

# Sculpting the Big Apple: Artist Mkrtych Mazmanian's Debut in Major NYC Exhibition

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The ancient city of Gyumri, affectionately known as the art capital of Armenia, has produced countless prodigious actors, poets, *gusans* (bards), and artists throughout the centuries. Following in the footsteps of renowned *Gyumretsis*, such as the great Soviet sculptor-monumentalist, Sergey Merkurov, Mkrtych Mazmanian has made a name for himself in the art world as an accomplished figurative sculptor, creating sculptures, portraits, and figurines that have been featured in parks, town squares, and exhibitions throughout Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. His myriad accolades have made him a leading figure in the sculpting world.

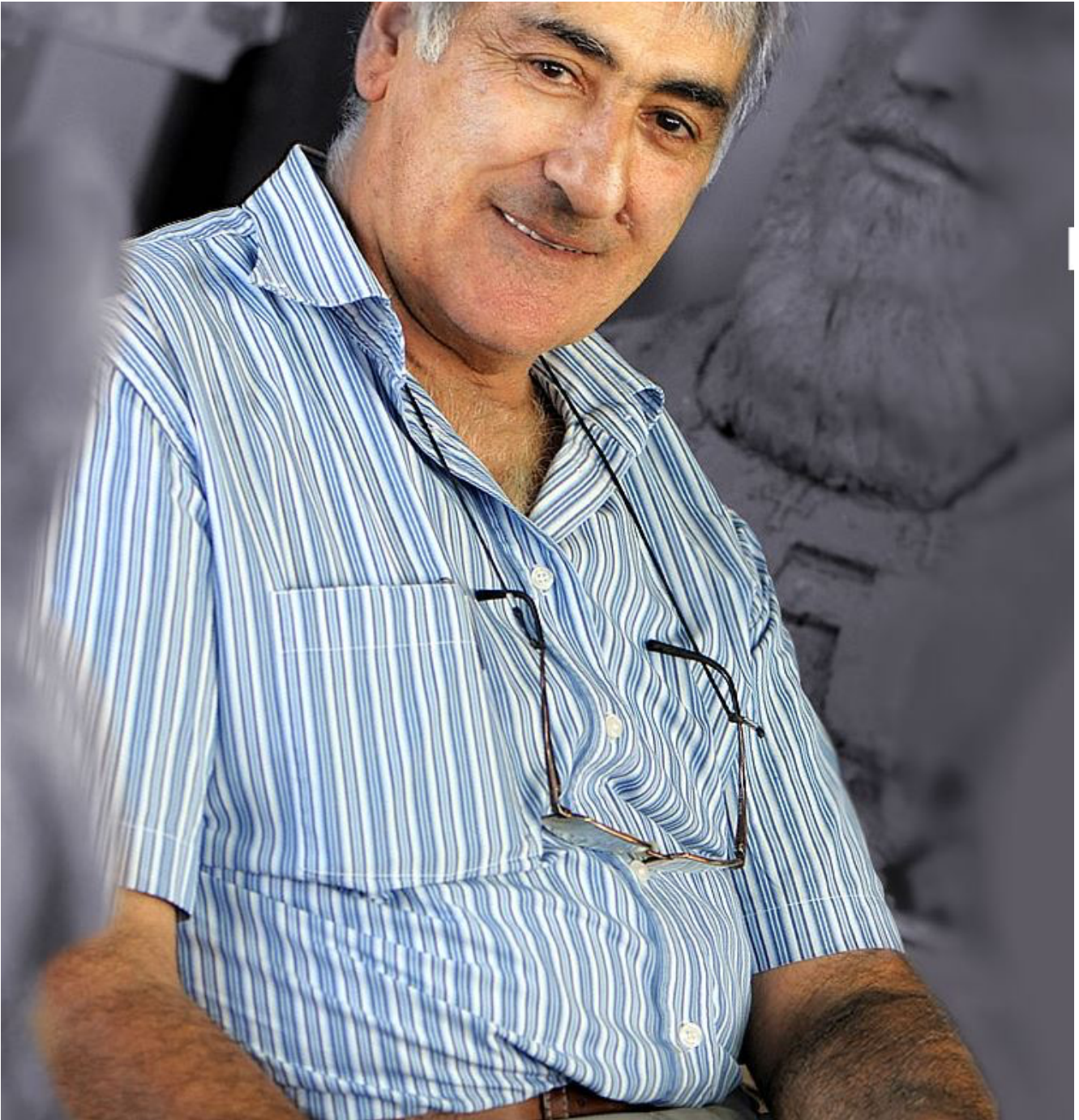


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## The Artist

Born and raised in an artistic family in pre-earthquake Gyumri, Mazmanian was surrounded by a rich creative legacy, realizing his innate talent and fascination with sculpting at the ripe age of five. "I [have always] had a huge craving for drawing. In the years that followed, my instructors emphasized that I had a talent for creating artwork rich in dimensions and perspective," explains the artist.



