

# Lebanon bids farewell to artist Amine el-Bacha

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BEIRUT: Amine el-Bacha, one of Lebanon's more prodigious modernist artists, passed away Tuesday evening at the age of 87. Bacha was born in 1932 to a cultivated family in the Beirut neighbourhood of Ras al-Nabaa. His uncle and brother Toufic (himself the father of pianist Abdel-Rahman el-Bacha) were both accomplished musicians. Young Amine also betrayed musical proclivities and music marked his visual art throughout his career.

He enrolled at Academie Libanaise Des Beaux-Arts in 1954, where he was influenced by the work of Cesar Gemayel and Jean-Paul Khoury, as well as that of Italian painter Fernando Manetti.

He received a scholarship to continue his studies in Paris in 1959, first at the National School of Fine Arts, then at the Grand Chaumiere academy, with Henri Goetz.

During his time in France Bacha the figurative artist began to experiment with abstraction. By 1968 he was leaning toward expressionism, while developing Lebanese themes.

After Lebanon's Civil War broke out in 1975, Bacha was invited to join Italy's Educavi Maesta Foundation, where he signed on for five years. Eventually he moved back to France, and he continued to divide his time between there and Lebanon.

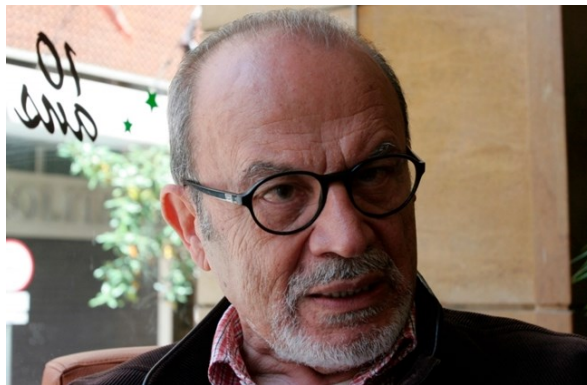
Bacha's career as a visual artist was marked by formal restlessness. He worked in ceramics, tapestry, jewelry, and collaborated with photographer Ghassan Kitmitto on works combining improvised painting upon photographic prints. In the early '70s he illustrated the poetry collections of Alain Jouffroy, as he did the works of Lebanese poet Nadia Tueni, in 1983, and an Italian translation of Leopold Sedar Senghor's poetry. Bacha

turned to writing as well, publishing the play “The Suicide” in 2009.

In 2017-18 the Sursock Museum collaborated with the Amine el-Bacha Foundation in staging the retrospective exhibition “Partitions and Colors,” sampling the artist’s oeuvre from the ’60s through to the first decade of the 21st century.

The show reflected the sheer diversity of materials and themes in Bacha’s work, as well as the modernist’s dedication to media exploration from watercolors to painted wooden objects, to Chinese ink-on-paper works and oils on canvas.

Over his long career, Bacha received numerous prizes. He became a laureate of Lebanon’s Education Ministry in 1959, was awarded the Gold Medal of the Citta Eterna Prize, Rome, and the title Il premio Internazionale d’Arte, Ottrano d’Argento, both in 1976, as well as Spain’s Medal of the Order of Merit in 2012. His works are part of the collections of modern art museums in Spain, Italy, France and the Arab countries, as well as private collections.



Lebanese artist Amine El Bacha at a Beirut cafe, April 24, 2011. AFP / Hasan MROUE / FAMILY HANDOUT

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