

THE ART OF PHILANTHROPY

From Brussels the Boghossian Foundation reaches out to the world

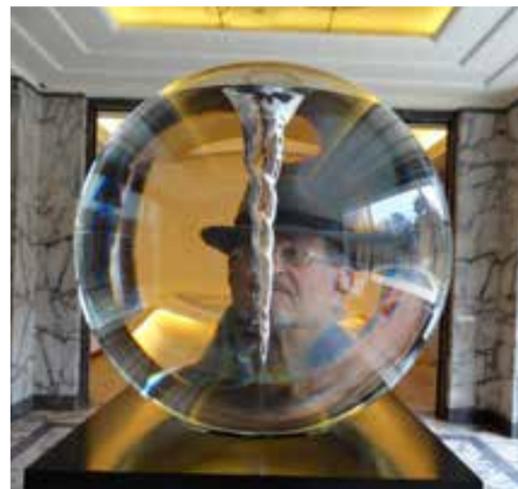
For those familiar with the world of fine jewellery, the Boghossian name is a classic. Lebanese jewellers of Armenian descent, their family has a story to tell that many can relate to. Having left Armenia after the genocide of 1915, for Lebanon, and then, due to civil war there having to move to the next welcoming city, they found themselves in Brussels. The family has continued to thrive in the jewellery business and with a heritage cultivated through migration and struggle, it seems to have been a natural progression for the Boghossians to give aid to those in need. It was the 1988 earthquake that devastated parts of Armenia that acted as the catalyst for their extensive humanitarian work in Armenia, Lebanon and Syria - in 1992 the father Robert and his two sons Jean and Albert, created the Boghossian Foundation.

Now based in the 1930s Villa Empain in Brussels, since 2006, the foundation has, through a series of projects, both practical - portable water projects for isolated villages, renovation of Yerevan's only remaining public park - and aesthetic - art

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and design prizes, exhibitions and lectures - worked to contribute to the artistic and cultural dialogue between East and West through activities, in Belgium and abroad.

The focus on art is also not just confined to the projects or the jewellery making - Jean Boghossian has been practising his craft for nearly 30 years, and for the last three has been working on a concept using fire. Already exhibited in Beirut, South Korea and Brussels, Boghossian was



inspired by the element, a key tool in the jewellery making process. “I’m captivated by the way fire can change the colours, shape and material of an object,” he says. “You just have to take a welding torch and you’ll get so many complex results.”

Using art to improve the world, as well as create his own, Boghossian is now in preparation for his next exhibit - having previously treated canvases and paper with flames, he will now be using the same techniques on books.

As is described in the mission of the Boghossian Foundation, art is a universal language, going beyond boundaries. “It opens ways of communication that have no aggression,” says Boghossian. “A link between East and West that is not impeded by religion and politics.”

For more information on the work of the Boghossian Foundation, visit their website www.villaempain.com

Jean Boghossian will be exhibiting at the Bibliotheca Wittrockiana: Museum of Book Bindings and Book Arts, in Brussels, 20 June to September 2013.

