

Archaic Resonance



PRESENTED BY
PAUL HUGHES FINE ARTS

FEATURING WORKS BY
NADIM KARAM

Nadim Karam's Archaic Procession unfolds as a surreal alignment of totemic figures in transmutation of becoming — forms caught mid-gesture, walking not toward a destination but through memory itself.

While rooted in the trauma and surrealism of postwar Lebanon, the work also reflects the influence of Karam's architectural training in Japan, where philosophies of Eastern thought and spatial perception deeply shaped his visual approach.

Yet, Karam's figures belong to a far older visual language; one that resonates with symbolic forms of archaic traditions across time and place, including those of Pre-Columbian civilisations. They echo rituals, myths, and the impulse to monumentalise the human condition through figurative art. Karam's work engages in a speculative conversation across distances — not a narrative of direct influence, but one of resonance. It gestures toward a shared symbolic intuition, a horizontal axis of cultural memory that links distant geographies through common archetypes, ritual forms, and the desire to make meaning through the body in motion.

The procession itself is a shared motif. In many Pre-Columbian traditions, processions marked the movements of the cosmos, the passage between life and death, the ordering of society. Karam's own processions — part dream, part stories — offer a contemporary ritual of remembrance and survival. Karam has long been building a personal universe populated by recurring characters — animals, hybrid creatures, human-forms that speak in silence.



Nadim Karam
Untitled, 2022
Mixed media on canvas



Chancay Culture
Chancay Painted Textile with
Figures and Snakes (detail),
Circa. 1200AD
Pigment on cotton
67 x 215 cm



Chancay Culture
Chancay Painted Textile with
Figures and Snakes, Circa.
1200AD
Pigment on cotton

Karam calls his work *Archaic Procession* — a deliberate gesture toward the pre-modern, the symbolic. While historical and cultural contexts greatly differ, both Karam's work and Pre Columbian art operate within a visual logic that privileges myth, abstraction, and collective memory over realism and/or individualism. Nadim Karam's instinctive visual language is one shaped by his being born into the landscapes of the Levant and deeply attuned to the symbolic and mythic residues embedded in the region.

Without directly referencing any specific tradition, the sculptural forms resonate with the ancient petroglyphs and rock carvings found across the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula — markings left by early humans who etched animals, spirits, and ritual figures into stone to connect with their world. These visual traces, scattered across desert surfaces, reflect a deep symbolic relationship between people and their environment.



Nadim Karam
Sketchbook 52,
1992
Mixed media on
paper
21 x 21 cm



Valdivia Culture
Valdivia Owl
Figure, Circa.
2200 BC
Stone
34 x 12 cm

These echoes surface not through imitation, but through an intuitive alignment: both Karam's abstracted figures and the ancient carvings embody a primal urge to monumentalise the unseen, to turn flora, fauna, and fleeting gestures into lasting signs. His characters — enlarged, fantastical, sometimes hybrid — feel like contemporary descendants of those early symbols, bridging time through form. The forms reference the creatures and symbols that once roamed and were revered in these regions — gazelles, ibexes, birds, hybrid figures.

At the same time, the work is rooted in the biodiversity of the Arabian desert itself. Home to thousands of plant and animal species, this environment is far from empty — it is a living archive. In Karam's vision, the figures become witnesses to this richness, embodiments of its fragility and wonder.



Nadim Karam
Sketchbook
51, 1992
Mixed media
on printed
paper



Chancay Culture
Mummy Bundle
Mask, Circa. 800
- 1200 AD
Pigment on
cotton



Nadim Karam
Sketchbook 58, 1993
Mixed media on printed paper
54 x 34 cm



Sihuas Culture
Nazca/Sihuas Mantle with Styl-
ised Ocucaje Icon,
C-14 dating 50BC
Camelid Fibres

Rooted in place yet universal in scope, his elements become a procession of dream-beings — guardians of a layered terrain where memory, ecology, and imagination coexist. It offers viewers a space for reflection: on what endures, what vanishes, and what might still be protected.



Nadim Karam
The Wild Cat & The Elephant on
Charles Bridge, 1995
Mixed media on canvas
100 x 160 cm



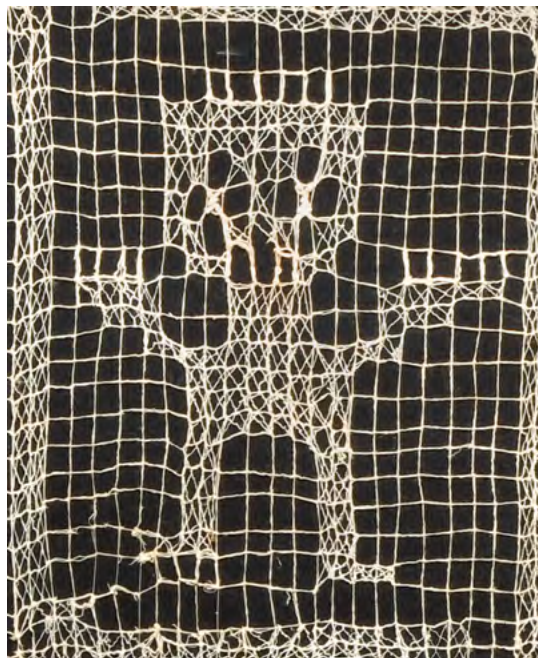
Chancay Culture
A Chancay zoomorphic vessel,
Circa. 1100 - 1450 AD
Ceramic
18,5 x 11 x 41,5 cm



Chancay Culture
A Chancay zoomorphic vessel,
Circa. 1100 - 1450 AD
Ceramic
18,5 x 11 x 41,5 cm



Nadim Karam
Sketchbook 52, 1992
Mixed media on paper
21 x 21 cm



Chancay Culture
Gauze with 14 Figures (detail),
Circa. 1000 AD
Camelid fibres
77 x 99 cm



Chancay Culture
Gauze with 14 Figures, Circa. 1000 AD
Camelid fibres, 77 x 99 cm



Nadim Karam
 Untitled Single Sheet, 1992
 Watercolor on paper
 41 x 32 cm



Chimu Culture
 Textile depicting a round of prisoners
 (detail), Circa. 1100-1450 AD
 Cotton and pigments
 116 x 214 cm



Chimu Culture
Textile depicting a round of prisoners (detail), Circa. 1100-1450 AD
Cotton and pigments, 116 x 214 cm

N A D I M K A R A M

Paul Hughes  FINE ARTS

*The curatorial approach draws upon a text developed by the Curatorial Team at
Nadim Karam Studio.*