

**WE
DESIGN
BEIRUT**

**TOTEMS OF
THE PRESENT
& THE ABSENT**



VILLA AUDI

Built in the early 20th century as a replica of a villa in Alexandria and commissioned by a husband as a gift to his wife, Villa Audi is a rare example of Beiruti architecture blending Ottoman influences with European refinement. Today, it also houses one of the region's most significant mosaic collections. A pioneer in the art and design world, Gregory's influence has shaped contemporary creativity in the region,



TOTEMS OF THE PRESENT & THE ABSENT

Beirut—where things appear, disappear, reappear, and somehow still exist in between. Where absence is never quite empty, and presence is never entirely whole. This exhibition is an ode to both: to the ones who stayed, the ones who left, and the ones who are here but feel like they're elsewhere.

For this edition of We Design Beirut, we are reviving Smo Gallery, a space that once gave designers a stage and sent them into the world. It closed, but here it is again—present and absent, much like the city itself. And what better way to mark this moment than with totems? Not the kind that guard ancient tribes (though we could use some of that energy), but new totems—personal, political, playful, melancholic, ironic. Objects that say, I am here, or maybe, I was here.

The designers have one mission: create a totem for today. For Beirut as it is, as it was, as it might be. For the ghosts, the dreamers, the hustlers, the hopeful. Villa Audi will be filled with them—totems standing tall, whispering, shouting, laughing at it all.

This is not just a design exhibition. It's a gathering of presences and absences, a tribute to what's missing and what refuses to go away. A reminder that, in Beirut, even when something is gone, it's never really gone.



Adrian Müller



Atelier l'Inconnu



Burau Naim&Helou



Carole Akkari
v



Cybelle Moutran



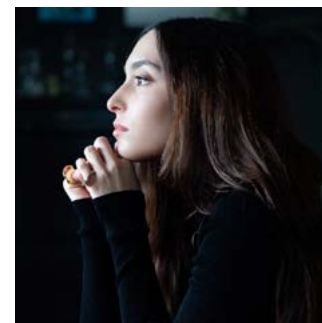
Davina Atallah



Dia Mrad



Dori Hitti



Emma Dya Jabr



Eva Szumilas



George Geara



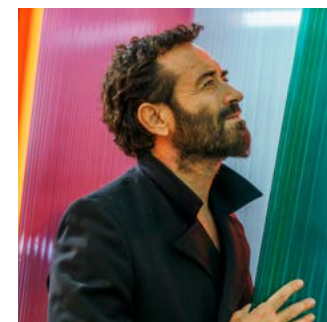
Ghyda Kanaan



Hala Matta & Zein Daouk



Hala Salem



Jacopo Foggini



Joanna Laura
Constantine



Johanna Jonsson



Joseph Haykal



Karina Sukar



Karine Letayf



Nada Zeineh



Nadeen Roufael



Nayla Khoury



Ramy Boutros



Khaled Mouzanar



Lama Elkhayat Salloum



Lamiss Akar



Lara Khoury



Roger Azar



Rouba Khalil



Samer Alameen



Sara Badr Schmidt



Lea Majdalani



Lina Shamma



Maggy Monsef



Maha Kutay



Selim Mouzannar



Spock Design



Spread



Studio Bazazo



Marie Munier



Marine Bustros



Myriam Sadek



Nada Rizk



Studio Manda



Tara Jane Tabet



Yakin



Youssef Haidar



ATELIER L'INCONNU

Womb of a City

Phase 1 La Volupté

Beirut is both womb and wound: an origin and an echo, fragile yet enduring. A body reimagined as origin, La Volupté rises from the earth like a maternal apparition, fragile yet monumental. Her rattan form breathes with the wind, an umbilical cord unfurling from her core, delicate as breath, resilient as memory. She anchors the city's pulse, recalling every birth and fracture that shaped it. Not comfort, not forgiveness, but a reawakening of what was always here, the foundation that endured beneath forgetting. This first gesture invites entry, a descent into memory and body, where the cord extends beyond the frame, searching, touching, penetrating space, binding what once was broken.

[Details](#) H.550 × W.440 × D.440 cm
Metal structure and 12mm hand weaved natural rattan spline

Phase 2 The Long Wait

From La Volupté's body emerges the cord threading through the window like a breath crossing thresholds. The Long Wait lies beneath it: a vessel of stillness, of time suspended. Here, grief becomes tactile, carved into wicker, where waiting is both ache and devotion.

Phase 3 The Conversation We Never Had

The cord reaches its final encounter, The Conversation We Never Had. Two presences lean toward one another, suspended between dialogue and silence. The cord still connects them to La Volupté, as if longing to mend what distance and time have undone. This work becomes both questionand reconciliation, a soft confrontation with memory. The forms, sculpted in resin and woven by hand, speak without words, an architecture of tenderness, of what remains unsaid yet deeply felt. The cord holds, for now a quiet tension between what remains and what must one day be released.

[Details](#) L.200 × W.100 × H.40/85 cm
Hand sculpted structure weaved with 3mm natural Rattan Finish
[Instagram](#) @atelierlinconnu



ADRIAN MÜLLER

Spolialith

A cluster of manufactured geology built from reclaim bricks, terracotta offcuts, and industrial rubble cast in concrete. The blocks are sliced like gems at both orthogonal and angled cuts to reveal their unexpected internal strata, textures, and forms. Stacked vertically in the garden, they aggregate fragments of history, memory, and material, like geological mosaics transforming debris into a totemic marker that speaks to cycles of destruction, repair, and reassembly in the urban and natural landscape. The totem can be extended with more pieces, dismantled and re-stacked, or used in parts.

[Details](#) W.40 × L.40 × H.180 cm
Brick Spolia, Ceramic and Stone Aggregate, Terracotta and Porcelain Grog, Marble Dust, Sand and Concrete
[Instagram](#) @adrianmuller.xyz



STUDIO BAZAZO

Solace

This sculptural installation takes the form of an abstract confessional booth — a symbolic space where intimacy and judgment coexist, to examine the conflicted relationship many hold with Beirut. Clad in warm textures and flickering candlelight, it evokes sacredness and secrecy. Its imposing structure offers secluded seating, suggesting a place where truths may be spoken, concealed, or silently carried. Beirut itself feels like a guilty pleasure — seductive yet exhausting, embraced despite, or perhaps because of, its chaos, beauty, and scars. For some it is identity; for others, loss. This booth offers no absolution. Instead, it invites reflection on the confessions we hold about Beirut — those we declare, those we whisper and those we refuse to voice.

