

MICHELLE



LESS IS
MORE

TOGETHER WE REBUILD

Some of the world's most inspiring creatives come together to raise funds to rebuild Lebanon's art landscape. MOJEH has all the details

With the people of Beirut still reeling from the devastating blast that tore through the city on 4 August, Christie's is extending its support to Lebanon's arts landscape by staging an online charity auction dedicated to benefitting the efforts in rebuilding the cultural scene. Taking place from 4-24 November, 'We Are All Beirut' will offer a unique selection of pieces across art, design and jewellery sourced from both Middle Eastern and international creatives, including Paulin, Paulin, Paulin; Hemmerle, and Piaget, as well as acclaimed artists Mona Hatoum, Laila Essaydi and Walead Beshty. Important emerging talents including Flavie Audi and Maryam Eisler will complete the roster, with sale proceeds going to the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) to restore the city's art and cultural community, including the Surssock Museum, Beirut's modern and contemporary art museum.

MOJEH speaks to Caroline Louca, Managing Director at Christie's Middle East, about the auction's importance to the people of Beirut, and why we should all champion this amazing cause.



Witness by Mona Hatoum, 2009

Why did you choose AFAC for this particular initiative?

We chose AFAC for its ethos, dedication to the arts community at large and transparency. AFAC is a trusted NGO that will be pooling its resources towards redistributing support across all artistic fields in Beirut, through a systemised and transparent process. Its achievements in the artistic field are far-reaching, and the team has supported the industry through grants, programmes and residencies, which made them an easy choice for us.

AFAC is based in Beirut but supports Arab artists the world over. Where and to whom will the proceeds of the auction be going?

The proceeds from the sale of the works will be very much targeted to the arts scene in Beirut, helping institutions such as the Surssock Museum and the many galleries that suffered extensive damage, both in terms of repairing structural damage, as well as helping them get back on their feet. There will be a vetting process for the distribution of the funds to all the entities that have been impacted, with full reports prepared to ensure full transparency.

How long did it take to piece the concept together?

The catalyst was, of course, the devastating explosion of 4 August that

took place in Beirut. We came together very quickly to respond and find a meaningful way to support the arts community that has contributed so significantly to the wider art landscape and which has been at the heart of our Middle Eastern auctions since 2006. Christie's feels a deep sense of responsibility to be part of the global efforts to help rebuild Beirut, a city so rich in culture.

Were you faced with any challenges?

Striving to make the sale happen in a very short period of time whilst ensuring a beautiful sale and curation was challenging, but we are fortunate to have a great team at Christie's, including our consultants Dina Nasser Khadivi and Lyne Kaddoura, who all helped to put together a beautiful international selection in all three categories and helped greatly with the initiative. I have also found great hope in the solidarity shown by the industry in supporting Beirut's art community when we announced our charity auction.

How did you choose the artists and what were the criteria?

We knew we wanted a diverse representation from Lebanon, but also the rest of the world, with artists who wanted to show solidarity with our cause. We tried to choose works that were symbolic, had international appeal, or that brought us all back to Lebanon somehow. This is why you will find artworks ranging from Mona Hatoum's poignant 'Witness' sculpture and Nabil Naha's commissioned work, to Walead Beshty's signature photogram series.

Could you talk us through some of the artists and their work in depth? What attracted you to them?

Of course! Mona Hatoum's 'Witness', which dates from 2009, takes us in the direction of Beirut. The historic Martyrs' Square is located at the heart of the metropolis, and during the civil war of 1975-90 it was at the epicentre of the urban guerrilla warfare. 'Witness' testifies faithfully to the fate of this statue and the various tribulations that it has seen since its unveiling. It is wounded in the same way as the original, but the bronze has been replaced by bisque [unglazed porcelain]. This piece is symbolic in the fact that Lebanon remains resilient in a similar way to the statue on Martyrs' Square.

The Hemmerle earrings are a very meaningful donation as these pieces are very exclusive. It's the classical Hemmerle form crafted in aluminium with reverse-set purple sapphires, and the brand is inspired by contemporary art, which was very special to us. Lastly Paulin, Paulin, Paulin's 'Tapis-Siège' was an incredible donation to our cause, given how in-demand and exclusive the brand is. It was the very first to kindly donate to our cause and we were extremely grateful, as many of the designers' pieces are included in the homes of some of the most important collectors in the world.

Linear Emotions by Maryam Eisler, 2018



Tapis-Siège by Pierre Paulin, 1972



Hemmerle earrings