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Majd Kurdieh: My Work is Inspired by the Struggles of the Human Soul

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

He has a rich artistic experience outside the usual framework. His brush carries cheerful colors, even if they appear dark, to raise cries in the face of ugliness and destruction through implicit messages carried by his characters, for whom he chose the name The Gang... He is the Syrian visual artist Majd Kurdieh.

The Syrian artist was born in the city of Aleppo and spent most of his life on the Euphrates River. He was influenced by the aesthetics around him, in addition to the political circumstances. His father was arrested for 12 years, as well as his family, which shaped his culture and outlook on things.

Majd Kurdieh characters, which he creates from his imagination, were able to fly over crossings, and jump over barriers and barbed wire, until they reached people everywhere, carrying messages and calls for love, peace, and the restoration of broken hearts, brandishing the weapon of art in the face of war, pain, and devastation. "Independent Arabia" met the artist Majd Kurdieh to learn about his experience closely.

Conflicts of the human soul

The butterfly gang, the monster, the donkey, and the elephant are characters that are strongly present in Majd's works, in addition to the "Fasaeen" (Fasaoon in the Levantine language is the small, short creature, and the people of Egypt call it Al-Ma'fus in their colloquial language), and the Syrian artist's Fasaeen steals sorrows and seeks to create an ideal world. He says about his works and characters, "I draw inspiration from my works from the conflicts, debates, and debates that take place within the human soul. They are dialogues between a person and himself in the words of different characters. Living organisms are a means of expression and important symbols for the artist over time, from the caveman murals to the present day, and they give a universal meaning." More comprehensively, when I write a story about a bird, for example, I do not tie it to a specific place or time".

He adds, "True art is transient to everything. It does not need to cross sects, religions, and parties in order to create a popular base for itself. It is transient over time. When it talks about injustice, it means it in every time and place, and not about a single incident, and the great masterpiece Amal Dunqul (Spartacus) is the best proof." On the ability of art to transfer a local event to its broader, universal state, or as in Picasso's "Guernica," which turned into an anti-war symbol.

Art is knowledge, not madness

People are confused about describing this type of art. Some see it as a caricature, others classify it as surreal, and a third group places it on the scale of magical realism. So how does the artist find his artistic identity and become his own school? The Syrian artist says, "Art schools are nothing but terms to facilitate the study of art." Art, but it does not express it accurately. Caricature is the product of journalism and daily events, and its effect disappears with the passage of the event. I do not deal with daily events. Perhaps my works are a mixture of symbolic expression and perhaps magical realism".

He continued, "As for artistic identity, there are no magic recipes for that. Only work, effort, research, and knowledge are the way to create the artist's personality. Art is knowledge, not madness

Trafficking in tragedies

Although Majd Kurdi's paintings carry childish lines and cheerful colors, they are equally filled with great concerns and thorny issues, which she presents in a smooth and simple manner. About this, he says, "I like not to say everything, and to leave a space or window in which the recipient's thoughts and concerns move, so that he becomes part of the story." Working without knowing, and in general I do not tend to explain water with water".

He continues, "On the other hand, I try to shed light on the tragedies that occur without commercializing them. I do not draw pictures of destruction and victims, and turn them into works of art. I see this as a commercialization of violence and its transformation into an aesthetic state at the hands of artists".

Facing oppression and ugliness

The mutual relationship between politics and art, and how each influences the other, is always a matter of question, especially after the Arab revolutions. Did visual art influence or was influenced by politics? Majd Kurdiya says, "There is no mutual relationship between politics and art except within the framework of political suppression of the artist. This is the relationship." The only one between them is politics is the art of controlling crowds, and art is a way of addressing individuals".

He points out that "we need at least 50 years to talk about the impact of the Arab revolutions on plastic art. The experience has not yet matured, and in general all new experiences and forays are better than the swamp of stagnation".

Regarding the role of the artist in such times of political tension, he asserts, "In the midst of revolutions and great events, art turns on its own into bread for hungry souls to eat, while in states of prosperity and calm it is decorations that adorn the walls, and in revolutions new ideas explode in all aspects of life, and art is one." Of these, he must absorb them, express them, and participate in creating their future course. Art is a bullet that confronts oppression, ugliness, and war, and this is an axiom for any artist who respects his art and himself, and has an atom's worth of ethics".

Son of freedom

Some view the visual arts as being distant from the Arab citizen, and from this view, Majd says, "The separation between the common people and the visual arts is a question of the chicken and the egg, and its answer is thorny, and I do not have the answer, but in general, there is a deliberate neglect of artistic culture on the one hand. Art is the son of freedom." This is not in the interest of dictatorships of various forms. On the other hand, there is a state of Westernization of art and its distancing it from its local spirit. Perhaps it was with the aim of reaching universality sometimes, but even universality begins from locality. If I do not understand myself and the person I encounter in the street, how will I realize that? Far away, separated from me by seas and mountains, and carrying another culture far from the spirit of the East in poetry and word".

I'm not a rebel

Whoever looks at "Kurdish" paintings finds an artist who appears to be rebellious against the rules, with unfamiliar ideas, and verses of poetry that adorn the works. Regarding this artistic mixture, he says, "I am not a rebel against the rules of art, and no artist, no matter how high his status, can rebel against the rules of color, shade, and balance of composition." I simply cannot produce a painting that imitates European art, and of course it will be rebellious. Art dies if it does not rebel. As for poetry, the arts are basically mixed together, but separated in their final form. The piece in the mind of the composer is the same poem in the mind of the poet, but the final product is different. Al-Mutanabbi is my favorite poet, and I consider that the Assyrian and Pharaonic murals that influenced my artistic formation the most, and I also love the works of Picasso".