

The Space Between

by

Kevork Mourad

GALERIE TANIT | BEYROUTH

Naila Kettaneh Kunigk



Portrait of Kevork Mourad
Photographer Peter van Agtmael/Magnum Photos

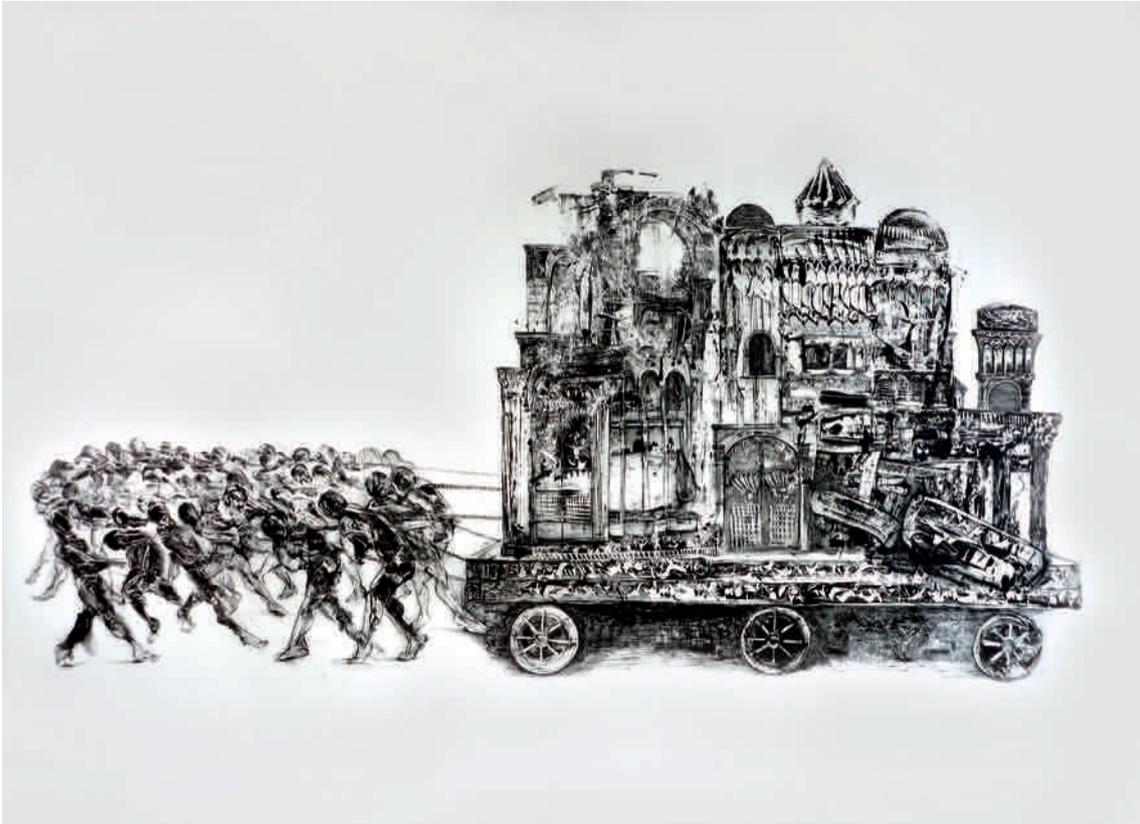
BIOGRAPHY

Kevork Mourad was born in Qamishli, a town in northeastern Syria. Of Armenian heritage, he received his Master of Fine Arts from the Yerevan Institute of Fine Arts in Armenia, and now lives and works in New York. With his technique of spontaneous painting, where he shares the stage with musicians—a collaboration in which art and music develop in counterpoint to each other—he has worked with many world-renowned musicians, including Kinan Azmeh, Brooklyn Rider, Ken Ueno, Liubo Borissov, and Issam Rafea. Mourad is a member, as a visual artist, of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble. He has performed, among others, at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, The Bronx Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Harvard University, the Morgenland Festival, Le Festival du Monde Arabe in Montreal, the Nara Museum in Japan, Lincoln Center Atrium, the Art Institute of Chicago, the American Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Central Park's Summerstage, the Agha Khan Museum in Toronto, and the ElbPhilharmonie in Hamburg.

