

Ayyam Gallery
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Gallery Hours:
Mon-Fri: 10.00am-8.00pm
Sat: 12.00pm-6.00pm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Raining Thoughts, 2015, Mixed media and gold paper on canvas, 205 x 205 cm

Nadim Karam

Stretching Thoughts

21 January – 2 April 2016

Opening reception: Thursday, 21 January from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to present *Stretching Thoughts*, the solo show of internationally renowned artist Nadim Karam.

Highlighting a new body of work, the exhibition includes recent sculptures, installation and mixed media paintings that explore the inquisitive nature and boundless imagination of the human mind. *Stretching Thoughts* questions the impact of national, regional, and global

decisions that affect personal histories, and how human creativity has the potential to grow beyond their imposed boundaries.

At a time when demarcated borders are becoming increasingly porous and notions of collectivity transcend physical space through mass migration and constant exchanges across the digital sphere, Karam's latest series asserts the power of the connectivity that we carry within us, the importance of stories, and the will to confront situations much larger than ourselves.

Identifying the limitless possibilities that thoughts can generate, Karam proposes new ways of perceiving the world and examines the significant roles of individuals who dare to embrace such heightened levels of imagination and vision.

At the centre of the exhibition, the large-scale installation *Neglected Thoughts* (2015) establishes the context of the series. Structured as a square box with suspended scrap metals, the work alludes to the growing intellectual crisis of today: the unused or abandoned thoughts and ideas, specifically in the Arab world, that would otherwise offer alternatives to our current reality.

The artist's recent works depict an androgynous protagonist in various states of contemplation. Reclined, sitting, or standing, its head is rendered as a cloud that has no end. Karam describes this as 'an ethereal mass of entangled, enquiring thoughts.' The figure's 'ascetic' body is composed of thin charcoal outlines in canvas works, or stainless steel frames filled with intricate abstract patterns that, as in previous sculptures, represent the accumulated ideas and experiences of the character.

In the mixed media work *Raining Thoughts* (2015), for example, the figure's delicate, solid white body stands in contrast to the massive cloud that represents its mind, a whirlwind of dynamic lines and shapes. Connected at the base of its head, the imposing formation seems positioned to transport Karam's protagonist as ideas fall from the tempest-like growth, showering the ground below.

In an eponymous 2014 monograph published by Booth Clibborn, London, the artist asks: 'Unravelling, how far could our thoughts stretch? Could they encircle the planet? Could they take us above the skies?' Defiant of earthly limitations, Karam's characters are emblematic dreamers.

About the Artist

The multidisciplinary practice of Lebanese artist and architect Nadim Karam incorporates painting, drawing, sculpture, and writing in the creation of bold and inspiring, uncanny artworks that challenge common preconceptions. With a background that fuses Oriental and Japanese theories of space, Nadim Karam has created his own concepts and a distinct artistic vocabulary that tackles the universality of the human condition, working towards the reconfiguration of space. His research focuses on the conviction that cities need to dream, and it is the role of artists to provoke this dream by injecting art into still structures by setting up silent, yet palpable, cultural movers with the power to act as magnets that influence the trajectories of people. Cities are thus the inspiration and target sites for many of his groundbreaking conceptual proposals and initiatives.

Born in 1957 in Senegal, Nadim Karam lives and works in Beirut, where, in 1996, he founded, and still leads, a satellite grouping of Lebanese architects and designers, Atelier Hapsitus. The twenty-year-old practice, based on a cross-fertilisation of disciplines and nationalities, has a multi-disciplinary composition, which feeds into the experimental nature of its work.

Karam initially trained in architecture at the American University of Beirut before traveling to Japan in 1982 to attend the University of Tokyo. In Japan, he studied with world-renowned architects and thinkers Hiroshi Hara, Fumihiko Maki, and Tadao Ando, and earned a doctorate in architecture. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Art, and Design at Notre Dame University in Lebanon (2000-2003) and taught architectural design at the American University of Beirut (1993-1995; 2003-2004).

Karam has been commissioned to create large-scale urban art installations for cities across the globe and has participated in international art fairs and events such as the Liverpool (2006), Venice (1996), and Gwangju (1995) biennales.

Recently he has held solo shows at Ayyam Gallery Beirut, Dubai, and London (2013), and has been featured in group exhibitions at venues such as the Shanghai JSIP Biennale (2014); Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2013); Villa Empain, Brussels (2012); and the Royal College of Art, London (2012).

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut and Dubai, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts programme have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also contributed to recent efforts that document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

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Opening Reception: Thursday, 21 January from 7:00 to 9:00 pm

Location: Beirut Tower, Ground Floor, Zeitoune Street, Across from Beirut Marina

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