

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Untitled, Surrender to Love series, 2019, oil on canvas, 125 x 125 cm

MAJD KURDIEH: *SURRENDER TO LOVE*

25 November 2019 - 16 January 2020

Opening reception: Monday, 25 November from 7 – 10 pm

- Syrian artist Majd Kurdieh embarks on a spiritual journey for his latest series
- Works on paper and canvas see his regular childlike characters moving freely and with more expression
- Fusing his own poetry with inspiration from Arabic masters, the pieces are powerful and emotional

“Surrender and all the rest of the miracles will be possible before you are defeated by the monster.” Majd Kurdieh

The Workshop and Fann A Porter are pleased to announce their third solo exhibition with acclaimed Syrian artist Majd Kurdieh. Spanning a period of the past two years, this large body of work titled *Surrender To Love* is characterised by a sense of heightened expressionism, where his characters and his colour palette are liberated from restrictions.

This progression in style and form can be best summarised by his removal of outlines from his wild and creative characters. The elephant, the donkey and the smiling sun are no longer depicted by surrounding black lines, in a move that symbolically removes them from their former ‘cages’.

His use of poetry is also heightened in this newest collection. Kurdieh’s paintings both on canvas and paper are historically given their wonderful, poetic depth and narrative by the accompanying text that the artist writes. In this exhibition, Kurdieh’s poems have evolved to more concise statements such as: “You are the insight”; “ You are the memory”; or “You pour light into my heart”. His primary characters Fagoon and Fasooneh, alongside their animal tribe are also elevated into a journey of spiritual consciousness. It is almost as if, with their liberation, they are also reaching profound levels of awakening and so, becoming infused with love. The artist himself explains this through his use of white space: “In many of my works on canvas I left the white background empty to tell my viewer that it is not important where you are or in what time zone you are in, what is important for me actually is you, in the Sufi sense where we find clarity in nothingness,” Kurdieh said.

In a particularly striking Untitled work, the large pachyderm is painted in a deep-sea green and his trunk swirls towards his turbulent heart from which a white flag emerges. Fasooneh, the little girl character, is firing a flower-tipped arrow into the beast's heart. The viewer is left questioning if the act is brutal or peaceful but when we read the accompanying poem, we realise that it is love that prevails: "Surrender to Love," the elephant says.

"My inspiration for this series began in 2015, when one of my characters told me to 'run away from the lines' and then I began to think about that in a literal way," said Majd Kurdieh. "Many of these pieces actually have a spiritual dimension because surrender is also about submitting to a higher power and embracing the strongest human emotion: love. Surrender and all the rest of the miracles will be possible before you are defeated by the monster."

Ghada Kunash, founder of Fann A Porter said: "This exhibition shows progression in Majd's work that we are proud to witness. It has been our pleasure to support Majd and watch as he pushes himself beyond his own boundaries and at the gallery, we very much enjoy having all his characters to come and tell their stories upon our walls."

About the Artist

Artist Majd Kurdieh's practice incorporates painting, drawing, and literature using recurring figures that stand to tell a story, usually carrying a strong moral and positive reinforcement that the artist projects into the world. Kurdieh's works have always been figurative, with his earlier works being a series of trials in realism, mythicism, and other fields. He paints recurring whimsical characters that seem to narrate a story. Over the past four years, the artist has created a 'cast of characters', the two main ones being the *Fasaeen* (Arabic for 'tiny ones'). The stories told through the representation of these figures are not specific stories that the artist references but rather ones that could apply to any viewer, leaving room for personal interpretation. The Fasaeen, one boy (Fasoon) and one girl (Fasooneh), always smiling despite the fact their world is filled with hardships, are usually accompanied by other characters.

At first glance, the works seem cartoonlike and simple, however, upon further investigation, the viewer is drawn into a complex world that the artist has been able to simplify, almost with a childlike innocence.

Using a strong literary element within his works, Kurdieh joins the Fasaeen with a group of animals that he paints. The group of characters comes together to make what the artist calls 'The Very Scary Butterfly Gang'. Using the paradox of a butterfly and it being very scary, Kurdieh touches upon harsh topics with immense gentleness. He explains that 'when the fragility of a butterfly scares you, you become indifferent to the roars of a monster, you will busy yourself defending the rights of people to maintain their humanity'. At the essence of all his work is a strong sense of human protection and need to shed light on basic human rights and needs. The gang carries out small optimistic tasks like removing thorns from the land and replacing them with flowers, or talking to the sun and the moon, where the sun itself rises and sets at its own caprice, projecting a sense of freedom to the viewer.

Strongly poetic and very sensitive Kurdieh channels the multilayers of his emotions into creating deeply humane art. The ingenuity of his paintings and drawings relays the artist's candor and sincerely draws attention to issues he feels deserve to be represented truthfully.

Recently, Kurdieh has featured in solo and group exhibitions at BBA Gallery, Berlin (2019), Manara Arts & Culture, Jordan (2019); Fann-A-Porter, Dubai (2019, 2018, 2016), El-Sawy Culture Wheel, Cairo (2019), and Athar Al Farasheh, Aleppo (2011), Sikka Art Fair, Dubai (2018) and Art Bahrain, Manama (2019, 2018). His works are housed in public and private collections in the Middle East and abroad.

Born in Aleppo, Syria in 1985, Kurdieh lives and works in Amsheet, Lebanon.

About Fann A Porter

Fann A Porter is a contemporary art gallery that represents a diverse selection of emerging international and regional artists. The gallery aims to nurture the burgeoning and dynamic contemporary art scene through quality exhibitions, non-profit events, auctions, and an active community programme.



Fann A Porter is based at The Workshop, a unique inter-disciplinary community space consisting of a cafe, art gallery, sustainable store and design space, providing visitors with a diversified artistic and cultural experience. Bathed in natural sunlight with its garden, The Workshop is located in the heart of Jumeirah in Dubai.

For more information and for interviews with the artist, please contact the gallery on +971559480363, or email fann@theworkshopdubai.com