



MOHAMMAD EL RAWAS
COMMENTARIES

My work is a commentary about and record of my emotional and intellectual reactions to circumstances and events, personal or otherwise, happening or prevailing at any given time. Hence the diversity of themes tackled in each work and the cynical and absurd attitude permeating my art.

I do not subject such themes to scrutiny or judgment; major or minor themes are equally valid to me as long as the process of translating and conveying them into a work of art is the same. This process is essentially one of an association of ideas and the juxtaposition of elements.

FOREWORD

MOHAMMAD EL RAWAS - COMMENTARIES

To contemplate a work by Mohammad El Rawas is to embark on a voyage of discovery, across cultures, continents and centuries of artistic endeavour. Invariably eclectic, a Rawas 'construction' is an amalgam of seemingly disconnected visual references, both perplexing and intriguing, and sometimes disturbing.

At first encounter the juxtaposition between the nubile female form and the brash but exquisitely fashioned Japanese Manga cartoon character, now a Rawas signature, is compelling and unsettling. The latent sexuality of the child-woman cartoon creatures, counterpoised by the fresh faced Lolitas who predominate many of the works, inevitably alerts the viewer to the possibility of underlying eroticism. At the same time there is an implication of innocence, and escapism from other more menacing socio-political concerns that are also part of the Rawas oeuvre.

The tension or the compatibility between these contrasting female forms becomes the starting point of the journey that is as diverse as it is challenging. Peeling away the layers of meaning is vexing yet satisfying. As much as these extraordinary three-D assemblages are replete with clues and signposts, they somehow defy interpretation, simultaneously triggering insecurity while demanding further scrutiny. How confident can we be in deconstructing these magnificent landscapes? How satisfied can we be with our interpretation? Does it matter?

It is often the time-travelling Mangas who propel us forward even as we linger transfixed by the profuse imagery. Contemporary sculptures in their own right and integral to the composition, these feisty miniature dominatrices - small but perfectly formed - seem to call the shots. Confronting iconic goddesses like Marilyn, or facing off against the dumfounded Daffy Duck or the laconic Pink Panther, each is a potent messenger, a latter day Hermes with 21st Century attitude, delivering dispatches from the mind of the artist. Those dispatches include an attachment to home and belonging, abhorrence of war and displacement, and detestation of duplicity and manipulation consistently expressed through sardonic humour.

Rawas' sense of the absurd and his own ambivalence as to how and why each piece develops is reason enough for the viewer to take courage while plotting these microcosmic worlds. If the artist himself accepts that the journey can take many forms - and he does - then certainly the viewer is free to chart a new path, sifting through evidence and navigating the space before arriving at journey's end.

In **Commentaries**, Rawas generously provides us with insight into the creative process. Shifting from one thought to another, one 'linkage' to the next, he invites us to become privy to the inspirational components from which he fashions his multifarious domains. They are as prolific as they are curious.

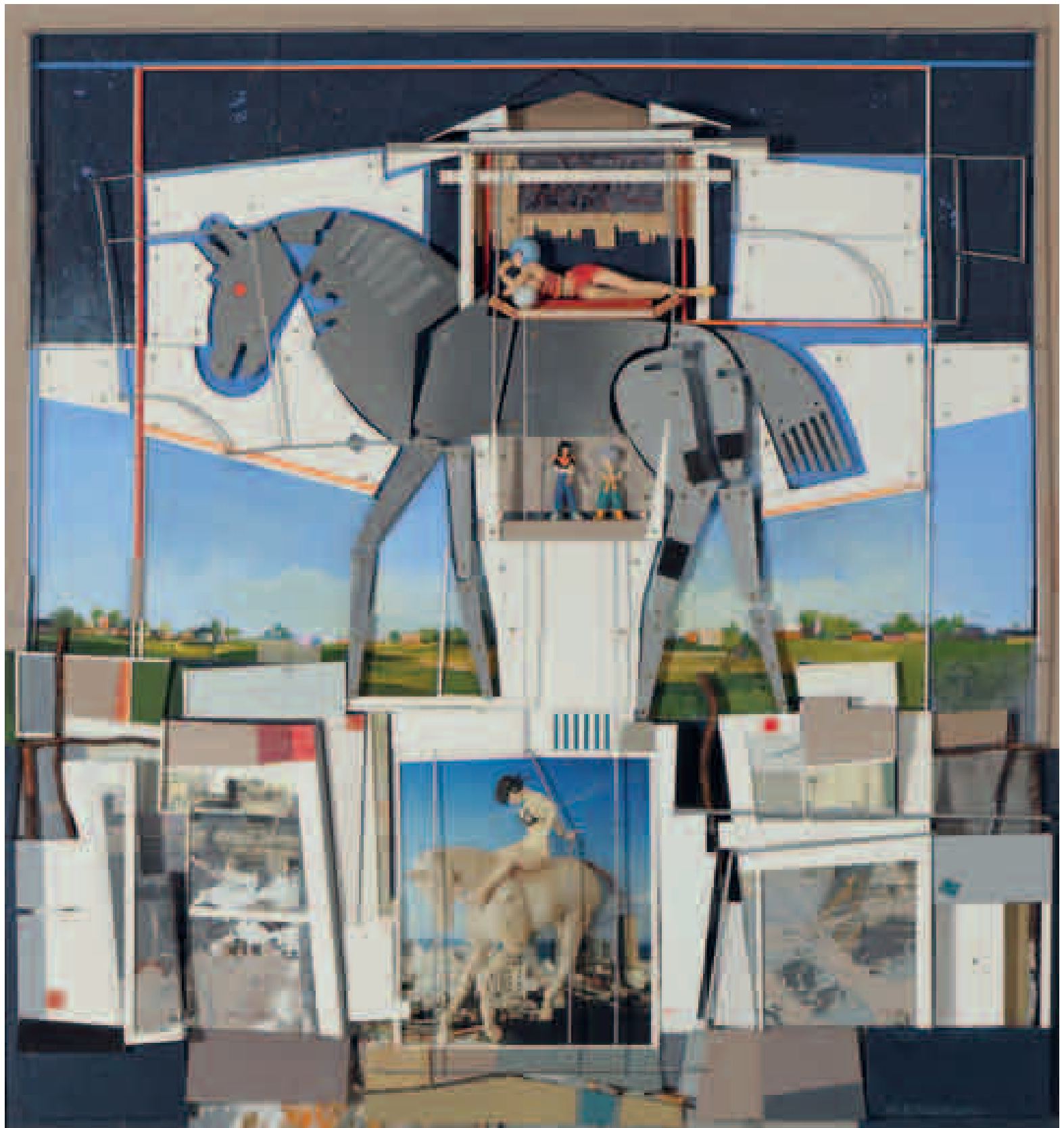
None of this, however, reflects the agonizing weeks of construction and destruction that take place; the dissatisfaction and at times sheer despair that go into the making and remaking of each piece. During **Rebirth**, a recent exhibition in Beirut, Rawas documented the dismantling and remaking of a finished piece to produce a completely new and appreciatively different work. He readily admits to being bewildered by the way each piece takes on its own momentum.

Days of bemusement and hours of painstaking self-examination only finish when the artist is no longer distressed by the work, but nor is he fully reconciled with it. Thereafter the journey begins again.

Maureen Ali
Beirut - 2012

A Howdah on Trojan Horse, 2012

Oil, acrylic, encaustic, digital print, aluminum, copper, balsa wood,
Salix branches, plastic figurines and Papyrus paper on plywood panel.
72 x 67.5 x 5 cm.

