



Driven by injustice: Shadi Alzaqzouq

Interview by Ege Yorulmaz

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“Sometimes I feel so angry with Injustice that I wonder if the painting I do is because I love it, or it’s just for revenge.”



Palestinian artist Shadi Alzaqzouq is interested in the psychology of society and wants to dig into different identities. In his work, Paris cityscapes and the Arab Spring meet the punk revolution and there’s always room for sense of humour. Living in Paris since 2005, the artist gave us answers on how his experiences in France showed him that the societies do not live through their senses and feelings anymore, but by their heads, and a lot more.





Panique Panique
Huile sur toile, 160x200, 2013 – Collection Julien Dray





Paris Calling
Huile sur toile, 100x130, 2014

You come from a refugee family, you were born and raised in exile, you moved from Al Kufrah to the Gaza Strip, leaving your father behind. While growing up, is there a specific moment/incident that motivated you to become this artist and made the most influence on your work?

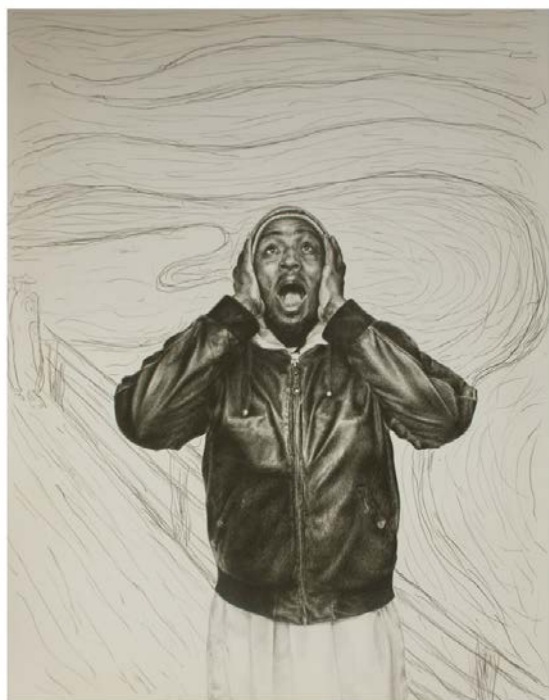
When I was young, my father would not let me and my brothers go out of the house and play outside with children after school. He was scared we'd get out of control and wanted us to grow strong ties as a family. So we started invited our friends in, and to attract them I would make beautiful reception, like an opening, draw giant Mickey Mouse and calligraphy with the name of Allah on the wall. This was really the beginning, as from then, I wouldn't feel transparent any

more

The major incident that influenced my work was the first Intifadah, that started in 1987. I was young and couldn't understand what it meant, but all I saw was pure energy, continuous action, rebellion, mysterious anonymous fedayin playing with danger and being chased by occupation army. I was captivated. I guess this is why I like street art. It reminds me of Intifadah.

What is your main drive to produce such provocative artwork? Having lived among suppressed communities, is it the lack of artistic expression, freedom, predominating injustice or violence? What is the ultimate issue you'd like to touch through your work?

I am mainly driven by injustice. I have always liked talking about dark and serious matters, but with humour. And since I am in France, I am so chocked about the indifference of the people on what happens in Palestine. I realize that the country where "human rights" were supposedly born has lost its own humanity. This society doesn't live through its senses and feelings anymore, but by its head. It gave a new and strong orientation to my artwork.



Appel à la prière
Crayon sur papier, 42,5 x 55,5 cm, 2014 – collection privée



Charlotte
Crayon sur papier, 42,5 x 55,5 cm, 2014 – collection privée

One of your paintings (After Washing) was censored in an art fair in Dubai. Were you glad that it was disturbing for certain masses or you'd rather not be accepted primarily as a political artist?

I am glad my work is disturbing, and in the meantime I do not qualify myself primarily as a political artist. I am issued from popular culture, I do not understand political games, and politics at all, but I just want to express my feelings and show I can't be dictated by the society – by no one. This is my punk side. I am much interested in the psychology of society, digging into identities.

What are your opinions on the self-censorship among (political) artists in oppressed countries/lands?

