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Beirut Art Week 2018: Temporarily turning the city into a museum

Lebanese designers welcomed international artists in their boutique as the city itself greeted their pieces on its monuments.

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BEIRUT: Beirut Art Week transformed Downtown into a museum from Sept 18 until Sept 25, where sculptures by Lebanese and international artists were located in different parts of the town.

When organizing art week, Beirut Art Fair creates a circuit that people can follow, made of different stops. Each stop consists of an art piece. This gives people a chance to roam around the city in search of the different art installations.

This year it followed the same concept, but included exhibitions in the circuit as well. It was a way to encourage more people to attend the

was very honored to be chosen for the first stop, she said.

Her sculpture was made of stainless steel and it represented the word Horiya, which means freedom in Arabic, using the Phoenician alphabets. Each letter signified something that contributes more to the meaning behind the sculpture.



Horriya by Nayla Romanos in front of Le Gray. (Annahar Photo/Carla Richa)

The H, for example, represents a wall meaning an obstacle, where people face obstacles to be free as Romanos explained. The T means a sign as in leaving a mark. She used polished stainless steel for this letter whereas the others were brushed for it to look like a mirror and be able to blend with the sky.

“When people escape, they want to leave a mark behind,” said Romanos, “and the letter T represents that.” This is why when constructing the piece, she made sure this letter looked as if it was trying to leave the piece.

Nayla Romanos, like many artists, created these pieces especially for Beirut Art Week. She already has a series for the Phoenician alphabet letters but it was the first time she designs a word rather than just letters, and in such a big size.

Then there was Charles Khoury who made the piece Famille located inside Le Gray. He decided to create sculptures that signify family and the idea of gathering around together.



Famille by Charles Khoury located in Le Gray.

The idea behind the art fair was to combine both international and Lebanese cultures together. Lebanese designers welcomed international artists in their boutique as the city itself greeted the pieces on its monuments.

The Italian artist Antonio Signorini's Warriors pieces were located on top of the Samir Kassir pool, a structure dedicated to this Lebanese warrior. "After learning about the history of this man, I had to have my sculptures there," Signorini told Annahar.

Warrios was created before the fair, but the artist decided to display it specifically in Beirut with all of the conflicts the country and neighboring ones have faced. "Being a warrior means being ready to live not to kill," said Signorini, "and the sculptures in Beirut signify bringing back its life and heritage."

Another mix of cultures was found in Elie Saab's boutique where photographs by Franco- German artist Cathleen Naundorf were exhibited. "It's the first time that my work is displayed in Lebanon," Naundorf said.

As for the success of this year's art week, it was reflected in the number of the attendees. It's the first time I meet that many people," said Khoury, "this year the number of attendees definitely increased."

"Beirut was like a museum where people go around searching for the next stop," said Maya Eid, a Lebanese artist.

