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French artist Rachid Khimoune with his creations

Image Credit:XPRESS/Abdel-Krim Kallouche



Rachid Khimoune at work

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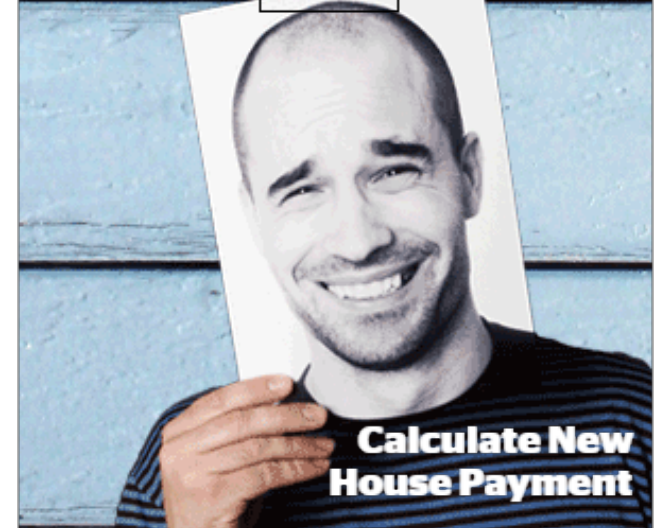
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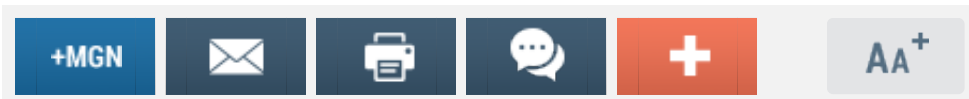
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ATTENTION

Every few days someone is forced to pay thousands of dirhams to seedy jet-ski operators in Sherik's Al



Twenty-one 'kids' of different races, colours and creeds are looking for a home in the UAE.

Shipped into Dubai earlier this month, these kids are actually made of bronze casts and are part of 'Children of the World' – a monumental collection of giant sculptures by renowned French artist **Rachid Khimoune**.

Layered in every 500-kg piece is the story of the city these children belong to – 21 being a metaphor for the 21st century in which the artwork was created.

To bring out the essence of each city, Rachid, 56, has used what he calls 'skins of the streets' – a bizarre assortment of impressions of drain covers, paving stones and broken concrete painstakingly captured from the 21 cities he visited over eight years. It's these 'extraterrestrials', as he calls them, extracted from the ground which have then been used to add texture and individuality to each child, dressing them as a designer would.

Troubled times

"I take from and then give back to the street," says Rachid, who has often landed in trouble for scavenging objects from the streets.

"I have been detained by so many police stations, I have lost count. One particularly harrowing experience was in Seoul, just before the 1988 Olympics. I was taking impressions on one of the streets when the military came after me. I had a tough time convincing them," he

operators in Sharjah's Al Mamzar area but the racket still flourishes.

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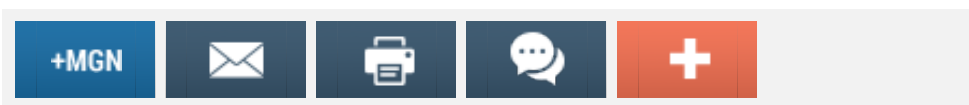
The Children of the World is on display at the Art Sawa Gallery in Al Quoz until June 16. But Rachid reckons the collection should be put out in the open where it can be seen and admired by everyone.

The logistical nightmare notwithstanding, Rachid wants to take the artworks weighing over 10,500kg around the UAE to create awareness about them.

A similar body of Rachid's artwork has been made a permanent installation at the Parc de Bercy gardens in Paris.

Art Sawa founder Amel B. Makkawi is hoping for a similar response from the UAE too.

"The UAE is a melting pot of many cultures and would therefore be an ideal place to house this collection. This truly inspirational and universal project is particularly relevant to the youthful city of Dubai and could stand here as a symbol of its all- inclusive culture," she says.



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