

# The Breakdown: Artist Chaouki Choukini discusses his 'Paysage Nocturne'

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BEIRUT: The Lebanese artist discusses one of his earliest wooden sculptures, currently on display at Dubai's Green Art Gallery.

"Paysage Nocturne" (Nocturnal Landscape) is an important work for me because it symbolizes the beginning of my career as a sculptor in the late Seventies, and this artistic path of mine goes beyond the 1990s. Sculpture, for me, is a personal reaction to nature, society, music, obstacles, and the life that we lead.

When I was younger, I used to go to my grandfather's house during school holidays in a village called Choukine in the south of Lebanon, where I would contemplate mountains, trees, valleys, wells — unlike the views of Beirut. This led me to develop my love of nature, which influences my work. My expression of a landscape is not an exact representation of nature — I'm turning it into something metaphysical, imaginary and with an element of mystique.

In the beginning, the theme of this piece was actually figurative. It was inspired by a sculpture of a reclining woman "Nu Paysage" (Nude Landscape) that I previously made when I was a student at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris.

Visually, a part of "Paysage nocturne" is organic, whereas the other is geometric. The elongated stretch that you see represents a horizontal view. The lower, geometric opening acts as a sort of escape from this block to the exterior. It's almost similar to the notion of how a human is extended to the

outside world through sight. I tried to create a sense of harmony and completion for the overall shape of this work.

I used a hard wood from Africa called 'wangué,' and during that period of my career it was found in a majority of my works. I enjoyed using this form of material, because I reacted passionately to it.



Artist Chaouki Choukini discusses one of his earliest wooden sculptures. (Supplied)

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