

Khalid Zahid: I'm not an artist, I'm a messenger

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Saudi artist Khalid Zahid draws up passion wherever he goes, whether it's on the canvas or furniture, an inspiring message shines from his creativity. Zahid, an internationally celebrated Saudi artist, sold his artwork on everything from T-shirts to furniture.

Born in England and studied in the US, he started drawing while looking for a job after college. "I worked on a beautiful combination between pop art and calligraphy and I applied my art on T-shirts and called it Jin", Zahid explained. He titled his artwork "Jin", meaning get crazy in the Arabic language, saying it represented his funky style.

Zahid's fashionable T-shirt art sold in 2008, in cities worldwide including New York, Dubai, Riyadh and Jeddah. "I was very excited to know that a famous rapper, Lil Wayne, bought a couple of my T-shirts but sadly I didn't get a photo of that," he expressed.

By 2010, Zahid established two collections for his clothing line and decided it was time to get creative once again. "I decided to use the same artwork and blow it up on canvas. I used vintage French frames, painted them with funky colors and framed my work," he added. Zahid's art was showcased and sold in the Young Saudi Artist exhibition in Jeddah, making him one of the gallery's top sellers.

"I got this adrenaline rush after the exhibition because this is really my passion and it took off from there," he added.

Full of creativity and inspiration, Zahid took on yet another platform to showcase his work. This time his canvas was unfinished furniture. He polished and printed his funky style on vintage French chairs adding verses or words to his new artistic creations.

When asked if he has a message behind his art, Zahid said he didn't at first. He was only creating beautiful pieces but now almost all his art pieces exist

to deliver a message. “I decided to use my art to reflect my opinion on certain social issues particularly women’s rights in the Kingdom, he explained. Zahid expressed that there is a lack of appreciation for art education in the Kingdom explaining his passion to deliver a new outlook on art and social awareness. “I am trying to do something different where I deliver something beautiful with a twist. I’m not an artist, I am a messenger and that’s the way I see it,” he added.

Zahid wants the Saudi audience to relate to his work, so he dedicates his art to serve various social issues affecting the society. “One of my favorite pieces is when I spray painted a picture of a Saudi woman on a car door representing women driving issue in Saudi Arabia,” he said. Another piece he displayed was a budding flower made out of a pack of cigarettes to represent the “blooming” smoking industry among the youth. Zahid said he wanted to express the recent growth of an industry that is killing beautiful children.

Saudi art galleries are filled with beautiful work, Zahid explains but adds only the top one percent of the population can afford to enjoy such a luxury. “Artists should make art pieces affordable so more people can appreciate and actually buy it,” said Zahid.

Zahid’s new creation speaks to the social issue of marginalized women. His art piece, which will be auctioned in Ayyam Gallery in Dubai on the Jan. 21 where his design focuses on 50 halala coins to create flag and bubble gum wrap as hijab to symbolize how women’s rights are worthless like the halala coins.

Zahid’s vision is that art in the Kingdom can be used to help society realize the value and joy of everyday life. “Art is an angel here to save us all. I like to daydream and it’s the best way to get creative,” Zahid proclaims. Zahid developed his passion for art as a child and now as a well -know artist has given the international community a glimpse of Saudi art combined with a social message.

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