[Details](#) W.185 × L.75 × H.260 cm
Beech Wood, Stainless Steel and Fabric
[Instagram](#) @studiobazazo

BURAU NAIM&HELOU

Common Grounds

Common Grounds reimagines the totem not as a vertical symbol of worship but as a site of presence, reflection, and connection. Its narrative unfolds horizontally, each compartment becoming a chapter, a seat, a surface. Placed within Beirut's fractured urban fabric, it acts as a soft monument a quiet act of resistance reclaiming public space and offering a place for exchange. Its mosaic cladding deepens the story: each tile, like a fragment of memory, forms a pixelated portrait of Beirut built from the city's own pieces, open-ended and ever-growing. In gathering, sitting, and remembering, we rediscover a lost Beirut, where salvation lies not in elevation but in shared presence and human connection.

[Details](#) L.460 × W.65 × H.45 cm

With a thin glass pole going up to 270cm

Stone mosaic and frosted glass

[Instagram](#) @burau.arch



CCONCEPT

Layers of Beirut: Totem of Time

Layers of Beirut: Totem of Time is a sculptural wall installation that embodies the city as a palimpsest of histories (historical, architectural, social, economic, political, cultural, natural, and technological). Each layer is more than a physical stratum: it is a memory, a scar, a dream, a voice, a trace. It is both wound and bandage, weight and inheritance, presence and absence. Through metal, rust, mirror, and light, the work reflects Beirut's unique capacity to rewrite itself without erasing, where absence is never empty and presence never whole. This piece is both a poetic narrative and a collectible object, bridging art and design for contemporary interiors, luxury hospitality, and public spaces.

[Details](#) H.250 × W.150 cm

Sculpted Metal (oxidized steel & brushed, rust patina)

[Instagram](#) @akkaricarole



CYBELLE MOUTRAN

Of Now & Then

Of Now & Then explores the emotions and experiences that shape us, individually, collectively, and as a city. It is a reflection on Beirut and its people: fractured yet steadfast, wounded yet alive. Embodying dualities – the present and the absent, the exposed and the buried, the repressed and the emerging – the totem stands tall in quiet defiance. Is it Beirut, enduring despite everything? Or is it us, rooted, bound, haunted, and perhaps healing? Culminating in a rupturing swirl, it evokes meditation on memory, identity, and transformation. A silent story written in clay, *Of Now & Then* holds space for both remembrance and release, for the weight of the past and the possibility of becoming.

[Details](#) H.180 × W.42 × D.20 cm

Stoneware and Porcelain

[Instagram](#) @cybellemoutranceramics







DIA MRAD

PSI-01 (Power Supply Indicator 01)

PSI-01 is a sculptural system that reflects Lebanon's daily negotiation of fragmented electricity infra-structures. Each illuminated signal corresponds to a shifting source of power, whether solar, generator, government grid, or none at all, making visible the uncertainty that structures daily life. Neither appliance nor monument, the work merges the language of industrial control panels with domestic scale, situating political and infrastructural failure within the grammar of design.

Details H240 x W 45 x D 60 (customizable)
Airbrushed welded steel, APEM industrial switches and indicators, Bulgin fuse holders, Dialight indicator lamp, Wever & Ducré lighting fixture, steel frames with backlit acrylic panels, textile cabling.

Instagram @diamrad



DAVINA ATALLAH

Majlis Body Blocks Totems Edition

Davina Atallah presents a new edition of Body Blocks, a modular stacking toy inspired by the earliest known civilizations. Drawing from the visual languages of antiquity in Mesopotamia, these large-scale, soft blocks continue her exploration of identity and play. Long before classical ideals defined the perfect body through symmetry, whiteness, and measured proportions, the peoples of our region celebrated forms rooted in the wildness of nature, rich with meaning and diversity. These forms, once dominant, never found their way into the playthings that influence our early sense of self. Atallah reflects on what was lost through erasure and what could be reclaimed through play. Functioning as floor cushions, the blocks echo the majlis, a place for gathering and exchange across generations.

Details Various Dimensions

Water Repellent / Stain Resistant. Stuffing: Shredded Foam

Instagram @davina.atallah



DORI HITTI ARCHITECTS

The Silent Walker

This sculpture, with its angular body striding forward, stands as a totem of movement and resilience in a city suspended between memory and survival. Its faceless form and geometric limbs strip away individuality, transforming it into a universal figure — not one person, but all who have walked Beirut's fractured streets. In its forward step, it is present; in its absence of features, it recalls what has been lost. Yet the figure does not bend or falter: it walks tall, head high, embodying a rhythm of continuity. Through collapse and reconstruction, loss and renewal, Beirut persists. *The Silent Walker* reminds us that to live here is to carry absence within, yet to affirm presence — always moving forward, unbroken. Finally, *The Silent Walker* stands as a reinterpretation of our famous Phoenician man, a symbol that has long represented the people of Lebanon.

Details W.65 × L.235 × H.670 cm, Metal

Instagram @dorihattiarchitects



EMMA DYA JABR

Bar Platine

Bar Platine features rotating shelves of varying heights, its layers speaking to the strata of a city destroyed and rebuilt time and again. Its surfaces capture and scatter surrounding colours and textures, casting an ever-changing display. Rooted in the theatre of mixology and music, it becomes a stage, brought to life through touch and use. The movement of the shelves echoes the spin of a turntable but also becomes hypnotic and alludes to the motion of a people always in flux in a world that rarely remains still. This piece is a totem of togetherness and perseverance, a tribute to the innate instinct to gather, to enjoy life. It is a testament that even in the hardest of moments, we somehow always manage to raise a glass.