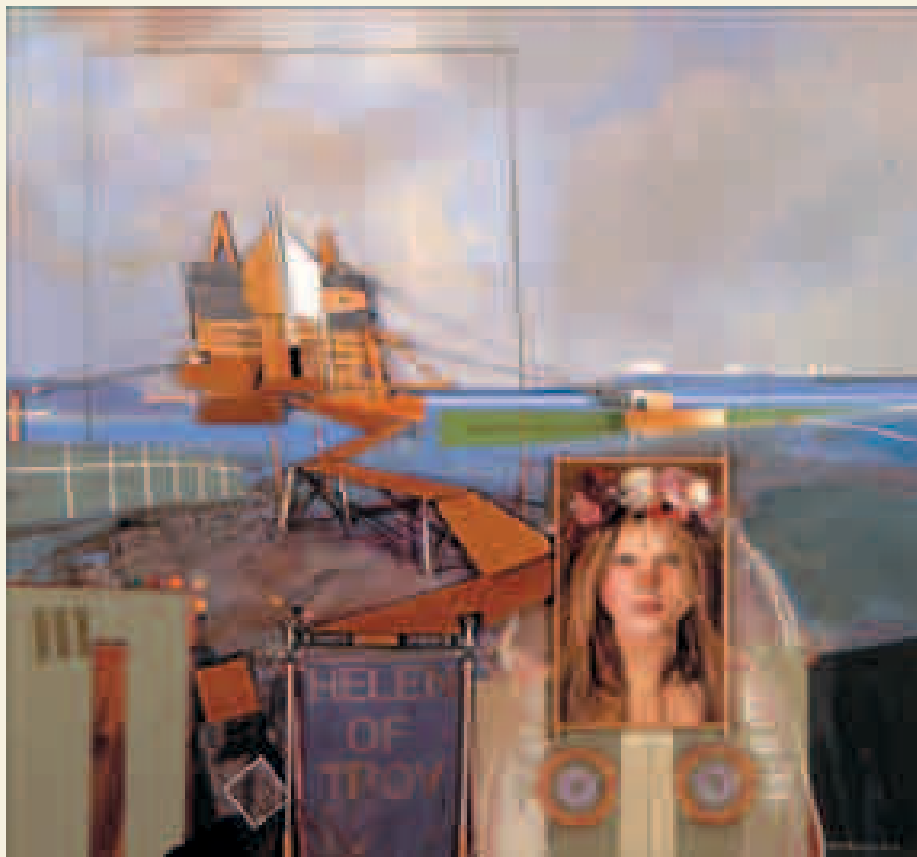


Commentaries:

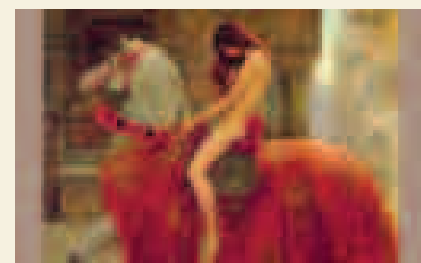
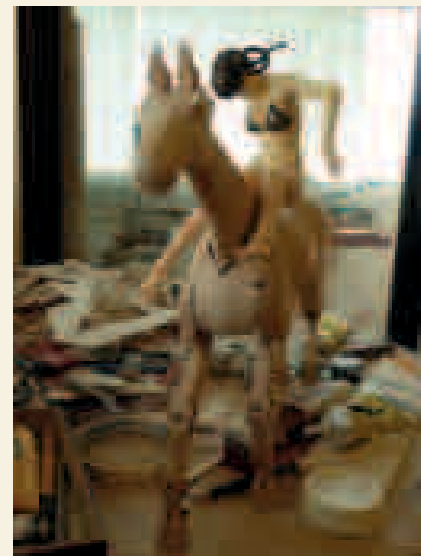
A Howdah on Trojan Horse, 2012

I had a whim to draw a horse whose body is composed of detached flat metallic pieces. After I had the drawing Laser-cut into aluminum, it was laid aside for months until I came up one day with the theme of a gigantic horse crossing atop the buildings in a city.

*While working on this painting, the horse became indubitably associated with the Trojan horse and since I had painted in 2000 a work entitled “**Helen of Troy**”, why not the Trojan Horse this time?*



M. El Rawas, Helen of Troy, 2000, Mixed Media and Assemblage on Plywood panel, 64 x 69 x 4 cm.

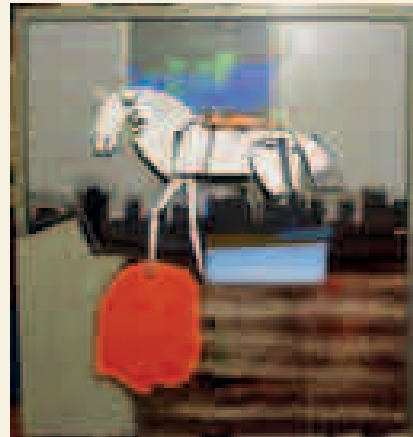


John Collier, Lady Godiva ca. 1897

The horse looked to me incomplete without a rider, and definitely a female rider. This brought to mind the painting of Lady Godiva by John Collier ca. 1897. So I tried to compose the scene in my studio by placing a figurine in bikini swimsuit on top of a wooden horse and then taking a photo of it. I used as a backdrop a photograph of a panoramic scene of Beirut that I shot from the rooftop of the building where I live.

The theme of a nude female on a horse seemed déjà vu. So I replaced the figurine with another one casually dressed and biting on a lemon instead of an apple. This in turn reminded me of an earlier painting of mine from 1989, entitled "Why an apple not a pear".

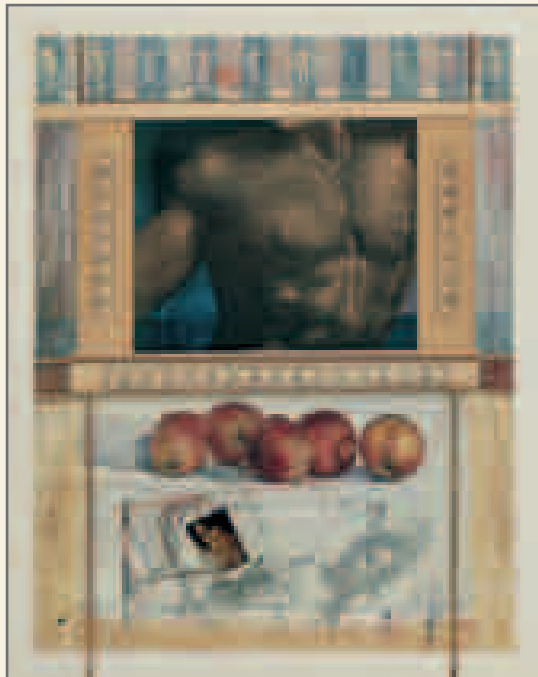
The new figurine is disproportional to the horse, but this time she is reclining on the horse's back which adds to the allure of capturing not only the compelling bait of the horse but its rider as well! 😊



1



2



M. El Rawas, Why an Apple Not a Pear, 1989, 78 x 63 x 4 cm.



3



4

I however wanted to add an aura of Oriental mystery to the scene which led to building a Howdah-like construction to accommodate the figurine on the back of the horse with an extended platform for her namby-pamby bodyguards to stand on.

