

PUT IT IN A TIN | MY CITY-WALL

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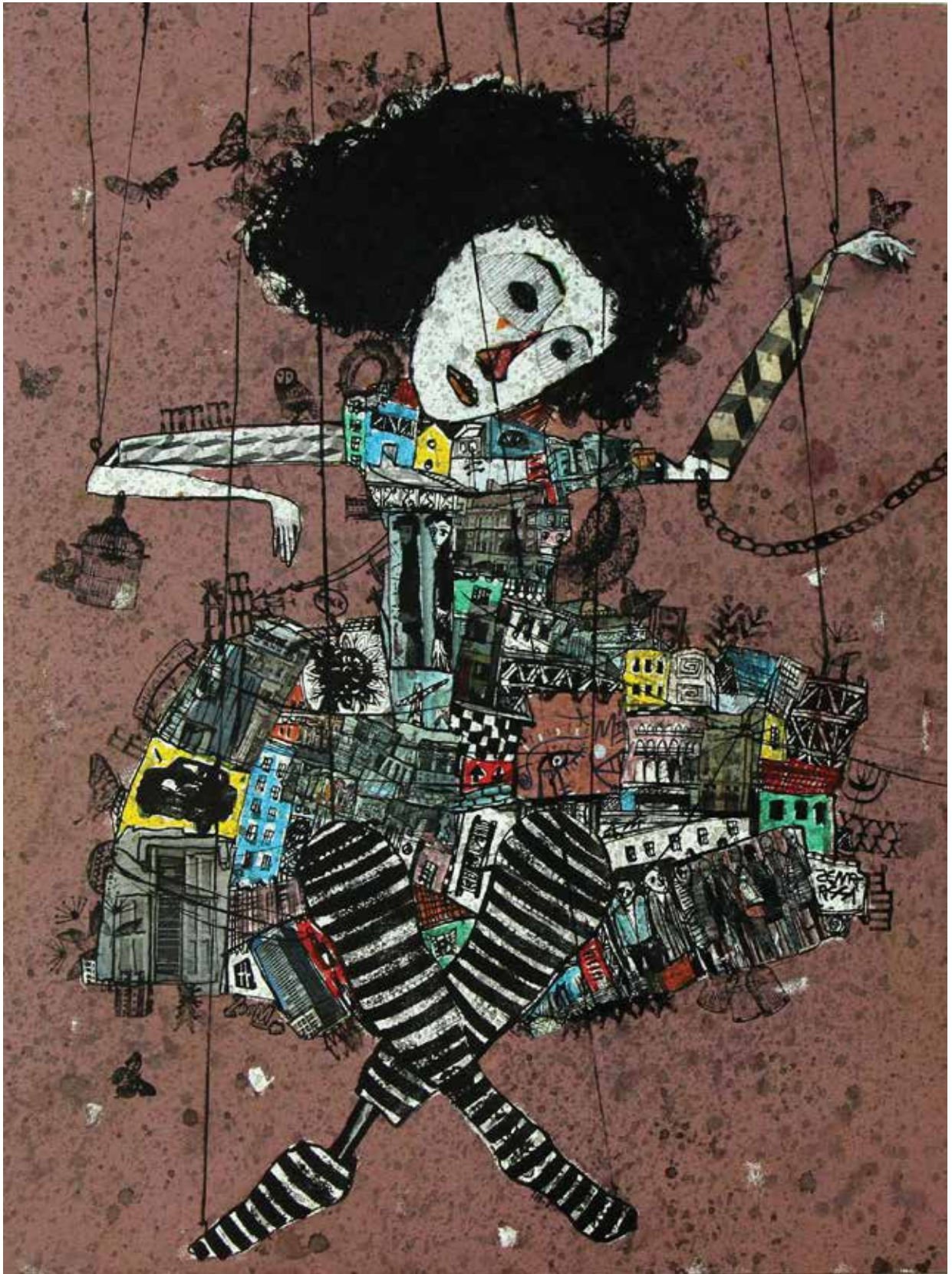
ARTSAWA | DIFC
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PUT IT IN A TIN | MY CITY-WALL

Zena Assi moved from Lebanon to the UK in 2014. These series include her latest artworks produced in her London studio. The artworks draw inspiration from the emotional, social and cultural baggage we carry with us when we move from an environment to another. Facing a new culture makes you question your own. It tackles the identity issue and all the conflicts we are facing when we are rewriting our own story and narrative from tainted memories.

