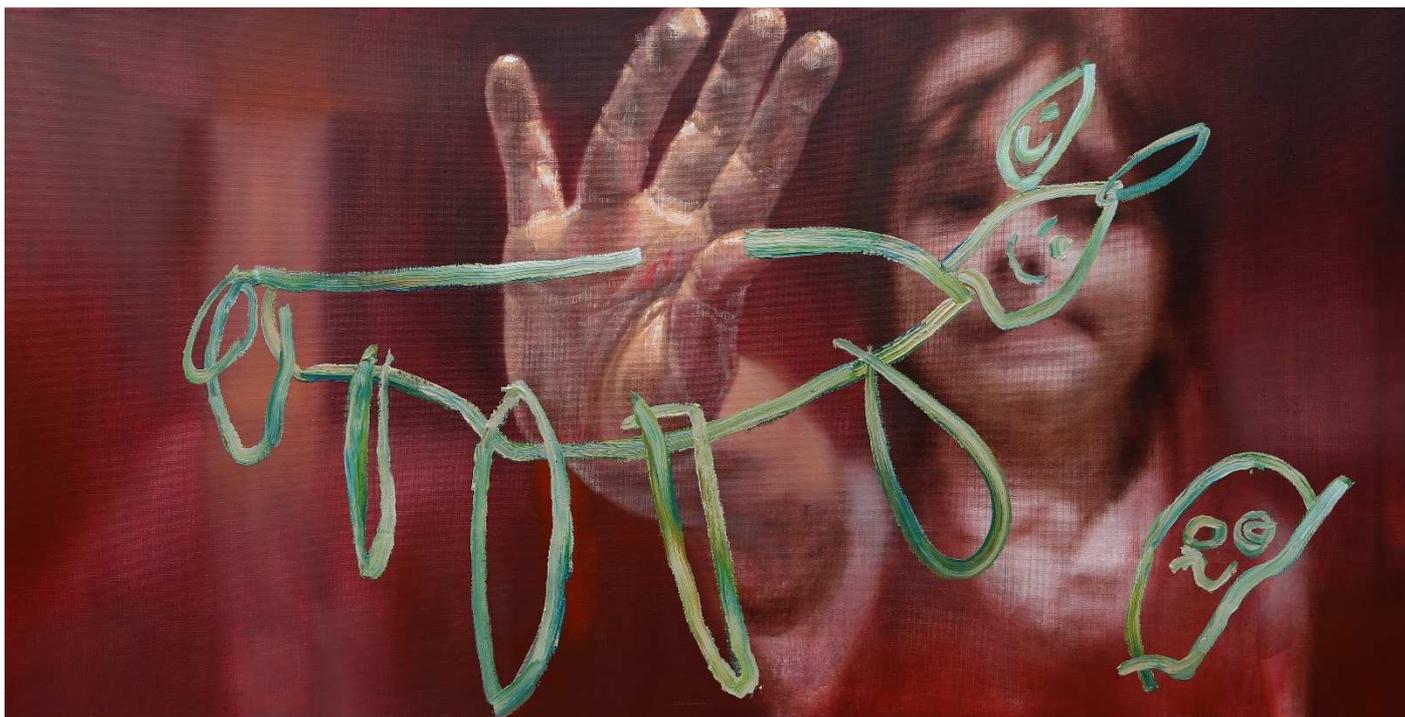
He is the author of seven books that reflect his works. His "Mes Arabies" series has notably received the Mother Jones price in 1999 and in 2011 he was awarded the title of pioneer photographer by National Geographic all Roads Program. Samer Mohdad is born in 1964 in Bzebdine, Lebanon, he currently lives in France.



