

PRESS RELEASE

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'Alchemy'

**An art exhibition by Tom Young
-featuring installations by Noor Haydar
and photography by Karim Sakr**

Wednesday 13th December 2017, 6-9pm

In the heart of Mar Mikhael's main street is a magnificent heritage mansion which has been derelict for many years. It was built by Salim El Boustani in 1873 in a hybrid Lebanese-Italianate style called 'Baroquetta.' It is the largest heritage site on the street, but has not witnessed the rapid resurgence the area has seen over the past few years: until now.

Artist Tom Young, well known for his transformation of heritage mansions *Villa Paradiso* in Gemmayzeh, and *The Rose House* in Manara had worked in this house in spring 2016. The project did not see full light due to differences of opinion about the fate of the house planned by the previous owners. Without the participation of Young, an exhibition was held in June 2016, titled '7 Rooms 7 Artists'. The house has remained empty since then.

As of autumn 2017 there is great news: the house was bought by Nabil and Zoe Debs, who wish to restore the house and garden authentically, keeping its integrity and transforming it into their second project in Lebanon under their *International Arts Clubs* umbrella. They imagine it as a cultural exchange venue and platform for the arts on the ground floor, the upper floors would become an eclectic home away from home guest house/hotel. This will be the second *Beirut Arts Club*; the original one in Gemmayze has already hosted a few exhibitions. Its hotel component is rumoured to open in 2018.

Before renovations begin in earnest in 2018, they invited Tom Young back to the house to hold an exhibition to mark the building's new life- as he had originally intended in 2016. Young has resumed his artist's residence on the ground floor, where he and fellow artist Noor Haydar gave workshops for disadvantaged children (through UNHCR and Makhzoumi Foundation). The workshops were filmed by the BBC on 4th December as part of their 'Art Lover's Guide' to Beirut, to be broadcast next year.

Young is collaborating with Haydar, photographer Karim Sakr and performance artist Nadine Sures for the exhibition. Young will be exhibiting 30 paintings as a response to the house, its adjoining garden and the rapidly developing city which surrounds it. Haydar is creating site specific sculptural installations on the themes of displacement and self containment. Sakr is producing a series of 'superimposed' photographs about the memory of the building's former residents, whilst Sures will be giving an improvised performance based on archival imagery of events that took place at the house in 1963. The exhibition opens on 13th December 2017, and continues daily until 19th December 12pm-7pm, with a percentage of proceeds going to the children who have come to the house.