I feel we all self-censor at some point, more or less according to the society we live in. I regret it, but one needs to protect their family. Either you self-censor, or you hide yourself.



National Clothesline
Huile sur toile, 160x200, 2012 – Collection Kamel Lazaar



After Washing
Huile sur toile, 60x60, 2011 – Private collection

Did Arab Spring give you greater hope or courage? Did you live in Paris back then?

Oh yes. I was living in Paris at that time. When it first started in Tunisia, it gave me so much hope. I remember I was proud to be an Arab again. It was like an assertion of my identity. I couldn't believe we were capable of such a rebellion. And then this hope disintegrated, collapsed, when it got politically recuperated, when they divert the objectives for a war of chairs.

Your more recent work, Muslim Punk series, was produced in Paris and it carries vibrant traces of popular culture. What characteristic of the city led you to mix Islamic images, punk culture and classy Parisian scenes? Why specifically punk? What does it mean to you?

First, I really like urban landscapes. My objective was to display my character in historical places, in places where he didn't belong to, to create a culture shock. When Islamist parties took leadership in Egypt and Tunisia, the French media would talk a lot, too much, about Islam. And at the same time anti-Islam feelings were growing amongst the population. I see the punk tries to be out of the society, while the society tries to push Islam to the side, so I simply made the link.



All we need is hope
Huile sur toile, 70x70, 2012

**What effects has Western culture had on your expression of the issues that matter to you?
Has any significant change happened in your perception and interpretation?**

No, I haven't really changed, though I agree it was difficult back in Gaza to express myself and to be different. I feel now I am in the right place. Here I can choose to be myself, dress like I want, say what I want; I am much more free, for sure.

It's incredible how your Muslim Punk paintings could still be serious with a humorous touch. Are you doing that to keep the subject from being more dramatic than it already is? How do you keep the balance?

Using humour makes the drama stronger though it makes it easier to watch by the spectator. Balance is natural, is uncontrolled. My paintings really are like my own sense of humour.



Me in 30 years
Huile sur toile, 70x70, 2012



Spring Clean-Up
Huile sur toile, 97x130, 2012

Are you happy with the way your work reaches to audiences from around the world?

Not really, it's complicated to show this kind of artwork in the Arabic world. My work is not decorative enough for those places. And in Europe, maybe it creates discomfort

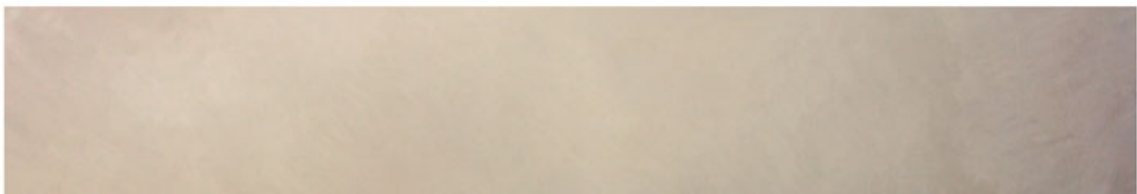
What inspires you the most these days?

I get my inspiration from people, and music. But currently I take a lot from my eldest 3-years old son, Joseph.





The Free-Thinker
Crayon sur papier, 64x50 cm, 2012





Prayers
Huile sur toile, 160x200, 2015

How did your specific techniques evolved throughout the years?

Actually, technique is a playground for me. I like changing technique. Now I stick with Realism, as I believe it's still too rare in the Arabic world and I like to spend time on a complicated technique.

Through the course of your artistic evolution, do you wish you did certain things differently? Or ultimately are you happy with the way your art evolved?

I permanently think I am still looking for my way, my series, the series that will really be me, 100% honest with myself. Sometimes I feel so angry with injustice that I wonder if the painting I do is because I love it, or it's just for revenge. I am not at peace. Am I happy with the way my art has evolved? : "Monday Yes, Tuesday No..."

Do you think your art will take on a completely different direction? Do you think you'll be exploring an entirely different concept in the future?

I don't know if my art will change, but what I am sure is that I will never stop painting.

Where are you at the moment and what are you working on?

Now I am in deep thinking about the painting itself, the technique, colours and brushes. I am in vacation from "subject" thinking

Bu yazıyı paylaş



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