With the writer and singer Anais Tekerian, he has co-produced and directed several multimedia plays, including *Lost Spring*, which premiered at MuCEM in Marseille, France. Mourad created stop-motion animation work for Manuel De Falla's *Master Peter's Puppet Show*, performed with *The Knights at Tanglewood*; and the video animation for Lembit Beecher's chamber opera *I Have No Stories to Tell You* at Opera Philadelphia. Commissioned by The Space, UK, he collaborated with the composer/oud player Issam Rafea to create *Barbed Wire* (2015), a musical-visual project that aims to encapsulate the reality of Syrians forced to leave their country.

His exhibition, *Immortal City*, was on view at the Rose Art Museum in late 2017 to early 2018. In February 2017, with the Los Angeles Master Chorale, he performed the biblical oratorio *Israel in Egypt*, as part of the Chorale's *Hidden Handel* project.

The 2016 recipient of the Robert Bosch Stiftung Prize, Mourad is currently at work on an animated short film about Syria.



Pulling the Cart . Acrylic on paper . 131 x 243 cm

Selected Exhibitions

- 2018 The Met Fifth Avenue, New York, USA
- 2018 Art Paris Art Fair - GRAND PALAIS, Paris
- 2017 Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, USA
- 2017 ISSOUDUN, Musée de l'Hospice Saint-Roch, France
- 2016 Gallery Z, Rhode Island, USA
- 2015 Galerie Claude Lemand, Paris, France
- 2014 The Contemporary Art Platform, Kuwait City, Kuwait
- 2014 Art Moment, Budapest, Hungary

Selected Projects

2012 Home Within with Kinan Azmeh

A 60-minute audio-visual performance, Home Within is the newest project of Syrian composer and clarinetist, Kinan Azmeh, and Syrian-Armenian visual artist, Kevork Mourad. In this work, art and music develop in counterpoint to each other, creating an impressionistic reflection on the Syrian revolution and its aftermath. Rather than following a narrative, the artists document specific moments in Syria's recent history and reach into their emotional content in a semi-abstract way. The corner stone of the project was the single sound-image piece, "a sad morning, every morning," released in March 2012.

Lost Spring with Anaïs Alexandra Tekerian

Mixing theater, dance, and a soundtrack inspired by Armenian traditional music, and brought to life by the live drawing and animation of painter Kevork Mourad, this multi-disciplinary creation is the poetic journey of a woman in quest of her history, in quest of meaning, in quest of a lost spring.

2015 Lost Spring (Le Printemps perdu)

premiered (in French) in France at the MuCEM in Marseille, on April 10th, 2015.

Lost Spring was performed (with German subtitles) at the Morgenland Festival in Osnabruck, Germany, on July 26th, 2015.

Artist Statement

An Armenian born in Syria, I draw from the dual influences of my heritage. The stories of my home country seep into my pieces, which have become meditations on violence, its redundancy in the region of my ancestors, and the ways to climb out of it toward peace.

I want to explore the role of memories as the inheritance of trauma, the troubled relationship between remembering and forgiveness.

The descendant of genocide survivors, I am fascinated by the idea of what refugees carry with them, how the artifacts that they create hold the history of their suffering, and how my own art fits into the tradition of holding onto or surpassing loss through creation.

My goal is to work in both my media of painting, video, and live performance to find the way for hope and inspiration in the face of repeated disaster.

Kevork Mourad



Untitled . Acrylic on paper . 76 x 55 cm

Immortal City . 2017

Armenian-Syrian artist Kevork Mourad (b. 1970, Syria) is a painter who fuses printmaking, animation, and collaborative performance to bear witness to painful and continuing histories.

Immortal City responds to the ongoing devastation of Syria, in which over 400,000 people have died, more than 6.5 million people have been displaced, and untold destruction has been visited upon the country's rich cultural heritage.

In his allusions to calligraphy, textiles, and the ancient architecture of Palmyra, Bosra, and Aleppo, Mourad engages deeply with the historical texture of his homeland. His art is both a vital act of remembering and a poetic expression of creativity in the face of tragedy.

Mourad works in the immediate black-on-white of newsprint, draftsmanship, and rapid sketches, sweeping paint squeezed from a tiny bottle into expressive lines with his finger or brush producing a sort of symbolist reportage. His marks, quick and final, shift across boundaries of figuration and abstraction, creating an exquisite tension between the beauty of his own process and the relentless destruction and fragmentation that are his theme.

The lyrical, energized lines and layers of Immortal City suggest a life force that not only survives ruination, but also vanquishes it.



Untitled . Acrylic on paper . 76 x 55 cm



Tomorrow . Acrylic on paper . 127 x 75 cm



Installation shot at the Rose Art Museum , Waltham, Massachusetts, US



Installation shot at the Rose Art Museum , Waltham, Massachusetts, US