

Public Programs These events are free except where noted, open to the public, and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Seating is limited. Please check camh.org for the most current information.

Opening Reception |
Nicolas Moufarrege: Recognize My Sign

Friday, November 9, 2018 | 6:30–9PM
Join us to celebrate Nicolas Moufarrege's first solo museum exhibition that traces the development of his work from the lap-scaled portrait tapestries to the final works he created.

In Conversation | CAMH Curator Dean Daderko

Saturday, November 10, 2018 | 2–3PM
Explore the symbolism, evolution, and process of Moufarrege's work.

Performance | Musiqa

Thursday, November 15, 2018 | 6:30–7:30PM
In conjunction with the exhibition, Musiqa presents a special concert inspired by Moufarrege's artwork.

Art at Noon | Perry Price

Friday, November 30, 2018 | 12–1PM
Join the Executive Director of Houston Center for Contemporary Craft for a look at the increasing permeability between the fields of contemporary craft and art.

Open Studio | Felt Ornaments

Saturday, December 1, 2018 | 2–4PM
Embroider a felt ornament for the holidays.

Performance | Scriptwriters Houston Museum Plays

Thursday, December 6, 2018 | 6:30–8:30PM
Scriptwriters Houston will present a series of ten-minute plays. Space is limited; register at camh.org.

Lecture | Dr. Nada Shabout

Saturday, January 26, 2019 | 2–3PM
Join art historian and writer for a conversation that views Nicolas Moufarrege's work within the broader context of cultural traditions in Beirut and the Middle East.

Workshop | An Exploration of Embroidery Art

Saturday, February 9, 2019 | 11AM–1:30PM
\$20 Workshop Fee. Register at camh.org. Space is limited. Join us to learn embroidery from a textile artist, designer Mariana Barran Goodall.

“I want to draw. I want to paint. I have something to say. To everyone and to as many as I possibly can. I am doing it on the streets. I am doing it in my room, I am doing it underground. I am doing it on the trains, on the billboards, in the mail. The palaces are full but new ones are being built: in the nightclubs and in the bathrooms. I will work with and on whatever I can lay my hands on. I will carve on a tree or a rock, I will use paint, chalk, or any stick that leaves a mark. I will draw pictures and color them. I will write words, in my language and in yours. I will build toys. I will make sounds and instruments that make sounds. I will rap and I will sing and I will dance to it all. I want you to know my name. I want you to recognize my sign.”

—Nicolas Moufarrege

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
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#atCAMH
#NicolasMoufarrege

HOURS

Mon.	Closed
Tue.	10AM–7PM
Wed.	10AM–7PM
Thu.	10AM–9PM
Fri.	10AM–7PM
Sat.	10AM–6PM
Sun.	12PM–6PM

Cover: *Title unknown*, 1984. Thread and pigment on needlepoint canvas. Courtesy Nabil Moufarrej and Gulnar “Nouna” Mufarrij.

Inside: *Le sang du phenix* [The Blood of the Phoenix], 1975. Thread and pigment on needlepoint canvas. Courtesy Nabil Moufarrej and Gulnar “Nouna” Mufarrij.

¹ Moufarrege, Nicolas. “Another Wave, Still More Savagely than the First: Lower East Side 1982.” *Arts Magazine* (September 1982).

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Nicolas Moufarrege: Recognize My Sign

November 10, 2018–February 17, 2019



Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Nicolas Abdallah Moufarrege (1947–1985) was born in Alexandria, Egypt to Lebanese Christian parents. An avid and intelligent student, he received undergraduate and graduate degrees in chemistry at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. A Fulbright Scholar grant brought him to Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1968 to continue his chemistry studies; this is where his life was changed by a hole in his jeans.



According to the artist, he went shopping to find a patch to fix the hole, but none appealed to him, so he embroidered a patch in the shape of a strawberry to mend the hole. Moufarrege quickly became enamored with the possibilities that embroidery provided: he appreciated how a slow accumulation of stitches could

coalesce in an image, and he stitched more patches to share with friends. Inspired by his creative experiences, Moufarrege decided to become an artist.

Moufarrege's artistic career is punctuated by a series of transnational relocations, from Beirut, Lebanon to Paris, France, and finally to New York

City, New York. Each of these moves seems to have stimulated notable developments in his artistic practice, and this exhibition brings together works made in each of these sites.

In the early 1970s, after returning from the United States to Lebanon, Moufarrege began creating lap-sized tapestries. Stitched from wool, cotton, and silk, these freehand weavings demonstrate his facility with color, texture, and composition. His first exhibition, in 1973, was celebrated by the artist and writer Etel Adnan, who lauded the way he imbued traditional craft with personal content. With the Lebanese Civil War looming on the horizon, Moufarrege left Beirut for Paris in 1975. The move to France seems to have fueled his artistic ambitions. He produced larger works that combined pigment and embroidery. Importantly, this is when he began referring to his artworks as “paintings.”

Moufarrege arrived in New York City in 1980. While the works he made in France often drew inspiration from Baroque and Classical art, it is in New York that Moufarrege's experiments with appropriation—the reuse of images or objects with little transformation from the original—reached their zenith. Moufarrege's references include Yves Klein, Pablo Picasso, Vincent Van Gogh, and especially the Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein. His inspirations came from comic books, Arabic calligraphy, and mass-produced needlepoint kits; he mixed Eastern and Western traditions, commenting on art history and current political events. If appropriation reveled in the juxtaposition of seemingly incompatible elements, it seems Moufarrege saw a parallel in the way his diverse interests and experiences formed his own worldview. He celebrated his artistic passions and personal desires, realizing them—stitch-by-stitch—in thread and

paint.

At the height of his creative powers, Moufarrege's life was cut sadly short when, in 1985, he passed away from complications due to AIDS. Like so many artists of his generation, he left behind a vast and inspiring body of work. Fortunately, his work has survived through the efforts of caring family and friends. This exhibition brings together nearly forty of the artist's tapestries and paintings, as well as drawings and archival materials, in his first solo museum show.

Nicolas Moufarrege's exquisite paintings offer a sense of his unwillingness to be constrained by limited binary choices and cultural normativity. He enthusiastically explored new forms of creative expression, disregarding longstanding tensions between art and craft, assumptions about masculine and feminine tendencies, high and low culture, and geographic specificities; instead, he upended and blended them to create new hybrids. His unique experiences—as an expatriate; a Lebanese citizen; a French, Arabic, and English speaker and writer; a modern global citizen; an Arab; and a gay man—offer a singular opportunity to understand how these complex and layered concerns intersect and inform the work of an extremely talented and creative individual.

Suggested Resources

Reading

Adams, Brooks, Michele
Cone and Bella Meyer, Carlo
McCormick, et al.
– *Nicolas A. Moufarrege*,
1987

Adnan, Etel
– *Sitt Marie Rose*
(translated by Georgina
Kleege), 1978

Daderko, Dean, Elaine
Reichek, et al.
– *Duets: Nicolas A
Moufarrege*, 2016

Daderko, Dean, Élisabeth
Lebovici, and Mounira Al Solh
– “Prescient Stitches:
The Work of Nicolas
Moufarrege,” *Mousse*,
2018

Fisk, Robert
– *Pity the Nation: The
Abduction of Lebanon*,
1990

These resources are recommended for further inquiry into the artwork and themes explored in the exhibition *Nicolas Moufarrege: Recognize My Sign*.

Viewing

Hokusai: Old Man Crazy to Paint
– Patricia Wheatley, 2017

Roy Lichtenstein
– Chris Hunt, 1991