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Majd Kurdieh's Retrospective Exhibition Debuts in Lebanon with

Fann À Porter and ZAAT Collaboration

الطريق بأصحابه



Majd Kurdieh Retrospective

6 June to 26 June 2023

Private Reception: Tuesday, 6 June at 5pm

Ground Floor, Safir Building, Mneimneh Street, Hamra

Beirut, Lebanon



Celebrated artist Majd Kurdieh's retrospective exhibition, presented by Fann À Porter in collaboration with ZAAT will make its debut in Beirut, Lebanon from 6 June to 26 June 2023. Building on the success of the previous retrospective exhibition in Cairo, Egypt in 2020, this exhibition showcases Kurdieh's artistic journey over the past nine years.

About the Exhibition

As whimsical as ever, this retrospective exhibition embodies the journey of Majd Kurdieh's art and his commitment to deliver an understanding of the human experience. It begins with *The Land Needs Ironing* (2014-2016), a series begun in a decade fraught with war. Kurdieh chose his brush as a weapon, depicting peaceful yet powerful messages. Highlighting painful fault lines created by political upheaval, he manages to tend to what remains of innocence, calling on the Samsh and the Fasaeen to lead the way to brighter days.

True to its name, *Stealing Sadness* (2017-2018) depicts *The Very Scary Butterfly Gang* on a mission. Prerequisites of sadness thieves include a light touch and a lighthearted spirit to boot. Though their name may be scary, *The Very Scary Butterfly Gang* only wish to replace sadness, which can often feel as heavy and huge as a whale, with a feather to help you rise above your sorrows and the barriers that separate us as humans. As time goes by, so too does the story of The Gang.

In his series, *Surrender to Love* (2018), Kurdieh's characters are all softness, both figuratively and literally as they've shed their previous outlines and by default, their confines. They are, after all, surrendering to the greatest power, love.

A striking contrast is presented in *Hold Onto The Flower* (2019), an ink on paper series ironically portrayed in black and white. Kurdieh's famous cast of characters have remained the same in name, however, his proclivity for expressing complex realities through simple visuals has evolved through each series as the characters appear technically enhanced on the canvas. Joining their number in *Hold Onto The Flower* is Mr. Mouse, for whom nothing is impossible, and who raises the Sun Flag in the face of storms.

In his 2020 series, *We Continue To Raise The Flag Of The Sun*, a certain member is featured more prominently: The Cactus. In Arabic, "cactus" and "patience" are the same word and the new Gang member represents this virtue time and again, particularly in the vibrant watercolor scenes.



Majd Kurdieh's 2021 collection ***Watermelon Peace***, confronts humanity's increasing restlessness and turmoil with depictions of unwavering love, belief, and the discovery of inner peace. Bursting with light and color, the paintings exude a passionate aesthetic that matches the intensity of the subject matter.

Love is at the forefront in Kurdieh's 2022 series, ***One Wound, One Smile***, with two opposing forces emerging as recurring themes: the wound and the smile. As is characteristic of his work, complex human emotions and experiences are rendered discernible through the use of characters and elements. For example, sadness is depicted as being as large as a whale, while sorrow is portrayed as a flood with crashing waves. The wound is a mix of nostalgia, hope, and sorrow. The heart is likened to a fish, finding its place in the vast ocean of this world. Beauty is personified as a woman, and desire as a man. The ultimate prize life has to offer, according to Kurdieh, is love, personified in the characters Fagoon and Fasooneh.

Majd Kurdieh's new series made in 2023 titled ***The Wing of the Dream*** is a departure from his previous works as it focuses on the depiction of birds in a more realistic manner. The series explores the themes of duality and contradiction, as highlighted in the artist statement. The birds in the paintings are not only meant to represent the freedom of flight but also to symbolize the fragility of life and the fleeting nature of existence. Through his use of color and texture, Kurdieh creates a dream-like atmosphere, blurring the line between reality and imagination.

A fitting conclusion, if only for now, to the continuing story. The concepts of home, love, devotion and sadness ring strong in all his creations. Kurdieh is masterful in his ability to express our realities through the strokes of his brush and the power of his words. As noted by the artist himself, his art and its characters are of this world, not merely a fantasy. If you care to look deeply enough, he offers a portal to a place of hope and togetherness should you wish to experience it.



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 childlike paintings incorporate strong literary and story-telling techniques. 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 animal characters.

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.

At first glance, the works seem cartoon-like 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.

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 candour and sincerely draws attention to issues he feels deserve to be represented truthfully.

Recently, Kurdieh has featured in solo and group exhibitions at MADS Gallery, Milan, Italy (2021); Azad Art Gallery, Cairo (2021; 2020); Egypt Art Fair (2023; 2022; 2021; 2020); BBA Gallery, Berlin (2019), DAR Art (2021, 2022); Fann À Porter, Jordan (2021; 2020, 2019); Fann À Porter, Dubai (2021; 2020, 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, including HE Dr. Zaki Nusseibeh's private collection and the Atassi Foundation.

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

About Fann À Porter

Fann À Porter is a contemporary art gallery at The Workshop Dubai 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 program.

The gallery's exhibition program includes eight curated exhibitions a year, and features artists working across diverse media.

Fann À Porter has established a series of dialogues and collaborations with curators, writers, governmental entities, and institutions to affirm its commitment to support the long-term development of young contemporary artists from the Middle East.

By hosting a regular public programming including exhibitions, talks, non-profit and charitable initiatives and by participating in fairs, Fann A Porter has established itself in forefront of the region's exciting arts landscape.

Founded in 2006 by Ghada Kunash, Fann À Porter is based at The Workshop, a unique interdisciplinary community space consisting of an art gallery, a sustainable store, design studio, and a cafe. The Workshop aims to engage the audiences and support the development of Dubai's arts scene through its extensive programs, educational initiatives, and community projects.



About ZAAT

ZAAT is a multi-disciplinary platform created to promote and empower artists and designers. By offering a place for collectors to buy, sell and trade work that ranges in styles, movements and eras, ZAAT then reinvests into showcasing and supporting the production of contemporary work. Coming from the Arabic root meaning, one, essence, self, ZAAT upholds the integrity of the art and artists.

Specializing in art from the Arab world, ZAAT is a digital platform that also curates events, advises clients interested in buying new work and consults on currently owned pieces. The platform is continually expanding with new artists and seeks out designers with social narratives and ethical production.

Conceived as a place to connect art enthusiasts and artists together, ZAAT aims to make art more approachable and understandable while supporting artists. Read about ZAAT on zaat.me.

For more information and for interviews, please contact at info@fannaporter.com or visit fannaporter.com.