



Claimants of Peace,
145x220 cm
Oil on canvas,
2014



Live Together, 2014,
Oil on canvas,
90x60 cm

ART IN SEARCH OF UNDERSTANDING

WORDS: INDIA STOUGHTON

ARMENIAN LEBANESE ARTIST **RAFFI YEDALIAN'S** WORK IS ROOTED IN HUMANITY AND INSPIRED BY GOD, AS A RECENT EXHIBITION OF HIS WORK HELPED REVEAL

A patchwork of angular grey faces stares out of the canvas in Raffi Yedalian's *Claimants for Peace*. The horizontal lines formed by rows of hooded eyes are crossed by the vertical lines of the noses that bisect each face down the centre, splitting it neatly into two halves.

The striking composition is not just for aesthetic effect. Yedalian's paintings and sculptures aim to transmit his vision of the world.

"My artwork is rooted in humanity and human beings are always present in my figurative works because human emotion is what inspires me," the artist says. "All my expressive and uncommon figures have a line that divides the face, which represents the line between earth and sky, the link between God, man and his destiny."

The Armenian Lebanese artist, born in 1973, works in a variety of media, producing intricate drawings and colourful paintings in oil and acrylic, as well as sculptures in wood, bronze and upcycled materials.

"Sculpture and painting are two different forms of artistic expression, but for me they complete each other, and both are equally important in my artwork," Yedalian explains. "It is important for an artist to work in multiple medias and I think there is a richness there – the ability to fully discover your subject matter."

Yedalian says that the inspiration for his work comes from his relationship with God. The most significant milestone in his career to date, he says, was during Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Lebanon in 2012. During his visit to Bzommar, the pontiff inaugurated and blessed Yedalian's bronze monument, entitled *Meghabard*, a miniature replica of which now forms part of his private collection in Vatican City.

"We have two powers: the power of the mind and thought, and the power of human emotion," the artist says. "The two can lead to understanding. My role as an artist is to find the facts and the meaning of life and to apply them in my work." ●



Raffi Yedalian