Paul Gossian, *Baalbek*, Oil on canvas, 180 x 300 cm

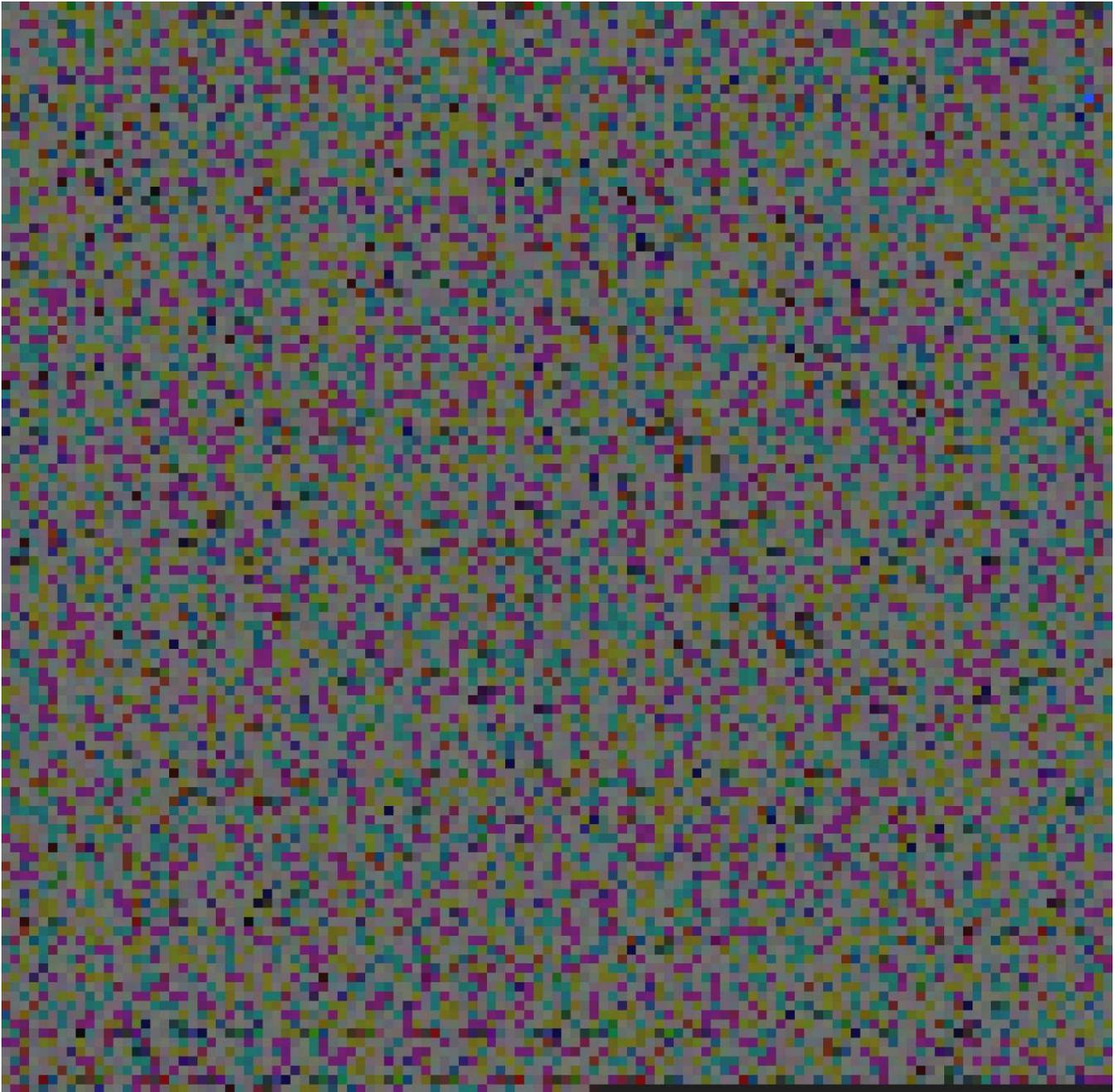
Paul Gossian was born in Lebanon into a dynasty of gifted painters. He moved to Germany 11 years ago and has been working and living between there and Beirut ever since.

His paintings translate his inner torment as he struggles to understand and establish his identity as an artist and as a citizen of two countries. Primarily consisting of painting and drawing, Gossian's work comes mainly from his memory and sometimes through images found in books and magazine.



Sara Shamma *Horse* 2016, Oil on canvas, 75 x 150 cm

Sara Shamma's practice focuses on death and humanity expressed mainly through self-portraits and children painted in a life-like visceral way. Her works can be divided into series that reflect often prolonged periods of research, sometimes extending over years. Shamma believes that death gives meaning to life, and rather than steering away from a subject that is increasingly taboo in contemporary culture, she considers the impact of grief and deep internal emotions. The Syrian conflict has a distinct impact on the way that Shamma portrays her subjects. Working mainly from life and photographs, the artist uses oils to create a hyper realistic scene, using transparency lines and motion to portray a distant and deep void.



Ricardo Mbarkho, *The Lebanese Constitution pigmented print on photo paper, 2008, 56.519 x 56.998 cm* edition of one

Ricardo Mbarkho is an artist and lecturer living in Lebanon.

In his digital images as well as in his time-based work, he investigates multiple questions related to language, communication, and creative industries issues within the socio-political sphere. His work is presented in several festivals and exhibitions in Lebanon and abroad.



Raffi Yedalian, *Clouded Minds*, 2016, Acrylic and Mixed Media and metal on wood, 101 x 71 cm

“Most humans escape and hide from the reality of the world they live in. Even though they are conscious about the reality of all the cruel, inhumane and discrimination acts that chase them, they still intend to cover this reality and live in their fictional world.