Details W.80 × H.270 cm, Stainless Steel

Instagram @emmajabr



EVA SZUMILAS

Diamond

This bar cabinet is a tribute to Beirut—a city of resilience, memory, and hidden beauty. Tall and slim, its totem-like form symbolizes endurance, while the diamond-shaped structure echoes strength and rarity. The oak exterior recalls the weathered facades of the city, its peeling doors revealing brass glimmers beneath—like crumbling walls that once concealed opulent interiors. Opening the cabinet is an invitation into Beirut's old houses, where secret courtyards, high ceilings, and intricate details created a world of quiet elegance and intimacy. Through the interplay of rawness and refinement, the piece mirrors the city itself: scarred yet graceful, marked by hardship yet endlessly resilient, where beauty patiently waits to be rediscovered beyond the layers of time.

[Details](#) W.85 × L.85 × H.215 cm

French Oak, Brass, Leather, LED Light

[Instagram](#) @evaszumilas



STUDIO MANDA

Birds Don't Come Easy

This piece is a meditation on invitation and distance. A birdhouse rises like a totem; part shelter, part symbol. Its form brings together a composite of recycled resin and concrete: raw and industrial, yet delicately formed. But the birds don't come easily. Maybe they never do. Their absence becomes part of the piece, a quiet tension between welcome and withdrawal. The house stands open, expectant, but uncertain.

It holds space, not birds. A suggestion of home, not a home itself. This duality whispers: "I am here, or maybe, I was never meant to be." It asks: What does it mean to offer refuge? What remains when connection is never made? Is the gesture of creating space—human or avian—enough on its own? By merging the elemental with the refined, the inviting with the unreachable, this work becomes more than a place for birds. It is a reflection on longing, impermanence and the quiet distance between offering and belonging.

[Details](#) L.80 × W.80 × H.250 cm

Composite of recycled resin and concrete

[Instagram](#) @studiomanda



GEORGE GEARA

Pink Phoenix

Pink Phoenix is a totemic bar sculpted from a single block of pink onyx, a noble stone carrying Beirut's heritage. Its form integrates architectural ornaments: the arcade, a crown with vitrail recalling the oculus of Lebanese facades, and two marble sides rising like columns, symbols of strength and resiliency. Conceived at an over-scaled human proportion, the bar rises as a monumental body, unfolding through leather clad doors that open like wings. The phoenix, eternal emblem of rebirth, mirrors Beirut itself: scarred yet dignified, always able to rise again. Pink Phoenix thus becomes a totem of freedom, vitality, and resilience, a tribute to the city's enduring strength and endless rebirth.

[Details](#) W.140 x D.45 x H.230 cm

Pink onyx, burl wooden doors, crown of artisanal vitrail and casted feathers

[Instagram](#) @georgegeara.studio



GHYDA KANAAN STUDIO

Berytus

Berytus is a collectible cabinet born from memory. It pays homage to Beirut's Roman soul, a civilization once alive with colonnades, forums, and public baths, now buried beneath glass towers and concrete ambition. This piece embodies the secrets the city holds under its surface, within its form lies both absence and presence: layers of memory, fragments of identity, whispers of an empire that shaped our cultural foundation. Crafted as both vessel and metaphor, the cabinet invites us to reflect on what has been silenced and what deserves to be seen again. It does not reject modernity but seeks gentleness in it. Berytus stands as an awe to Roman Beirut, urging us to preserve and celebrate our hidden heritage.

[Details](#) H.198 × D.60 cm

Brushed Stainless Steel, Egyptian Alabaster and Glass Shelves. Limited Edition of 2.

[Instagram](#) @ghydakanaan.studio





HALA SALEM

Presence of Absence

This totem is a guard of memory, a sentinel who embraces the future. Built from ceramic tiles that echo the texture of stone: marble, onyx, serpentine. It holds fragments of Beirut: faded colors, fractured surfaces, traces of homes and histories. It stands 2m30 high, layered like the city itself: scarred, silent, still standing. Between the tiles, seams of copper, drawn from Lebanon's craft tradition, carry engraved phrases about absence, memory, and return. These are not just lines of metal: they are moments of rupture and reflection.

This is not a reconstruction. It is a witness. A presence made of what's missing. Because in Beirut: nothing is ever fully here, and nothing ever fully gone. You might see yourself. You might see someone you lost. You might see Beirut, or what Beirut might have been.

[Details](#) H.230 × W.32 × D.22 cm

Glazed ceramic tiles evoking stone (marble, onyx, serpentine) with engraved copper seams.

[Instagram](#) @hala_salem_achillas

JACOPPO FOGGINI

Cheese_Smile

A monolith dedicated to the resilience of— Beirut and of all Lebanon— a country that fiercely protects its extraordinary essence from the violence of war. The secret lies in Lebanese culture itself: a culture in love with life, enlightened by the vivid memory of tragedy, bombings, and war, yet always driven by an unrelenting desire to bloom again. With an ironic yet conscious approach, bullet holes—etched into many of the capital's walls—are reimagined as openings on a transparent polycarbonate wall-mounted monolith, evoking a giant slice of Swiss cheese. This playfully references an old saying that describes Lebanon as the “Switzerland of the Middle East”, the axis of a three-bladed propeller connecting Africa, Asia and Europe.

The project is made in Italy in collaboration with Dr. Gallina, a leading company in polycarbonate processing that has been working for years with Jacopo Foggini on his special projects.

[Details](#) Polycarbonate

[Instagram](#) @jacopo_foggini



HALA MATTA & ZEIN DAOUK

Abacus Quadrumanus

“Born from a flowing, four-handed conversation between Hala Matta and Zein Daouk, ABACUS QUADRUMANUS reflects their artistic journey and practice. Inspired by ancient counting devices, Abax to the Greeks, Suanpan to the Chinese, this imagined, totemic object features seven rows of ceramic spheres, each varying in texture, glaze, and form. Symbolizing the union of spirit and matter, air and earth, it invites touch and interaction. Viewers are encouraged to place both hands on the spheres, engaging in a timeless gesture of movement and connection. Playful and poetic, the work breaks free from rigid taboos around art, offering a tactile experience rooted in collaboration, exploration, and an intimate relationship between artwork and viewer.”
— Alia Atieh

[Details](#) W.120 × H.200 × D.35 cm

Ceramic, Wood & Metal

[Instagram](#) @hala_matta, @zein.daouk





JOANNA LAURA CONSTANTINE

Continuum

A totemic necklace of orbs in brass and resin, *Continuum* speaks to the cycles of life, memory, and rebirth. Each orb holds the weight of experience, while the final resin sphere embodies fragility and renewal — a vessel of beginnings. Rooted in my personal journey of motherhood, the piece reflects both rupture and healing, endurance and transformation. In its form, it also echoes the spirit of Beirut — a city scarred yet unbroken, endlessly reshaping, and forever finding ways to begin again.

