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Ansamed

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Art: Katanani, telling refugee stories with barbed wire

From Sabra to Rome: Palestinian artist launches message of hope

22 September, 20:00

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[\(javascript:nextImage\(\)\)](#) 'Tree' by Abdul Rahman Katanani

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ROME - As a child, Palestinian artist Abdul Rahman Katanani never imagined he would be able to leave the Sabra refugee camp in Lebanon.

These days, his works of art travel all around the world and thanks to his sculptures he is able to tell the stories of life in refugee camps, the experiences of Palestinians and the millions of people who live in segregation.

Through his installations, made up of barbed wire, wood and plastic collected in Sabra, one of the twelve refugee camps in Lebanon, he has risen to worldwide fame, exhibiting his art in London, Paris, Dubai, Brussels, and now Italy for the first time. His works are valued by Christie's and Sotheby's at around 25,000-35,000 pounds, but he remains humble despite his success.

"Art has become my visa for leaving the Lebanese refugee camp in which I work," he said in an interview with ANSA on the sidelines of a news conference organised by the Italian Senate.

Born in 1983, a year after the massacre of about 2,000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps by Lebanese Christian militias allied to Israel, Katanani has never seen Palestine, but says he aims to establish his Palestinian identity through his artworks.

His family come from a small village near Jaffa and he is hopeful they will be able to return one day.

"My message is of hope, aside from a cry of suffering," he said, adding that he has become an example for other young people in the camps.

"I show that by working you can become something different and getting out of the camp becomes possible," he said.

"Culture is a means through which one can manage to keep one's identity alive," said Palestine's ambassador to Italy, Mai Alkaila. "While not having been able to enter the territories, Katanani honors this identity through his work." (ANSAMed).

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