

Abbas Alkadhim

Painter&Visuel Artist
www.alkadhim.dk

Abbas Alkadhim: Intractable desires...

By Husaen Alsagaaf

He has drawn for himself his own path between Baghdad and Copenhagen through the Iraqi plastic art movement .

Thus the ideas of Abbas AlKadhim who was born on 1954, was directed toward the human dimension and its gestures , and his method in working on his projects was developing. It started with impressionism through expressionism and abstract art and later on , abstract expressionism that the Viking countries were distinguished with, and was represented by the *Cobra group*.

These ideas and forms were embodied in his works and was clear through the using of cloth and colors until he was tempted by the "conceptual art" that occupied his mind , before pulling him into its vast space . What was the reason that pushed Abbas Alkadhim toward installation, or an installed project that occupied the centre of the biennial Cairo exhibition , after the era where his ideas and expressive forms were embodied through cloth and colors and frames? Then what was the motive in his mind that made him move out of the frame again , to free his installation projects through biennial fourth exhibition in sharja in 2001?

Also what was the cause behind his other installation work in Al Khiam prison in south Lebanon which was called "The presage of sun's eyebrow"?

In answer says the Iraqi artist that : " The installation works are closer to reality than the traditional painting, you can even touch them .Otherwise the idea and nothing but the idea chooses the materials that will represent itself . I can say that the difference between the painting and the installation is like that between the poem and performing a play. They both keep the holiness of the idea ,and its message is revealed via presenting and performing" .

The homeland of Abbas was represented through using the same installation method , using a very frank name , *Homeland* in the seventh biennial exhibition for arts in Cairo in 1998 .

There he presented Iraq as a bed installed on a sandy pyramid , a bed without any thing to sleep on , even a net , here you can notice it reflected on a mirror under the bed . This signifies that the stability and security in his country and homeland, has become part of the past [the mirror] . Also the *Homeland* of Abbas was slant a little bit toward right, as if it will fall in case there was a storm . He say : " My country stands now on a sandy pyramid, that might move at any time and cause a fall or collapse or even change its form. It even might be covered with those sands coming from the four directions , and becomes buried under it, as it was the case with other civilizations . Homeland stands between the loss and mirage . Every nice and beautiful thing, that is in mind, has been changed into a fake image in the mirror , an image that tries to resist the storm " .

That is how an artist sees his country, although he does not want that image of homeland that is part of his memory and soul, otherwise he might predicts the future . That year *Homeland* won the binally prize in Cairo beside another prize from UNISCO. It was the first time in the history of biennial where one work takes two prizes.

Three years later, Abbas Alkhadim showed himself to his audience from "The fourth Sharjah biennial " through his project that was named "A flame, and not a thousand". In that work, there is a photo of an old Iraqi woman, having a latent desire in her desperate soul. A desire that cannot be felt by any Other who lives a luxurious life and who practices the right of deciding.

The old woman who represents through her facial expressions , nothing but the Iraqi catastrophe , carries her burden of solicitude and weakness in a work created by the artist who has installed her photo in a frame surrounded by thousands of broken lighters.

All she is looking for is a simple flame ,so she can satisfy her desire. To light a cigarette , could mean, for her, a bad taste, that could make her forget for a while a worse one. Otherwise that desire and so many other desires are hard to be achieved and satisfied.

Concerning his installation work "the presage of sun's eye brow" 2002, he brought back the idea of the bed, after he changed the symbolical dimensions , where he built eight beds in Al-Khiam prison . Abbas who was born in *Mesopotamia* , and who has lived in an exile from Baghdad to Rome and Copenhagen later , has always dreamt of turning the prisons of Iraq into museums, when his country regains its freedom . When Abbas received an invitation to turn the prison of Khiam into a museum that stays as a witness on the Israeli methods of torturing and also on those ways being used there aiming the destruction of the human soul ,so he started his job as if he is fulfilling his big dream.

He also thought of turning the stuff that were left in the prison into art , for they are honest and they also are closer to that reality . That is how he chose the location to be the "sun" hall in that prison . It is the same hall where prisoners had their ten minutes to be under the sun shine.

Abbas took eight beds that witnessed the existence of prisoners , their dreams , pains and nightmares for long years , and he put them in the centre of the hall . There also he created a shadow of an Israeli soldier that moves in accordance to the sun movement ,where we can see that moving on the beds .

The artist wanted to invite us to enter the minds of those prisoners in order to touch their obsessions , and to assure that the Israeli soldier is still present their in the minds of those prisoners although they are free now.

This also means that the Israeli ghost is there waiting for a prey , a prey that is the human who loves live . Even if the beds stay with no bodies , still the hunter is drown in his savage behavior .

Abbas Alkadhim

Under a different sky

Abbas Alkadhim has studied plastic art in Fine Art Institute in Baghdad between 1970-1976 . He then finished his studies in Fine Arts Academy in Rome . Later he was graduated from the Fine Art College in Copenhagen, after he moved to live there . He arranged an exhibition called "Voices between us"

in association with those artists of exile, between 1994 to 1995 . He also occupied the position of the artistic manager of " Trinaly Copenhagen for Plastic Arts" , where he had his efforts to make an exhibition for the artists of exile called " Under a Different Sky" , in Copenhagen in 1996 where the city was chosen as the capital of the European culture . More than 90 artist from about 40 countries all around the world , attended this exhibition to discuss the art in the exile. Here he is, Abbas being inspired by that experiment , is now preparing himself to hold another meeting about the exile theme.

Alkadhim worked for long years on his paintings before he moved to installation. He thinks that the installation works are best way to motivation. Its language depends on showing the latent power in " the raw materials" .

A language that depends on the idea in turning that power into a touchable notion. Iron, sand, wood, water, fire, wires, glass and mud are noting but those materials that the artist tries to give a soul to, these are the materials that moved him from only a framed painting on a wall to a real multi-dimensional special representation of an idea. That is how those works gives nothing to the observer but an impression of " wonder and anxiety".

Translated by: Azhar Al Hady