

# Art on 56th

## Zouhair Dabbagh's Painting Self-Satisfaction of Elements

Zouhair Dabbagh appears in this exposition as an artist with a comprehensive insight on multiple fine arts forms. He is a sculptor of undisputed skill, although the little material he presents does not provide a clear picture of his encounter with metals. His recent dialogues with clay produce brilliant leaves standing in the middle between his sculptures and paintings, waiting to decide their destinations. We have to acknowledge that in the courtesy of Zouhair the painter, the other accompanying work has a supporting role on his interests and occupations, as well as on understanding the artist's broad vision. Zouhair's painted work is almost self-satisfied and refers to nothing outside their frame. It is realized in the moment it is decided on and seeks no explanation and points to no incident nor legend nor date. Its vigor stems purely from its components. It is thus a purely artistic celebration. The moment you hold it and reveal it to the audience is a warm and daunting moment. It comes as a *Modus Vivendi* between two elements; not the form and color, the material elements for every painting, but beyond that. It is the battle between the form being strongly present and clearly defined, and the color not as an identity with expressive energy, but considering its ability to flow and grade into transparency, which is contrary to all explicit form. Dabbagh's vivid colors do not align him with colored artists as much as it does with the creative and the dynamic. His painting exhibits two parallel powers: sculpture and painting, and his quest to merge them at their extreme limits of coexistence form the core of his plastic practice; this is what gives his work the legitimacy to individualism and uniqueness. The forms we speak of are the characters present in all the works, and its forms, and attributed proportions, and in strokes that point at sometimes and pause at other times for the details; if goes passive at some scenes, it is never adventurous. Characters that resemble line drawings sitting or standing in different poses where their surrounding world does not exceed the chair or the table or any of the intimate objects they adheres to. They are minimalistic and bare from signs of time, environment, or story, which contributes to their isolation from any reference outside the painting. The characters form settled masses in a narrow world on which Zouhair the sculptor's role stands. The concept of the sculptor is occupied with unambiguous forms and characters in general, with the absence of nature's wide world. In these works we are confronted with absent-minded characters, as if in halls or in theaters or lingering in corners, waiting for their role behind the curtain. I say that the characters and unambiguous forms generate the positive energy in the sculpture, considering the negative energy that it challenges in their surrounding space, turns into a negative energy itself and its role topples. Colors are playful in Dabbagh's painting; they are an agonizing and sabotaging element for the solid stable factors more than they are an element meant to distinguish the forms, or an additional element led by its own identity, or a participant of a crucial role based on coloration. It comes as a positive vigor that battles with the forms to put it back on track and in the folds of its momentum and stream over the surface; not to have a background to support stability, but to affirm its independent and rigorous presence. The audience does not know, and it might not be crucial that they know, what comes first of those two elements nor how do they move forward nor how the layers form and assemble in the hands of the artist before he signs his art. It is distinguished though that these layers form in this space of conflict: engagement and controversy. The artist utilizes the opportunity of coloration and expanded in it from one work to the other - this is proved by the context of its successive production. Transparency has sometimes reached the level of harmony with the raw canvas; it got so dense at times it was merged with jagged media, or by adding element with a different texture than the base materials to allow the colors to yield new outbreaks, and thus create a different sense and a new depth in the conception of the work. In all cases, the coloration emits tension between established forms, sometimes connects dispersed elements within a formative relationship with an abstract dimension. In the end, and despite their implications, Zouhair Dabbagh's paintings are impressionistic, where a great measure of their charm and the pleasure of observing them comes from following up the textures and how their layers blend, following their surface as creative manual playfields

## Zouhair Dabbagh

Zouhair Dabbagh was born in Aleppo in 1953. He pursued and earned his Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts in 1977 from the Damascus University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Sculpture Department. He has participated in several exhibitions since 1970 and some of his artworks are in exhibited in the permanent collection of the Damascus Museum, as well as in private collections in Ankara, Dubai, Germany, KSA, Paris and Canada.

## Exhibitions

- 2017 Solo Exhibition, Europa Gallery, Paris, France
- 2017 Solo Exhibition, Art on 56th, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2015 Art on paper, Art on 56th, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2015 Collective 2015, Art on 56th, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2014 Beirut Art Fair, Art on 56th, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2014 Solo Exhibition, Art on 56th, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2014 Art 14 London, Art on 56th Gallery, London, England
- 2013 Summer Collective Exhibition, Art on 56th Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2013 Beirut Art Fair, 4th Edition, Art on 56th Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2013 Contemporary Istanbul, 9th Edition, Art on 56th Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2011 "Richard Koh Fine Art" gallery, Singapore
- 2007 Jabla archeological stairs, Syria
- 2006 Dar Kalamat gallery, Aleppo capital of culture- Aleppo National Museum, Syria
- 2003 Exhibition tour for the winners of the competition  
"Think with your Hand", Cervantes Institute, Damascus, Aleppo, Homos and Latakia, Syria
- 2002 Women and War exhibition, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2002 Solo Exhibition, Jisr gallery, Aleppo, Syria
- 2001 Women and War exhibition organized by the Red Cross, Damascus, Syria
- 2001 Solo Exhibition, Le Pont Gallery, Aleppo, Syria
- 1994 Atasi Gallery, exhibition for artists from Aleppo
- 1993 Al Noukta Gallery, exhibition for artists from Aleppo, Syria
- 1992 Solo Exhibition, Bilad Al Sham gallery, Aleppo, Syria
- 1992 Solo Exhibition, "Shahbaa Al Sham", Oumiya gallery, Aleppo, Syria
- 1977 Annual Exhibition for Ministry of Culture, several times until year 2005, Syria
- 1976 Gabrovo Biennale, Bulgaria
- 1974 Autumn exhibition, Damascus, Syria
- 1971 Annual Exhibition of Fine Arts, Damascus, Syria  
Winner of the first award for oil painting
- 1970 Annual Exhibition by Ministry of Culture, Aleppo, Syria

## Awards and Scholarships

- 2000 Third Award, "Think With Your Hand" Cervantes Institute Art Competition  
Damascus, Syria
- 1997 Two scholarships from the Gulbenkian Foundation for the talented, Spain