In the process of working on this painting I lost interest in the silhouette of the buildings on the horizon, as well as of the pictures of buildings under the horse's hooves and thus I applied splashes of paint on top of the buildings and replaced the earlier Beirut panorama with an imaginary, cartoonish landscape.

The Downfall of the Regime, 2011

Oil, acrylic, encaustic, digital print, aluminum, copper, balsa wood, dried papyrus plant, resin and plastic figurines on masonite panel.
150 x 120 x 8 cm.

POISON WANTS THE DOWNFALL OF THE REGIME



Commentaries:

The Downfall of the Regime & Till Death Do Us Unite

Irrespective of the immediate causes of wars between and among individuals, communities or nations, wars always erupt as a result of parties to a conflict becoming totally identified with their own mindset and viewpoint to the exclusion of everything else.

*The following text by Eckhart Tolle from his book "A New Earth" corresponds to my driving thoughts behind **The Downfall of the Regime** and the following painting **Till Death Do Us Unite**.*

(On a collective level, the mind-set "We are right and they are wrong" is particularly deeply entrenched in those parts of the world where conflict between two nations, races, tribes, religions, or ideologies is long-standing, extreme, and endemic. Both sides of the conflict are equally identified with their own perspective, their own "story," that is to say, identified with thought.Both regard themselves as victims and the "other" as evil, and because they have conceptualized and thereby dehumanized the other as the enemy, they can kill and inflict all kinds of violence on the other...Here it becomes obvious that the human ego in its collective aspect as "us" against "them" is even more insane than the "me," the individual ego, although the mechanism is the same.)

In both works, I am trying to envisage the possibility of an individual approaching a situation of conflict while fully conscious of the objective external reality.

The strategy for such a detached attitude could be achieved through distorting the identity of the active players in a war scenario by substituting for the factual opponents those borrowed from remote and irrelevant historical, cultural and geographical sources.

That way, the feeling of belonging or identifying solely one's own self/ego with either party is totally neutralized.

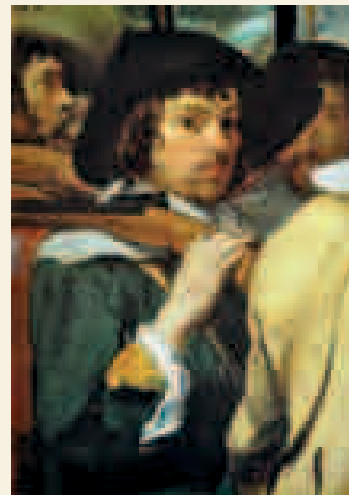
1- The Downfall of the Regime

The painting depicts a conflictual situation inspired by the recent and current events in some Arab countries.

I am quoting the famous slogan of the demonstrators: "The people want the downfall of the regime".



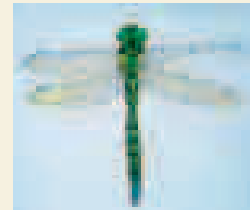
Velazquez, "The Surrender of Breda"



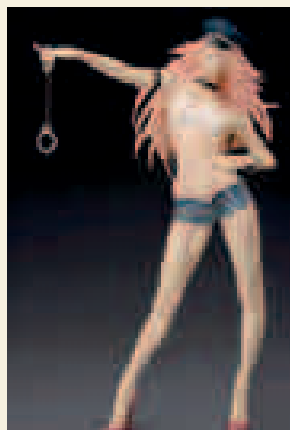
Detail

The "People", are replaced here by the Manga figure "Poison", a group of plastic miniature figures (originally made for use in architectural models) and another little Manga figure flying a fictitious fighter plane in the shape of a dragonfly.

The "Regime authorities" are replaced by Warriors borrowed from a painting by Velazquez, "The Surrender of Breda" 1634-1635, one of Gaddafi's female bodyguards and Donald Duck defending the Presidential palace.



Working drawings of the Dragonfly plane. (Right) Gaddafi's female bodyguard (Below) The dried Papyrus plant and the construction of the presidential palace



Archonia.com » Capcom PVC Figure - Girls Collection Poison

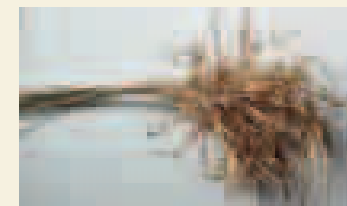
Capcom PVC Figure - Girls Collection Poison

Our Price : EUR 64.17

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Once again, Yamato is proud to present the work of master sculptor Mitumasa yashizawa (REFLECT) to the International audience. Offered here is a stunningly statuesque portrayal of Poison from Capcom's Final Fight. Standing nearly 11", Poison comes complete with metal chains, handcuffs, arm rings, and display base. She's ready for action... are you? available early 2008, this one will take your breath away.

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Till Death Do Us Unite, 2011

Oil, acrylic, digital print, aluminum and copper on canvas.

150 x 170 cm.

1) YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER
IMAGE-ANY LIKENESS OF ANYTHING
THAT IS IN THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH

2) YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF
AN IMAGE OR ANY LIKENESS OF ANYTHING
THAT IS IN THE EARTH OR IN THE HEAVENS

3) YOU SHALL NOT BOW DOWN TO THEM
OR WORSHIP THEM, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD
IS JEALOUS, HE WILL NOT FORGIVE THE
WICKED



2- Till Death Do Us Unite

The two ladies in Roman dress are quoted from 'The Oath of the Horatii' a painting created by Jacques-Louis David in 1784.

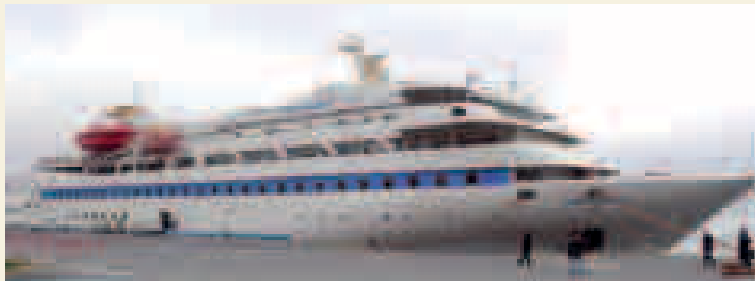
(The painting displays a scene from Roman legend with the Horatii brothers, representing Rome, saluting their loyalty and patriotism before waging war against the Curatii brothers, representing Alba Longa, in order to settle the conflict between the two states. Their mothers and sisters are stricken with fear for the warriors' lives. According to the legend, one of the Horatii sisters was engaged to one of the Curatii brothers. Upon hearing that her brother Publius had killed her beloved, she wept with grief. Seeing her tears, Publius stabbed his sister stating, "So perish any Roman woman who mourns the enemy.) In the context of my painting these two lamenting women could either be both from Gaza or one of them only while the other comes from Israel.*

* Wikipedia



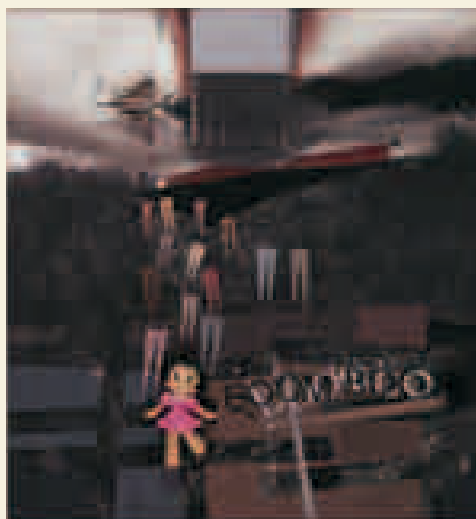
Here again my painting "Till Death Do Us Unite," depicts a conflictual situation inspired by the Arab and Israeli serial wars. A scene of an Israeli air raid on Gaza at the horizon line is placed adjacent to a rendition of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin. The rubble from the destroyed buildings in Gaza is turned into tumbling blocks reminiscent of the blocks in the Berlin memorial.

