

ALFRED BASBOUS

MODERNIST PIONEER - SELECTED WORKS

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SOPHIA
CONTEMPORARY
GALLERY

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ALFRED BASBOUS

Alfred Basbous was born in Rachana, Lebanon in 1924. His first exhibition in Beirut, at the Alecco Saab gallery in 1958, marked the beginning of a long and successful career as a sculptor.

In 1960, he received a scholarship from the French government and became a pupil of the sculptor René Collamarini at 'The National Fine Arts School in Paris' (L'Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts de Paris). In 1961, his works were included in the International Sculpture Exhibition at the Musée Rodin, in Paris.

From 1994 to 2004, 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."

Basbous's works express a lifelong exploration of the human form and its abstract properties. Focused on the aesthetic principles of shape, movement, line and material, his sculptures display a deeply ingrained sincerity and a search for the essence of beauty. Working in the tradition of sculptors such as Jean Arp, Constantin Brâncuși and Henry Moore, Alfred Basbous explores the potential of noble materials such as bronze, wood and marble to express the sensuality and purity of the human form. This aversion towards frivolous and meaningless embellishments echoes his own philosophy of simplicity and earnestness.

The works of Alfred Basbous are part of numerous public collections throughout the world, including the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the Musée Rodin in Paris, the Hakone Open-Air Museum in Japan and the Modern and Contemporary Art Museum (MACAM) in Lebanon, among others. His monumental works are present in the public areas of Beirut and many Lebanese cities.

ALFRED BASBOUS, THE ELOQUENCE OF BRONZE AND MARBLE

Edgar Davidian

Son of the mountains and of Rachana, the village he has made mythical, Alfred Basbous, make the toughest, most defiant materials sing and bend them to his will and his inspiration. Nothing can resist him, not even bronze or marble.

Today, after more than half a century of intense labour and original creations that have marked the passing of time and, most of all, the golden age before the Lebanese Civil War, his works pass through space, cross borders and defy trends, with an understated confidence and an elegance all their own.

Twenty sculptures, abstract and figurative, in a range of sizes (from the smallest and most compact at 24 cm x 19 cm x 7 cm to the finest and most slender at 2 m), bring the artist's vision to life. This vision is innovative, otherworldly, bold and still relevant, both in its avant-garde form and in the universality of its themes.

Bronze, smooth, dark and glossy, rivals the living chill of milky marble, with its imperceptible veins. To accompany this set of statues; set free from the imagination, from chisels and mallets, from alloys of copper and tin, from the rocks bursting forth from the belly of the earth and exposed by patient, expert hands shaping, planing, sanding and polishing; there are nine drawings. Sketches and proofs drawn in charcoal (size 37 cm x 15 cm) to catch an idea in flight, pin down an image seen in the mind's eye, glimpsed somewhere between dream and reality. A series of sketches to illustrate and bear witness to a creative thought unfolding. Engendering an enchanted and enchanting universe in which woman, nature, a bestiary and snatches of Phoenician history are pivotal points both static and in motion.

Sculpture is the child of a happy marriage between technical supremacy and the passion to condense the most intimate

impulses and the incarnation of life. Through a subtle balance of volumes and elusive movements, fleeing shadows born of the state of beings and the state of objects.

At the age of thirty-four, with no warning, a meteoric career took off. This was in 1958 at Beirut's *Galerie Alecco Saab*, in the city's heady days of peace. From his career as a master stonemason, which was in his very bones and which he practised with both total humility and total mastery, Alfred Basbous completely moved over into art. The art of sculpture. Shrugging off his earlier codes in favour of free, inventive expression, of serenity in the midst of his own revolution. Like the change of the seasons in Rachana, which punctuate the stages of life with reckless abandon...

In the tradition of the greatest names (Rodin, Moore, Arp), the sculptor has set out to find his own path and his own voice – unique and captivating, to speak of the simplicity and the grandeur of a human journey. Elegant, still subject to the eternal values, but far from the madding crowd, always dignified, always triumphant. Even at times of the most surprising transformations and metamorphoses. With just a touch of poetry to accentuate the references to “*siren*”, “*flame woman seated, reclining or standing*”, “*couple embracing*”, maternity, the female torso with a sensuality that is both sophisticated and torrid.

