

Exhibition: Nadim Karam, *Urban Zoo*

Location: Ayyam Gallery Beirut

Preview: 29 August 2013, 7pm

Dates: 29 August – 10 October 2013



Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to present *Urban Zoo*, a solo exhibition of new paintings and sculpture by acclaimed Lebanese artist, writer and architect Nadim Karam. The exhibition will open on 29 August 2013, 7pm.

Nadim Karam uses painting and sculpture to develop his characters and narratives, frequently returning to the symbol of 'The Cloud' to represent freedom and escape in a changing landscape. The artist is renowned for his public sculpture projects which he uses to humanise urban spaces. Karam encourages interaction with the public sculpture he creates; referring to them as *Urban Toys*, he invites people to consider the space around these surreal forms; to touch and climb them, and adopt them as part of the living cityscape.

On show at Ayyam Gallery Beirut will be a series of crystal pieces, through which Karam further develops the ideas found in his large scale architectural interventions across the globe. Here they are scaled down to provide the viewer an intimate experience with an object, rather than encountering a structure in an expansive urban space. Domestic and functional buttons masquerade as precious stones in the jewelled *Queen of Spades* (2013) and the iridescent monochrome *The Cloud House* (2013). Karam tell stories through the brightly coloured, abstracted forms, borrowing from existing mythology and fairy tales.

Karam will also present a series of small scale stainless steel sculptures drawing from his vocabulary of recurring characters and symbols. The figures making up this series are shown in profile and formed from intricate lattice work, giving them a sense of lightness. *Dream Girl* (2013) has wings in place of arms, lifting them to take flight; in *Couple* (2013), two joyful figures run in unison, hands entwined; while *Elephant* (2013) stands proud and unyielding. Forms embedded in the framework of these sculptures invite the viewer to uncover characters and narratives hidden within the larger structure.

Several new paintings by Karam will feature in the exhibition, including paintings based on the emblematic shape of the elephant, and exploring the themes of the 'Cultural Warrior' and the 'Urban Zoo'. A preview of several monumental new sculptures will also be on show in the Piazza of Platinum Tower outside of the gallery for a period of the exhibition; these large-scale sculptures will be a highlight of Karam's forthcoming show at Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz opening in Dubai on 30 September 2013.

## Notes to Editors

### About the Artist

Born in 1957 in Senegal, Nadim Karam now lives and works in Beirut. In 1996, he established Atelier Hapsitus ([www.hapsitus.com](http://www.hapsitus.com)), a satellite grouping of young Lebanese architects and designers, that seeks to create an original urban vocabulary through large-scale art installation and architectural works for various cities worldwide. Karam's work has appeared in numerous solo and group exhibitions worldwide, as well as biennales including Venice, Liverpool, and Gwangju. Previous solo exhibitions include: Ayyam Gallery London (2013); DIFC Gate, Dubai (2010); Sultan Gallery, Kuwait (2008); Al-Bustan, Lebanon (2006). Selected group shows include: Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris and Abu Dhabi (2013); Villa Empain Exhibition, Brussels (2012); Chatsworth House (2011), Royal College of Art, London (2011); Running Horse Contemporary Art Space, Lebanon (2011); Katzen Arts Centre, Washington (2010); American University Museum, Washington (2010); Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2009); Liverpool Independent Art Biennale (2006).

### About Ayyam Gallery

Founded by collectors and cousins Khaled and Hisham Samawi in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery sought to nurture Syria's burgeoning and dynamic contemporary art scene through landmark non-profit initiatives such as the Shabab Ayyam Project, an incubator for emerging artists. Expansion into Beirut and Dubai enabled Ayyam Gallery to broaden its scope from the promotion of work by Syrian artists to those from the wider Middle East region. In doing so, Ayyam Gallery has established itself as one of the foremost exponents of Middle Eastern contemporary art to the international community.

Today, Ayyam Gallery is recognised as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Arab and Iranian artists with an international profile and museum presence, such as Abdunasser Gharem, Khaled Jarrar, Nadim Karam, Safwan Dahoul, Samia Halaby, Sadik Alfraji, Afshin Pirhashemi and Khaled Takreti. A number of non-commercial exhibitions, as well as the launch of initiatives like The Young Collectors Auction, have further succeeded in showcasing the work of Middle Eastern artists with the aim of educating a wider audience about the art of this significant region. Ayyam Gallery Damascus currently functions as a studio and creative haven for artists who

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remain in the war-torn city. In early 2013, Ayyam Gallery launched new spaces in London and Jeddah.

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Location: Beirut Tower, Ground Floor, Zeitoune Street

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