Between the grieving women on the right and the angry figure of the cartoon character Captain Haddock, representing rage and fury, stands "Uran" a Japanese cartoon Manga figure created by Osamu Tezuka. She is horrified, running towards us while holding a toy ship that is a model representing the Turkish "hope" ship Mavi Marmara which was attacked by the Israelis while attempting to bring aid to Gaza in May 2010.



I used the actual figurine of Uran in a triptych work which I did during the Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006. In the eyes of the Israelis, Mavi Marmara is synonymous with a Nazi battleship or a submarine! That is why the schematic flat aluminum model of an invented submarine has the Nazi flag with the Swastika missing!

Despite the divine call for honesty, truthfulness and peace among mankind as stated in Moses Ten Commandments, wars and fighting will persist in the mind-set humans till death do them unite.



M. El Rawas "Boom Boom", "They are Burning Down my House", "Recreational Kit" 2006, Mixed Media and Assemblage on Cardboard, 26 x 24 x 1.5 cm. each.

Linkage, 2011

Oil, acrylic, encaustic, enamel paint, transfer, balsa wood, aluminum and silver leaf on canvas.
170 x 150 cm.



Commentaries:

LINKAGE

Gathering knowledge and collecting data through browsing the Web has become a significant mark of our time. On the Internet we follow “links” which relate one piece of information to the next. The process of association of ideas has always been my source of inspiration and a regular practice in my work.

I began this work by copying a detail from a painting by the German artist Johann Christian Reinhart (1761–1847) entitled “The Invention of the Corinthian Capital by Callimachus” (1844–6). I relied on my Internet findings to lead me through the different concepts to be included in “Linkage”.

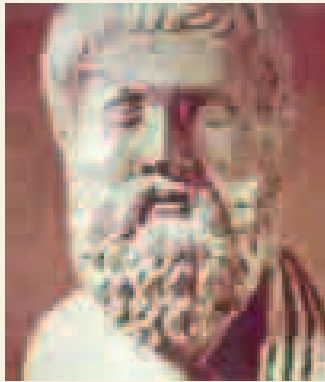


Johann Christian Reinhart, The invention of the Corinthian Capital by Callimachus, 1844-6, Oil on canvas 65.4 x 132 cm

First entry: “The Invention of the Corinthian Capital by Callimachus”.

Findings: It is related that the original discovery of this form of capital was as follows: A freeborn maiden of Corinth, having just reached marriageable age, was hit by an illness and passed away. Following her burial, her nurse collected a few items that used to give the girl joy, put them in a basket and carried it to the tomb. She laid a roof-tile on top of the basket to preserve it from nature’s vagaries. The basket happened to be placed just above the root of an acanthus. When springtime came, the acanthus put forth leaves and stalks that grew up along the sides of the basket. Just then, Callimachus passed by this tomb and observed the basket with the tender young leaves growing round it. Delighted with the novel style and form, he built some columns after that pattern. That style eventually became known as the Corinthian order.

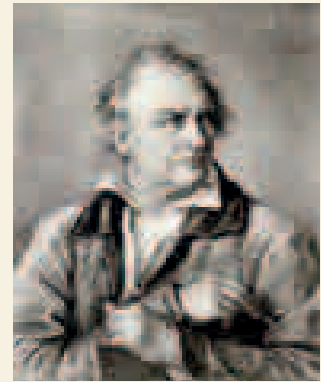
I replaced a column erected in the original painting of Reinhart with the six columns of the temple of Jupiter in Baalbek, since the capitals of these columns are of the Corinthian order.



Callimachus



Acanthus



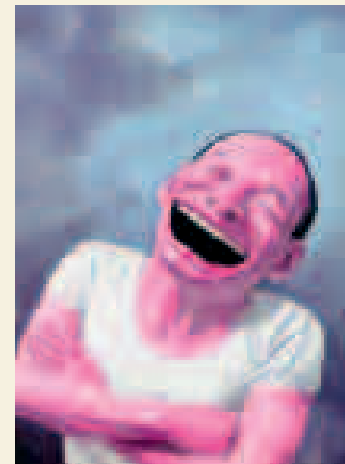
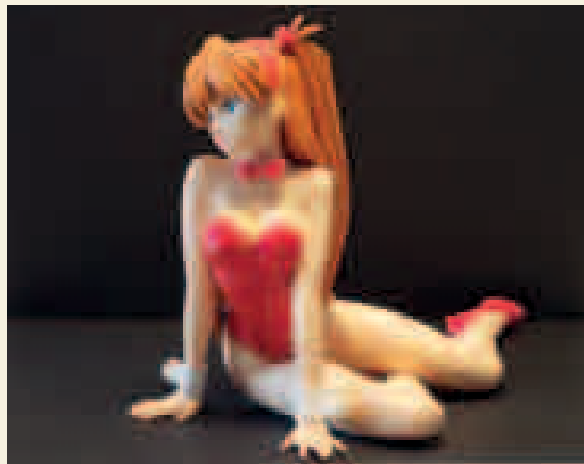
Johann Christian Reinhart

Second Entry: Callimachus (Καλλίμαχος)

Findings: A Greek sculptor working in the second half of the 5th Century BC. The Corinthian Capital and the statue of Nike are attributed to him.

Third Entry: Nike (Νίκη)

Findings: The Greek Goddess of victory. In Manga Cult: Saint Seiya (聖闘士星矢)



“Manga Cult” led me to search my Manga figurines collection for an appropriate figurine with a suitable posture and expression to introduce into my painting. I selected Surya Asuka Langley (惣流・アスカ・ラングレ) which I placed innocently observing the puzzling connections.

The presence of Asuka’s image (rendered in enamel paint, airbrushed on aluminum) evoked a sense of paradox when observed next to the rest of the serious, academic elements contained in the painting. In addition, the combination of Classical Greek culture with Far Eastern Pop culture evoked an absurd and cynical mood, which brought to mind the sardonic images in the work of the famous contemporary Chinese artist Yue Minjun.

Finally it is worth mentioning that Surya Asuka Langley was born and raised in Germany, making her both of German and Japanese descent. This connection links us back to the German artist Johann Christian Reinhart.