The first series, 'PUT IT IN A TIN', is a collection of big bouquets' paintings. The canvas itself is treated as a carpet, laid on the floor for months and months. It witnesses footsteps and dust, used as a draft of rough ideas, a palette cleaner or a coffee holder... When time takes its hold on it, Zena stretches the canvas on a wooden frame and images start to appear through the layers of paint, like shadowy memories emerging from the past. The canvas, now, has its own story to tell and she only has to outline its imageries to be visible to the naked eye. Finally, Zena takes this bouquet and does what her grandmother did before her, and her mother before her, she puts it in a tin, so that the iron would sink into the soil and make the plants grow even stronger...

The second series, 'MY CITY-WALL', reflects the relations and conflicts between the refugees/migrants and the cities they are aiming to get to. Through her work, for more than a decade now, she has been trying to visually translate the city life of our modern society. Zena believes that the structures we build, the architecture language we adopt, and the borders we draw, are all witnesses of our ideologies in one moment in time. They are the dialect history uses to write itself with. And now, unfortunately, we are witnessing the rise of walls again...



BUTTERFLIES IN MY STOMACH
2016
Mixed Media on Wood
61 x 46 x 4 cm

ZENA ASSI

Born in Lebanon, in 1974, Zena Assi lives and works between Beirut and London.

Zena graduated with honors from l'Academie Libanaise des Beaux Arts (ALBA), worked in advertising and taught in different universities.

Her contemporary work on canvas draws inspiration from the relations and conflicts between the individual and his spatial environment, society and its surroundings. Her pieces are punctuated by strong visual references to her native Beirut and the predicament of its citizens.

Zena uses various supports and mediums to document and explore the cultural and social changes of her country. Her work takes shape in installation, animation, sculpture, and mainly paintings on canvas and replicates the tumult, angst and cacophony that everyday life in the city is fraught with. Zena's use of pallid colors, jagged angular outlines and intricate layering, imbues inanimate objects, landscapes, and buildings with the emotional burdens of their inhabitants.

Themes that are central to her vision include present-day issues related to countries in the Middle East as they battle with internal strife and civilian unrest.