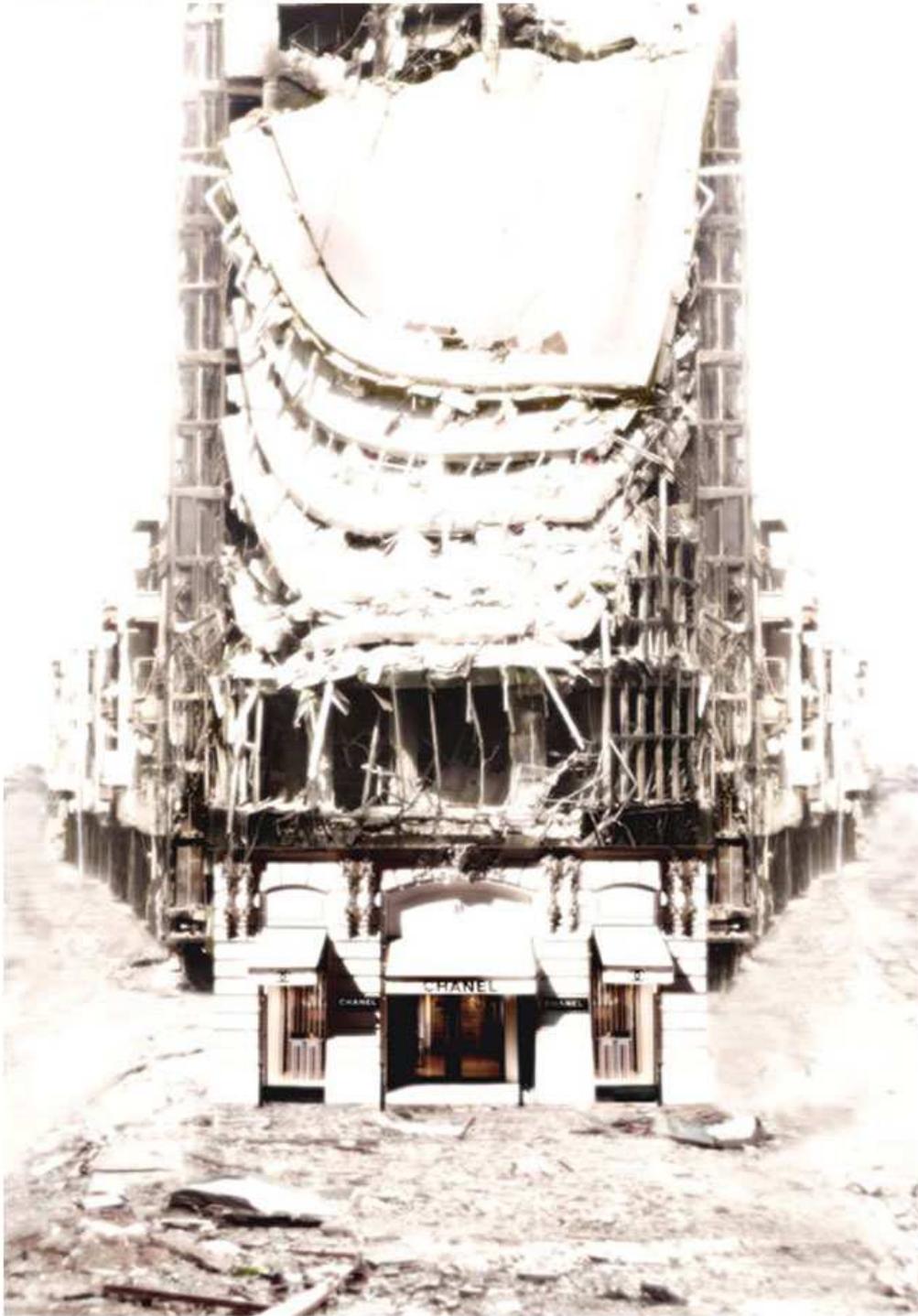
However, it’s only through our unity that we can maintain justice, equality and international peace. In other words, our unity and cooperation will pave the way not only to accept the hidden reality but also to fight against it and create a caring, respectful and peaceful existence between nations.”

