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Today's Events



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Artist of the Month



Amer Shomali

By Mahmoud Abu Hashhash

Amer Shomali moves easily between different artistic practices and forms. His academic background in architecture and animation is coupled with a feverish interest in and increasing knowledge of the Palestinian visual heritage, compounded by a critical spirit, black humour, and an expressive boldness that enables him to engage with various media and methods.



*Pixelated Intifada, sculpture, 200*85*95 cm, 200 kg, 58,000 wooden cubes, 2012.*



*The Icon (Laila Khaled), installation, 104 *145 cm, 140 kg, 3,500 lipsticks, 2011.*

His loyalty is only to his ideas, which can manifest themselves in many different forms: a poster, animation, drawing, painting, cartoon, sculpture, or even a film. Thus he is a visual artist, filmmaker, animator, graphic designer, painter, and cartoonist all at once. Yet when working on a piece of art, Amer always does so with the passion of a creator, the patience of an artisan, and, most importantly, with the heart of a dreamer who still desires a greater life for art, one beyond the walls of the gallery and its audiences.

What distinguishes Amer from many of his Palestinian artist peers is the great care he takes in searching for the connection that was once found between artistic expression and the people in the Palestinian context. Amer strives for his works to find a way to reach people and to contribute to the revival of the collective consciousness. He does this not with the aim of reproducing the past but through questioning history and heritage and being critical of the present, yet always with an emphasis on the aesthetics of the artwork and its ability to be contemporary.

Amer's works, notably *Pixelated Intifada* and *The Icon*, are charged with meanings related to collective work and the participation of others in the production of such pieces. This reflects the artist's ability to infect them with his passion and to lead them to believe in the power of art as a tool to influence change. Consequently, his collaborators participate enthusiastically in the process of production,

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Detail within The Icon.

and in so doing bring back memories of the atmosphere that Palestinians experienced decades ago when such values of collective participation, solidarity, and volunteering were at their peak. Perhaps this participation of the artist's friends and colleagues - and sometimes just people who happen to be passing by - demonstrates a certain nostalgia for specific moments in the history of Palestinian resistance. However, this act of contributing, which in itself entails a criticism of the present, leads to a transcending of nostalgia and a simple longing for the past towards an actual participation in the shaping of the present and the future. This collective engagement reaches out to the artisans and others who participate with the artist, establishing an audience for the artwork at an early stage and creating a special audience - one that has built a relationship with the work and become, in a way, part of its history.

Amer Shomali holds a master's degree in animation from Bournemouth University in the United Kingdom and a bachelor's degree in architecture from Birzeit University, Palestine. He was born in Kuwait in 1981, and is currently based in Ramallah, Palestine. For more information, visit www.amershomali.info.

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