Rounded or phallic, dotted with mysterious cavities or full beneath tender bulges, criss-crossed by extreme elongations like storm-ridden trees or cowering like a soul in agony, locked into a skilfully balanced architecture, with ingenious yet secret acrobatics, these statues are alive with a spirit that is free from all constraint, like the tenacious tongue of a flame in the wind...

A pupil of René Collamarini, crowned with many prizes and distinctions, celebrated for his talent, the promoter

of a symposium for sculpture in the country of his birth, Alfred Basbous, who has circled the globe from Paris to Washington via Tokyo, London and Italy, is now facing posterity. With his works that have never once fallen silent. With a soliloquy and dialogue of verve. An eloquence that the years have succeeded only in confirming.

Immanent statements as palpable as the lines carved into the stone and the bronze. Lines that are sinuous, curved or straight, that invite the viewer to approach and to touch, as the pleasure of beholding them is so peremptory. An ardent

discourse in defence of naked beauty through the power of sculpture.

The beauty of pure hearts, great moral values, the very sources of life, heightened sensitivity, commitment to work. Alfred Basbous' work has not yet finished expanding and extending its tentacles of seduction. An appeal, a question. Answering it is to return to the generosity of childhood, of adulthood, of maturity, of a certain spirituality, of creative fantasies, of original materials, of the components and elements that make up an essence that is profoundly human.

Edgard Davidian is a journalist and critic at *l'Orient-Le Jour*, the main daily newspaper in French language in Lebanon. Davidian is also a renowned novelist, playwright and author of a monograph on the sculpture of Raffi Tokatlian untitled 'Myths and reality'. His articles are regularly published in the Lebanese and international press.



