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Artist David Kurani at AUB

Le 31/01/15

J'aime 6



It always amazes me that in a small country like Lebanon, there could be so many talented artists. During the Holidays, I had the privilege of meeting David Kurani man of many talents. He is also a producer, director, playwright, illustrator, and composer! Many students at AUB know him as their beloved drama teacher. In Beirut's art circles he is a well-known artist.

Even though he was born in Virginia, he feels Lebanese. His parents moved to Lebanon when he was a child. His father, Dr. Habib Kurani, was the

Chairman of the department of education at AUB and its first registrar. His mother, Ester Kurani, was co-founder of the well-known AUB Folk Dance Festival.

His early love of painting led him to a career in the Arts. After graduating in Fine Arts at AUB, he specialized in Drama at the Old Vic Theater in Bristol, England. He returned to Beirut as a professor of Art and Drama at AUB in 1968. He worked alongside artists Fay Frick and John Carswell. Over the years, Kurani has held numerous solo and group art exhibits in Lebanon, France, USA, England, and the United Arab Emirates.

For many years, he has been illustrating Arabic children's books for Dar Al Mashrek Publishers. Today, some of his college students recognize his paintings from their old elementary textbooks.

When he is not busy teaching or directing, he focuses his attention on painting. Kurani is known for both, his portraiture and landscapes. Portraits require more detailed work than landscapes. When he paints a portrait, he prefers to paint his models spontaneously, rather than to have them pose for him. A gentleman, once, had asked him to paint his portrait but insisted in looking younger. This is not what portraiture is all about. He feels that some people are not looking for a portrait but a picture of what they would like to look like.

An artist needs to paint freely. Kurani prefers painting the landscapes of Lebanon. Especially, the views of the countryside as he drives to the villages of his Father, Mtaybel, and of his wife, Ashkout. Other times, he paints the beautiful Jacaranda trees at the Marquand House at AUB when they are in full bloom.

How can we support the art scene in Lebanon? Kurani emphasizes the need for the whole Lebanese community to encourage the artists in Lebanon, by visiting the art galleries, art fairs, and when they can afford it, to acquire their works. Of the hundreds of Lebanese artists in Lebanon, he added, only 10% can live from their art. Art is a high end commodity.

The average people in Lebanon may love to acquire art, but in these economic times, they cannot afford it. *"Art is not a need. It is a luxury"*. What would you advise an aspiring artist? *"Study"* he insists, *"take classes"*. There are many good schools of art in Lebanon. AUB, LAU, ALBA, and NDU all give good art classes.

What makes a good watercolor painting?

First, pay attention to the detailed work. Did the artist make an effort in painting with care and precision? Next, look for the transparency and the brilliance of the colors in the painting.

"Watercolor is the only artistic medium that can truly reflect the brilliancy of colors".

Finally, and most important, it all will depend on one's individual taste.

When you want to acquire a watercolor, or any art work, for that matter, you should ask yourself, *"Do you love it? Can you live with it? If the answer is yes, and you can acquire it"*.

What is the role of an Art Gallery?

"Many artists can rarely price their works objectively" he said. In his case, he prefers to do it in collaboration with gallery owners. Art galleries help promote the artist, as well as exhibit his works. *"The artist cannot do all this by himself. It is a symbiotic relationship. Most of the time, the artist has to rely on his family and friends by word of mouth to promote and sell his works."*

Kurani will be dedicating more time to painting and exhibiting his watercolors. At the end of our conversation, he showed me some of his recent works. Here is a sample for all of you to see.

Libanista

Professor David Kurani in front of his portrait of Daniel Bliss.



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