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SELECTIONS

ARTS / STYLE / CULTURE FROM THE ARAB WORLD AND BEYOND

“Inventing Perspective | Hiba Kalache,” *Selections*, October 21, 2021



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TELL US ABOUT THE WORK YOU SUBMITTED.

The initial premise of my most recent project, *Lemonade Everything Was So Infinite*, which I started in December 2016, was to address the relationship between text and image, and the process of translation between written and visual languages. In its earliest stages, my concerns revolved around the transmission of knowledge across generation, (mis)communication and what was lost in the process of translation from text to image, as translation always entails interpretation.

I focused on the written word as my starting point in the creative process, and as a signifier that led to my interpretation of the symbolic images. I started playing around with the narrative I was confronting and altering its linearity by taking specific fragments out of context, confusing the descriptive language and layering it in my own work. This created new and unexpected associations among visual images, figures and consequently, interpretations, that led to indeterminacy in the narrative, and in the reading of the work. References to the initial narrative were retained as fragments, while new, and often fictitious, associations seeped in to feed on and disrupt one another.

I took the notion of 'hope' that we, as humans, embody, and that aids us in surviving or dealing with trauma and pain. In my interest in allegorical narratives, I turned to the description of the heavens in religious scriptures and studied specific passages for the production of my work.



Hiba Kalache, 56:10-40. Acrylic on paper, 150 x 310 cm.
2017

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WHEN CREATING A NEW PIECE, WHAT INSPIRES YOU MOST?

The process of constructing a drawing, a painting or an installation, and the layering of the work that goes through the different required steps, intellectually, technically/materially, as well as my emotional engagement. These spaces, experiences and interactions bring experiments, memories and visions to come together in the service of a projected future. A constancy of doubt and ambivalence drives the process and allows for the layers of the work to consolidate. It also resembles the way a tower or a city space is built, minute parts assemble to form a larger whole.

I usually start by envisioning a certain universe, and I work on the smaller elements. There are no new pieces: every beginning of a work is the continuity of past works. It is important for me that the process remains in perpetual "construction, deconstruction and reconstruction." In his book *Playing to the Gallery*, Grayson Perry points out that, "the sound a box of Lego makes is the noise of a child's mind working, looking for the right piece. Shake it and it's almost creativity in aural form." I love this reference.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?

I choose to live in a state of imagination and improvisation regardless of where I am geographically. I take from Clarice Lispector's novel, *Água Viva*, a fragment that concretizes this in my process, "always and always creating the present that is future."



Hiba Kalache, *I hear the mad song of a little bird and crush butterflies between my fingers acrylic on paper, 285 x 525cm, 2018*

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WHAT'S ONE THING YOU COULD NEVER LIVE WITHOUT? WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Spaces of conversation – they create momentum to our presence. There's nothing else. I believe in process and in collaboration, which I believe is counter to the tediousness of our daily lives. These spaces carry the ability to continuously propel us into a future moment. Through exchanges with others, specifically in the art field with curators, art historians and gallerists, these dialogues become elemental in the unfolding and development of an idea and a project. Pertaining to that, preparations for my most recent solo exhibit over the past year and a half evolved and took shape only through an intense conversational exchange with the curator as well as the steady support of the gallerist. This only reflects the importance of the thought development behind the body of work and the present/local accessible contemporary art making approaches.

WHO'S THE PERSON YOU MOST ADMIRE AND WHY?

Today: Clarice Lispector. Again, in her novel *Água Viva*, she claims "I refuse to be defeated: so I love," and continues "...to settle for that not as one defeated but in *allegro con brio*." I like the *allegro con brio* – it simply resumes life itself. It takes a lot of courage and self-defiance to choose "love" in life, and even better, with a high note.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN JUST ONE WORD.

That's difficult... resilient.

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