Where You Live, 2010

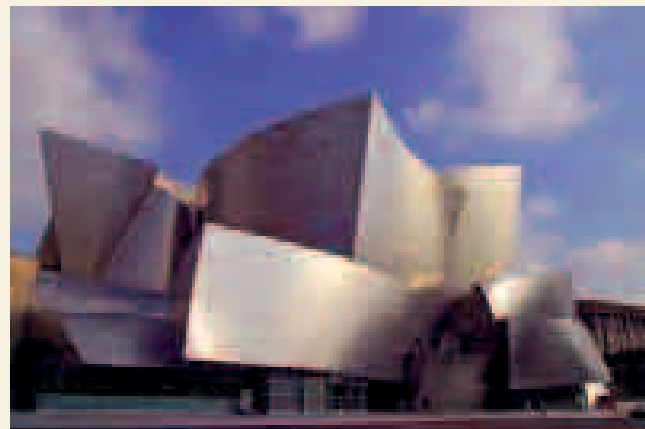
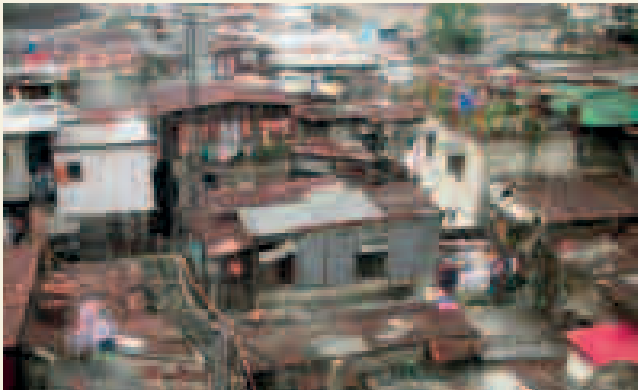
Oil, acrylic, encaustic, aluminum, copper, balsa wood, digital print, resin and plastic figurines on plywood panel.
99 x 99 x 6 cm.



WHERE YOU LIVE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHO YOU ARE

Commentaries: Where You Live

An estimated 100 million people are homeless worldwide according to the United Nations Commission Report on Human Rights, 2005. The homes, which the rest of the world's population lives in, vary dramatically to the extent that a common definition of a home becomes impossible. However, one thing the residents of all types of homes share is the feeling of living not in a house but in the heart of the lover! 😊



Frank Gehry, Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Dictionary (Phrases): **Home is where the heart is** - Proverb / your home will always be the place for which you feel the deepest affection, no matter where you are.

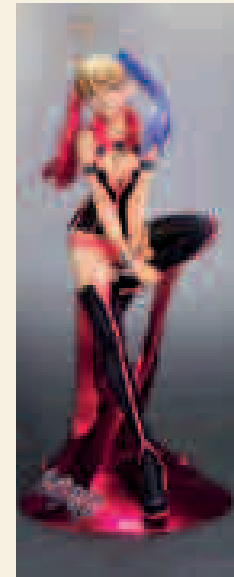
In this painting I put together images of people in different situations expressing their affection for their homes. From left to right:
 □ A Woman holding a model of her house as if it were her son or daughter. Inspired by a painting by Caravaggio. □ A woman sweeping the floor of the balcony in her home, Beirut, ca. 1983. □ Hala holding on to a toy house next to her heart. □ A man standing proudly next to his modern house designed in the style of Frank Gehry. □ And Maria, the PVC figurine from the Japanese anime comic series Witchblade, sculpted by Shunji Hagii, standing by the window of her modern villa. A more recent panoramic view of part of the city of Beirut appears along the horizon. Ca. 2009.

The key figure in this painting is the young woman playing the lute which I painted after Caravaggio's The Lute Player. I however flipped the image along its vertical axis for the sake of composition. The inscription next to her which reads: "My home is where you are, with every beat, in every beat we're closer", suggests that she is playing and singing Paul Van Dyk's song, "My home is where you are."

* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gym9n7N-JLI>



Caravaggio, The Lute Player. Ca. 1596 . Metropolitan Museum of Art.

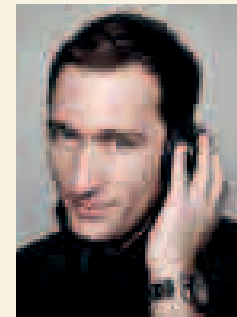


Maria

People poured their concrete floors
 They built their churches and their walls
 Painted pictures of their hopes, fears unbound
 A Single look, a tiny touch, it changed the system
 that's enough.
 And I can see it all in your love, in your eyes
 Explode with life
 Covered in your light
 My home is where you are
 And every beat and every beat
 we're closer

They fashion streets out of the rock
 Struck up statues to their gods
 And hung up flags on every corner they made.
 We are charged, spoiling to go
 Bring me back to where I'm from
 A billion molecules are lined up in her heart
 Pulsing with life.
 My home is where you are
 And every beat and every beat
 we're closer

Paul Van Dyk



The Lightness of Being, 2010

Oil, acrylic, encaustic, aluminum, copper, balsa wood, digital print, resin, plastic and lead figurines on plywood panel.
57 x 41 x 6 cm.



Commentaries:
The Lightness of Being

No doubt that in the world of arts, the photos of Marilyn Monroe have become synonymous with Andy Warhol's pop paintings of her so much so that any artist using the picture of Marilyn in his or her work of art would automatically be connecting the work to Warhol's.

In my painting "With Pleasure" 1990, I used Marilyn's picture shot by Sam Shaw in 1956, but instead of painting her picture in repetition a la Warhol, I repeated the picture of an anonymous Algerian girl featured on a Post Card dating back to the French Mandate period in Algeria.

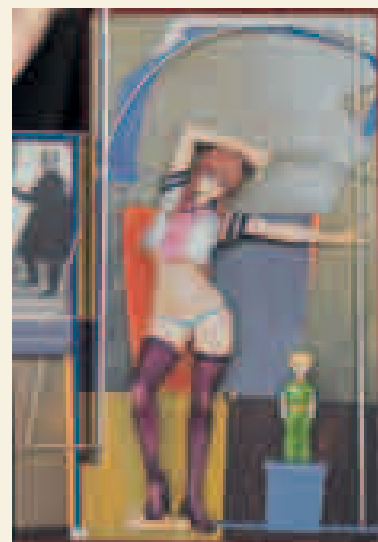
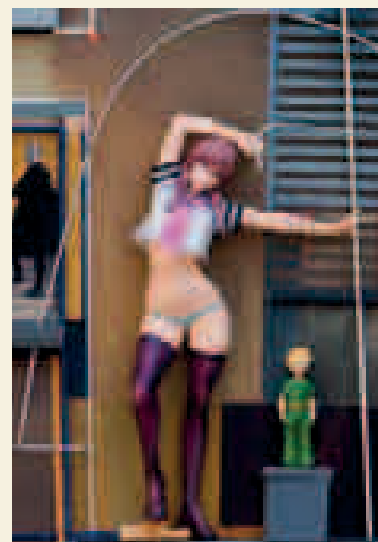
I had another picture of Marilyn from "The Last Sitting", a topless Marilyn Monroe, taken by Photographer Bert Stern just six weeks before her death. She is pictured playing with a see-through scarf. I had always wanted to paint this photo but was searching for the right context.



M. El Rawas, With Pleasure, 1990 Mixed Media and Assemblage on Cardboard 37 x 37 x 1 cm.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being written by Milan Kundera is a philosophical novel set in the Czechoslovak Communist period in 1968. In 1988, an American-made film adaptation of the novel was released.

Irrespective of what the novel and the film are about, one of the impressions I had is that both are about living carelessly, irresponsibly and cynically. The appearances of leisure and pleasure in the characters in this work and their playful mood are merely a cover for their bitter and cynical souls. The image in the tilted rectangle in the middle part of the painting is a picture of a detail from another painting of mine *"Revisiting Las Meninas"* which was in progress when I took it. The resin figurine in the painting is created by Milo Manara, the Italian comic book writer and artist. I used a found snap shot of an anonymous girl in the bottom part of the painting because I found in her casual and unpretentious relaxed posture, a matching expression of the lightness of being.