[Details](#) Various Dimensions
Brass and Resin
[Instagram](#) @joannalauraconstantine



JOHANNA JONSSON

Cabaret

Cabaret celebrates the deep-rooted mindsets of Beirutees living in the present moment, while acknowledging what is absent—stability and peace. *Cabaret* is a bar cabinet that mirrors the vulnerable and glamorous nightlife, channeling people's vibrancy and echoing its promise of belonging to a bowl of artistic creation. A timeless dance of grace and classic sophistication, the flamenco and swan portray beauty and transformation, flying high precisely because of sudden changes in the city's fabric.

Cabaret reflects the therapeutic undertone of nightlife as a consistent escape for bonding, belonging and freedom of expression. Its accordion mirrors unfold like a paravan, transforming from a home bar into a

dazzling centerpiece, showcasing its spontaneity, going from a bar cabinet to a generous home party. Designed to house fine treasures, *Cabaret* embodies resistance and celebration in a gathering act of bold and intimate intensity.

[Details](#) Closed: W.103 × H.200 cm
Open: W.260 × H.200 cm
Primary stainless steel in cream gold metal with 6mm tinted red mirrors of etched patterns.
[Instagram](#) @johannajonsson_official





JOSEPH HAYKAL

Quiet Resilience

Despite destruction and loss, Beirut and its people continue to rise with dignity carrying pain in silence yet holding hope in their hearts. This totem reflects that journey. The base, in shiny silver with a rough texture, shows strength despite scars light emerging through pain. The middle, twisted steel bars in brass, metal, and stainless steel, represents chaos yet also unity, embodying the city's diversity. The ring, a smaller silver piece, is a pause of reflection, lifting memories and lessons. The top, polished stainless steel with a chrome to blue gradient, points upward toward renewal. The chrome mirrors strength, while the blue evokes Beirut's sky and sea symbols of healing, peace, and an open horizon of hope.

Details W.47 × D.47 × H.270 cm

Brushed and polished Stainless Steel, Brass, Steel and Resin Putty.

Instagram @josephhaykal_design.studio

KHALED MOUZANAR

18:07

When Gravity Was No More

When what truly matters goes up in smoke, we cling to the trivial things. As when we lose someone we love: a forgotten strand of hair, a word scribbled in a notebook suddenly become the most precious of objects.

On August 4th, 2020, we lost everything, and for days we gathered our insignificant things: a shattered portrait, a pencil, a note, a torn canvas, a childhood stuffed toy... As if, amid the chaos of the ruins, we were trying to reassemble the scattered fragments of our disfigured souls...

This installation recreates my room and office that were blown apart that day; a suspended landscape of what once surrounded me. The music we hear within the space, *The Pulse*, is a piece I composed in the aftermath of the explosion — a heartbeat that persisted when everything else had stopped.