Couple, 1997, White Carrara Marble, 37 x 35 x 18 cm



Woman nude, 2001, Marble, 40 x 27 x 21 cm



Woman, 1982, Marble, 22 x 40 x 18 cm



Woman Dancing, 1990, Marble, 50 x 30 x 10 cm

Seated woman, 1997, Bronze, 50 x 26 x 15 cm, Edition of 4





Syrene Maquette, 1980-85, White Gibson, 16 x 20 x 4 cm



Syrene, 1985, Bronze, 66 x 105 x 30 cm, Edition of 8



Femme Acroupie, 1972, Bronze, 45 x 24 x 28 cm, Edition of 8



Torse, 1970, Bronze, 44 x 35 x 20 cm, Edition of 8

Femme Allongée, 1972, Bronze, 20 x 44 x 15 cm, Edition of 8





Gitane, 1991, Bronze, 70 x 60 x 25 cm, Edition of 8



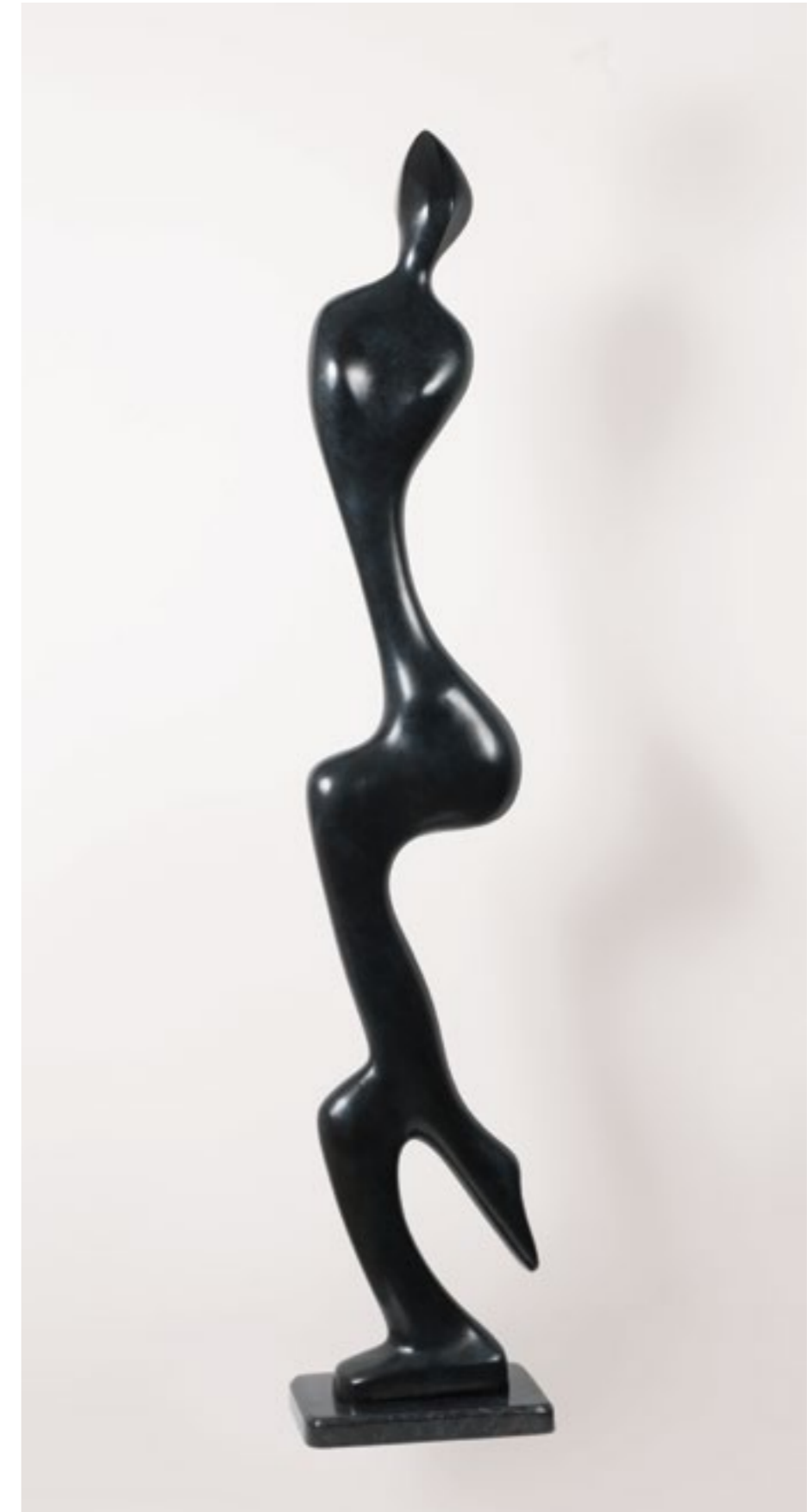
Standing Figure, 1985, Bronze, 120 x 30 x 20 cm, Edition of 8



