



CULTURE, LISTINGS, VISUAL ARTS

“Despite”: portrait of a conflict

December 2, 2012 14:33 by [The Prisma](#)

From 7 December, a dozen Palestinian artists will exhibit work based on the reality of daily life in their native country under this banner.

The competition features the work of seventeen Palestinian artists and will show how art can be an opportunity to expose the pain experienced in the country, without the need for voice or photography.

Organised by Nicola Gray and Canteen Arts' Aser El Saqqa, the exhibition's objective is to construct and foster artistic relationships between Europe and the Arab world by allowing young artists the chance to display their work.



"This is a unique opportunity for me. This is my first show in London and the first time I've participated in a collective exhibition with my contemporaries from and outside of Palestine," comments Hanan Zu'bi, one of the artists involved.

His work, like that of the other Palestinian artists, reflects the duality and juxtaposition of a world where there is as much suffering as there is joy.

As such, one finds in the exhibition desolate images of humiliation to ideas quite contradictory to that.

This is just the case with "Four Faces" by Mohamed



Jaha, which depicts a clown dressed in military clothing beside a dog and two people whose faces are covered by a mask; four faces of one same reality.

Over the last few years, the Gaza art scene has reached a new level of expression, with art becoming a refuge for those living in the shadow of Israeli asylum which allows that resistance spirit to survive.

For example, Dina Matar has developed a style which touches on the puerile in order to show this sad reality from a different perspective, one full of hope and optimism where the dark, lifeless tones are traded in for bright, cheerful colours.

At the other end of the spectrum, the works of Jawad al Malhi are closely linked to personal memories of his childhood.

Through these, he seeks to produce alternative representations of society and shows clearly how Jerusalem is turned upside down turns by way of its social classes, ideologies and mortality.



The political context of another artist, Mohammed Musallam, has led him to link art with the thoughts and dreams of the human, oppressed by the current situation in Gaza. As he states on his website, freedom in art is a way of making up for the fact he cannot change reality.

"Despite" features work from Nidal Abu Oun, Mohammed Joha, Shareef Sarhan, Mohamed Al Hawajri, Dina Mattar, Raed Issa, Mohamed Abusal, Jawad Al Malhi, Nabil Anani, Tayseer Barakat, Rana Bishara, Mohammed Musallam, Muzayan Rima, Hosni Radwan, Majed Shala, y Hani Zurob. All of their work could be categorised as modernist.

The exhibition is on at Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Road, London, until 28 December. For more information go to www.artscanteen.com and www.richmix.org.uk.



(Translated by Rachel Eadie – Email: racheleadie@hotmail.com)

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