M. El Rawas, *Revisiting Las Meninas*, 2009 oil, acrylic, mixed media and assemblage on plywood panel, 99 x 99 x 4 cm

Bare Necessity, 2010

Oil, acrylic, encaustic, aluminum, copper, balsa wood, dry Elm branch, leather and hemp on plywood panel.
90 X 84.5 X 3 cm

B A R E N E C E S S I T Y



Commentaries:
Bare Necessity



Richard Diebenkorn (American, 1922-1993). Ocean Park #83, 1975, Oil on canvas, 254 x 205.7 cm

I have a tendency to charge my paintings with many visual and conceptual elements as if I am reflecting our modern, complex life through my art. In this work I wanted - for a change - to be as minimalist as possible! When I think of minimalism in art, two examples come to mind: the earlier work of the American artist Richard Diebenkorn and the Bauhaus School.

*In my painting "**Bare Necessity**" I reduced the area dedicated to multiple colors into thin rectangular bands - inspired by Diebenkorn's Ocean Park series which I placed in the narrow margins on the peripheries of the canvas. I built a small flat model of the Façade of Gropius house and placed it on the horizon.*

I thought of painting a portrait of Anna in this work after I had painted her in an earlier work entitled “The Art of Cloning” in 2007, I have copied the image of the girl situated behind Anna from a painting by the British Artist Sir Peter Blake entitled Pin-up Girl, 1965.

Who would need more in life than three necessary and sufficient things: a real friend with an attractive and engaging personality, a simple, minimal house designed by Walter Gropius and a Dreamcatcher?

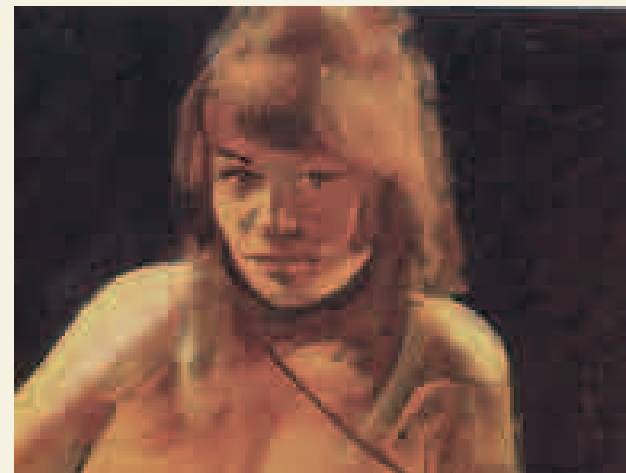
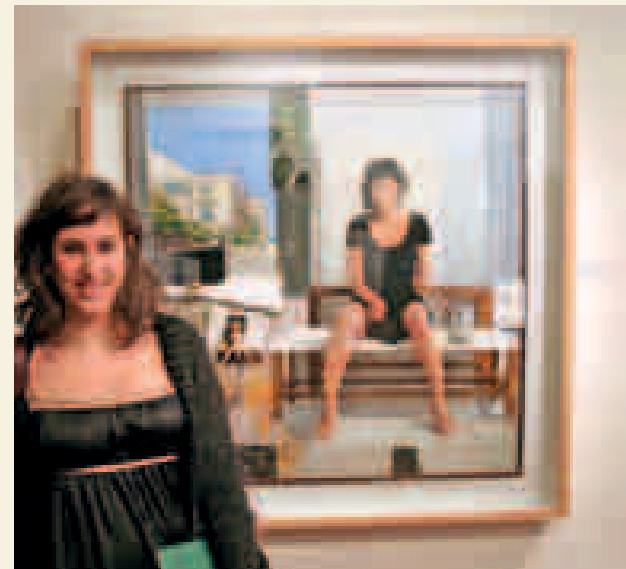


Dictionary: **Charm** - an object, act, or saying believed to have magic power. The dreamcatcher is a charm used to prevent bad dreams. An object kept or worn to ward off evil and bring good luck

(While dreamcatchers originated in the Sioux Nation, with relics found dating as far back as 700 AD, they were adopted by Native Americans of a number of different nations. «dream-catchers» are hung above the bed and used as a charm to protect sleeping children from nightmares. Good dreams pass through the holes and out of the window. The bad dreams are trapped in the web, and then go out of the window at the first bit of sunlight brushes the sleeping person.) *

* Wikipedia

(Top Right): The house of Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus school. 1925-26. (Opposite): Peter Blake, Pin-up Girl 1965 (Detail)



From left to right

A Midspring Day's Dream, 2010

Oil, acrylic, encaustic, mixed media and assemblage on plywood panel.
42.5 x 42.5 x 2 cm

A Midsummer Day's Dream, 2009 - 2010

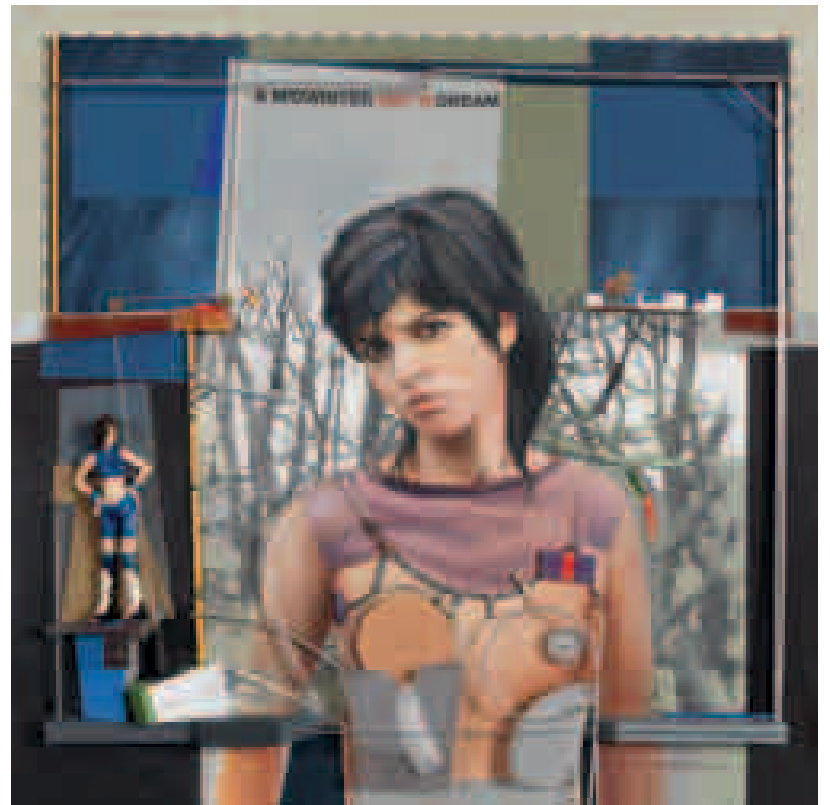
Oil, acrylic, encaustic, mixed media and assemblage on plywood panel.
42.5 x 42.5 x 2 cm.

A Midautumn Day's Dream, 2010

Oil, acrylic, encaustic, mixed media and assemblage on plywood panel.
42.5 x 42.5 x 2 cm

A Midwinter Day's Dream, 2010

Oil, acrylic, mixed media and assemblage on plywood panel.
42.5 x 42.5 x 2 cm



Commentaries:

A Midspring, Midsummer, Midautumn, Midwinter Day's Dream



Comicmastersonline.com

There is no direct relation between any of these four works and William Shakespeare's comedy "A Midsummer Night's Dream", other than the humor tinged by tragedy they all share! Or shall I say maliciousness.