Woman, 1982, Bronze Polished Gold, 22 x 40 x 18 cm, Edition of 8



Phoenician Victory, 1992, Bronze, 200 x 23 x 8 cm, Edition of 8



Syrene, 1998, Bronze, 200 x 45 x 25 cm, Edition of 8

Phoenician Head, 2003, Bronze, 90 x 17 x 13 cm, Edition of 8





Woman Figure, 1992, Bronze, 210 x 25 x 11 cm, Edition of 8



Femme Flamme, 1985, Bronze, 193 x 25 x 25 cm, Edition of 8

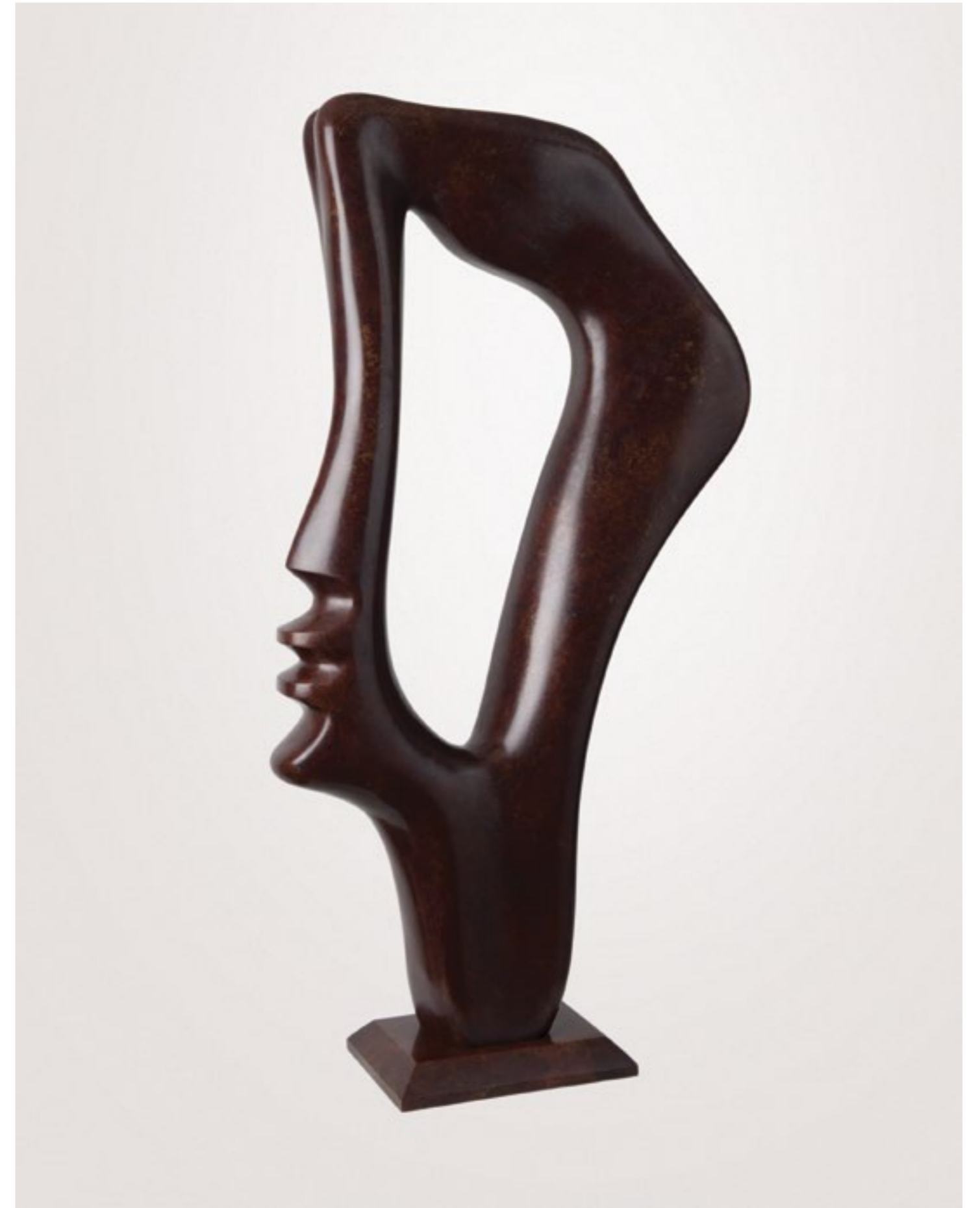


Taureau, 2003, Bronze, 50 x 70 x 30 cm, Edition of 8



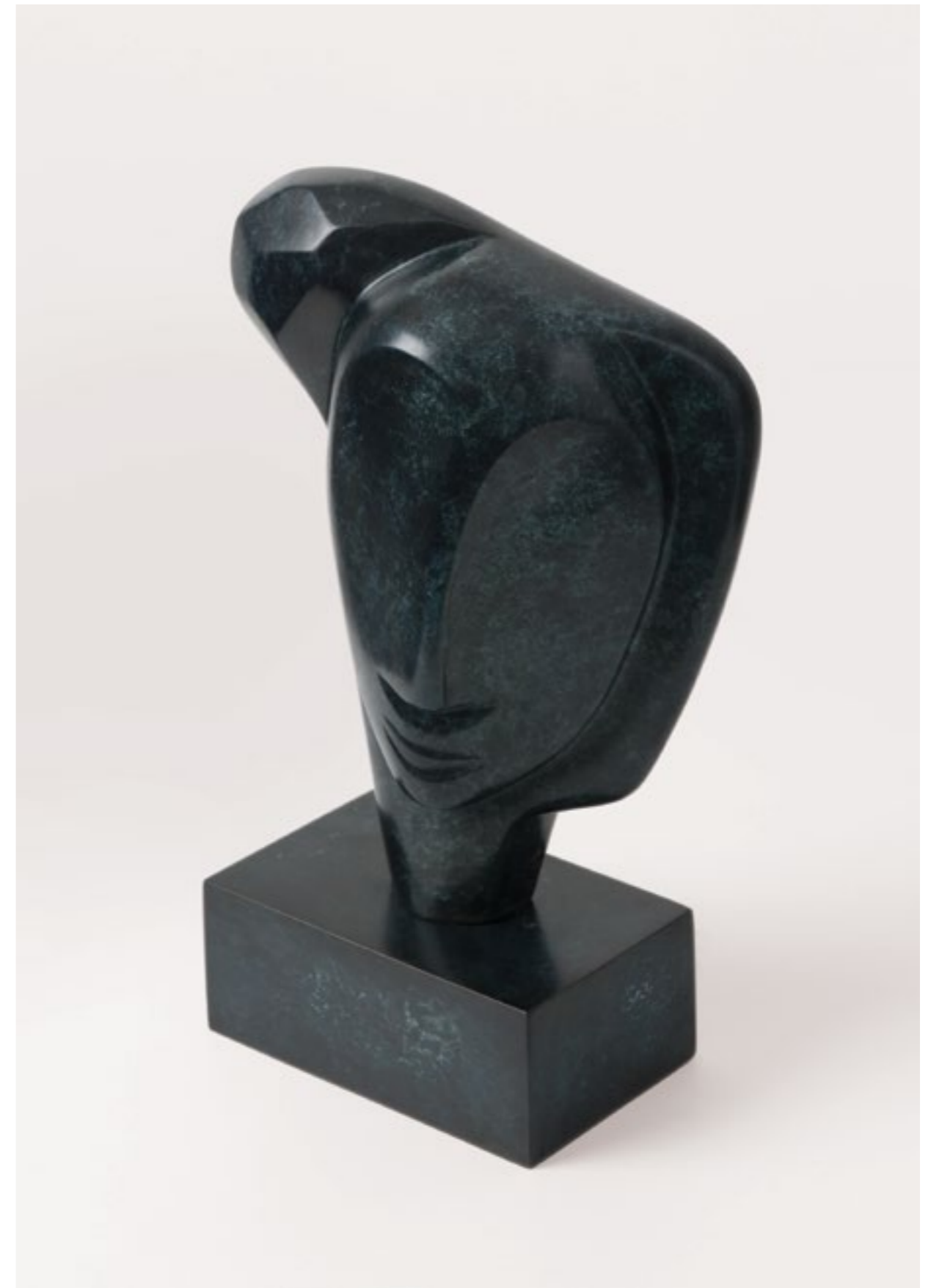
Minimal Abstraction, 1972, Bronze, 57 x 75 x 50 cm, Edition of 8