Details W.4 × H.10 m

Metal structure, metal chains and trivial things from daily life

Instagram @khaledmouzanar



KARINA SUKAR

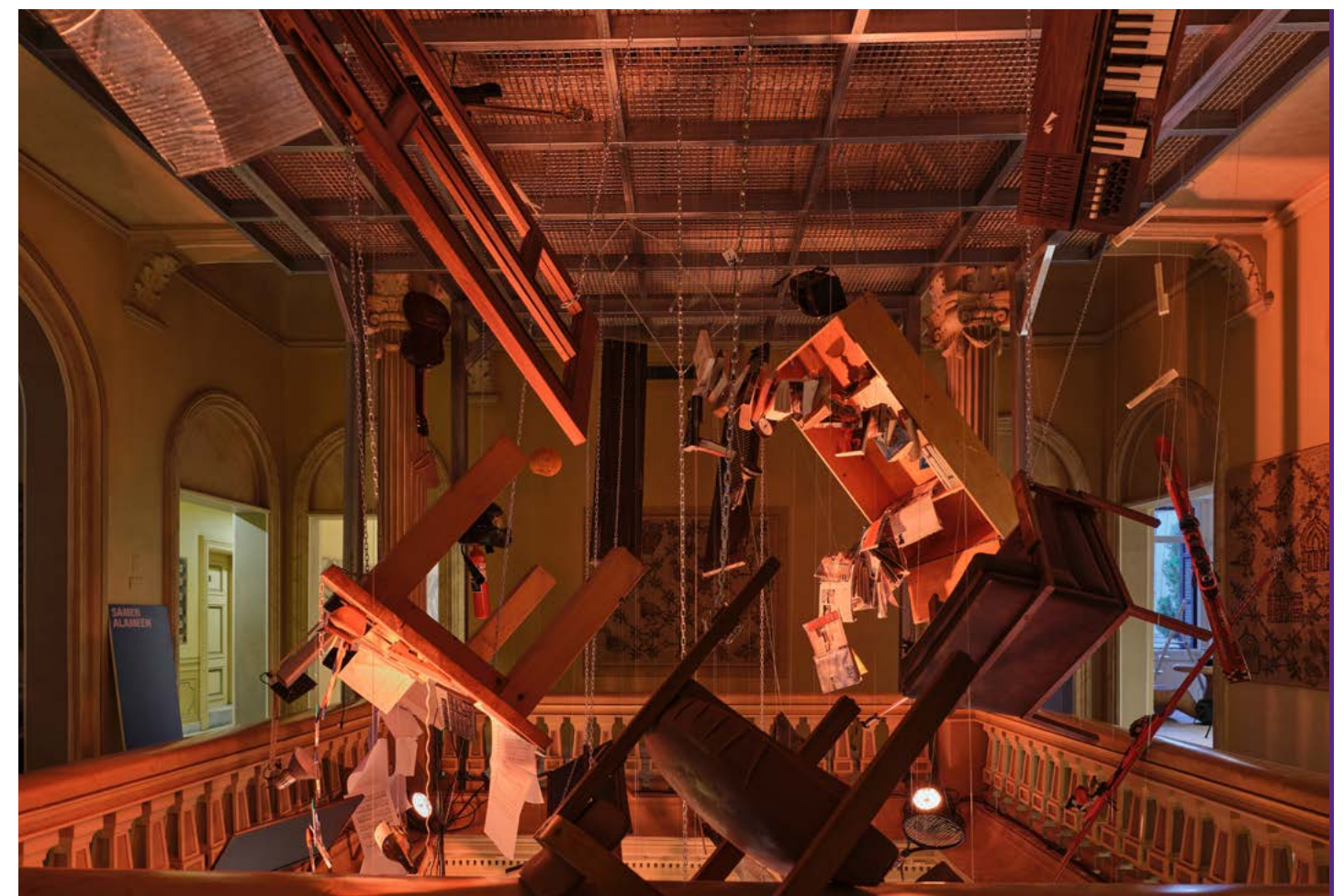
A Monument to Memory & Hope

This totem embodies Lebanon's identity through weight, contrast, and lightness. Its base of thick, time-marked wood recalls the cedar's rootedness and resilience, layers of history, scars, and endurance anchoring the past. Between these heavy blocks lie fragile pauses: thin glass bubbles, transparent and weightless, letting in light and breath. They evoke life's delicacy, the quiet tension between burden and grace, yet they hold everything above them. As the totem rises, wood and glass alternate, echoing Lebanon's rhythm of strength and fragility. At the summit, glass breaks free, rising like a quiet eruption of hope, persistent and luminous. This monument asks how fragility carries such weight; its answer lies in Lebanon's spirit, rooted, scarred, and still reaching skyward.

Details W.52 × D.52 × H.300 cm

Wood and Glass

Instagram @karinasukardesignstudio







KARINE LETAYF

My Scars are Not Silence

In this piece, Karine Letayf explores memory, wounds and the persistence of life through absence. The artist's own words accompany the work:
 My body is a hollow tree,
 once filled with voices,
 now holding only echoes.
 In Beirut, I try to bloom,
 half-rooted, half-lost.
 I tie the past to the present
 with green threads,
 soft ivy
 growing through the cracks.
 I am still here.
 My scars are not silence.

[Details](#) White Totem: H.160cm × D.30cm
 Handbuild and glazed stoneware, kiln-fired at 1220°C
 Grey Totem: H.160cm × D.35cm
 Handbuild and glazed stoneware, kiln-fired at 1220°C
[Instagram](#) @karineletayf.ceramics

LAMISS AKAR

Light Keeper

Human-scale lampshades, each standing two meters tall, embody the memory of an ancient figure once essential to our nights: الدومري — the light keeper

In Lebanon and across the region, the domari was entrusted with lighting the oil lanterns that once illuminated our streets. With the arrival of electricity, he vanished, leaving only traces in language, memory, and imagination. In these sculptures, the light keepers are reborn. Their bases, abstract and organic, reflect the human body, a presence both physical and symbolic. Above, the lampshade rises as an embroidered fabric “head,” crowned with the familiar arches of Lebanese architecture, bridging past and present. Here, the forgotten domari becomes a totem: no longer keeper of light, but the light itself.

[Details](#) H.200 × W.140 × D.50 cm
 H.200 × W.130 × D.50 cm
 Embroidered Fabric, Fiber Glass, Micro-cement
[Instagram](#) @lamiss.akar



LAMA ALKHAYAT SALLOUM

Nine Lives

Nine Lives is a symbolic totem that embodies Beirut's ever-evolving journey, its people, and their collective experiences. Inspired by the myth of nine lives, it reflects the city's trials, transformations, and resilience across past, present, and future. The totem is built of nine stacked triangular cedar wood levels, each representing a “life” of the city, eras of rebirth, change, and growth. Metal squares link the layers, symbolizing the city's heart and lifeblood that hold everything together. Mirrors embedded in the panels invite viewers to encounter their own reflection, drawing them into the collective narrative of struggle, renewal, and hope. More than a structure, Nine Lives stands as an ode to Beirut and its people, their spirit, their ability to endure, to reinvent, and to rise anew.

[Details](#) W.50 × L.50 × H.195 cm
 Wood, Mirror and Brass
[Instagram](#) @offgrid_lb





LARA KHOURY

Bound To Be Free

In the midst of Lebanon's crisis, I reached a breaking point. I left, uncertain if I would ever return. My first memory from that escape is vivid: the blue water of the Red Sea, the boat carrying me away from the human-made into pure nature, and the wind on my face. That breeze — cool, alive, unapologetic — felt like a gentle reminder that freedom, even fragile, is still possible. I stood there with a hesitant smile, uncertain yet willing, taking my first steps into the unknown. That moment will remain with me forever: the breeze, the peace, the freedom.

Rooted in LARAKHOURY's ready-to-wear collection Embers of Power, this totem embodies resilience and unbreakable creativity. It flows tall, not to be worn but to be witnessed — a monument to survival and self-expression.

[Details](#) 250 × 300 cm
[Liquid Organza and Raw Metal](#)
[Instagram](#) @larakhourythebrand



LINA SHAMMA

Eunoia

(pronounced you-no-ya)

Beirut, my city, is a place I met through its scars. Not the city of postcards, but the one that survived. This work is a tribute to Beirut as she emerges not as a city but as a woman —feminine in essence, layered in paradox. At once passionate and phlegmatic, wounded yet unyielding. She is passionate and restrained, proud and broken, tender and defiant, always complex, always whole in her fragmentation. She stands tall, luminous, woven from fragments and memory, from silences and screams.

[Details](#) D.45 × H.195 cm, Raku Clay
[Instagram](#) @linashammaceramics



LEA MAJDALANI

Sôlace

Solace is a monumental wax sculpture standing at 1m80, designed to embody both fragility and strength. Through its pure materiality and vertical presence, the piece evokes a sense of quiet resilience, offering comfort while reflecting on the delicate balance between vulnerability and endurance. Its smooth surface and warm tone transform wax—a material usually associated with impermanence—into a lasting statement of stillness and hope. Solace invites viewers to pause, reflect, and find intimacy within simplicity.

