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Brush with dance

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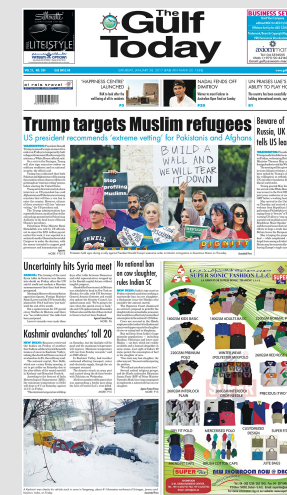
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Dubai Gallery Art Sawa is hosting the works of renowned artist Ahmed Askalany (Mar. 17 - Apr. 16). Critics and art connoisseurs alike have already described him as one of the most unique and inimitable sculptors of his generation. His sculptures are characterised by remarkable traditional aesthetic forms that place an emphasis on both structure and volume; but the volumes are distorted with a minimal head on a giant body.

His subjects are usually simple human figures inspired and representative of his society, in Cairo and his works possesses a profound nature and a sense of innocence alongside a state of isolation reflecting humour, frankness and candour. There is no specific formula that he uses when creating his works of art, the final work often represents his emotions by becoming humorous or naïve but always with a tremendous poetic sensitivity, reflecting his observations and thoughts about his daily life.

“And now ... shall we dance?” is an invitation, an interrogation : There is some truth, if a very limited truth, to the cries of the simple human nature. Time and again, he sets down images of a pre-civilised world, his Eden before the Fall, a world inhabited by his musicians and dancers celebrating life.

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This connection allows his sculptures to become unique and unmistakable, yet, at the same time, does not stop him being thoroughly up to date. Here, he speaks of his character as an artist, provides a broad brush view of art in Egypt and also about the current show.

How were you first exposed to art (through family, school, etc)?

It was a kind of odd at first: I have been brought up in a extreme poor environment, where education is a utmost luxury and many of my peers prefer to help their parents in farming. For some reason I was fascinated by the idea of ??physical anatomy, but I was not knowledgeable.

I was just fascinated by the human and animal bodies so I wanted to re create these anatomies through the mud. Culturally and socially, this was causing a major problem for me with my family and neighbors.

However, I brought silt to begin the formation of my statues.

Some of my entourage made ??fun of me but others ones encouraged to pursue through the path of the strange and the beautiful.

Despite the religious belief that God would be surely unhappy with me as per my works I conveys the idea of imitating him in the creation of lives, I decided to strengthen all my efforts to become an artist and the distant idea grew slowly. This was a difficult challenge for me as per the extreme poverty suffered in the villages, the environment completely not interested in art and more focused in battling against epidemics and plagues

How could I be an artist in light of this?

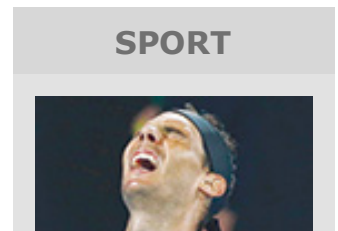
At the end I succeeded by following my dream, practicing my art and learning every day.

Tell us about your educational background, as well as your personal background (where were you born, grew up, lived, etc).

I was born in the village of Nag Hamada Gnawi centre in the far Upper Egypt where I joined the primary school, and later on the Agricultural Institute.

I used to work to afford my studies and art; I did not earn much , but this was still cheaper than my earnings. Choosing either between getting an education or learning art , I have and will always choose art.

What was your first exhibition and where?



My first show was in 1999 at the British council in Cairo.

What the inspiration behind your works?

The truth is that I like the transfer of realistic scenes of my life, perhaps for me to experience the issue of the creation.

Art has surely its own roots in this fact; but I don't reproduce creation.

I use it and I always add to it my own vision, with a lot of exaggeration.

The exaggeration I prefer is the world of obese people, as their big forms work as a symbol of the set of mind of my characters. What I want to express is that the memory stores sights, moments, experiences and lives, and my inspiration is like a little lamp light that jumps to my mind when I find the idea.

What are the messages you would like to convey through your art?

I am simply against the propagation of ugliness in the world.

My art aims to create beauty, poetry like a protection against ugliness, even though the viewer can still imagine the ugly.

Tell us about this (current exhibition):

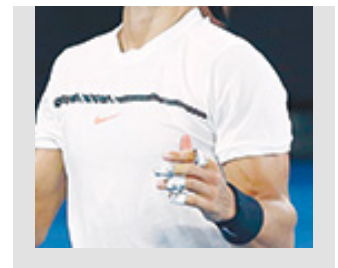
The exhibition "And now ... shall we dance?" will be shown starting from Mar. 17 for a month.

I do not like to talk much about what I do, but here I am compelled to answer.

The exhibition is composed of a group statues, a group musicians, all and each of them apparently in a valley , a total stand-alone, all of them playing solo, and no in relation to the other.

No harmony is organising or orchestrating them, no conductor to lead as a proper orchestra , no relations with the audience, the rest of the world.

Is it a crisis of modern man, who is suffering from a fatal flaw?



Is it a search for its uniqueness or the fall into the trap of compulsory isolation as was the hero, Meursault of Albert Camus, in “The Stranger”?

Do you suffer from being in the diaspora as happens now with the Egyptians?

Can each of you to choose one or ignore all of this and reach his or her own vision completely?

How do you envision the future of your art? How will it be accomplished?

How I imagine the future of art? I think that question needs to be an entire book to answer.

By now I am mostly concerned not only about the decline of art in Egyptian society , recognising , of course , our share in obsolescent art , graffiti and the after-revolution art and the decline of patronage as well.

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