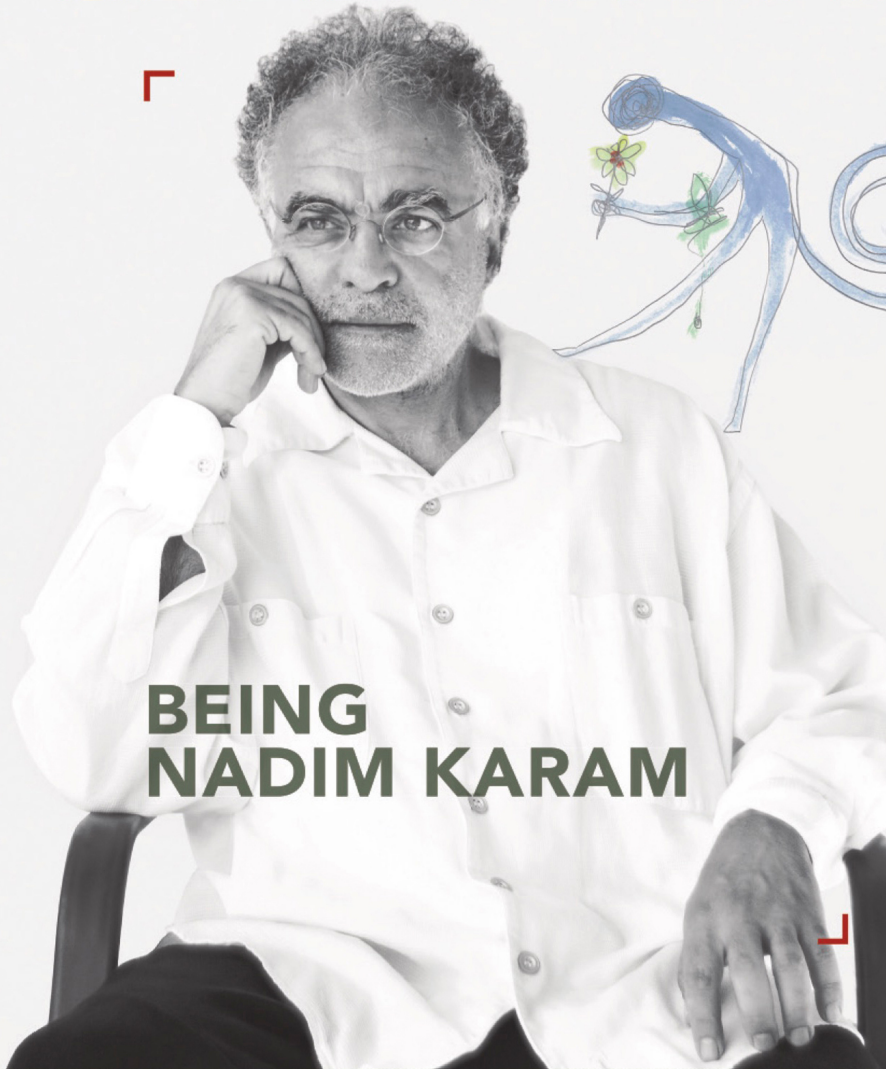


SELECTIONS



**BEING
NADIM KARAM**

ARTS-STYLE-CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND
46 SPECIAL EDITION
FALL 2018

GETTING PERSONAL WITH THE ARTIST - A LOOK BACK AT A LIFETIME OF ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS
INSTALLATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE - THE MAKING OF THE MUSE



SELECTIONS
MAGAZINE

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Interview: Jean Boghossian

In 2015, during his second solo show at the Beirut Exhibition Centre, Jean Boghossian was surprised when three sculptures caught the eye of prominent Lebanese artist Nadim Karam. He tells Selections how the encounter led to a mutually beneficial exchange.