[Details](#) H.180 cm, Wax
[Instagram](#) @thesillyspoon



MAHA KUTAY

The Spirit Within

The Spirit Within stages a confrontation between rooted identity and modern constraint. Two intertwined ribbons rise in a poised spiral, forming a contemporary totem shaped by Lebanon's inner spirit and the forces confining it. Raw-textured and granular, the inner loop is the living core. Its rough surface recalls sun-baked stone walls; humble, enduring artefacts that have outlasted countless tempests. As the loop climbs, it embodies the collective resilience of a people with unyielding ability to remake hope from the very ground beneath them.

Casting a wider, mirrored arc, the outer band is cool, gleaming, and seemingly impervious. It represents the tangle of political, economic, and social constraints that encircle Lebanese life, shimmering with power while simultaneously constricting.

[Details](#) W.47 × D.18 × H.70 cm, Coated Resin
[Instagram](#) @studiomkplus





MAGGIE MONSEF

Genome of Ashes: The Eyes of Beirut

Inspired by the spiralling double helix of DNA, my totem embodies the unbroken thread of identity across time and generations. Within its helix, unblinking eyes, historically used as a talisman by the Phoenicians against the “evil eye,” bear witness to survival, beauty, and loss; symbols of memory, ancestry, and resilience. Entirely handmade, in solid wood and marquetry, in varying tones, it showcases the precision and artistry of true craftsmanship. Through the delicate fragments of wood, I invite the viewer to stand before this totem and feel Beirut, not only as a place, but as a presence. It is both a sculpture and a soul print.

This is our DNA: fractured and magnificent.
This is our gaze: unbroken.

[Details](#) 240 cm

Solid wood and marquetry
[Instagram](#) @maggymonsefdesign



MARINE BUSTROS

Silent Dialogue

In Beirut, every corner trembles with memory and change, caught between what endures and what fades. From this threshold an installation emerges: a paravent and a wall, two figures locked in dialogue. The paravent stands as a mediator between past and present. It occupies the in-between, holding space for what once was and what still echoes. Facing it, the wall is anchored, punctuated with niches holding fragments of Beirut. Together, they form a dialogue and reflect the soul of Beirut, a city in constant motion, yet firmly rooted in layers of history that never cease to surface. At the heart of this dialogue lies another story: the myth of Europa, the Phoenician princess carried away to foreign shores. Her exile becomes Lebanon's allegory: a homeland suspended between uprooting and inheritance, absence and fragile presence. But what remains of a nation when its vital forces are torn from it? Can a future be built upon the ruins of absence?

[Details](#) Concrete Wall Dimension: L.160 × H.230 cm

Paravent: L.200 × H.180 cm

Paravent in Wood Marquetry, Wall in Wood,
Concrete Paint and Stainless Steel Boxes

[Instagram](#) @mb.designstudios



MARIE MUNIER

Baqi

Baqi is a sculptural reflection on Beirut, a city of enduring spirit and layered time, it captures its past wounds, present strength and future hope. Built in four symbolic planes, it begins with a present day layer of steel and central glass element shaped like part of Beirut's map, evokes a moment frozen in time; the August 4th, 2020. From within the totem light shines, an echo of beauty that refuses to dim.

While drawing attention to the hidden, central core: a solid steel heart that represents Beirut's unchanging soul, from within it a video invites viewers to a journey through Beirut's history, revisiting lost landmarks and memories that shaped the city's identity. The frontmost, smaller layer stands slightly apart: a yet untouched, waiting to be shaped.

[Details](#) H.225 cm, Base Diameter.70 cm

Steel, Glass and Led Lighting
[Instagram](#) @mariemuniercreations



MYRIAM SADEK

Wiladā

She sits in stillness - knees drawn in, hands resting gently. Rooted deeply, she spills into the earth—steady, grounded— as if she has always belonged. From there, her body rises with fluid grace. She moves like memory; shaped by time, by survival, by all the things the trees once stood through. She holds within her the quiet force of what endures: resilient yet vulnerable, structured yet fluid. Her essence reaches upward, pulled by something greater, seeking a quiet kind of hope. She becomes the meeting point between who we are and who we could become. She leans into the unseen, where absence carves space for becoming, and her presence hums in the silence that lingers behind.

[Details](#) W.120 × H.230 cm, Wood

[Instagram](#) @myriamsadek.design



NADA ZEINEH

Dyeux

Dyeux is a totemic reflection of our modern world, a silent witness to global events, ever-watchful yet unmoved. It sees everything, yet does nothing. As if blind by choice. Paralyzed by empty rhetoric. Imprisoned by self-image. Entranced by fleeting material gains. This work speaks to the harrowing events in our region met with global indifference. The powerful remained still. The world, frozen.

The sculpture consists of seven elements, hand-sculpted in stoneware clay. These are mounted on a steel frame standing approximately 180 cm tall. The five upper pieces are designed to rotate freely in all directions, echoing the restless, aimless gaze of a presence that sees all but acts on nothing.

[Details](#) H.180 × L.26 × D.26 cm

Stoneware and Steel Structure

[Instagram](#) @nadazeineh



NADEEN ROUFAEL

What Remains, What Is

A light green totem stands at the center, one solid and ceramic; the other porcelain and suspended, echoing the relationship between those who left and those who stayed in Lebanon. Around it hang four to six delicate porcelain pieces, each one representing someone who has left or passed, yet still belongs in spirit. The fragments are gently collected, wrapped in light green ceramic and topped with a porcelain rose. Over 4 days, new forms appear, they hold absence, but also care. This work invites reflection on how memory, ritual, and presence are tied together; and how what's gone still shapes what remains.

[Details](#) Platform: W.180 x L.180 cm

Totem: Ceramics and glaze

Suspended Sculpture: White porcelain

[Instagram](#) @nadeenroufael



NADA RIZK

The Suns of Beirut

The Suns of Beirut is inspired by a gold medallion amulet found at the Beirut National Museum depicting a radiating gold sun disk linked to the sun worship, the cycles of life and death, and new beginnings. Composed of five bronze disks stacked in vertical ascension and anchored in a solid bloc of marble, the totem embodies a rhythm that is both cosmic and human, an echo of the cycles of day and night, a metaphor to Beirut itself, its absence, presence and rebirth.

Bronze and marble, with their weight and permanence, carry the strength of memory, much like the collective spirit of Beirut. The repetition of forms conveys stability, yet the vertical ascent suggests transcendence. The Sun of Beirut is eternal. It rises as a totem of memory, light and rebirth.

