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**THE ROSE ART MUSEUM  
PRESENTS SYRIAN-ARMENIAN ARTIST KEVORK MOURAD'S *IMMORTAL CITY*  
"Culture Cannot Wait" program brings experts in  
preserving cultural heritage to Brandeis campus**

(Waltham, Mass.) – The Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University presents *Immortal City*, an exhibition of new paintings by acclaimed Syrian-Armenian artist **Kevork Mourad** created in response to the war in Syria and the destruction of the artist's beloved city of Aleppo, September 8, 2017 – January 21, 2018. A public opening reception to celebrate the museum's fall exhibition season will be held 6–9 pm on Saturday, October 14.

**Kevork Mourad** (b. Syria 1970) is known for paintings made spontaneously in collaboration with composers, dancers, and musicians. Of Armenian descent, Mourad performs in his art both a vital act of remembering and a poetic gesture of creativity in the face of tragedy, as he mediates the experience of trauma through finely wrought, abstracted imagery that celebrates his rich cultural heritage even as he mourns its loss. Mourad's paintings ask viewers to stop and bear witness, to see the fragments of a culture destroyed – textiles, ancient walls, Arabic calligraphy, and bodies crushed by war. Using a unique method that incorporates monoprinting and his own technique of applying paint with one finger in a sweeping gesture, Mourad produces paintings that are fantastical, theatrical, and lyrical, the line reflecting the music that is such an integral part of his practice.

An 18th-century etching from the Rose's permanent collection by Italian artist Giovanni Battista Piranisi will accompany Mourad's work and locate Mourad's practice within a centuries-old artistic interest and fascination with the city in ruins.

"In times of conflict or crisis, artists can operate as our conscience," says **Kristin Parker**, Deputy Director of the Rose and organizer of the exhibition. "Over 400,000 people have died in the Syrian conflict, and more than 6.5 million people have been displaced. This multicultural country has been fractured and desperately impoverished, resulting in the international plight of refugees today. Mourad's exhibition expresses our shared humanity, while the accompanying programs aim to help us contend with loss and devastation, to encourage hope and empathy, and to share ways in which the preservation of heritage and the arts can contribute to building human resilience."

A series of programs will be presented alongside the exhibition, including a multi-day workshop November 7, 8 and 9 titled ***Culture Cannot Wait***, that will bring a range of experts working to preserve cultural heritage in times of crisis to the Waltham campus, presented in collaboration with the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, Rome, and Brandeis's Heller School for Public Policy. This invitation-only workshop will offer a public program on November 7<sup>th</sup>, details to be announced.

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, Mourad and clarinetist/composer Kinan Azmeh will perform ***Home Within***, an audio-visual performance that has toured the world in efforts to raise awareness and funds for Syrian refugees. In this work, art and music develop in counterpoint to each other, reflecting on the Syrian revolution and its aftermath.

The *Immortal City* exhibition grew out of a 2015 **MusicUnitesUS** residency with Mourad and Azmeh at Brandeis. MusicUnitesUS is a program that strives to foster understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures through music, hosting a residency that explores ways to approach difficult situations through an artistic lens. For more info about the residency visit, <http://www.brandeis.edu/now/2015/october/azmeh-muus.html>

Organized by Kristin Parker, Deputy Director, the exhibition and accompanying programs are funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

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 class musicians, including Kinan Azmeh, Brooklyn Rider, Ken Ueno, Liubo Borissov, Issam Rafea, and Haruka Fuji.

Mourad is a member, as a visual artist, of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble. He has performed at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, The Bronx Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, the Chess Festival of Mexico City, The Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art in Yerevan, Le Festival du Monde Arabe in Montreal, the Nara Museum in Japan, the Art Institute of Chicago, Harvard University, the American Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Central Park's Summerstage with the Silk Road Ensemble and Bobby McFerrin.

With the actress and singer Anaïs Tekerian, he has co-produced and directed several multi-media 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.

In addition to a recent solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Platform in Kuwait, Mourad's digital work *The Map of Future Movements* toured as part of a group exhibition in Jerusalem and Ramallah, and was featured in the 2010 Liverpool Biennial. He also participated in Art Moment 2014, in Budapest, Hungary. The 2016 recipient of the Robert Bosch Stiftung Prize, Mourad is currently at work on an animated short film about Syria.

He is represented by the Claude Lemand Gallery in Paris and the Rafia Gallery in Dubai.

## **ABOUT THE ROSE ART MUSEUM AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY**

Founded in 1961, the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University is among the nation's premier university museums dedicated to collecting, preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting 20th and 21st century art. A center of cultural and intellectual life on campus, the Museum serves as a catalyst for artistic expression, a living textbook for object-based learning, and a site for scholarly innovation and the production of new knowledge through art. American painting of the post-war period and contemporary art are particularly well represented within the Rose's permanent collection, which is now more than 8,000 objects strong.

Major paintings by Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Helen Frankenthaler, and Andy Warhol anchor the collection, and recently acquired works by Mark Bradford, Al Loving, Jack Whitten, and Charline von Heyl build upon this strength while reflecting the Museum's commitment to works of both artistic importance and social relevance. Through its collection, exhibitions, and programs, the Rose works to affirm and advance the values of global diversity, freedom of expression, and social justice that are hallmarks of Brandeis University.

Located on Brandeis University's campus at 415 South Street, Waltham, MA, the museum is free and open to the public Wednesday through Sunday, 11 AM – 5 PM.

For more information, visit [www.brandeis.edu/rose](http://www.brandeis.edu/rose) or call 781-736-3434.

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