Profile, 2004, Bronze, 115 x 15 x 60 cm, Edition of 8





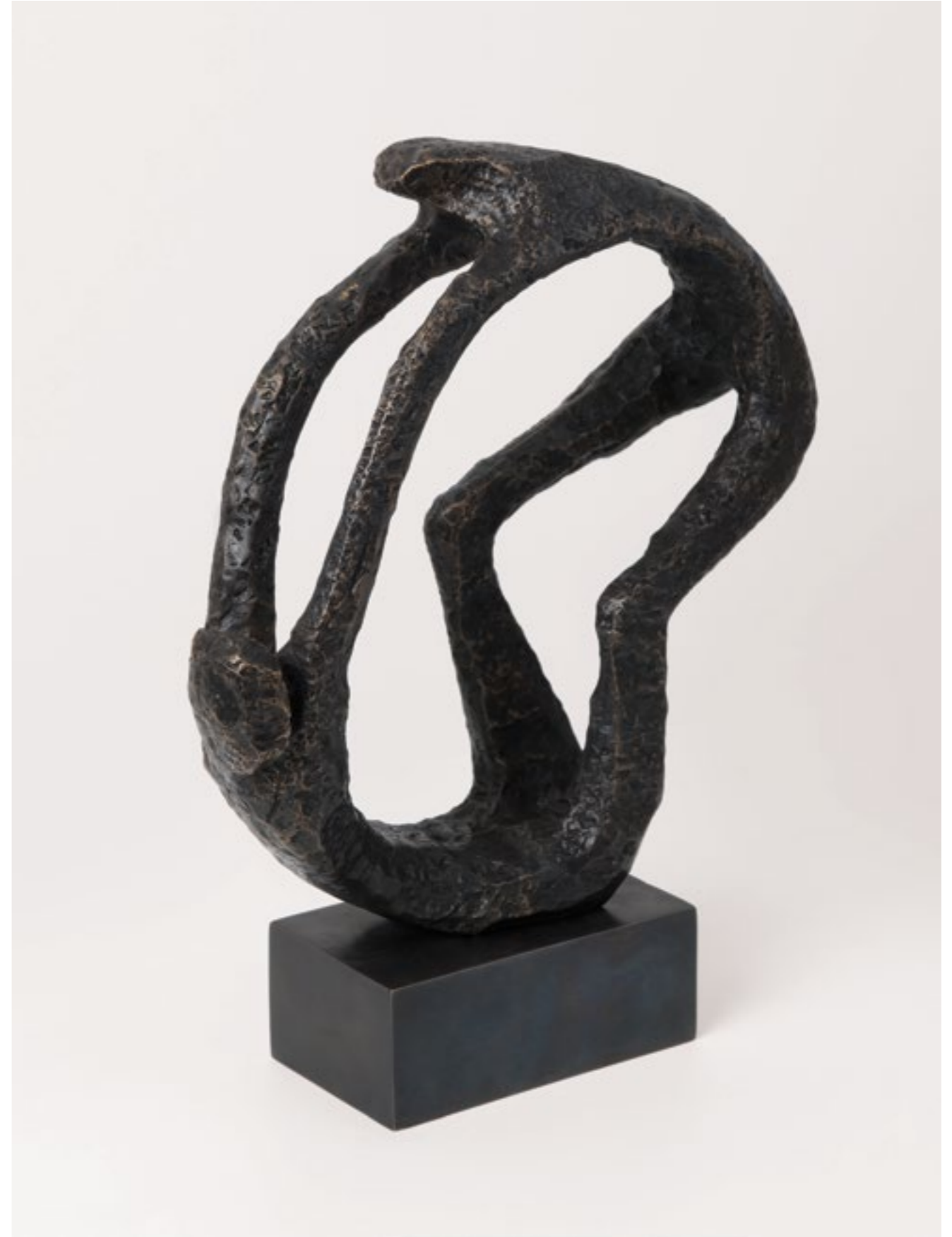
Caring Figure, 1982, 64 x 37 x 5 cm, Edition of 8