[Details](#) H.230 × W.40 × D.40 cm, Bronze and Marble

[Instagram](#) @nada.rizk_ceramics_sculpture



NAYLA KHOURY

Hanging by a Thread

This totem does not stand tall; it floats hanging by a thread, like Beirut itself. Suspended rather than grounded, it reflects the city's fragility. A place that continues, against all logic, to function; unstable yet unbroken. Volatile, sensitive, it shifts with the slightest breeze always adapting to survive. Its form draws from the shape of a tear—a powerful symbol of both sorrow and joy. In Beirut, we weep for loss, for absence, for what has been taken. But also for reunions, for love, for the sheer beauty of being here. From within this delicate cluster of stylized tear shapes, fragmented yet connected a glow emanates. It's a quiet insistence on hope, joy, resilience. Light in the darkness. Presence in the void... Creating shadows that echo what's here, and what's not. Absence and presence, sorrow and celebration, brokenness and beauty. All held, barely and bravely by a single thread.

[Details](#) D.65 × H.270 cm (length of threads is adjustable)

Tinted glass, mirror stainless steel and steel cables

[Instagram](#) @naylakhouryinteriors



RAMY BOUTROS

The Promise

RB architects present The Promise framing the present moment at villa Audi as part of the exhibition Totems of the Present and the Absent. Rooted in heritage, the installation features a raw stone symbolizing history and cultural foundations. From its sides, benches extend outward like wings, inviting visitors to pause, reflect, connect and interact with the rock by inscribing their promises to the city and each other. Above a 3m suspended metallic ring; indirectly lit, acts as both a frame and portal which captures the present moment, while opening a window to what lies ahead. This ring symbolizes our dedication to the city of Beirut and our heartfelt promise. Engraved within its depths are the vows of Jubran Tueini to our nation, embodying Lebanon's strength through the unity of its people. This piece stands as a tribute to Beirut's resilience. Framing a city that constantly oscillates between what was, what is and what is yet to come.

[Details](#) W.320 × L.520 × H.400 cm
Basalt Stone, special hand forged and brushed stainless steel ring
[Instagram](#) @ramyboutrosarchitects



RUJI

Flower Flame

Flower Flame by Ruji rises as part of Totems of the Absent and the Present for We Design Beirut. The vertical form embodies a dynamic dance of forces—an ascension from the pull of gravity toward the open sky, mirroring the invisible impulse that lifts a tree or a flower from the earth. Spiraling in movement, it becomes a torch of resilience for a land and people shaken yet unbroken. The piece stands as an alchemical vessel of transformation, a living symbol of trust that endures even in the absence of safety. Within its form unfolds the paradox of vulnerability and strength, presence and absence, darkness and light—a dance of dualities illuminated by a higher power that both transcends and unites them.

[Details](#) H.320 × W.70 cm
Carrara Bianco and Basalt Base
[Instagram](#) @rujiuuuuuuuuu, @sculpturescandance



ROUBA KHALIL

Silo

Five wheat silos once stood quietly on Beirut's skyline before becoming haunting symbols of Lebanon's broken system. Silo reimagines them as a living seed library, preserving Levantine heirloom varieties, seeds of memory, identity, and resistance. Resistance to corporate agriculture, where Western conglomerates flood our fields with hybrid seeds and chemicals, eroding biodiversity, exhausting soil, and stripping us of food sovereignty.

Conceived in collaboration with Domaine Public Architects, Silo rises as an architectural manifesto. Deeply inspired by Buzurna Juzurna, a local NGO preserving heritage seeds, it stands in defiance of the colonial project. Executed by Hearth Concept, Silo occupies the frontline of design, ecology, and food justice. Its mission: safeguard heritage and restore food agency and sovereignty to future generations.

[Details](#) 250 × 90 × 60 cm, Rammed earth blocks
[Instagram](#) @roubakhalilkitchen



SAMER ALAMEEN

Still Flickering

A tribute to the fading light of Beirut's cultural golden age. The Piccadilly Theatre lingers in the city's memory; suspended between presence and absence. Once alive with voices, music, and movement, it now lies in waiting, beneath a shadow of dust. A trembling red neon pulses in the dark, a faint heartbeat, refusing to die. Its glow mirrors Beirut's bond with its icons: neglected, perhaps, but never forsaken. This is not mourning, it is awakening, it is a reminder. It is a call to tend to what still breathes, to rekindle what time has only dimmed and to revive what absence hasn't yet erased.

[Details](#) H.180 x D.20 x W.20 cm, Metal
[Instagram](#) @sameralamdeen



SELIM MOUZANNAR

Nour Beirut

This marquise-shaped sculpture in corten steel is conceived as a beacon of hope and renewal. At its heart, a radiant sun is engraved and brought to life with layers of transparent enamel, allowing light to pass through and illuminate the piece from within.

The dialogue between corten steel and enamel reflects strength and fragility, permanence and transformation. With its elongated form reaching upwards and its luminous center radiating warmth, the work celebrates a collective belief in a brighter future and honors Lebanon's energy, creativity, and ability to keep moving toward new beginnings.

[Details](#) H.300 x W.100 cm, Corten Steel and Enamel
[Instagram](#) @selimmouzannar

