

Press release

## **“Mawtini” – my homeland – a call for peace at the heart of Paris ‘ White night ’ Armenian Syrian artist exhibits first Middle Eastern artistic creation**

Paris, 21 October 2014 -

Armenian Syrian artist Hratch Arbach, recently became the first Middle Eastern artist to take part in the famous annual all-night art festival in Paris called Nuit Blanche that was held earlier this month. A symbolic tribute and call for peace in the Arab World, the piece of work he presented was titled “Mawtini”. It represented the pain and healing which unite humanity, and conveyed the ideas of peace and unification, including a special message to the Syrian community to reflect on the healing power of reconciliation.

The art installation was displayed inside the Saint Séverin church in Paris where Middle Eastern music resounded through the building, inspired by melodies and poetry from Gibran Khalil Gibran, Mahmoud Darwish, Al Buhturi, Georges Henein and Nizar Al Kabani and improvised by **Samuel Liégeon** to the tunes of the pipe organ. The building was also flooded with green light, a color that symbolizes peace in Islamic culture. Arbach partnered with Cire Trudon, French luxury candle maker and the oldest, most prestigious wax manufacturer in the world, to create “Mawtini”. As a message of reconciliation, visitors were invited to take up one of the 20,000 nails made from wax lined up on the floor and to melt it on the dedicated heated altar. Each and every person engaged was touched by this act symbolizing the annihilation of the suffering and universal celebration of peace.

Speaking on behalf of the Cire Trudon company, his director Julien Provost said, “It is a bold act for Middle Eastern artists to express themselves these days, especially in the way Mr. Arbach has chosen to do so. Pressure, violence and intolerance are at work in all societies. Mr. Arbach’s work represents a positive force that allows us non-artists to meditate about the world and societies we live in.” He added that he was “immediately intrigued by the fact that an artist wanted to use wax as one of the main mediums for his work. When I discovered the project, I felt close to Mr. Arbach’s esthetics and was very sensitive to the message that was going to be conveyed by the installation.”

The wax nails released three distinct fragrances especially created by renown French perfumer **Francis Kurkdjian** around jasmine, earth and blood. These were to recall the jasmine-scented memories of childhood in Syria, the deeply-rooted love of the Syrian soil and the blood of Syria’s martyrs. Commenting on his role in the art installation, Kurkdjian said, “I was really touched by the sense and the goal of Hratch Arbach’s project. Humanity, peace and earth are themes that make sense to me and most probably to everyone. I was proud to participate in this piece of art by creating specific scents and thereby reinforcing the messages delivered through this ephemeral installation.”

During the exhibition, the architectural projector from Hitachi became part of the conceptual art installation, displaying people participating, witnessing universal peace in the world, and more specifically, peace within the Arab world. Commenting on why they decided to support this art project, Sophie Demaria, the Hitachi Channel Sales Manager said, “Our motto, Inspire the Next, defines both our brand and our approach – breathing life into the society of tomorrow. Our values - Harmony, Sincerity and the pioneer spirit - are totally in line with the Mawtini project.”

[Video - art installation](#)

Born in Damascus, Hratch Arbach moved to Paris at age 25, where he currently lives and works. After obtaining a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology (University of Paris VII) he joined the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, a leading art school in Paris. For the past years he has dedicated himself to art, conceiving and creating numerous exhibitions and installations. His diversity is reflected in his art with mediums spanning from photography to painting, drawing and scenography.

The annual Nuit Blanche, which literally means White Night in French, has museums, private and public art galleries and other cultural institutions open and free of charge, with the centre of the city itself being turned into a de facto art gallery. Since the first Nuit Blanche, the idea of a night-time festival of contemporary art has spread around the world, with similar events now being held in over 12 cities.

### *Partnership*

Maison Francis Kurkdjian, Maison Cire Trudon, Silvana K Designs, Hitachi Digital Media, EasyLum

### *Support*

Atelier Agopyan Architectes Urbanistes, Art Culture et Foi-Paris, Braun et Associés Architectes.