L'Ironique, 2003, Bronze, 24 x 19 x 7 cm, Edition of 25



Desire, 1987, Bronze, 31 x 29 x 6 cm, Edition of 8



Acrobat, 1987, Bronze, 34 x 26 x 10 cm, Edition of 12

Couple, 2002, Bronze, 66 x 28 x 20 cm, Edition of 12

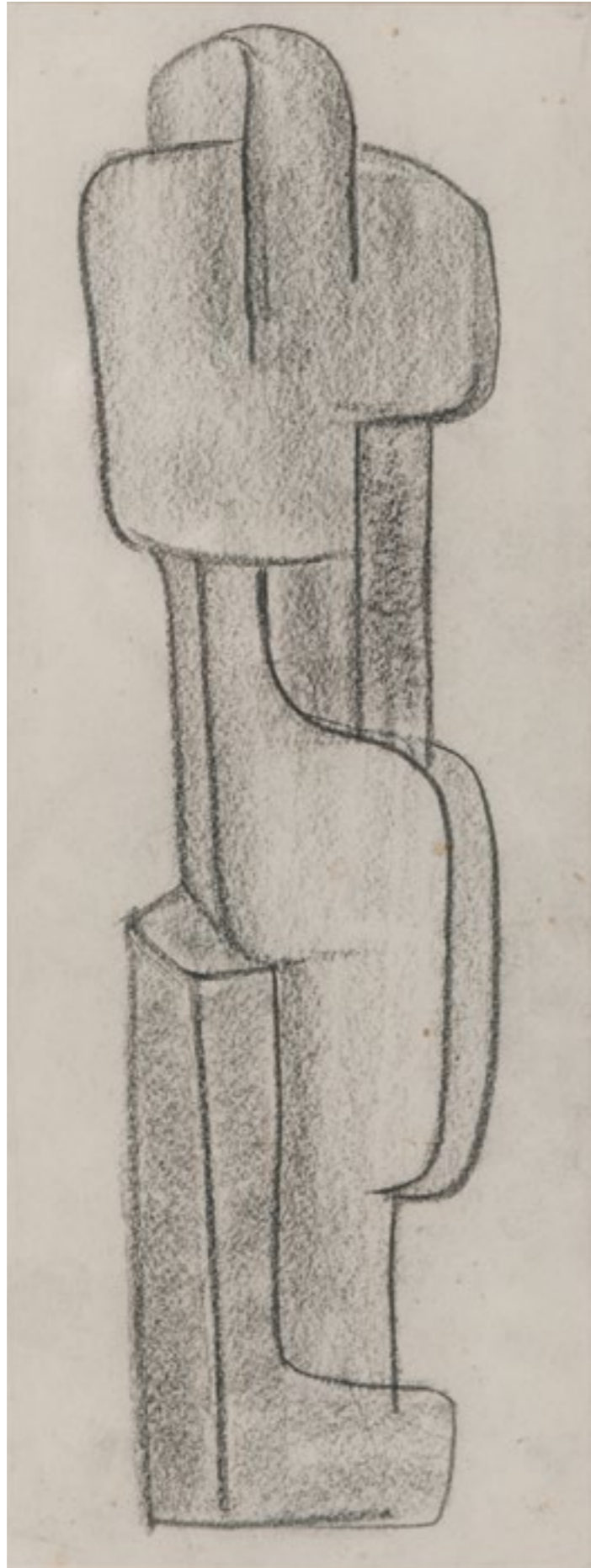


A Set of 9 Drawings, 1980-89, Charcoal on Paper, 37 x 14 cm each











LIST OF ARTWORKS

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TIMELINE

Born 1924 in Rachana, Lebanon

Died 2006 in Beirut, Lebanon

EDUCATION

1960 Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2017 Sophia Contemporary Gallery, London, Alfred Basbous: Modernist Pioneer – Selected Works

