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The Road is in its Companions: Majd Kuedieh's Retrospective Exhibition

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

Yesterday, the artist Majd Kurdieh opened his first exhibition in Beirut in the “Al-Safir” newspaper building in a collaboration between Fann À Porter and Zaat, through which he presented his artistic experience during the previous nine years. Under the title “The Road is in its Companions,” art connoisseurs delved into more than 100 paintings from different groups, through which Majd wanted to display the production of an entire decade, and to gather many friends under one roof.

Majd was born in the Syrian city of Aleppo in 1985, and today he lives and works in Lebanon, specifically in Amchit. However, he was not able to organize his first exhibition in Beirut before yesterday, because “high art is always difficult to move, as it is not a purely commercial situation,” Majd says and continues. “I imagine the delay was until we found the appropriate space that was in line with the business spirit of the “Assafir” building.

On the walls of the exhibition, you are captivated by the various series that Majd created with his brush. At first glance, his works appear simple and cartoon-like, but they carry within their content a complex world that enables... From his simplicity,

which resembles childish innocence,

He draws fun and repetitive characters that tell stories, and over the past four years, he has created a “gang of characters,” most notably the “small-sized” characters, and the stories told through the representation of these characters are not specific stories that he imagines. They are stories that can apply to any of us, leaving room for personal interpretation.

Through his brush, he also managed to combine painting and literature together by using characters that repeat and stand to tell a story, and they usually carry a strong moral and positive reinforcement. In his childish paintings, there are strong literary and narrative techniques, he says. He succeeded in blending them based on his view of art, and he adds: “Literature, music, and all other arts are only branches of one tree. As for the characters, it is a purely technical case that depends on the contrast between things. By using them, ideas and images stand out more. As they say, things are known by their opposites in the exhibition. There are many paintings that the artist did not prepare “so that the blessing would not disappear, as his grandmother says,” as he said. They are distributed among different groups, including “The Land Needs Ironing” (2014-2016), which embodies peaceful messages. Majd used his brush as a weapon. Over more than a decade of devastating wars, to highlight the divisions created by political conflicts, and to return to what remains of innocence among “Samsh” and “Fasaen” to pave the way towards a better tomorrow, then the “Stealing Sadness” series (2017-2018), where “The Very Scary Butterfly Gang” replaces sadness with feathers of hope, “Surrender to Love” series (2018). Majd’s characters shed their forms and appearances to surrender their souls to the greatest power through which “Love” can be embodied. “Hold on to the Flower” series (2019) is drawn. In black ink on white paper in a simplified comic style, the collection “We Continue to Raise the Flag of the Sun” (2020) featured the character “Al-Sabara”, portrayed by Majd in multiple vibrant scenes done in watercolor.

In the riotous aesthetics, “Watermelon Peace” (2021) series confronts the rising levels of anxiety and human turmoil by depicting unwavering love, faith, and the discovery of inner peace.

Love is at the forefront of the series, “One Wound, One Smile” (2022), which brings together complex human emotions in the contradiction that exists between a wound and a smile. Sadness appears as large as a whale and grief as a breaking wave, and the heart resembles a fish finding its place in the vast ocean of this world.

As for his new series, "Wings of the Dream" (2023), we notice a shift in the artist's mind from his previous works towards a more realistic representation of birds. Through his use of different colors and patterns, he creates a dream-like atmosphere in which the line between reality and imagination is blurred.

In his works, his view of the human experience also emerges, and in this context, he points out that "art, in its essence and in all its branches, revolves around the human being. The painting may have been about the tree, but its subject is the human being. My painting has many hidden ways, all of which are magical and difficult to describe, but in Overall, what worries the artist appears in his production, and I imagine that what worries us all is the human condition in which we live."

Majd does not hide his enthusiasm and anxiety towards his first exhibition. He points out that "the exhibition is for everyone... because art is for everyone," inviting those who wish to visit him to enjoy and immerse themselves in his works.