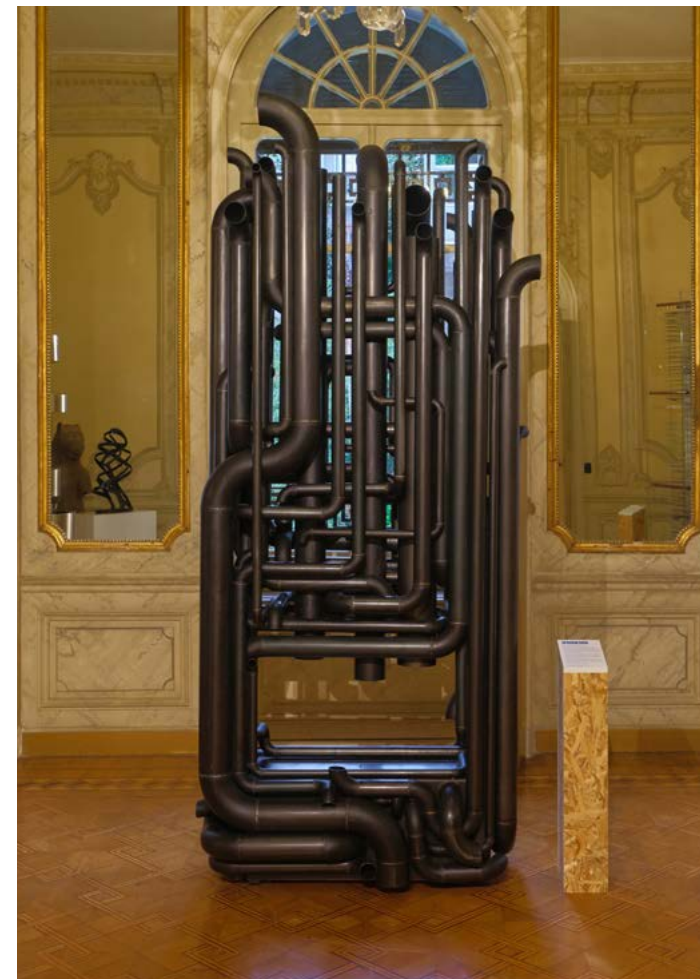


SARA BADR SCHMIDT

Page Blanche

Web Shelter: White threads unfold like a blank page, open to reinvention. Purple evokes ancient wealth and Phoenician dyes. Red suggests war and silent national wounds. Blue recalls the Mediterranean: fluid, nurturing, marked by journeys. Gold glints like the sun, symbolizing Lebanon's enduring light. The work balances forgetting and remembering, silence and transmission. Portrait of a Bird: A still bronze bird, wings folded, eyes fixed on the horizon. It symbolizes exile and return, heaviness and lightness, a fragile anchor between memory and flight. The Book: A living archive of inspirations, a handmade notebook at the crossroads of a personal journal and a laboratory of ideas. The Nest: A house or the feeling of a home, golden composite structure. Represented by Saleh Barakat Gallery

[Details](#) H.270 x W.225 cm
 Web Shelter: Silk, Cashmere, Linen, Wool, Metal, Copper
 Portrait of a Bird: Patinated Bronze, Edition 3 of 8
 The Book: Hand made paper, Ink, Thread, Mixed-media
 The Nest : gold-plated bronze, Edition 2 of 8
[Instagram](#) @sarabadr Schmidt



SPOCKDESIGN

Les Temps Modernes

This fireplace is a homage to the Industrial Revolution, a time when steel, fire and ingenuity reshaped the world.

Today, technological advances and artificial intelligence (or AI in the parlance of our time), have definitely turned the page on this chapter of our history, a chapter that ultimately, had given us all here, our livelihoods.

In a visual nod to old-world ironworks, it is hand-built from cold rolled steel pipes, around an eco-smart burner unit running on bio-ethanol, the 'furnace' of the piece. The open flames heat a purposefully jumbled network of pipes, which are open at both the lower and upper levels. Through this simple and elegant system, cold air is drawn in from below, heated as it travels through the pipes, and released from the top as warm air — creating continuous, natural circulation. Fireplace, sculpture, radiator...

[Details](#) W.115 x D.55 x H.255 cm
 Cold rolled steel tubes, blood, sweat & determination.
[Instagram](#) @spockdesign





SPREAD

Much Peace, Love and Joy

Based on the conviction that color stimulates the senses and emotions, Spread created this work out of an urgent need to spread Peace, Love and Joy into the world. It was inspired by the importance of reaching for the things that spark happiness in difficult times. One-of-a-kind gradations were created using custom letterpress printing and textured paper. The printed paper was then torn by hand into many fragments. The accumulation of fragmented color gradients acts as a metaphor for every kind of existence, state, and perspective. The viewer may freely interpret the fragments as rocks, earth, drift ice, birds, or even souls. The work stimulates the imagination of the viewer, instilling them with strength for tomorrow.

[Details](#) W.80 × H.160 cm, Custom letterpress print on paper, torn by hand
[Instagram](#) @spread_tokyo



YAKIN

Palimpsest: The Eternal City

Like a manuscript written and rewritten, Palimpsest – The Eternal City rises from Beirut’s layers of memory, loss, and renewal. Sixty stacked metal tiers reach skyward, each fragment holding a story, a scar, a whisper of lives past. Suspended aluminum plates hover in tension—some dense, weighty, brutal; others fragile, dancing, breathing —echoing the city’s restless pulse. Threads of emerald-tinted glass shimmer like buried histories beneath Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Ottoman, and modern streets, weaving a mosaic of time. The totem is both archive and prophecy, solid yet luminous, a monument to survival and transformation. Beirut’s spirit pulses within it: destruction becomes story, ruins spark dreams, scars glow with life. Palimpsest transcends gravity and decay, a living testament to a city that is never finished, forever unfolding, and eternally rewriting itself in steel, glass and light.

[Details](#) H.270 × W.80 × L.80 cm
 Hand-sanded Aluminum, Emerald Tinted Glass, Low Iron Glass and Brushed Stainless Steel
[Instagram](#) @yakindesign



TARA JANE TABET

Evocative Reminder

Beirut, in itself, is filled with “architectural totems”, a constant reminder of a city that has disappeared and reappeared so many times. In its architecture, stigmatised by so many tragic events, this city stands as a “melancholic totem” for all generations. History repeats itself in different forms, but one constant remains: The enduring hope.

The disproportionate and fragile superposition of these cement bricks echoes the delicate balance of Lebanese society. Softening their forms, enriching them with wax textures and natural pigments, attempting through this act of creation —on my own scale— to contribute to our collective Lebanese memory. Re-sculpting these fragments with clay, softening their harsh edges into more organic forms is a reflection of the Lebanese spirit, resilient and endlessly aspiring toward beauty, even under the weight of scars. This illuminated totem will stand tall and upright—yet visibly fragile.

[Details](#) W.210 × D.33 × H.33 cm
 Up-cycled cement bricks, clay, cement, natural wax and LED bulbs
[Instagram](#) @tara_____.



YOUSSEF HAIDAR

Stupa

Like a Mani stone cumulus placed to the spirits of the city helping to appease them.

[Details](#) W.200 × L.50 × H.300 cm, Marbel
[Instagram](#) @youssefhaidararchitecte



FOR INQUIRIES

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