By India Stoughton

In 2015, Lebanese-Armenian artist Jean Boghossian had his second solo show at the Beirut Exhibition Centre. Curated by Italian art critic and curator Bruno Cora, it featured dozens of works on paper and canvas exemplifying Boghossian's signature practice of carefully burning and singeing his materials to create striking abstract works.

Forged with fire and smoke, his paintings were accompanied by three wooden sculptures hewn from enormous tree trunks. The artist shaped his huge blocks of wood into rough pillars using a chainsaw. One towering piece consists of a series of stacked bulbous forms, resembling a standing figure. The other two works retain the circular form of the tree trunks from which they were carved, their surfaces inscribed with swooping indented curves and lines that defy the brute force of the tools that shaped them. Each totemic sculpture bears the tell-tale marks of the voracious and unpredictable flames that Boghossian uses to baptise his works.

To Boghossian's surprise, his sculptures caught the eye of Lebanese artist Nadim Karam. Like Boghossian, Karam works across multiple media and is as happy shaping monumental sculptures from metal as he is filling a diminutive sketchbook with watercolour paintings or designing a building shaped like an enormous elephant with a rollercoaster running along its spine.

"I was giving a talk on working with flames," Boghossian recalls. "As it ended, Nadim and his wife Kaya came up to me. He introduced himself and said, 'I am ready for an exchange.' I was overwhelmed with Nadim's offer and the thought of a very established artist wanting to do an exchange with a then-young artist like myself."

Boghossian elected to exchange his three sculptures in part for a trio of Karam's signature works, three-dimensional elephant sculptures cast in metal, their surfaces made up of Karam's vocabulary of shapes, signifying lifetimes of memories.

Today, Boghossian's wooden sculptures stand proudly outside Karam's summer house in Daroun. Karam's trio of elephants were sent to Yerevan, where they were unveiled last year in the popular Lover's Park. In keeping with his playful aesthetic, they now watch over frolicking children and picnicking families.

Photo by Walid Rashid



Nadim Karam and Jean Boghossian in front of his sculptures in Daroun, 2018



Body and Soul, Arthaus Gemmayze, 2017
191 x 64 x 55 cm
Polished stainless steel

Photos by Walid Rashid



Patience (front), 2018
120 x 99 x 43 cm
Corten steel

Walking Angel (back), 2018
90 x 115 x 37 cm
Corten steel

Or: Ignatius and John's Gift of the Magi



Singing Birds,
2018 (under
production)
3.3 metres high
Polished stainless
steel and painted
stainless steel

Photos by Walid Rashid
under production for the CHIP Headquarters



Wild Zay, Beirut Central District,
renovated 2018
4.5 metres high
Corten steel
Part under construction

MY DAUGHTERS, TARA AND SASHA, INTRODUCED ME TO THE WORK OF WILLIAM FORSYTHE WHILE I WAS CREATING THE MUSE SERIES. I FELT CONNECTIONS WITH HIM ON MANY LEVELS AND CHOSE THE TITLES OF MY PAINTINGS IN HOMAGE TO HIS WORK.

N.K.

The Muse is a space where Nadim Karam can express his art, his architecture and his singular personality. It's a work of art that does not have to explain itself. It's an atelier, with the possibility of becoming a studio-gallery, and a promise to clients that the artist and his team can deliver on city-scale public art projects. "It's simultaneously my architecture and my art," Nadim Karam says.

The Muse began in the clouds and ended in the ground. There are traces of it in his work dating back 20 years. It represents a life journey for Nadim Karam, he says: a flashback and a fresh start. The project is a promenade: from his house, he will walk into it along the top of a giant corten steel closet filled with sculptures by himself and other artists from the world.

A man whose work is very public has created a very private building. The Muse looks inward. The layered architecture, its long ramps and staircases, the interlocking pathways, the courts, are influenced by his spatial studies. The outdoor closet niches for the sculptures take inspiration from the Butai-Zukuri (stage) temples he studied in Japan, particularly the structural space under the stage, filled with empty niches.