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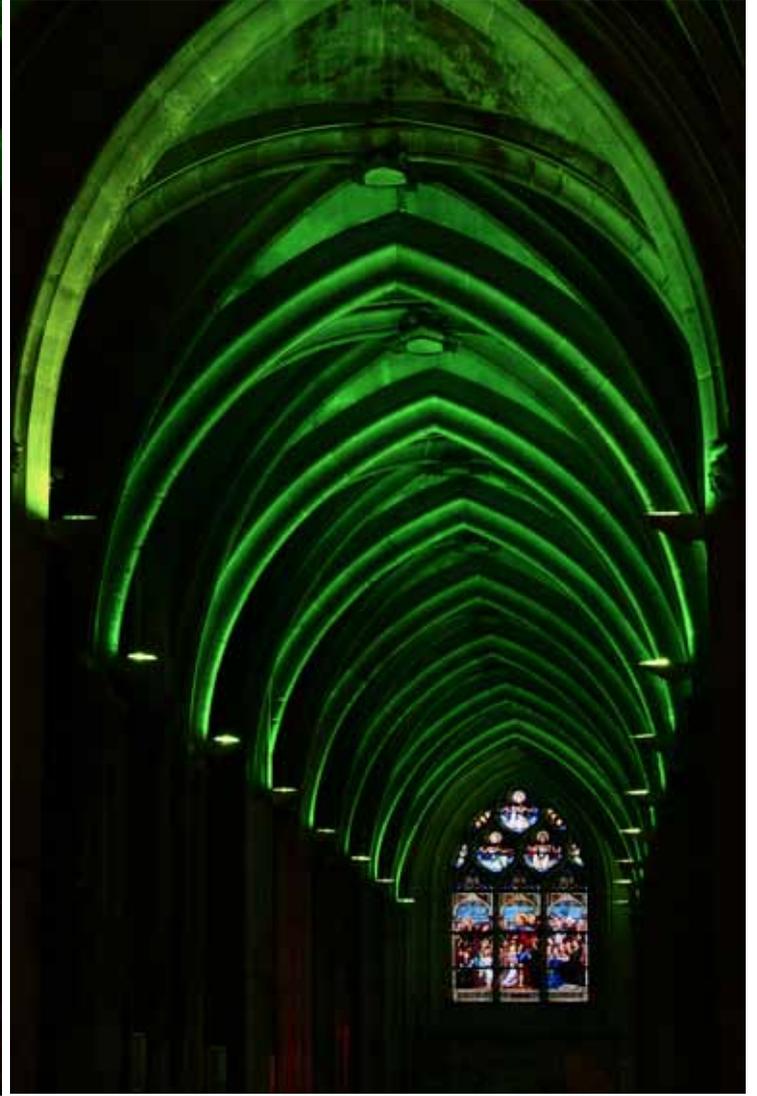
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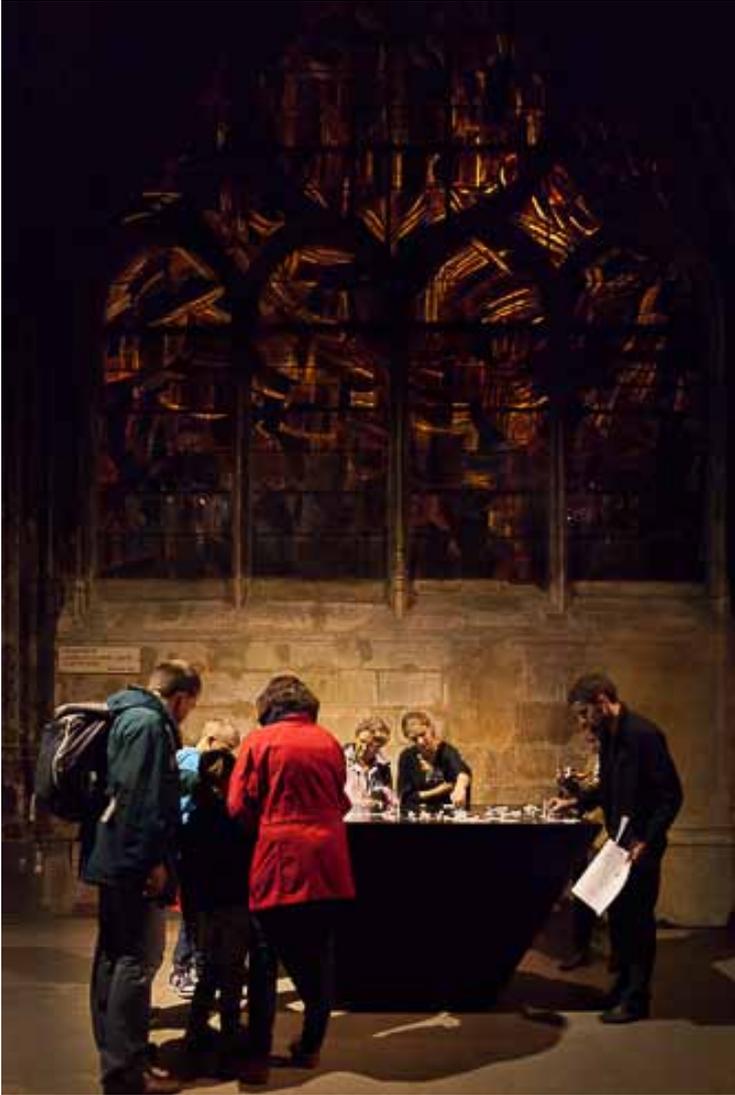