(Several of Shakespeare's comedies, such as "Measure for Measure" and "All's Well That Ends Well", have an unusual tone with a difficult mix of humor and tragedy which has led them to be classified as problem plays. It is not clear whether the uneven nature of these dramas is due to an imperfect understanding of Elizabethan humor and society, a fault on Shakespeare's part, or a deliberate attempt by him to blend styles and subvert the audience's expectations.)*

* Wikipedia

A Midspring Day's Dream

Dima manipulates - through the voodoo puppet in her hand - the hungry wolf which is threatening the frightened little girl in her hiding place.



(There are two primary sorts of Haiti Voodoo. (a) - Rada. This is a family spirit Voodoo and the Voodoo of the relatively peaceful and happy lwa. (b) - Petro. (In some areas called Congo.) This is a black magic Voodoo and the Voodoo of angry, mean and nasty lwa. Dangerous things happen in Petro including death curses, the making of zombi and wild sexual orgies by virtually all scholarly estimates one can find, Rada accounts for about 95% of Voodoo, if not more. Thus the spectacular tales of black magic, while very real, are extremely limited. Petro is not the typical Voodoo, but it does exist.) *

* <http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/voodoo/overview.htm>



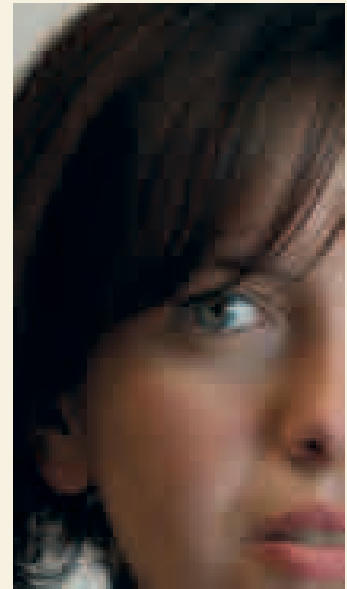
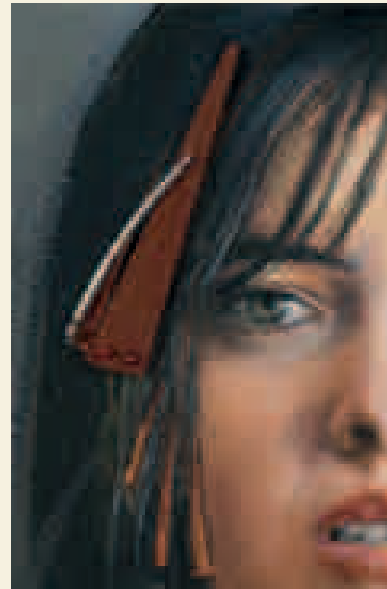
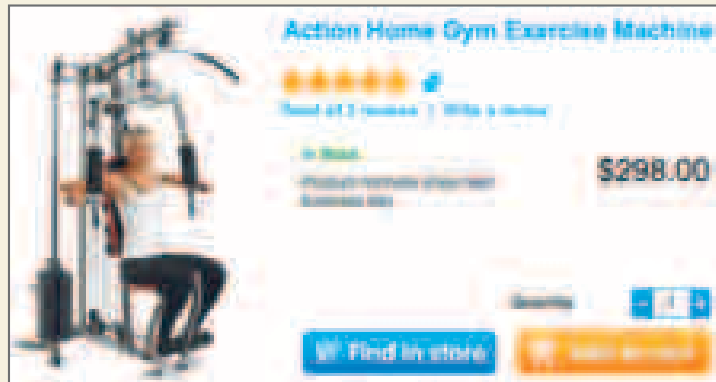
A Midsummer Day's Dream

Wile E. Coyote from the cartoon series of Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies is over-excited due to having his nose caressed by the cute little girl. Shivering with joy, he starts shaking the rod attached to the house and risks overthrowing it. Christel is turning her back but perhaps not her mind, to what is going on.

A Midautumn Day's Dream

Pink Panther, inside his little hut, is not very amused at being bounced by the young girl who has turned his home into an exercise machine.

The decorative hair clip Nisreen is wearing is made of aluminum, copper, pearl, red glass beads and balsa wood.



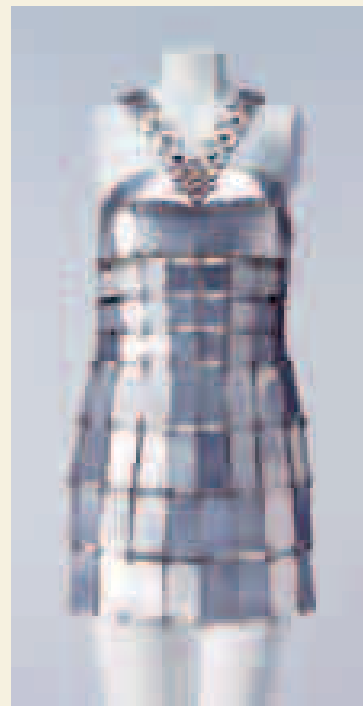
A Midwinter Day's Dream

In this painting, Adonis's assistant demonstrates a foot-operated device which moves and manipulates the loosely joined parts of Adonis's metallic dress when she pedals a lever. Talking about a metallic dress, I recall the picture I saw in the sixties of Paco Rabanne's metallic dress.

(Paco Rabanne (born 18 February 1934) is a Spanish fashion designer. He fled Spain for France with his mother when the Spanish Civil War broke out. He originally had an architect's education but became known as l'enfant terrible of the French fashion world in the 1960s. Rabanne started his career in fashion by creating jewelry for Givenchy, Dior, and Balenciaga. He started his own fashion house in 1966. He used such unconventional materials as metal, paper and plastic for his outlandish and flamboyant designs.)*

* Wikipedia

metallic dress designed by Paco Rabanne ca. 1967



Inclinations - 2010

Oil, acrylic, encaustic, aluminum, copper, balsa wood, digital print, and resin figurines on plywood panel.
109 x 99 x 6.5 cm



Commentaries:
Inclinations



Hannes Meyer, Hans Wittwer and the Dessau Bauhaus building department: General German Trades Union school in Bernau, near Berlin, 1928-30. Meyer and Wittwer made the three chimneys of the oil-firing system the dominant motif of the school's entrance, leading one pupil to describe it as an "education factory". On the right, a loading ramp; left, garages.*

