

Art on 56th

Art on 56th gallery - Beirut

Opening: Exhibition "Re-Imagining Beirut"

Artist: **Wissam Beydoun**

Exhibition Date: Thursday October 20, 2022

Immediate Release



Art on 56th has the pride and honour to announce the celebration of its 10th anniversary. For the last decade, the gallery has shown tremendous dedication to its program, artists and community of collectors, surmounting many obstacles along the way and surviving the terrible blast of August 4th, 2020. To commemorate its continuing hope and special milestone, the gallery is pleased to showcase Re-Imagining Beirut, a solo exhibition of works by Wissam Beydoun. On view will be paintings that depict maps of the Lebanese capital, a city enmeshed in the fabrics of the artist's creative consciousness. By employing the ancient tradition of cartography, Wissam Beydoun tells stories about Beirut, with each tale woven into the intricate layers of the map.

Re-Imagining Beirut constructs a narrative via the art of mapping. With the perfect juxtaposition of abstract and organic forms, the artist produces a subjective layout of the city. As such, cartography becomes personal, intimate, instead of being purely accurate. Wissam Beydoun chooses to condense the physical features of Beirut, to illustrate the density of the land, as well as the diversity of its characteristics. Instead of leading the viewer somewhere, the map is transformed into a labyrinth, allowing the imagination to get lost in the chaos. The paintings act as active vessels, challenging the conventional purpose of cartography, and freeing the mind to wander through the kaleidoscopic grounds without pinpointing a destination.

The exhibition also pays tribute to the ever-changing landscape of Beirut. It highlights the transient nature of the city, which has rebuilt itself countless times. Beirut is in constant need of remapping and reinventing itself, especially after the blast on August 4th 2020, and Wissam Beydoun hints at this impossible task. Like the great phoenix, the city rose from its ashes and re-created itself, born again as a new, colourful Beirut. As different versions of the same city, each painting combines geometric precision with abstraction, producing a map of a human experience rather than a static place, and bridging the collective with the personal to reveal a field of infinite discovery.

Noha Wadi Moharram

Biography

Born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1961, Wissam Beydoun received his bachelor of art from the Lebanese American University (LAU) with the Sheikh Zayed Award distinction.

Beydoun works with organic forms, creating abstract landscapes that celebrate the majesty of mountains and the overall beauty of nature. His recent oeuvre revolves around his relationship with his hometown. Experimenting with the art of cartography, he maps out Beirut according to his experiences, documenting the emotions embedded in this metamorphic city.

Beydoun has held several individual and collective exhibitions in Lebanon and France, and has participated in Sursock Museum's 'Salon d'Automne'. His work is featured in numerous private collections.

Artist Statement

It is all about Beirut.

It's about a city that is deep under my skin like an old, fading tattoo.

It's about a love and hate relationship that has been going on for almost 47 years.

It is a map: A personal cartography. With an abstract approach, I tried to re-imagine the lace-like, labyrinth urban layouts of streets and buildings, almost chaotic yet so rich, like mapping out my experience in the city for all this time. A city razed so many times with so many wars, invasions and lately the terrifying August 4 explosion, but somehow manage to rise again. The works are an obsessive variation on the same theme. Each one bringing different emotions to the surface, conveyed in a different technique or media. The intricate labyrinth of the city, the many layers (both sociological and archeological), the sounds, smells, colors... all rendered in acrylic and mixed media for the larger pieces and watercolor and ink for the more intimate sizes. Choosing watercolor as a primary medium helped me in creating magical color washes and layering of forms and colors.

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