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Syrian Research

In Conversation with Syrian Artist, Majd Kurdieh

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This article was originally published in Arabic and has been translated to English below:

Syrian Research: Is the world of Majd Kurdieh that far from reality?

Majd Kurdieh: I see no difference between art and life. The world that I draw and write is the story of my life, as if my art and my world are two threads that twist together to make a strong, cohesive rope. There is also no difference between my story and the Fasaeen's story, as we are two mirrors facing each other.

SR: Do you consider the world of Fasaeen the ideal place embodied in paintings?

MK: My world is not ideal. Rather, it resembles the world we live in with its problems and crises. Portraying an ideal world will prevent me from making any change. The ideal world does not need anything.

My paintings are stories in which I moved away from idealism, and despite the presence of good and evil within me, my fear of the good and evil, which often leads to the demonization of the other, prompted me to deal with this point with extreme caution.

SR: Your paintings are distinguished from others by the different words and poems that accompany them, taken from both modern and pre-Islamic poetry, in addition to your own words. In your opinion, which most illuminate the world of Majd Kurdieh?

MK: The quotes in my paintings in my paintings are not limited to pre-Islamic nor modern poetry. Rather I also love colloquial language, and most of the writings in my paintings are a result of my own ideas. A limited number of paintings are also accompanied by the poems of Nizar Qabbani, Mahmoud Darwish, Al Qayrawani, and others, with approximately fifty works out of a thousand.

SR: What difficulties have you faced in your artistic career?

MK: The difficulties are many and varied, and I am not about to mourn and complain. These difficulties are what make us strong to become what we are now. Likewise, art itself is a set of difficulties that must be overcome in order for an artist to reach the stage of creation and innovation.

SR: Tell us about your exhibition, Stealing Sadness.

MK: Stealing Sadness is an extension of a project from five years ago, and under this broad name, there are many subtitles. It is difficult to summarize art under one title, but it is the most comprehensive title.

SR: You have represented a distinctive mark in the art world and have formed your own identity. How can a novice artist find his own identity?

MK: Research and experience are the solution for any artist to find their identity, as every human being is different from the other. Whether in a way of thinking or in a view of the universe, an artist must embody this difference and develop himself, especially since the difference is free though far from all preconceptions. The essence of art lies in each artist drawing and writing the reality he sees and feels, in order for this reality to be his own, he must add change. If each of us draws without adding reductions, we will all become repeated and successive copies.

SR: How important are rules in art?

MK: The standards of art have been a controversial topic since the inception of art. Laws are of a rigid nature and have definitive results. If everyone follows the same laws, works will become similar and devoid of creativity, while chaos will occur when there are no laws, and we will not be able to distinguish a work of art from the others. This possibility will lead to an interruption in the chain of human knowledge for subsequent generations. We hand down knowledge to the generation that follows us, just as our ancestors and the generations before them did, and laws are an essential part of this knowledge. But as Picasso said: "We learn rules in order to rebel against them."

SR: Profession and passion in art – what are the boundaries between them?

MK: The artist must maintain a passion for their work and not turn it into a dry, routine profession. He must look at the painting through the eyes of an amateur, even if he is a professional. In fact, an artist cannot go into his studio and draw, for creativity is like the rain. There is no specific time or place!

SR: Do you think that academic study is a prerequisite for an artist's success?

MK: From an academic standpoint, art is different from scientific fields; a person can be an artist without attending an art academy, and this does not apply to medicine or engineering, I think. Academic artistic study is a tool for organizing an artist's personal effort in research and knowledge, and an auxiliary factor in making a successful freelance artist and craftsman, but is not a basic condition for this.

SR: To which school of thought does your art belong to?

MK: Art schools exist to facilitate study, but we cannot include the complete works of an artist under a specific school except in specific cases, or during specific stages of his life.

Personally, I sometimes approach surrealism, while other times I approach cubism. In art, there are no boundaries between things. It is one sea within which all the different drops of water are mixed.

SR: An artist's inspiration varies between a warm home, beautiful music, a professional artist, and many details. What is the source of your inspiration?

MK: There are countless names, starting with the paintings on the cave walls since ancient times, and the Assyrian arts, Picasso, Goya, Michelangelo, Al Mutanabbi, Tarafa Bin Al Abd, and many others.

SR: The weakness of our artistic culture in our society is the heaviest burden on young talents. What advice do you have for them?

MK: Art is a tiring and exhausting world, but if you have talent, patience, and energy, you will achieve your goal. The truth of the matter is that most human societies do not possess a high artistic culture, and this situation is not limited to the Arab world. As art – as a cultural state- has its pioneers and those interested in it, who in most societies constitute an educated segment whose percentage varies from one society to another.