

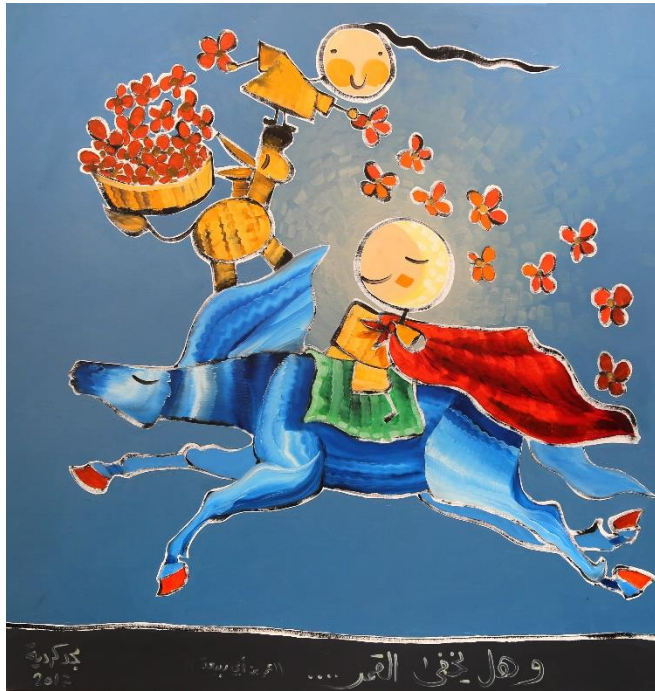
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Middle East Masala

Stealing Sadness by Majd Kurdieh

By Tessa Koshy

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Syrian artist Majd Kurdieh was forced to flee his homeland and now lives in Lebanon. This displacement and the current volatile political situation of his country has deeply impacted him. His art, a creative expression of his thoughts, features tiny cartoon-like characters he calls Fasaen. Stealing Sadness, his latest exhibition at The Workshop, on Al Wasl Road, depicts these tiny characters on a quest to steal sadness from the world and in turn spread a lot of happiness. Kurdieh created this group of characters inspired by George Orwell's Animal Farm, Kalilah Wa Dimna, the Arabic translation of Panchatantra and from the old poets of pre-Islamic period.

The Fasaen include Fasoon and Fasooneh, a boy and a girl, smaller than cherry blossom, always smiling. The Elephant, who gives everything and never listens to anyone, and therefore became very large, the butterfly — the symbol of the gang, the fish — who is bored of living in water, the snail — on whose back everyone takes a ride so that the happy moments pass slowly and the donkey, the dove, the rat, the horse and the wolf.

Majd also exhibited at Art Bahrain 2018 and Sikka Art Fair 2018. His current exhibition at Fann A Porter at The Workshop, that runs till April 12 features a new series called Fasaen and the Very Scary Butterfly Gang.

Majd's art is endearing and his characters have universal appeal. There is indeed a lot of sadness in the world and the colourful Fasaen characters touched a deep happy chord inside me.

Majd says, "Fasaeen... realistic slaps coated with dreamy kisses... theatrical characters that appear on the austere whiteness of the painting where they tell their story and run away as if they belong to the Tramps... the talking animals are an extension to the conversation between the poets and their horses and wolves...I tried to be visually aesthetic as much as I could... when I found myself an immigrant who cannot carry many colours and lines... the heavy suitcases burden the wings of the swallow... yellow and blue... are my everlasting nostalgia for a land on the banks of the Euphrates... merely scattered thoughts that resemble what I did. In the time of war I did not try to present death and destruction as an aesthetic case; I have rather tried to reconstruct the beauty of the souls that ugliness destroyed."

Looking forward to more of Majd's playful artistic characters. The Workshop was yet another find, this aesthetic hub has an innovative gift shop, an art gallery and a lovely cafe.