

# Art on 56th Safa Al Set

Born in 1974, Safa Al Set studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Damascus University and graduated in 1997. While briefly experimenting with multi-media graphic design, she chose to pursue a divergent artistic route. The artist shifted platforms, working with metal and using both steel and copper as means to create a body of works, which stands out through its rough texture and design. She sparks metal with life, and is able to transform its firm and rigid quality into an element that is animate and flowing. In her studio, Al Set plays with fire, heating and melding scrap pieces of iron and copper to form giant sculptures.

## Solo Exhibitions

- 2015 "Yellow Barrel" Art on 56th, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2011 "Shoe" with Albareh art gallery in collaboration with Saks Fifth Avenue, Bahrain
- 2009 "We are never alike", Art House, Damascus, Syria
- 2008 "Women", Ayyam gallery, Damascus, Syria
- 2003 "Figures", Maktab Aanbar, Damascus, Syria
- 1998 "Commedia dell'Arte", French Cultural Center, Damascus, Syria

## Group Exhibitions

- 2015 Al Markhiya Gallery, Doha, Qatar
- 2015 Beirut Art Fair, Art on 56th, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2015 Art 15 London, Art on 56th, London, UK
- 2015 Collective 2015, Art on 56th, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2014 Beirut Art Fair, Art on 56th, Beirut, Lebanon
- 2014 Wadi Finan for Arts, Amman, Jordan
- 2013 Khawatem Art & Jewelry Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
- Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland
- Geneva, Switzerland
- 2011 Al Telal Gallery, Kuwait
- 2010-2011 Let it be jewelry, Damascus, Beirut, Bahrain
- 2010 Tajalliyat art gallery, Damascus, Syria

## In The Midst Of Metal

Safaa El Set enters the workshop holding an empty birdcage. Without a plan, without drafts, and without preset ideas, she enters full of assurance that she is going to fulfill her quest in the midst of the scattered metal. She is not disappointed; her ideas and words immediately start to come along, as though the solid metal opens the appetite to her imagination! Safaa is used to this trend; she is used to the tendency of finding her prey in the midst of her work. She inspires her viewers with her attitude that sculpting is nothing short of a challenge! a self-challenge! challenging the canon of art. The artist imprisons her idea, communicates with it, flirts playfully with it, fights and interrogates it until she decides on how to bring it to life. She begins by fusing metal with metal. She wants her idea to be perceived first, but the shape and form of that idea is conceived later. She wants to say a lot about her idea. She seeks inspiration and gets involved with the themes of the woman, the teenager, the handicapped child, the victims of war, the birdcage, the trapped bird, the emotion of sadness, the pregnant woman, people in love and others depressed...etc. Whereas all these ideas are only the beginning, they are the key to unlock the path of "getting busy," of creating her fantasy with all these crowded issues. She tells the story in her own language: a language that encompasses the mute roofs with the gathered parallel and perpendicular metal rods. The shapes transform into a forest of intertwined metal branches. The artist does not care for linearity or perfection. She tugs at the shapes, elongates the body parts, stretching the legs, the arms and the neck, and flattens the heads. She does not hesitate to add red colors here and blue pigments there into the mesh of dark metals, as if pitying the hammered material. She puts an end to the traumatic creation process with a hint of humor. Safaa plays with the rigid metal pellet, rough and sharp, that is all but smooth. She handles the metal as though it were made of warm and soft dough! She shapes it with such pleasure and laughs to hide the challenge coming from the resistance of the piled stubborn metal. The artist does not care for the rules, or for the judgment of others. She cares solely about the underlying ideas, those on the bottom like mud or silt. She focuses on those ideas, the ones about the sinking of the metal. Safaa will allow her imagination to grow and take up the space around her. She collects the critiques in her life album, as though they were stamps. She does not care about contradiction or about harmony. She cares about expressing her ideas and feeling free to do so. She is here to play with the metallic balls. She bridges the fragments with her imagination, just like the bird that caught a glimpse of the freedom in front of it and opened its wings to the wind.

Youssef Abdelke  
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