* Bauhaus, Bauhaus archiv / Magdalena Droste, Taschen , page 192

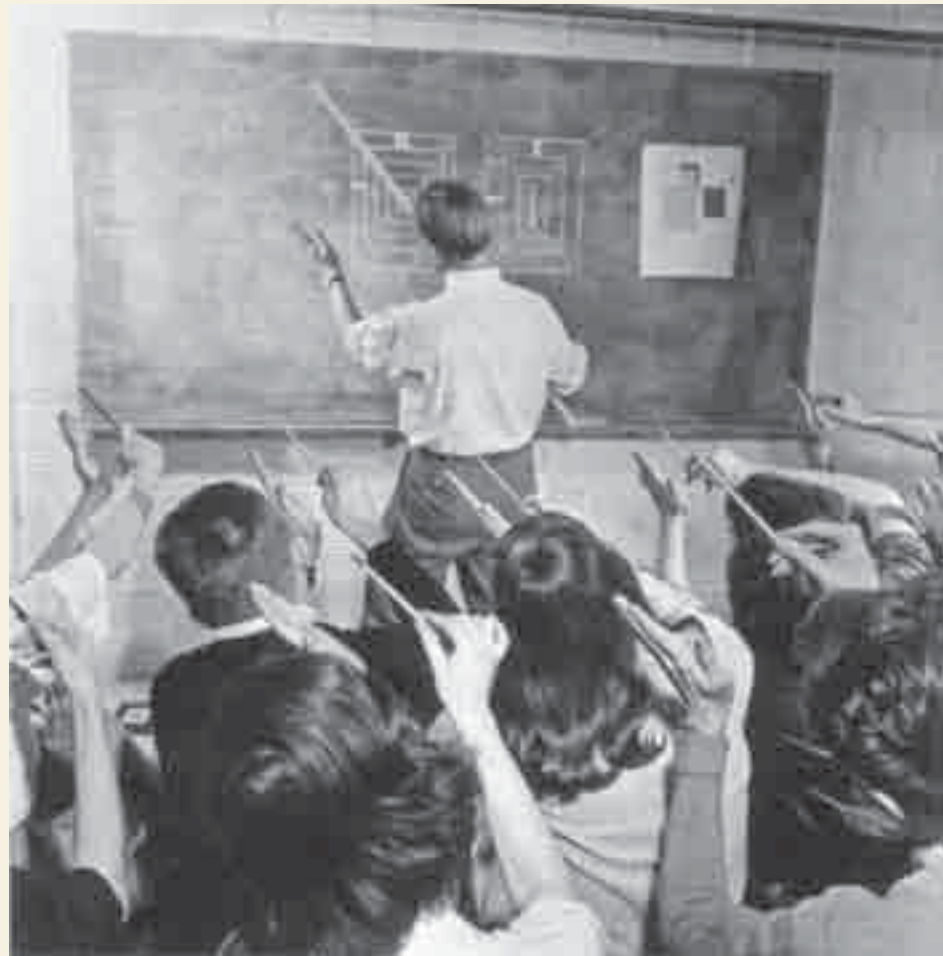
At the horizon I built and installed a model of the Hans Wittwer and the Dessau Bauhaus building department. Bauhaus was a German school that combined crafts and the fine arts and was famous for the approach to design that it taught and disseminated. It operated between 1919 and 1933.

I have always been inspired by the Bauhaus philosophy and vision. I even based my course "The Theory of Color", which I taught at the American University of Beirut between 1992 and 2004, on the color theory of Johannes Itten, one of the main Bauhaus teachers. In the documentary film (Bauhaus, the face of the 20th century) issued on VHS tape by Phaidon, I saw how the students spent more time in different workshops than in lecture halls; while in the workshops, the students wore aprons over their clothes.

I asked two of my ex-students to pose for me in this painting wearing custom tailored aprons. I wanted one of them to sit on a Bauhaus chair designed by Marcel Breuer. The large set square and intersecting angular formations recall the spirit of the Bauhaus style in furniture and architectural design.

The theme 'inclinations' came to mind after seeing a rare photograph of Joseph Albers in 1946, teaching Black Mountain College students to study angles. Joseph Albers was also one of the main Bauhaus teachers.

Dictionary: **Inclination** - 1. The angle at which a straight line or plane is inclined to another.
2. An interest in or liking for something.



Art in America magazine, May 2009, page 50.

I was curious to know how (ميل) the Arabic translation of "inclination" was defined in the famous Classic Arabic Language Dictionary (Lisan al Arab). I discovered that the term referred primarily to the second meaning in the English language dictionary.

I decided to include in my painting a copy of the page of (Lisan Al Arab) bearing the explanation of the term.

I also included the Manga figurine Kanu Unchou from the series Ikki Tousen, known in North America as Battle Vixens. Here she is contributing to the theme of inclination in her own mischievous way.

Destin d'une Marionnette - 2009

Oil, acrylic, encaustic, aluminum, copper, balsa wood, digital print, threads, vinyl, resin and plastic figurines on plywood panel.
99 X 109 X 4 cm



DESTIN D'UNE

MARIONNETTE

Commentaries:
Destin d'une Marionnette



George de la tour, The Fortune Teller, ca. 1630

*The above painting inspired me to paint "Destin d'une Marionnette", it (portrays a 17th-century picaresque scene: four sly thieves in the act of robbing a young man. The latter's attention is fully occupied by an old woman who is about to tell him his fortune by reading his palm. He is thus unaware that he is the victim of a plot: while one girl is removing his purse from his pocket, her accomplice's hand is already held out to spirit it away; at the same time, a pale-skinned beauty is cutting a gold medal from the chain around his neck.)**

* What Great paintings Say, Volume I, Rose-Marie & Rainer Hagen, Taschen , page 74

Dictionary: **Picaresque** - adjective of or relating to an episodic style of fiction dealing with the adventures of a rough and dishonest but appealing hero.



Our dishonest but appealing man treats his female companion as a marionette (puppet) The pale skinned beauty is aware that he is a man who behaves selfishly and irresponsibly in his sexual relationships with women. She is about to cut the cables connecting the puppet to the control mechanism in his hand. Her intentions are to befriend him with a seductive young girl: Sera Chan. The pale-skinned beauty could be a professional matchmaker acting on behalf of Sera.



The surrendering posture of the figurine, unaware of her bleak destiny brought to mind a still from Harun Farocki's film, Respite 2007. Further information on Farocki's film on:
<http://www.3quarksdaily.com/3quarksdaily/2009/02/interpretations-harun-farocki-respite-2007.html>



Mohammad El Rawas

Born in Beirut in 1951. He studied painting at the Institute of Fine Art of the Lebanese University, and graduated in 1975 with honors receiving the Lebanese University Scholarship to study abroad. The year of his graduation marked the beginning of the civil war in Lebanon, leading the artist to stop painting and to leave his country for Morocco where he stayed for two years in Rabat and where he resumed painting and taught art at a local school. He returned to Beirut in 1979 to hold his first solo show before joining the Slade School of Fine Art in London in the same year.

Upon his return to Beirut in 1981 with a Masters Degree in Printmaking, he started his academic career, that lasted for 27 years, at the Lebanese and the American Universities of Beirut.

Mohammad El Rawas served for 9 years as the secretary general of the Association of Lebanese Artists and is a founding member of the Lebanese Artists' Syndicate.

Since 1979, El Rawas has held ten individual exhibitions in Beirut, London and Dubai, and has participated in more than 40 international art biennials and exhibitions in England, USA, Norway, Tunis, Brazil, Japan, Kuwait, France, Holland, Egypt, UAE, Poland and China. In these international shows, he claimed five prizes and honorable mentions including the prize of the Alexandria Biennale of the Art of the Mediterranean Countries in 2007, for his first installation and video art piece "*Sit Down Please!*"

His work is found in many Museums, public and private collections in Lebanon, Tunis, Iraq, Jordan, Sharjah, Norway and the U.K.

In 2004, Saqi Books of London, published a major monograph entitled "*The Art of Rawas*"

In 2011, *The Maker of Realities, Faiseur de réalités*, was published by Librairie Antoine as a joint publication with the Lebanese Poet Antoine Boulad, featuring the artist's paintings with Boulad's poems inspired by Rawas' œuvres.

www.elrawas.net

Mohammad El Rawas
Commentaries

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