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Mazmanian's insightful and contemplative design technique reflects even in his earliest work. In 1979, his first major production—a collection of obelisks at the Gyumri airport—an homage to his hometown, remarkably survived the catastrophic earthquake that devastated the city a decade later. It was also this year when Mazmanian joined the Union of Artists of the Republic of Armenia. In 1990, he became a member of the International Association of Art (IAA), an NGO created by UNESCO.

The following year, the tumultuous final days of the crumbling Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic impelled Mazmanian to begin a new chapter in his artistic journey by relocating to Beirut, Lebanon. Despite encountering a nation torn by war, his repertoire and prestige sharply ascended in the Middle East. In 1999, he was

commissioned to create the official sculpture of Cardinal and Patriarch Emeritus of the Antioch Church, Nasrallah Sfeir. Shortly afterward, he began a fruitful career designing and constructing the official monumental sculptures of various Lebanese heads of state, including Presidents Michel Suleiman and Camille Chamoun, and Prime Ministers Elias Scaff, Saeb Salam, and Rafic Hariri.

In recent years, he has also designed and sculpted the official portrait sculptures of beloved Armenian actors Sos Sargsyan and Varduhi Vardenesyan, who passed away in 2013 and 2015 respectively. "I think for every sculptor, it is a dream to have a sculpture in public spaces, as it is a creative challenge to connect the monumental sculpture with the architecture of its environment," Mazmanian explains.

Today, Mazmanian splits his time between Lebanon and Armenia, incorporating the inspiration of each location, time, and culture into all of his works. "I would like to display the evolution and development of my sculptures in chronological order. There is no one period that I don't consider unique. Every stage has its own particularities," describes the sculptor.

### The Artist and the Collector

The torch of the Mazmanian family's artistic legacy continues to burn strong with the newest generation, Mazmanian's daughter, Zara. Just as her father knew early on that his calling was to become an artist, Zara always wanted to have her own art collection. In 2009, she created *Esquisse Gallery* as a platform to showcase fresh talent—mainly young Armenian artists—in their drive for global recognition, as well as to exhibit the many works of her accomplished father. The senior Mazmanian suggested the name of the gallery, which means 'sketch' in French. "A sketch is the starting point of any artwork," he describes. This literal sketch of sculptures and figurines, making their journey from lumps of bronze and gypsum to timeless works of art, serves as a metaphor for the artistic journey through which each piece travels, even upon completion, as exhibited oeuvres in Zara's gallery and throughout the world. As Mazmanian describes, "[e]ach and every period of my creativity is productive and figurative on its own."





**The late Armenian actor Sos Sargsyan's bronze portrait sculpture, commissioned in 2013 (Photo: Rupen Janbazian)**

When asked to reflect on his accomplishments, Mazmanian remains humbly grounded. "In my opinion, there shouldn't be limits and endpoints for professional artists. We always aim for the peak, which is like an illusion, and unreachable. The reason you never reach the zenith is because you always aspire for greater heights." He concludes that "I still have many heights to surmount."

## NYC Exhibition

For four days only, the father and daughter duo will exhibit Mkrtych Mazmanian's sculptures at the ArtExpo Exhibition in the Pier 94 special events venue in Manhattan.

For more information on the exhibit, including the schedule, and to purchase tickets, please visit

<http://artexponeyork.com/>

For more information on Mazmanian's art and Esquisse Gallery, please visit <http://www.esquissegallery.com/>.



Bio



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Lilly Torosyan is the Assistant Project Manager of Hamazkayin's h-pem, an online platform to engage young diasporans in Armenian art and culture. She holds a master's degree in Human Rights from University College London and a bachelor's degree in International Relations from Boston University, where she served on the ASA Executive Board. Her writings primarily focus on highlighting unique facets of, and approaches to, identity, community, art and youth events.