

## PRESS RELEASE



# Unveiling of Gibran Khalil Gibran statue at Los Angeles Central Library

Los Angeles - October 21, 2014 - The World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) has donated a sculpture of Gibran Khalil Gibran to the City of Los Angeles. The statue will be unveiled on December 5th of this year at the Los Angeles Central Library.

The sculpture is in commemoration of the 130th anniversary of Gibran's birth in the city of Bsharri, Lebanon. Over the course of his 48 years (1883-1931) Gibran's writings elevated him to be the third best-selling poet of all time. The proposed artwork consists of a 36"H x 24"W x 17"D hollow bronze sculpture.

The WLCU is a non-profit organization recognized as the sole representative of the Lebanese Diaspora in the world. It is an NGO associated with Department of Public Information (DPI) of the United Nations and accredited at the ECOSOC with a "Special" Consultative status. The WLCU's mission is to share with the countries of residence of its members the Lebanese traditions, folklore and history within educational, cultural and societal discourse. Moreover, it aims to enhance confidence, peace and understanding among communities regardless of personal or financial gain, and to elevate the human spirit in fields of trade, public works, and personal life.

The final location of the sculpture has been confirmed within the Central Library perimeters by a unanimous vote of the Board of Library Commissioners with the presence of the Librarian John F. Szabo and his staff members, Deputy Harry Semerdjian serving Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell of the City's 13th District, Tania Picasso, Art Manager at the Public Art Division, Anise Garabet along with Milad Oweijan and John Couri Hanna representing the WLCU Greater Los Angeles chapter. The project had earlier gained the recommendation of the

Public Arts Committee and was set on the Agenda of the Cultural Affairs Commission for conceptual and final approval.

The members of the WLCU identified the Central Library as a proposed site because the sculpture is of Gibran Khalil Gibran, an author who contributed work to both Lebanese and American literature, and Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell regards the Central Library as the most appropriate place. In addition, since June 20, 2006, Beirut, Lebanon has been a sister city to Los Angeles; a program that fosters friendly meaningful exchange between two cities through various cultural forms. Lastly, Council Motion #13-0020 was introduced by former Councilmember Dennis P. Zine and seconded by then City Council President Eric Garcetti on January 4, 2012, to accept the generous donation of the Gibran Khalil Gibran sculpture from the WLCU and to authorize the Department of Cultural Affairs to receive the donated sculpture and register it as part of the City's Art Collection. As part of this Motion the Chief Legislative Analyst, with the assistance of the City Administrative Officer, and other Relevant departments, have been involved in the whole process including the maintenance responsibility of the sculpture.

All funds to fabricate the sculpture originate directly from the World Lebanese Cultural Union, as they commissioned the artwork. Permits, installation, unveiling ceremony, and all project-related costs will also be covered by the WLCU. As a gift to the City, the artwork will become part of the City's Art Collection as a permanently-sited sculpture.

The World Lebanese Cultural Union had interviewed several artists and reviewed their work. After careful consideration it was determined that Victor Issa, with his vast experience in sculpture, his artistic pedigree and influence on a national and global platform, and his Lebanese background, was the best candidate for this proposed sculpture.

The City of Los Angeles is home to a vibrant community of immigrants from all parts of the globe. As such, the Gibran Khalil Gibran sculpture will be an invaluable addition to the City Art Collection, as it aims to be a beacon of optimism, inspiration, and Lebanese cultural heritage in connection with the writings of Gibran. As part of the City's Art Collection, this sculpture will memorialize the importance of Gibran's contributions to American literature and the presence of the Lebanese Community within the City of Los Angeles. The Gibran Khalil Gibran sculpture will resonate with visitors in the broader Los Angeles area for years to come.