Raffi Yedalian



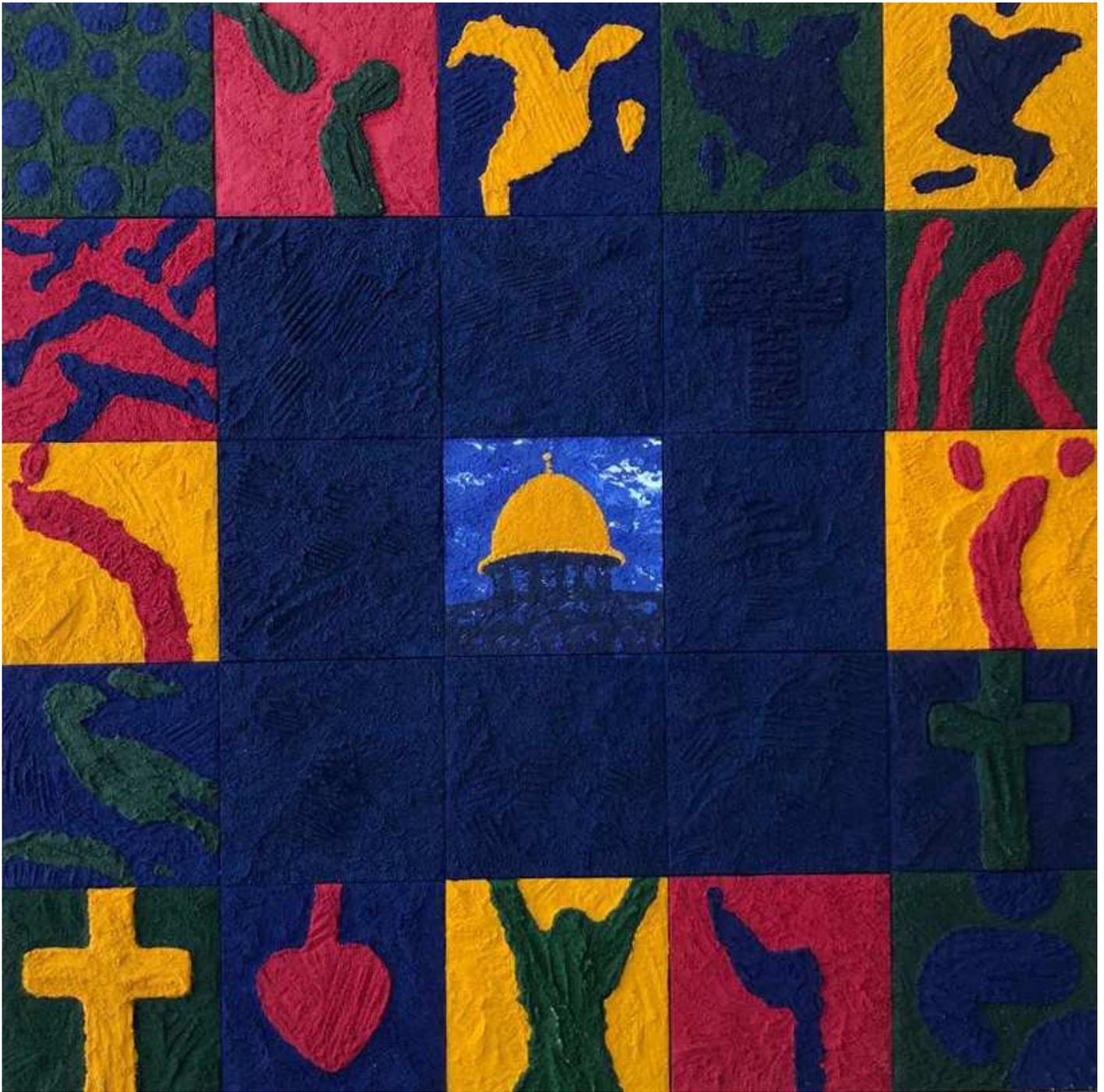
Nasr-eddine Bennacer, *L'aigle, le lion et la souris*, gouache and lead pencil on Japanese paper mounted on Arches paper, 2012, 153 x 113 cm,

Nasr-eddine Bennacer tackles profound questions on the evolution of links between civilizations and cultures. He also looks deeply at the ambiguity that exists in human relationships and interaction. This exploration focuses on the forms of manipulation and exploitation of conflicts, either for the individual or at a more global scale: Is the aggressor always the one demonstrating power or influence, or do either political and economic forces interfere through sentiment and the intellect, creating tensions between an ideology and its realization?



Yves Hayat, Business must go on - Chanel, 2012, Plexicollage Diasec, 130 x 90 cm

In the recent years many artists of Arab descent have chosen quite a few unique means for expressing their thoughts and feelings about the current events in the Middle East. Some chose graphic literal forms and language, and some found much more subtle yet no less powerful tools to express themselves. Such was the body of work by a French artist of Egyptian descent **Yves Hayat**. With elegance and subtlety Hayat points to these various forms of colonization using instantly recognizable imagery and allowing the viewer to complete the narrative without a single superfluous word.



Nasser Soumi, *Untitled*, Natural pigments and mixed media on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

Nasser Soumi is a painter and primarily an installation artist. He transforms a variety of ordinary materials into works of art. His work is a conglomeration of "eclectic and handmade objects". His use of different shades of the indigo blue color, evoking the Mediterranean Sea, gives an impression of navigation and nomadic movement towards a faraway land.

