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Beirut artists raise money for blast relief



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BEIRUT: The online auction "Artists with Beirut," which took place last month, is still going strong, with a few pieces left to be sold on ArtScoop. Proceeds will go to aid victims of the Aug 4 port blast.

The sale features work donated by prominent Lebanese artists and those inspired by the country. Until now it has raised \$257,980, which will go directly to the Beirut Emergency Fund 2020 -- a coalition including Social and Economic Action for Lebanon USA, Lebanese International Finance Executives, LebNet, Jamhour Alumni and the NGO Kuwait-America Foundation.

The money will go toward sheltering those affected, as well as reconstruction and refurbishment of homes and small businesses in Mar Mikael, Ashrafieh and Karantina.

Born of a desire to show solidarity with the people of Beirut in the aftermath of blast, 51 artists from 10 cities in seven countries donated their work. The auction was organized by film director Sabine El Gemayel-d'Herbecourt and communications specialist Mira Hawa.

"We are so thrilled and grateful for all those who donated their artworks and for those who bid generously to acquire beautiful art pieces," Hawa said in a statement. "This was a real demonstration not only of solidarity but also of humanity coming together. The money raised will no doubt make a valuable impact to ease people's suffering."

The auction included pieces by Katya Traboulsi, Laure Ghorayeb and Serge Najjar. Najjar, donated "The Light Seeker" to the cause.

"I chose this piece because it represents hope," Najjar said. "We Lebanese should never give up hope and hoping. We could do so much just by wanting it and we should always want the best for our country and its people."

"I feel so strongly about Lebanon because I want to preserve its essence, its spirit and its historical value. Lebanon generates extreme emotions inside my head and heart. My relationship with my country is visceral," he added. "It can be both heaven and hell."

Photographer Rania Mattar's "Miriam" print, from her ongoing "SHE" series, was also part of the sale, showing a woman in a red hijab peeking out from a derelict building.

"I felt it was sadly appropriate to donate this photograph," Matar said. "Miriam is peeking from behind the destruction into the future. Now the present and the past seems to be colliding with a new layer of destruction."

Pieces still up for auction include a couture dress by Tony Ward, with an original design sketch, and Jean Boghossian's "Burned Lebanon Press Sculpture Book," a sculpture formed from a charred book.

The "Artists with Beirut" auction can be found at:
artscoops.com/auctions/artists-with-beirut-online-auction