



QUEENS MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Queens Museum Presents Nicolas Moufarrege: Recognize My Sign
The first exhibition in 30 years to showcase the artwork of a Lebanese artist who helped catalyze the 1980s East Village scene in New York City.

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Public Opening: October 6, 2019



Image: Nicolas Moufarrege, *Title unknown*, 1984, Thread and pigment on needlepoint canvas, 39 ½ x 32",
Courtesy of Nabil Moufarrej and Gulnar "Nouna" Muffarrij

Queens, NY (September 2019) –The Queens Museum presents *Nicolas Moufarrege: Recognize My Sign*, the first museum survey of the artist's work, and his first solo exhibition in New York City in more than 30 years. A prominent cultural figure who helped catalyze the New York City's East Village scene in the 1980s. Nicolas Moufarrege (1947-1985) created a body of exquisite embroidered paintings during a series of transnational migrations from Beirut to Paris and then New York.

A dedicated appropriator, Moufarrege culled images from a broad and vast sourcebook; his embroidered paintings mix references from Classical sculptures and Baroque paintings with comic book heroes, Islamic tilework designs, Pop Art, and Arabic calligraphy. He borrowed images from paintings and prints by artists such as Katsushika Hokusai, Edvard Munch, Pablo Picasso, and especially Roy Lichtenstein. If appropriation provided the artist with raw subject matter, it is his pointed juxtapositions of images that most clearly reveal Moufarrege's wit and thoughtful intelligence: his stitched paintings tell stories. He does this by eschewing binaries like East and West, fictional and real, and by establishing temporal connections between history and the present, positing new ways to approach and connect with narrative storytelling.

Including nearly 40 tapestries and embroidered canvases, as well as drawings, photographs, and primary documents, *Nicolas Moufarrege: Recognize My Sign* follows the artist's relocations from Beirut to Paris to New York, and considers the effects these moves had on the development of his oeuvre.

Significantly, the Queens Museum presentation includes a selection of archival materials related to the artist's participation in P.S.1's National and International Studio Program in 1982-83, and his solo show at the East Village's legendary FUN Gallery in 1985. His curatorial efforts and work as a writer and critic are represented by materials related to his organization of the 1983 exhibition *Intoxication* at Monique Knowlton Gallery. These never-before-seen materials demonstrate the breadth of his interests and his connections to a group of friends and contemporaries that included the artists Fred "Fab 5 Freddy" Brathwaite, Tommy Lanigan-Schmidt, David Wojnarowicz, and Rhonda Zwillinger, among others.

Nicolas Moufarrege: Recognize My Sign originated at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. The exhibition's Curator, Dean Daderko, notes that "The continuing relevance of his work is striking. In a moment when queer identity and transnational migrations are front of mind, Moufarrege's refreshing work offers us new ways to approach these ongoing issues."

Moufarrege's artwork draws from personal experience—including references to his migrations and his identity as a gay man—but it exceeds these individual boundaries. In doing so, it offers a myriad of ways to approach contemporary painting, figuration, craft, transnational identity, desire, and queer life.

About Nicolas Moufarrege

Nicolas Abdallah Moufarrege (1947–1985) was an artist, critic, and curator born in Alexandria, Egypt, to Lebanese parents. He received undergraduate and graduate degrees in chemistry from the American University of Beirut in 1965 and 1968. In 1968 he moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, on a Fulbright Grant and a Harvard University assistantship; it is during this time that he decided to pursue a career in the arts. He returned to Beirut and had his first solo exhibition of tapestries at Triad Condas Gallery in 1973. In a review of that exhibition, the noted artist and writer Etel Adnan remarked, "This is how traditional craftsmanship becomes a personal art full of promise."

With the onset of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, Moufarrege relocated from Beirut to Paris, France. During this period, his work was included in exhibitions at Mathaf Gallery, London (1976); Gallery Kamp, Amsterdam (1977); George Zeeny Gallery, Beirut (1979); and Galeries de Varenne/Jacques Damase, Paris (1980).

Moufarrege died from AIDS-related complications in 1985, leaving behind a significant body of work that has been cared for by his siblings and family in Shreveport, LA. In 1987, Tim Greathouse, Cynthia Kuebel, Elaine Reichel, and Bill Stelling organized a memorial exhibition of Moufarrege's work at the Clocktower, a

space in Manhattan's Tribeca affiliated with P.S.1. Since then, Moufarrege's work has been included in *The Downtown Show* (2006), curated by Carlo McCormick in consultation with Lynn Gumpert and Marvin J. Taylor at New York University's Grey Art Gallery, and *SIDE X SIDE* (2008), curated by Dean Daderko for Visual AIDS at La MaMa La Galleria.

Funding and Support

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About the Queens Museum

The Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows Corona Park features contemporary art, events of hyperlocal and international impact, and educational programs reflecting the diversity of Queens and New York City. Changing exhibitions present the work of emerging and established artists, both local and global, that often explore contemporary social issues, as well as the rich history of its site. In November 2013, the Museum reopened with an expanded footprint of 105,000 square feet, a soaring sky lit atrium, a suite of daylight galleries, nine artist studios, and flexible event space. The Museum works outside its walls through engagement initiatives ranging from multilingual outreach and educational opportunities for adult immigrants, to a plethora of community led art and activism projects. The Museum's educational programming connects with school children, teens, families, seniors as well as those individuals with physical and mental disabilities. The Queens Museum is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Visit www.queensmuseum.org. Follow us at [@queensmuseum](https://twitter.com/queensmuseum).

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