

Footnotes

Farid Aouad (Lebanon, 1924-1982)

Opera Garnier Paris (see below)

oil on canvas, framed

executed in 1965

130 x 160cm (51 3/16 x 63in).

"Nothing is important save the spiritual state that enables one to subjectify one's thoughts to a sensation and to think only of the sensation, all the while searching to express it."

Edouard Vuillard

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Nour Salame Abilama and Marie Tomb, *Art From Lebanon*, Beirut, 2012

Exhibited:

Beirut Exhibition Center, *Art from Lebanon*, 2012

The present work is one of the largest and most visually impressive paintings ever produced by Farid Aouad. Depicting the grand Opera Garnier in Paris, "L'Opera" is one of the most superlative examples of Aouad's recurring theme; an expressionist depiction of the exuberant Paris social scene reconciled with the notion of man as fundamentally isolated being.

Farid Aouad was born at Al Maydan in the south of Lebanon in 1924. He studied at ALBA (Lebanese Fine Arts Academy) from 1943 until 1947. He then went to Paris where he spent one year at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts and, from 1948 until 1951, he worked in the studios of Othon Friesz and André Lhote.

After a brief return to Lebanon, in 1959, Aouad permanently settled permanently in Paris. Drifting into poverty and often in ill-health, Aouad's artistic production reflected the sense of torment, seclusion and hardship that characterised his day to day life. Whilst depicting populated and vivacious settings like Café's, and public spaces, Aouad's opaque figures, whilst crowded, do not express a sense of togetherness. A sense of palpable existential angst runs through his characters, who obscure and often faceless, seem to barely cling to existence.

The contrast achieved between his often buoyant colouring and morose subject matter is masterful, offsetting the playfulness of his palette with pallid tones, and a sallow, impressionistic, anatomical articulation. In Aouad, we are ultimately confronted with an artist who has a deep visual appreciation and connection with the vibrant, pulsating energy of the Parisian urban landscape, but whose own personal circumstances and emotional turmoil heavily colouring the artistic synthesis of this connection.

Aouad's present composition is very much akin to the works of the post-Impressionists, characterised by an exaggeration of impressionistic composition, a surge in expressionistic interpretations of compositions including distortion of form for expressive effect, and use unnatural or arbitrary colours.

The present work follows in the footsteps of many artists who depicted dramatic and theatrical scenes such as Pierre Bonnard, Edouard Vuillard and Toulouse Lautrec. Where Aouad departs from the orthodoxy is his shift of focus towards the audience and away from the performance aspect of the subject matter, emphasizing his distinctly existential agenda.

In 1982, the year of his death, Aouad was paid a special tribute by the

Sursock Museum, a belated recognition of the artists incredible contribution to the Art of Lebanon.



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