Many of her pieces were repeatedly shown in different international auction houses (Christie's Dubai, Sotheby's London, and Bonhams London) and are part of various public as well as private collections.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 "Put it in a Tin | My City-Wall", ARTSAWA, Dubai, UAE
 - 2016 "My City Shore", ARTSAWA, Dubai, UAE
 - 2014 "Framing My City", Alwane Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2013 "Bug Soldiers", ARTSAWA, Dubai, UAE
 - 2012 "Still Nature", ARTSAWA, Dubai, UAE
 - 2011 "Omissions Selectives", Alwane Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2010 "Cityphilia", Albareh Gallery, Manama, Bahrain
 - 2010 "Mass Movement", ARTSAWA, Dubai, UAE
 - 2009 "Public Space", ARTSAWA, Dubai, UAE
 - 2009 "Un peu de Beyrouth", Alwane Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2008 "Cite et Citadins", Alwane Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
- ### GROUP EXHIBITIONS
- 2017 57th La Biennale di Venezia, Grenada Pavilion**
 - 2017 The London Art Biennale, Chelsea Old Town, London, UK
 - 2017 The Lynn Painter-Stainers Prize, London, UK
 - 2017 The Pastel Society's 118th Annual Exhibition, Mall Galleries, London, UK
 - 2016 The Thames, the artery of London, London, UK
 - 2016 Portrait in April, Saatchi Gallery On Screen, London, UK
 - 2015 Start Auction, Paddle 8
 - 2014 Art14 London Fair, Olympia, Kensington, London, UK
 - 2013 Abu Dhabi Art Fair, Abu Dhabi, UAE
 - 2013 Syri-Arts Auction, Beirut Exhibition Center, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2013 Art13 London Fair, Olympia, Kensington, London, UK
 - 2013 Pullman Art Night, Dubai, UAE
 - 2013 ArtNight special Edition- DIFC, ARTSAWA, Dubai, UAE
 - 2013 Journey through our heritage, Beirut Exhibition Center, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2013 Atfal Souriyah, Mark Hachem, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2012 OverTure, Miami Art fair, Miami, USA
 - 2012 Dress Code Project, Contemporary Art Platform "CAP" Kuwait
 - 2012 The Lebanese Creations 1959, 2012, Espace Claude Lemand, Paris, France
 - 2012 XXXI salon d'Automne Musée Surssock , Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2011 Subtitled, Royal College of Art, London, UK
 - 2011 Acquired by the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
 - 2011 XXX Salon d'Automne Musée Surssock - Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2011 Shubbak , London, UK
 - 2011 Menasart Fair, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2011 Abu Dhabi Art Fair, Abu Dhabi, UAE
 - 2011 Rebirth, Beirut Exhibition Center, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2010 XXII Biennale of Cairo, Cairo, Egypt
 - 2010 Zoom, Miami, USA
 - 2010 Contemparabia, Dome, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2009 Prize: BMW, mini cooper's 50th anniversary, 'best design for the Middle East'
 - 2009 Abu Dhabi Art Fair, Abu Dhabi, UAE
 - 2009 Prize: mention spéciale du jury XXIX salon d'automne Musée Surssock, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2008 Regards d'artistes II, Alwane Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2008 Creative Expressions, Art Sawa, Dubai, UAE
 - 2008 Art Paris Abu Dhabi art fair, Abu Dhabi, UAE
 - 2008 Opening, ARTSAWA, Dubai , UAE
 - 2008 XXVIII Salon d'Automne, Musée Surssock, Lebanon
 - 2006 Collective Exhibition, Alwane Gallery , Beirut, Lebanon
 - 2006 XXVII Salon d'Automne, Musée Surssock, Lebanon
 - 2005 XXVI Salon d'Automne, Musée Surssock , Lebanon





PUT IT IN A HEINZ TOMATO KETCHUP TIN
2017
Mixed Media on Canvas
150 x 150 cm



PUT IT IN A TWININGS QUEEN'S MARY TEA TIN
2017
Mixed Media on Canvas
150 x 150 cm



PUT IT IN A COSTA ESPRESSO TIN
2017
Mixed Media on Canvas
150 x 150 cm



PUT IT IN A STARBUCKS COFFEE CUP
2017
Mixed Media on Canvas
150 x 150 cm



(1) RICOCHETS 1
(2) RICOCHETS 2
2016
Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Canvas
170 x 70 cm (each)



(1) IRON AND STEEL WILL BEND AND BOW
(2) WOOD AND CLAY WILL WASH AWAY
(3) BRICKS AND MORTAR WILL NOT STAY
2016
Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Canvas
170 x 70 cm (each)



RICOCHETS 1

2016

Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Canvas

170 x 70 cm



RICOCHETS 2
2016
Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Canvas
170 x 70 cm



IRON AND STEEL WILL BEND AND BOW
2016
Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Canvas
170 x 70 cm



WOOD AND CLAY WILL WASH AWAY
2016
Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Canvas
170 x 70 cm



