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Farewell Green - Ali Jabbar

French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, uses a metaphor to describe the self, where the self is compared to a home in all its corners and extensions. He believes that the home is like a stage that is used to portray visions, as it allows one to be at comfort with one's thoughts and their formation. Each part of the home reflects a level of human consciousness, semi-consciousness, or even sub consciousness, as the home is a human creation and refuge for human ideas in addition to being a place for pleasure and comfort. On the other hand, Freud highlights sub consciousness as the master of the self and the home.

The ancient idea of home that man created was first led by fear; this enabled him to hide from danger; then it developed beyond that to become a place for relaxation. With familiarity, home became a place to perform all domestic activities under a safe roof. Furthermore, the concept grew with time to merely become synonymous with a "comfortable sofa", as Scandinavians call it.

It is this idea of seeking home that led us all to go back to our homeland in pursuit of our past and memories. Yet, upon stepping on the threshold of what we thought was home, we were all taken aback in awe except for one; for he was traumatized. That one man was Delair Saad Shaker, who found no key in his pocket to open his father's old home; the only key he had was one from memory's pocket and he hesitated to open the door of the past with it in

fear of what he will find.

The dark silence of the present seemed to mismatch the bright and lively spirit that roamed in this home as he was growing up, where he was raised to hear discussions on the latest artistic achievements and conversations on aesthetics. These shaped his consciousness and sub consciousness throughout his childhood, youth and adulthood. Moreover, the corner of his father's workshop, which embraced the muddy pottery stool, is where his little hands learned to shape his first works of art, from materials, history and ceramic ovens that honed Shaker's artistic abilities under his father's close and caring supervision.

What is it that drives us to go back to such places and memories? What secret lay behind those motives? And what is it that forces us to cross long distances in pursuit of the past? Airplanes, trains, cars, ships seem to lead to square and rectangular little shapes that disappeared perhaps, as did the roads that led to these places. Apparently changed paths have become crammed with steel helmets. The horizon appears dusty; stale air is filled with stagnant fumes; home's threshold is smaller, abandoned, lifeless. The key may open the door; yet may invite nothingness as well.

An inner feel shoves green aside, senses terror when sight falls on traces of military footsteps that have violated carpets and spread fear in the air and deemed memories ominous. But some paintings are still hanging on the walls. Paintings on the walls? "I have seen paintings on the walls of southern churches. Blood stains taint their surroundings, and that is how the paintings have lost their impact." (André Malraux – Anti-Memoirs)

Such a traumatic experience opened the inner eye for Shaker to view the world differently. As the idea of homeland collapsed, and our artist felt threatened by the extinguishing light of his memory of home, this charged him with renewed energy to express the home from a divergent perspective, as he attempted to reconstruct it in an artistic, rather more intentional, and more knowledgeable manner than before, revealing secrets of the world in this process. In his previous works- Past and Present, Explosion, and Scattered Memories- the color green was prevalent despite the violent and tragic force he used to express his feel of the world, even in his struggling and sharp harmonic employment of it combined with red and black.

Although these works contained obtrusive tips of nails on their surfaces, the severe harshness of his artistic expression was subdued by the use of green, where memories in *The Old Days* conveyed a mild romanticism as if one is looking at a fertile river from above, which gave an overwhelming sensation of an ornamented atmosphere through the main construction of this work that utilized printed, colorful pieces of cloth.

In his new artwork, Shaker uses a similar technique employing nails, wood, and printed cloth, yet he adds many wires and thread that imply old construction tools which preceded new technologies. Threads assisted ancient man to establish his home, since he used thread and nails to line borders of his spontaneously growing process of building, as if laying down blueprint foundations. Yet Shaker is able to maintain focus in his work and intended expression as he begins construction at one point and captures his whole vision of location; at the heart of his art piece he implants the self and reveals its original shaping. Shaker seems to virtually lay down the foundations of a home he sees in reality and/or in his memory that is surrounded with arch-shaped ceilings borrowed from places he has visited while abroad. All these blueprints dominate his artwork while the surrounding atmosphere appears governed by a sense of indifference: a virtual sky, land, sea, and frame.

At a certain point we are under the illusion that his construction represents the whole world. However, it is the center of the surfaces of his work where incidents take place, memories cascade, and questions grow: a house is built, another torn down in a blotch of burnt blackness. Sorrow seems to govern his arrangement of the atmosphere, ironically using fun, colorful pieces of cloth. Once having constructed his wilting home of memories, Shaker shocks us with a sudden desire for newness, and paints a bridge similar to that of San Francisco, yet it is broken, sulking in the midst of his work leading nowhere. And a number of bridges flood under a constraining arched ceiling of his home.

Intently looking into his painting, a person is kneeling at the center while the surrounding place feels shaky due to an explosion, conveying a sense of nothingness. This anonymous persona is featureless; there are no pictures on the walls, nor are there giggles on the stairs as the North wind moans. On the contrary, the stairway merges with the alien bridge as they

appear to symbolize the beginning of a shaky road that leads to this virtual home.

His work reveals the emptiness such a shock has created, as Shaker's memory of home portrays his absented self. There is emptiness in terms of time, as if carrying the expectations of catastrophe or the moments needed to evade the place. Moreover, an alignment of keys seems to symbolize confusion and fear from falling into an abhorring trap of barbarism.

Shaker is able to capture these visual effects in his surface, making use of the experiences of Iraqi artists such as Shaker Hassan, Mohammad Mohriddeen, Rafi' Al-Nasiri, Dia' Azzawi, Sa'ed Shaker, and Ali Taleb. However, he adds a light mood, despite his attempt to conceal it this time, to create an effective impact from his own painful experience. To do this, Shaker uses expensive pieces of cloth to modernize this overall experience in a skillful manner.

Shaker's technique with his art mediums gives him freedom to shape meaning in his own abstract style that somewhat involves a mixture of pop art and analytical cubism that leads to modern and mature pieces. From a distance, his work can be considered abstract art that creates pure visual harmony, yet when looking closely, one finds two complementary worlds governed by a modern outlook that is thought provoking.

Delair Shaker's recent works are a new stage in his artistic journey; they are open to the world and influenced by its intellectual and visual stimuli as they are the result of an accumulation of experiences. Throughout his artistic experience, Shaker demonstrates steady strands of growth, displaying a high degree of balance and maturity as well as a great and gradually growing talent.

I am quite confident that Shaker will accomplish great deeds as he pursues his artistic experiences and techniques. For he was raised by a great artist, and his eyes were trained to see significant shapes and figures since childhood. Shaker seems to be one among few of the sons of famous artists who inherited his father's talent and honed it to carry on his journey and continue to pave the way for Iraqi art. His new collection definitely stands witness to an openness to world trends in art in addition to preserving a cultural heritage.

I believe Shaker's recent artworks express an artistic protest to all that violated his personal

history as a human being. Yet, how long will this sadness and anger persist? I am sure Shaker will soon move on to new worlds of inspiration as he takes upon himself the mission of expressing humane issues in his artwork wherever existing. Perhaps Shaker will one day rebel against his steady steps and take up the challenge to reveal a different self, other than the one we know; a self shaped by global notions existing in the world of art now.

Ali Jabbar / London- 2012

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