

# Mohammed El Rawas

From manga to Michelangelo: we deconstruct the work of Mohammad El Rawas to see what makes him tick



By Nyree Barrett 25 May 2010

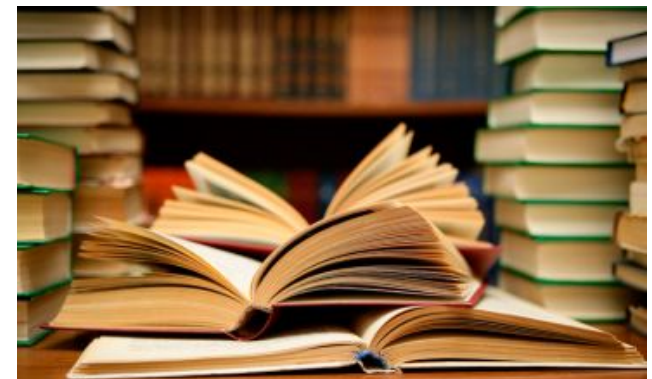


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Gracious yet opinionated, Mohammad El Rawas's love of pop art seeps through his postmodern canvases. He borrows elements from the greats: influences from Picasso's and Michelangelo's creations sit comfortably in his assemblage works alongside manga characters and portraits of anonymous women. His creations juxtapose such differing elements, he explains, in order to 'prove that there are no borders between cultures and times. It's about trying to create a hybrid that more or less represents the duality of our culture.'

This merging of influences is what he believes to be fuelling the Arab and Iranian art boom. 'Middle Eastern art in general is witnessing a very interesting movement of courageous and innovative expression, thanks to exposure on the internet and people travelling. If you let the doors open, this process of osmosis happens.'



For El Rawas, the tumultuous nature of some Middle Eastern states is a creative petri dish for its resident artists. ‘It’s a fertile soil for art,’ he points out. That said, he lived through Lebanon’s civil war and notes that artists need to be out of crisis before they can get their creative juices flowing. ‘You need the luxury of peace of mind to create – you can’t be threatened by a falling mortar shell and think of making good art at the same time.’

This is El Rawas’s first exhibition in the Gulf region, because he refuses to compromise and bow to the threat of censorship. Luckily, this is something he has avoided here in Dubai.

*Mohammad El Rawas’s show continues at **Art Sawa** until June 6.*



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