BRIDGES OVER THE CITY

2016

Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Wood

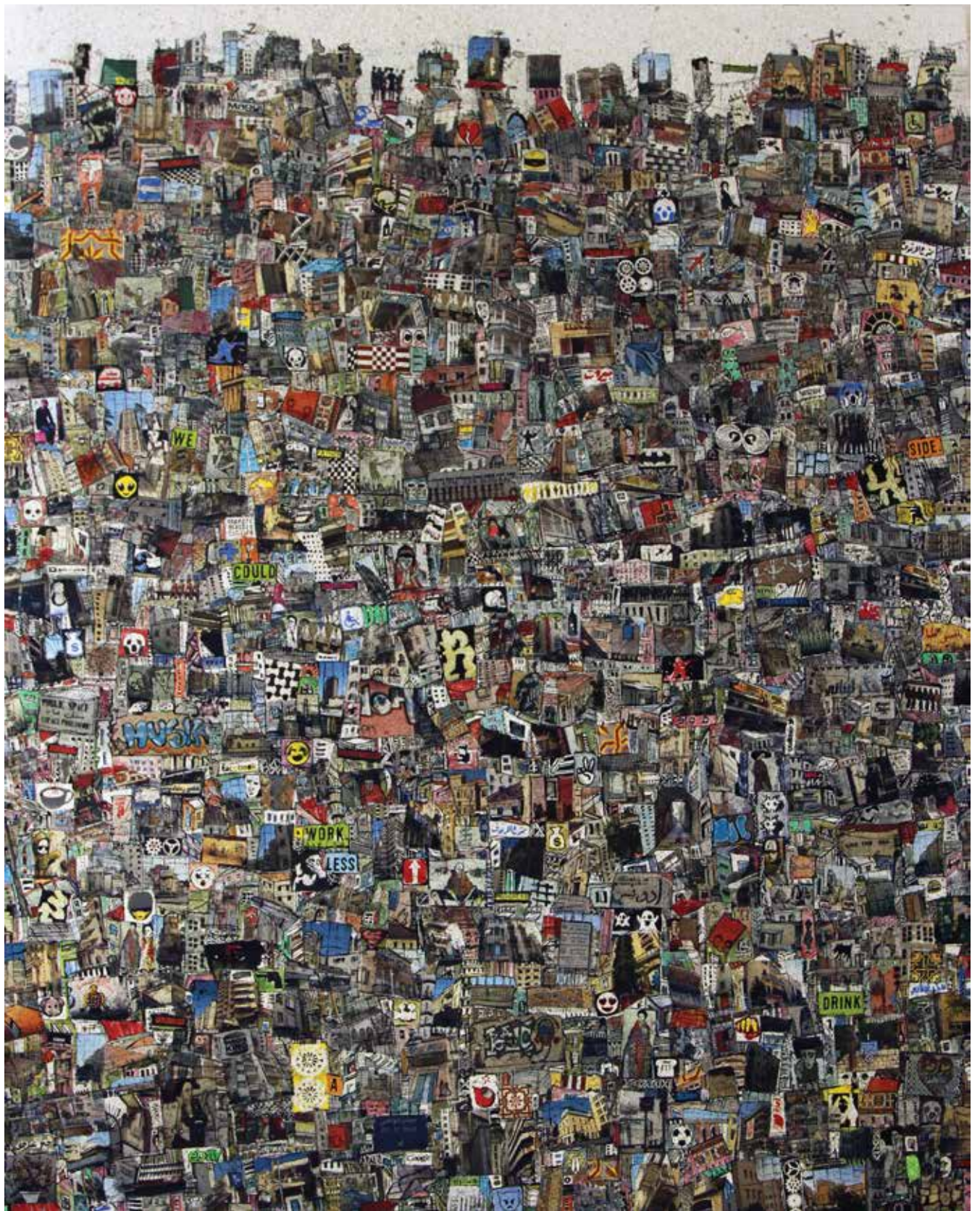
61 x 46 x 4 cm



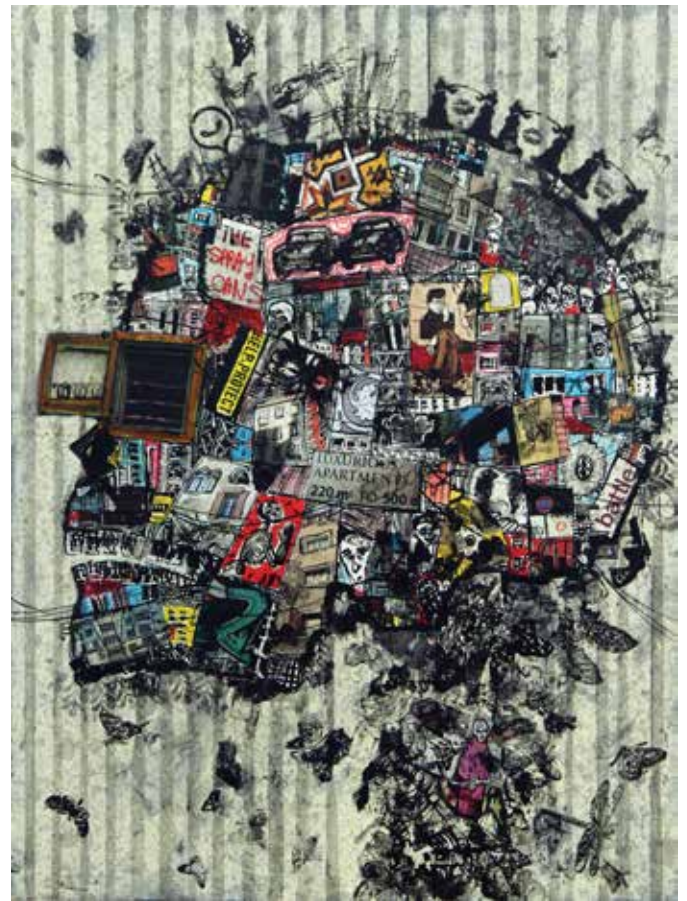
BRICKS AND MORTAR WILL NOT STAY
2016
Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Canvas
170 x 70 cm

