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Majd Kurdieh: Against War and its Pains

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The original article was written in Arabic and has been translated to English below:

Imaginary characters, animals, plants, moons and planets composed the paintings of the Syrian Majd Kurdieh in his exhibition “The Road is in its Companions,” which recently concluded in a hall of the “Al-Safir Newspaper” building in Beirut. Everything in it is fantasy with imagination, similar to the drawings that accompany the texts in children’s books, even if their topics are not happy, but are almost tragic due to the large number of destruction and victims in them, despite the messages calls for love and peace. For Kurdieh, art is a means of expression against war and its pain. It is as if we are facing sequences that resemble comics, with hot and bright colors in clear contrast to the dark subject matter. A connected story, smooth and simple, whose heroes are “Fasoon” and “Fasooneh,” the two children interacting with a whale, an elephant, a donkey, a sun, and a flower. In most paintings/scenes, there is text that conveys the idea, lesson, and narrative path. Drawing, speech, imagination and ideas within one plastic framework.

An unusual Kurdieh experience. Its colors are cheerful against a dark background, a cry of childish innocence in the face of a cruel adult world who are the makers of its cruelty, violence, and destruction. The complementary words are either the brainchild of the painter, or from famous songs, or from poems by ancient poets such as Al-Mutanabbi, Antara, Bashar bin Burd, or other contemporary poets.

The butterfly, the beast, the donkey, and the elephant have a dominant presence in these drawings, in addition to “Fasoon,” a

small creature of short stature. Kurdieh's "Fasaeen" steal sadness in an effort to create an ideal world. The artist says: "I draw inspiration from my works from conflicts and debates within the human soul, and the dialogues I have are between a person and himself, and I put them on the tongues of multiple people. In my drawings, there is a dialogue, for example, with the sun or the moon, and a debate between the elephant and the flowers of the garden. In my drawing, the huge heart of the elephant turns into a fish, the donkey speaks wisdom, and the butterflies race to remove thorns from the paths to plant them with flowers.

Living organisms are a means of expression and symbolization for the artist throughout time, from the wall drawings of the people of the cave until the present day. It gives a more comprehensive, universal meaning. When I tell a story about a bird, I do not link it to a time or place.

True art transcends everything, time and religions. When I talk about injustice, I talk about it in every time and place. The masterpiece of the great Amal Dunqul, "Spartacus," is the best evidence of the ability of art to transfer the local event to the broader global one. The same applies to Picasso's "Guernica," which became a symbol of anti-war."

"He treats cruelty with softness, complexity with simplicity, and his exhibition is worth visiting and discovering"

Majd Kurdieh (b. 1985, Aleppo) spent most of his life on the Euphrates River, influenced by the beautiful natural setting. He lived in harsh political conditions, as his father was arrested for twelve years and his family suffered. This suffering shaped his human consciousness, his culture, and his own artistic style, and he currently lives and works in Amchit, Lebanon. His works were displayed in many Arab and international exhibitions in Beirut, Dubai, Amman, Cairo, Manama, Berlin and London. Kurdieh's paintings celebrate human relationships and feelings, narrating love, hope, and the struggle between good and evil, with symbolic treatments and poetic dimensions. He treats cruelty with softness, and complexity with simplicity and symbolism.