

White

Afaf Zurayk (b.1948)

Moving to touch the ether with a tenderness gained from years of living softly, I become aware of the ethereal and understand my misty presence within it. Painting Time gently, I reaffirm my trust – limitless, endless and white. -Afaf Zurayk

I was born and grew up in Beirut, Lebanon, the third of four daughters in a closely knit, highly academic family. Always an introvert, I was introduced to art at a very early age. In painting, I discovered a language that gave expression to my thoughts and feelings and conveyed their inner dialogue beyond words. Preparing myself to paint, I spent time in nature, both in solitude and within community, and reveled in its mystery. This enabled me to see from within and to communicate in what connects rather than what separates us.

During the civil war in Lebanon, I experienced wrenching fear through the destruction of the life and the self that I knew. Yet, I was gifted with grace and love in the midst of overwhelming violence. In time, my belief in our intrinsic humanity deepened as I came to understand how to calibrate terror and grace—dark and light. I continued to paint from within as I charted an inner map of layered contradictions that illumined my life for years to come.

With the war still raging, I left Lebanon for Washington, DC . There I built on my experiences and reflections of connection and disconnection, and honed my skills at transparency. I coupled painting with writing to express feelings of both agency and belonging. I shaped a new sense of self and began to appreciate meditative solitude as a way to till my ground creatively. The privilege of being in and with nature was restorative and generative. My poetry emerged from a wellspring of love, and I grew.

I now live in Beirut and remain quietly introspective despite so many political and social upheavals. I center my art in the riches of our essential humanity with respect for our ability to correspond with and imagine our inner truth. Painting and writing in loving awe, I remain within, crossing those passages that connect us in kindness, gently.