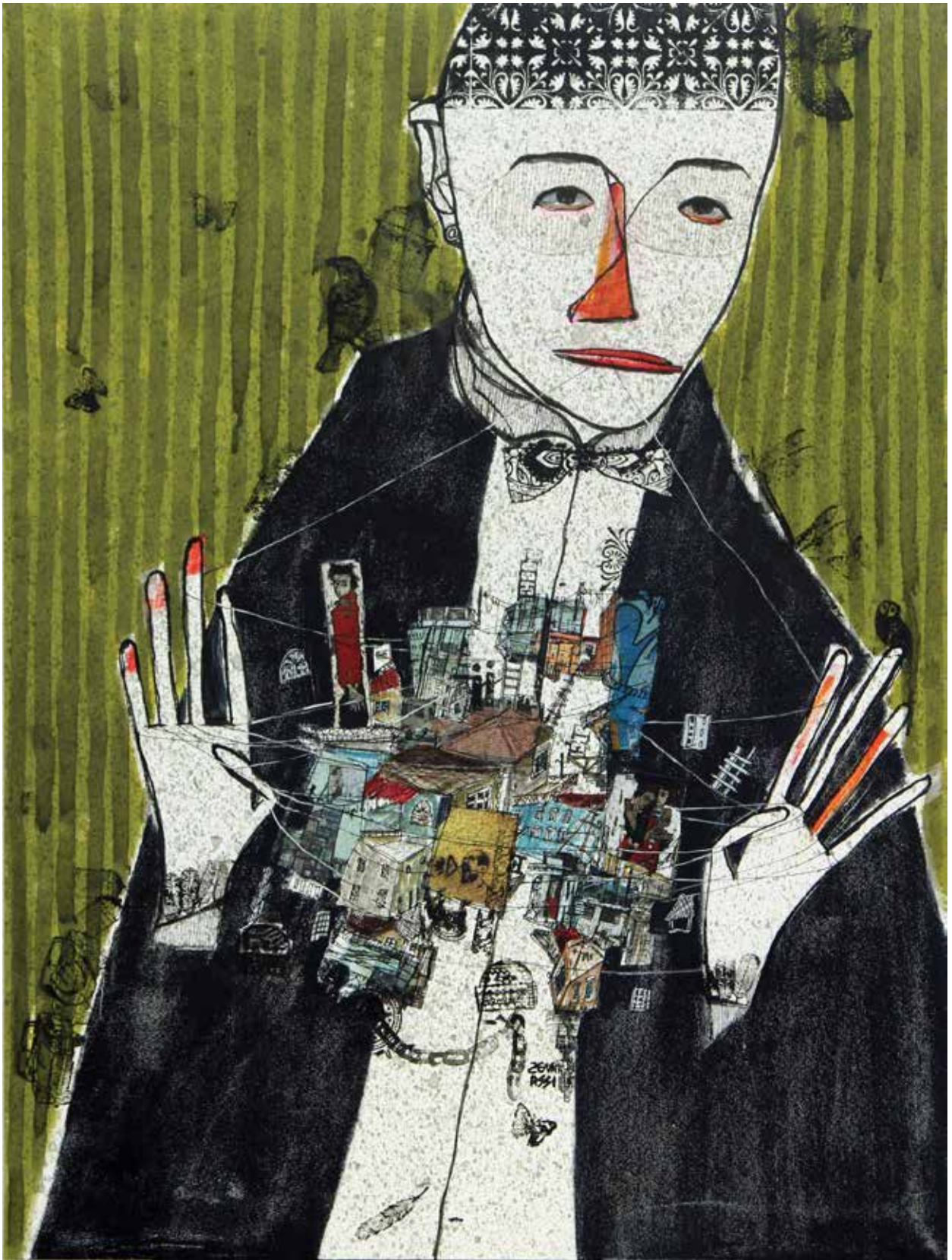


CITY WALL 1 & 2
2016
Mixed Media on Canvas
220 x 180 cm (each)



(1) I AM THE KING OF THE WORLD 1
(2) I AM THE KING OF THE WORLD 2
(3) RED TANK
(4) SHIPWRECK
2016
Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Wood
61 x 46 x 4 cm (each)



