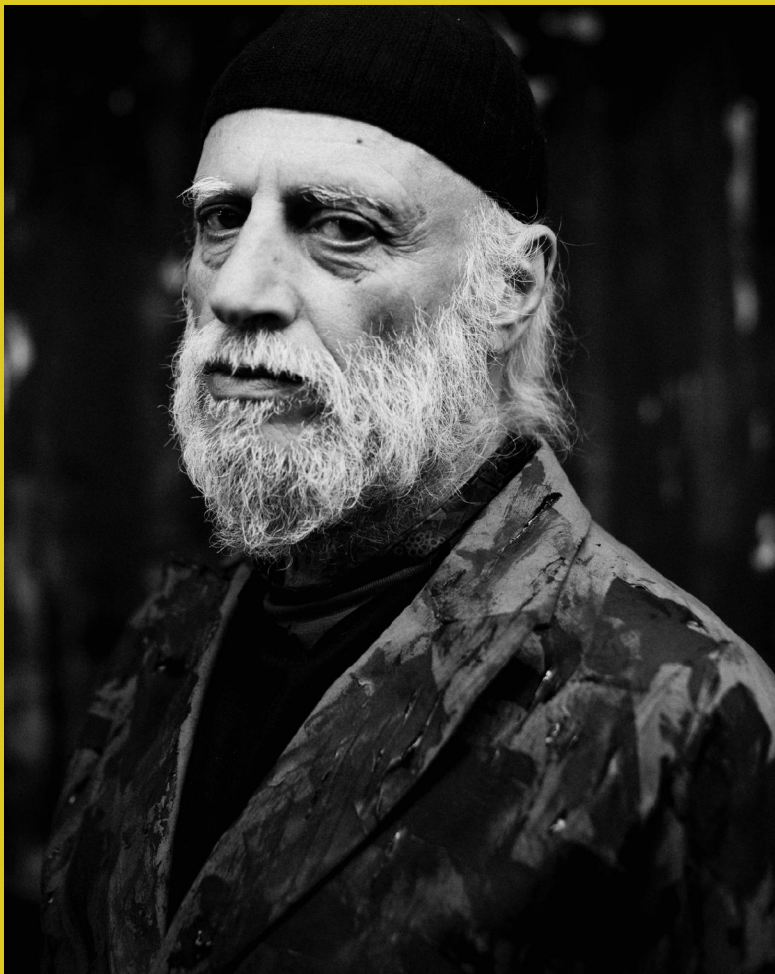




Entitled **Hide and Seek – Awkward Attempts to Hide**, the sculptures of Souheil Sleiman are a comment on the prevailing way in which consumerism disposes of its litter and waste. Working with plastic water bottles wrapped in colourful acrylic knitting yarn, Souheil Sleiman attempts to hide evidence of these dressed up bottles by burying them in concrete structures, sand or water. The sculptures are rough and grotesque objects reminiscent of those semi-finished harsh buildings that one encounters in many cities, villages and along the sea coast of the country. Post-human, stark and eerie forms overloaded with colorful objects raise the question: Do they come from an archaeological excavation? Informed by the works of Franz West, some sculptures are intended to be handled by the spectator, inviting them to pick them up and manipulate them, bringing the viewer closer to the identity of the matter – to look at objects and form from a different perspective, and beyond that, to make them closely

aware of issues of concern to the artist. Are these objects candy floss or sickly sugary confections, or pretentious things from a world of nasty and insensate human beings? Using readily available familiar and domestic materials we are reminded of the Italian Arte Povera movement, whose artworks call into question the nature of the art object.

As a result of his interest in collisions between the man-made and organic worlds, Souheil Sleiman has often worked with apparently incompatible materials. Once they are placed together, however, the materials coalesce to suggest the layering of an epidermis: the skin of the earth. In this body of works, his brightly wrapped plastic bottles give a domestic touch and a lightness of spirit to the otherwise somber and desolate concrete structures that make the bulk of the work. In this exhibition, the artist has transformed an aesthetic of waste into the poetics of transgression.

Souheil Sleiman was born in 1952; he traveled to England in 1970 to pursue an art education. Fifty years later, he moved to Lebanon where he now lives and practices sculpture in his studio, Al Bawtaqa, in Ain el Rummaneh. He studied art from 1972 to 1975 at Salford and North East London Polytechnic schools of art, and completed two years of postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Art (1975 – 1977). In 1978, he set up his first sculpture studio in the disused and abandoned historical wharfs in Wapping, East London. He makes issue-based sculptures informed by social

and political events that transcend national boundaries. He works and experiments with a range of materials, often combining what appear to be disparate elements. His sculptures are intended to be thought provoking, contemplative, and to carry the viewer beyond their immediate aesthetic appeal. He has participated with other artists to make sculptures and performances, and has shown his work extensively in Europe and the Arab world, including Lebanon. He has participated in more than 40 solo and group exhibitions. In 2007, he was one of three artists who represented Lebanon at the 24th Alexandria Biennale. In

2010 he co-founded Amhurst Republic, “where no one is illegal,” to establish a platform for a diverse mix of social and cultural events in his London studio.
<http://amhurstrepublic.wordpress.com>.

He has collaborated with TAP in 2014 on an international artist residency program and has worked as an artist in-residence and led workshops in schools and colleges. Souheil Sleiman has received three awards: the Tower Hamlet Sculpture Bursary (1980); nomination for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award (2002); and the Prince Claus Fund (2009).