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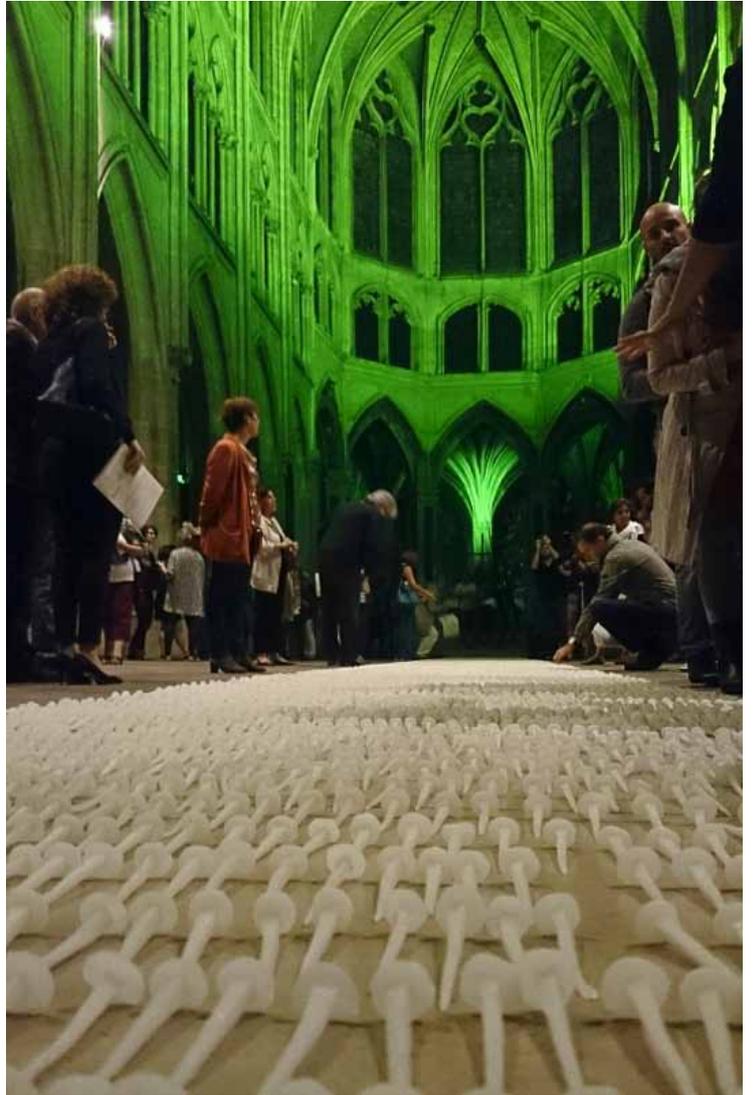
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