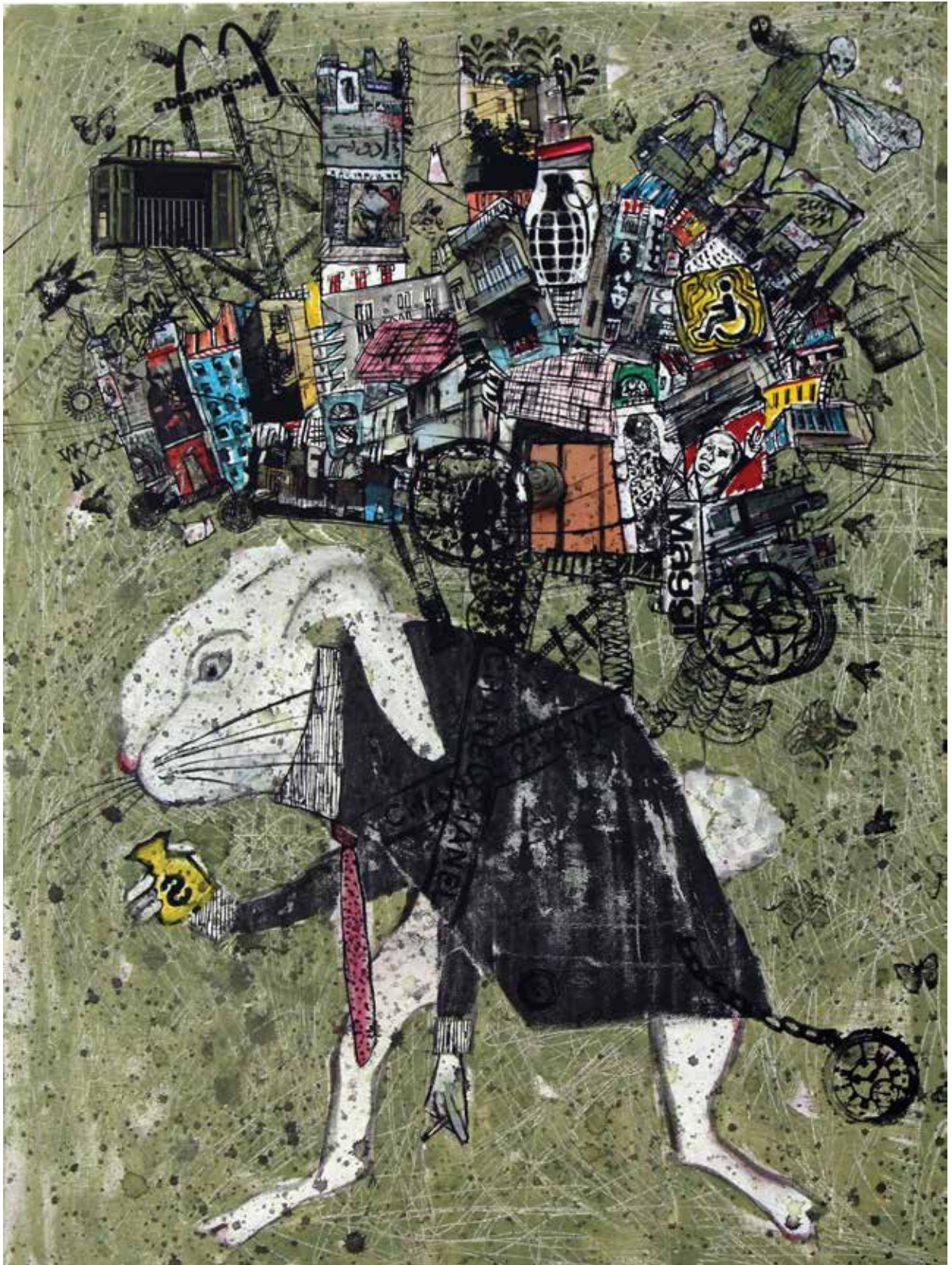


PULLING THE STRINGS

2016

Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Wood

61 x 46 x 4 cm



LATE LATE LATE

2016

Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Wood

61 x 46 x 4 cm



THE FLY

2016

Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Wood

61 x 46 x 4 cm

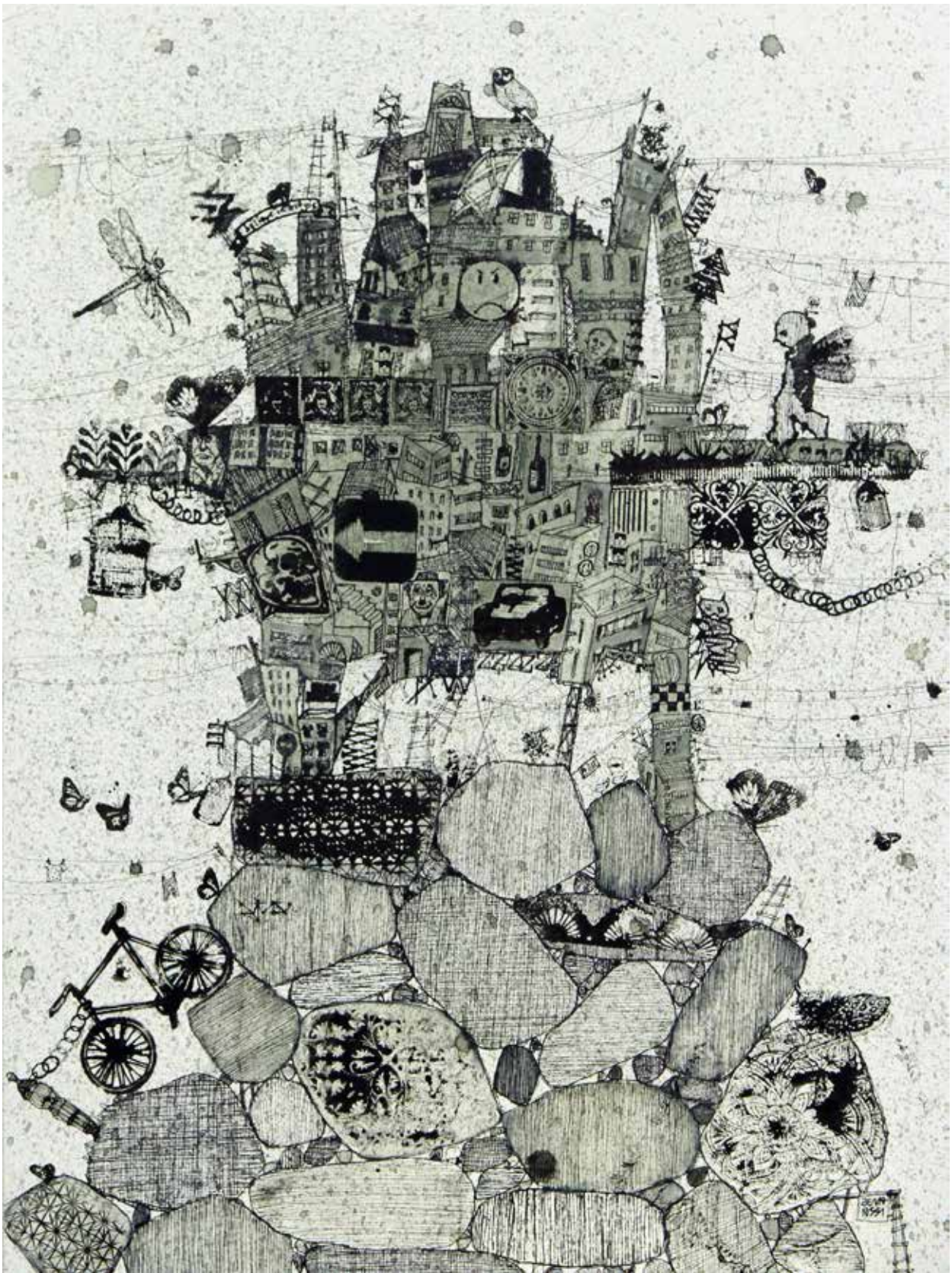


LE PASSEUR

2016

Mixed Media & Paper Collage on Wood

61 x 46 x 4 cm



MY CITY ON THE HILL
2016
Mixed Media on Wood
61 x 46 x 4 cm (each)



UNDER THE TREE
2016
Mixed Media on Wood
61 x 46 x 4 cm (each)

Questions & Answers

How were you first exposed to art?

I encountered art through travelling. I started discovering new cultures and different countries since the age of 11, travelling on buses and sleeping in tents every single summer. I fell under the spell of the arts when I first stepped into the Louvre. And since I am not good at anything other than being an artist, I am glad I did.

Tell us about your educational background as well as your personal background.