2016 Artspace, Dubai, Figurative to Abstraction

2015 Mark Hachem Gallery, Paris, Bronze Collection

2015 Artspace, Dubai, Modernist Pioneer

2014 Opera Gallery, Dubai, Bronze Collection

2014 Monte Carlo Beach Club, Abu Dhabi, Bronze Collection

2013 Monte Carlo Beach Club, Abu Dhabi, Bronze Collection

2012 Rachana, The Artist's Forum

2011 Lebanese Parliament, Lebanon

2011 Libanpost Stamps, Basbous Brothers

1996 SNA building, Tabaris Beirut, Lebanon

1985 La Toile Gallery, Rimal, Zouk Mosbeh, Lebanon

1984 Halate Sur Mer Garden, Halat, Lebanon

1984 Elcir Gallery, Beirut, Antelias, Lebanon

1982 One Gallery, Zalka, Lebanon

1979 Damo Gallery, Antelias, Lebanon

1972 Contact Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon

1970 Excelsior Hotel Garden, Beirut, Lebanon

1967 Amateur Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon

1967 Modern Institute Garden in Lebanon, Fanar, Lebanon

1966 Phoenicia Hotel Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon

1965 Excelsior Hotel Garden, Beirut, Lebanon

1963 One Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon

1962 Salle du Quotidien "L'Orient", Beirut, Lebanon

1959 Alecco Saab Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon

SCULPTURES IN PUBLIC PLACES

2003 Public garden of Jdeidet municipality, Metn, Lebanon

1997 Garden of Zahlé Municipality, Lebanon

1992 Espace Center, Kaslik, Lebanon

1984 Halate Sur Mer Gardens, Lebanon

1984 Halate Public square, Tannourine, Lebanon

1981 Maison du Futur Garden, Naccache, Lebanon

1981 Antelias city entrance, Lebanon

1981 Zouk Mkayel Municipality gardens, Lebanon

1977 Les Jardins du Quotidien "Le Reveil", Lebanon

1977 Jdeidet El Metn, Lebanon

1977 Tabarja Beach garden, Tabarja, Lebanon

1973 Beirut port, Lebanon

1971 Rayfoun roundabout, Lebanon

1962 Municipality Garden, Zahlé, Lebanon

GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND BIENNALES

2016 Sophia Contemporary Gallery, London, Summer Show

1998 Abu Dhabi Cultural Center, Emirates

1998 Dubai Cultural Center, Emirates

1998 Oman Gallery, Oman

1994 Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England

1993 Shroder & Asseili Gardens, London, England

1988 Kuwait Hilton International Hotel, Kuwait

1988 Platform International Gallery, Washington, United States

1982 Decoline Gallery, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

1980 Elcir Gallery, Mkalles, Lebanon

1977 Les Jardins du Quotidien Le Reveil, Jdeidet El Metn, Lebanon

1975 Jdeidet El Metn Roundabout, Lebanon

1974 Collamarini workshop at Rodin Museum in Paris, France

1974 Biennial of Alexandria, Egypt

1974 UENO Museum, royal museum in the city of Tokyo, Japan

1974 Cheikh Pierre Gemayel caves in Bekfaya, Lebanon

1974 Cite Scoute, Smar Jbeil, Lebanon

1973 Starco Center, Beirut, Lebanon

1971 Souk Tawil, Beirut, Lebanon

1971 Open air exhibitions in Faubourg of Saint Honoré, Paris, France

1971 Halles Gallery, Paris, France

1962 Alecco Saab Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon

1961 Rodin Museum, Paris, France

1961 Superior National School Of Fine Arts, Paris, France

AWARDS

- 2006** Awarded the "Medal of the Lebanese Order of Merit in Gold" by the President of the Lebanese Republic, Emile Lahoud
- 2005** Awarded "Commander the Order of Cedar" by the President of the Lebanese Republic, Emile Lahoud
- 2004** Awarded the "National Medal of the Order of the Cedar, Officer Order (طباطباضي)" by the President of the Lebanese Republic, Emile Lahoud
- 1997** Honorary diploma of INSEAD
- 1996** Honorary diploma of Lions club
- 1994** Awarded the "Medal of the National Order of Cedar, order of Knight" by the President of the Lebanese Republic, Elias Hraoui.
- 1974** Biennale laureate of Alexandria, Egypt
- 1965** Honorary award at the autumn fair of Sursock Museum
- 1964** Honorary award at the autumn fair of Sursock Museum
- 1963** Prix de l'Orient Beirut, Lebanon
- 1963** Laureate of the East award, Lebanon
- 1961** First award at the Superior National school of Fine Arts, Paris

SELECTED PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

- Collection of Mr Stefan Stolitska, Austria
- Collection of Mr Anders Ahlund, Dubai
- Collection of Mr Cesar Nammour, Lebanon
- Collection of Mr Elie Gebrayl, Lebanon
- Collection of Mr Marwan Zougheib, Lebanon
- Collection of Mr Abrham Karabajakian, Lebanon
- Collection of Dr Ramzi Dalloul, Lebanon
- Collection of Mr Raymond Audi, Lebanon

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTION

- Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK
- Musée Rodin, Paris, France
- Hakone Open-Air Museum, Hakone, Japan
- Modern and Contemporary Art Museum (MACAM), Lebanon
- Lebanese Parliament, Beirut, Lebanon