

# SELECTIONS



ABDUL RAHMAN KATANANI - ABED ABDI - AMMAR ABD RABBO - AYMAN BAALBAKI - CHAFA GHADDAR  
- ELIE BEKHAZI - HADY SY - HAMZA BOUNOUJA - HENAA MALALLAH - HODA TAWAKOL - MAHMOUD  
OBAIDI - NABIL ANANI - NEDIM KUFI - RAMIN H'ERIZADEH, ROKNI H'ERIZADEH, HESAM RAHMANIAN  
- SULTAN BIN FAHEH - SACHA ABOU KHALIL - SADIK KWAISH ALFRAJI - SEROJ BAREGHIAN -  
SERWAN BARAN - TAGREED DARGHOOTH - TIMO NASSERI AND CURATED BY DR BASEL DALLOU

ARTS-STYLE-CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND

# 53 THE DIARY OF AN ARTIST  
IN CONFINEMENT INTERESTING TIMES

FALL 2020 - AED 74

# THE DIARY OF AN ARTIST IN ~~CONFINEMENT~~ INTERESTING TIMES

What image(s) illustrate(s) 2020 for you so far?

*There is not a single picture that can illustrate this year. Dozens of paintings could reflect the year 2020. Most of my artworks this year included landscape paintings, which helped me to escape the painful reality we live in. I achieved beautiful paintings that transported me away and let me embrace nature. For instance, I used to draw many olive trees that always reminds me of the Palestinian countryside, not only from a political view, but also from the perspective of land, identity, and the beauty of Palestinian nature.*

If I had to write a note to the world to place in a time capsule to be opened 15 years from now, I would write that 2020 was one of the worst years we have experienced as Palestinians for several reasons. First, from the political point of view, which is an integral part of our lives as Palestinians, along with every event connected to the Arab League and the "deal of the century". I hope that after 15 years from now if I, or someone else, were to open the capsule, we could feel how badly the year 2020 affected Palestine, hoping for better conditions, politically and psychologically. The capsule would give a kind of hope to the Palestinians to live in a humane way without violation of human rights, unlike the case of the Palestinian people today, and with the right to live with freedom and dignity away from the Coronavirus. In addition, I would put some of my artworks from 2020 in the capsule to express my psychological state this year.

**"THE ARTIST IS INFLUENTIAL AND INFLUENCED BY HIS SURROUNDINGS. HE IS LIKE A MIRROR, REFLECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE CONCERNS OF HIS SOCIETY."**

The artist is influential and influenced by his surroundings. He is like a mirror, reflecting the environment and the concerns of his society. I really cannot imagine worse living conditions than the current one. As an artist, I understand the aspirations and beliefs of society around me and I feel a state of despair in Palestinian society, especially in 2020, due to the political situation and because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the greatest challenge facing humanity. I see that Palestinian society is in a state of heightened anxiety. As for me, I am more intensively performing my artistic work nowadays as a result of this pandemic and the imposed stay-at-home measures.



## NABIL ANANI

*Nabil Anani is one of the most prominent Palestinian artists and one of the key founders of the contemporary Palestinian art movement. After graduating from Alexandria University in Egypt in 1969, Anani returned to his homeland, Palestine, where he began a career as an art teacher-trainer at the UN college. Anani held his first exhibition in the city of Jerusalem in 1972. Since that time, he has exhibited his work internationally in solo exhibitions or with groups of contemporary Palestinian artists. As a painter, ceramicist and sculptor, Anani is a multi-talented artist and a pioneer in the use of local media and materials such as leather, wood, beads, copper and metal. Anani was awarded the first Palestinian National Prize for Visual Art in 1997 as well as the King Abdullah II Prize for Visual Arts in 2005, and became the head of the League of Palestinian Artists in 1998. He has devoted much of his time to volunteering; he is one of the founders of the Palestinian Art Association in 1975, as well as Al-Wasiti Art Centre in Jerusalem in 1993, and played a major role in establishing the first International Academy of Fine Arts in Palestine.*

*Nabil Anani, Untitled, 2020. Iron rust, acrylic and iron, 88 x 60 cm. Courtesy of Zawyeh Gallery.*





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For me, hope is always present in my paintings as it appears through the chosen colours and shapes. I believe that the recent connections made between 'the enemy' and some Arab countries are nothing but theatrics with no influence or meaning other than a painful psychological effect. It is a kind of performance signed by Trump and Netanyahu for election purposes only. Trump is known for his absurd actions that are not emanating from faith, culture, or humanity. For him, money and hegemony are first and foremost.

I didn't actually feel any frustration during the pandemic since I've been occupying myself and creating the opportunity for production and creativity, although I was very careful with social distancing to avoid being infected. I spent a large part of my time in the studio, since I believe that art can affect our psychological balance and is a way of dealing with and expressing the feelings inside. I also enjoyed listening to light classical music. In terms of reading, In search of Jamal al Mahamel

by the Palestinian writer and artist Khaled Al-Hourani is one of the books I have recently read. What I liked about this book is the description of the lives and human experiences of artists such as Sulayman Mansour, the owner of the painting "Jamal al Mahamel", in a beautiful narrative style. I especially enjoyed reading this novel because it evokes my own memories and those of other artists. I also read a lot of articles on social media. For example, the writer Zakaria Muhammad is rich in useful information and constructive criticism, whether political, social, or cultural. This is in addition to Muhannad Abdul Hamid's political and social writings, and other articles.

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- 1- Nabil Anani, Landscape Dream #4, 2020. Mixed media on canvas, 108 x 95 cm. Courtesy of Zawyeh Gallery.
- 2- Nabil Anani, Olive Groves #5, 2020. Mixed media on canvas, 97 x 97 cm. Courtesy of Zawyeh Gallery.
- 3- Nabil Anani, Olive Groves #7, 2020. Mixed media on canvas, 100 x 125 cm. Courtesy of Zawyeh Gallery.

# THE DIARY OF AN ARTIST IN ~~CONFINEMENT~~ INTERESTING TIMES

Since the beginning of the pandemic, I started walking around my house to optimise my health. As a result, I was attracted by many broken and rusty metal pieces outside on the street and decided to collect them and use them in my paintings, from small metal boxes to large pieces. I produced three metal artworks thanks to Covid-19. It was a completely new experience for me, being the first time that I used metal in my paintings. I discovered that this material gives strong, expressive effects due to the rigidity of the raw material and its old rusty colour. Metal has beautiful effects that cannot be

recreated with colours. I also used to manipulate the edges of the boxes to form patterns and lines in the painting, which makes me feel the aesthetic texture and stimulates my creativity and love for the artwork. In other times, I used colours with metal as well, but in a very simple way. I also tended to work outside the traditional norm and began to loosen and spread the hay and straw, inserting them as floors with acrylic colours, as well as using the collage technique in different ways and with a certain density. Consequently, I discovered that this method gives exciting aesthetic effects.

I think that Palestinian art is flourishing at the moment, and I also feel that this fits in a smooth and logical way with the development in arts around the world; and despite our presence in a small confined country with a small population, and the short history of the besieged Palestinian art movement, Palestinian artists are fully aware of what is happening in the world in the field of contemporary visual arts.



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1- Nabil Anani, Racism, 2020.  
Acrylic on canvas,  
104 x 124 cm. Courtesy of Zawyeh  
Gallery.

2- Nabil Anani, Olive Groves #6,  
2020. Mixed media on canvas,  
100 x 100 cm. Courtesy of Zawyeh  
Gallery.