I was born in Lebanon, I hold a master degree in advertising from ALBA (Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts) University in Beirut. I worked in Saatchi & Saatchi for a couple of years, then taught in different universities. For the past 3 years, I have been living and working in London.

What was your first exhibition and where?

I exhibited for the first time in the Salon d'Automne of the Sursock Museum in Beirut, in 2005.

What is the inspiration behind your work?

The present time & its current issues.

What are the messages you convey through your art?

No messages whatsoever. Just statements.

Tell us about this show.

These are my latest pieces since I moved to London. They tackle the identity issue and all the conflicts we are facing when we are rewriting our own story and narrative from tainted memories.

How do you select the works for an exhibition?

It is a very chaotic process. I keep filtering and alternating till the end.

How do you envision your future artistic practice and influence?

I just want to keep on experimenting in my field. I am only interested in the moment.

What is the most spontaneous thing you've ever done?
Sneezing.

What is your theme song?
'Non, je ne regrette rien.' Edith Piaf.

What word in any language do you wish you had invented?
Pain perdu.

Where would you like to live? What is your dream retirement location?
My studio next to the Mediterranean Sea.

What is the first famous quote that comes to your mind?
'We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.' Oscar Wilde

What do you miss about your childhood?
The child part without the hood.

If you could change your name, what would you change it to?
Zena with an i?

How would you describe your handshake in one word?
Manly.

What is the toughest part of your character?
The woman part.

What in the world do you least desire?
Foie Gras.

What do you think is lacking in the world, which if there was more of, would make the world a better place?
Humor and trees.

What do you think people like most about you?
My absence.

Finish this sentence: "Happiness is a thing called..."
Imagination.