"I enjoy creating an experience of space with promenades and flexibility of movement," he says. "In The Muse, there are multiple access points. There are no windows, but there are

courtyards. There are no doors, but there are entrances. It's basically about movement." The "inverted architecture" of The Muse is excavated into the earth. It did not begin that way. "There were so many versions of it," says Karam's wife, Kaya. "He literally did an entire design, did a model, all the drawings related to it, then discarded it and did another, which was also discarded."

Early plans were for buildings with steep roofs, like a church or a farmhouse. Then Karam tested a version of The Cloud, with simple boxes under cloud-shaped canopy on tilted columns. Nadim Karam first proposed The Cloud as an immense hanging public garden, to be built among the skyscraper tops of Dubai. Wildly ambitious, it has appeared in Karam's drawings and sculptures for over 10 years. But here it seemed overwhelming. The design team moved to create a volume inside the earth, with rooftop garden terraces and an internal 50m-long wall for hanging artworks.

The views are mostly internal, from all angles. The Muse is sheltered from passersby on the road in the village of Daroun, behind the recreated terraces. Light and air are brought in through two integrated courtyards, openings to the sky inviting wind, sun and natural cross-ventilation. The courts can be seen from the balcony of the artist's old house located above The Muse.

"In a few months, people from the village will only see the terraces, and will forget about the project, enjoying the view of the traditional house," Karam says. "The Muse is fully integrated within the landscape. Soon the architecture will disappear, leaving space for movement. The contemporary energy of the project is present without being visible. I don't wish to impose anything on the village." Even the solar panels are hidden away.

For the front terraces, 15 original olive trees

Photo by Walid Rashid



Title (q apror Font) "Eidos:
Telos" 2018
31x20 cm



Title (d'après Forsythe):
"Hypothetical Streams", 2018
 300 x 200 cm
 Mixed media on canvas



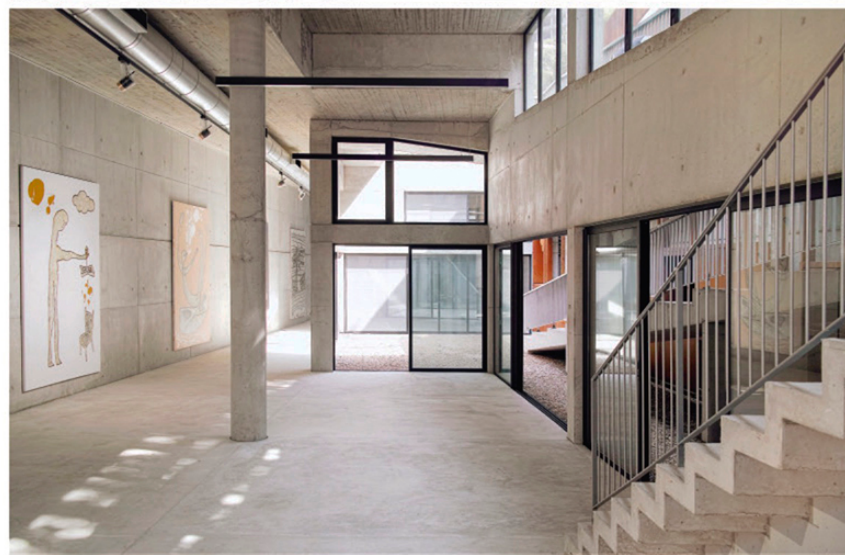
Title (d'après Forsythe): **"The
 Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude,"
 2018**
 300 x 200 cm
 Mixed media on canvas



Photo by Walid Rashid



Relationship of outside closet
and ramp





Details and patterns



Photo by Walid Rashid





CREATIVE EXPRESSION IS
NEVER A MONOLOGUE. IT IS
A NEGOTIATION WITH SPACE
AND FORM.
N.K.

The Old house and
A.MUSE.UM.