

Art Nabil Anani on 56th

Nabil Anani born in 1943 in Latroun, Palestine is one of the most prominent Palestinian artists working today. He is considered by many as a key founder of the contemporary Palestinian art movement.

Upon graduating from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Alexandria University, Egypt in 1969, Anani returned to his native country Palestine and began a fruitful career as an artist, teacher and trainer at the UN training college in Ramallah. Anani held his first exhibition in Jerusalem in 1972 and has since exhibited widely in Europe, UK, USA, Canada, Russia, North Africa, Japan and the Middle East – both as an individual artist and with groups of his Palestinian contemporaries. Anani is a multi-talented artist for he is a painter, a ceramicist and a sculptor. He pioneered the use of local media such as leather, henna, natural dyes, papier mâché, wood, beads and copper. Over the past four decades Anani has built an impressive catalogue of outstanding, innovative and unique art.

Anani was awarded the first Palestinian National Prize for Visual Art in 1997 and became the head of the League of Palestinian Artists in 1998. Upon retiring from his teaching post in 2003, Anani dedicated much of his time to voluntary pastimes such as; handling the League's activities and playing a key role in the establishment of the first International Academy of Fine Arts in Palestine – with the assistance of the University of Oslo and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Anani also won the prestigious King Abdullah II Arab World Prize for Fine Arts.

"One of the distinguishing features of Nabil Anani's work is that he combines the skills of a craftsman with the imagination of an artist." (Dr. Tina Sherwell, 2001)

Personal Exhibitions

2013	Spirits of the Land , Art on 56th Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon
2012	Land and People , Open House, Ramallah, Palestine
2007	A Journey into Script, Foyles Gallery, London, UK.
2005	Border Rituals, Peace Center Center, Bethlehem, Palestine.
2003	Khalil Al-Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah, Palestine.
2001	People and Chairs, Khalil Al-Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah, Palestine
1998	Inspiration from Palestinian Folklore, Hakawati Theater, Jerusalem, Palestine
1996	Inspiration from the first Intifada, Khalil Al-Sakakini Cultural Center, Ramallah, Palestine
1985	Al-Wasti Art Center, Jerusalem. Moved in the same year to Arts and Crafts Village, Gaza City.
1980	Paintings and Ceramics, Gallery 79, Ramallah, Palestine
1972	Oil Paintings Collection, Y.W.C.A, Jerusalem, Palestine.

Group Exhibitions

2011	Art Palestine, Meem Gallery, Dubai, UAE.
2005	Palestinian Art Exhibition, Geneva, Switzerland.
2005	Artists from Palestine, Gallery Four Walls, Amman, Jordan.
2005	Palestinian Art Exhibition, UNISEF, Beirut, Lebanon.
2004	The colors of Life and Freedom, Palestinian Artists, UNESCO, Paris.
2002	Alexandria Biennale, International Exhibition, Alexandria, Egypt.
2001-2003	Palestinian Art Exhibition, Palestinian Artists, JALA Exhibition Hall, Tokyo, Japan.
2001	Al-Sharjah Biennale, International Artists, UAE
2001	Palestinian Art Exhibition, The League of Tunisian Artists, Tunisia.
2000	Palestinian Art Exhibition, Bissan Gallery, Qatar.
1999	Palestinian Artists, Dramen Museum, Dramen, Norway.
1999	The Artists of the Occupied Lands, Jordanian National Museum, Amman, Jordan.
1995	Palestinian Subordination Day, United Nation headquarters, New York, USA.
1995	Its Possible, Palestinian & Israeli Artists, National Museum, Washington, USA.
1990	Palestinian Art Exhibition, Red Crescent, Montréal, Canada.
1990	Palestinian Art Exhibition, Parliament hall, Madrid, Spain.
1996-1989	New Vision Group, with Vera tamari, Suleiman Mansour and Taiseer Barakat, several exhibitions in Italy (Salerno), Jordan (Amman) & AL-Hakawati Theater (Jerusalem)
1986	Palestinian Art Festival, Moscow, Russia.
1985-1977	12 Local Exhibitions, Local Palestinian Artists, through the League of Palestinian Artists, Moved between several Palestinian Cities, Palestine.
1977	Palestinian Art Exhibition, moved between 8 States, United States.
1976	Palestinian Art Exhibition, Tetra Shell Castle Ship , London.

Art on 56th

Nabil Anani's Statement

Art and culture play a vital role in the expression of peoples' afflictions and their aspirations for a better life. Particularly during the recent Arab world uprisings, my mission to tackle topical issues has become more important. Social and economic injustices and the loss of dignity are among the main factors behind these uprisings which are aimed at changing, reforming and democratizing our society. The olive tree is a prominent symbol in my recent work. I use it to portray the essential cultural aspect of the Palestinian conflict resulting from the occupation. The olive tree is a major part of Palestine's culture. It constitutes the bulk of the Palestinian landscape, which has been the target of attacks by Israel. Its destruction reflects the drive to obliterate Palestinian identity, to empty and change the land and landscape. It is for this reason that I feel deep agony when I witness an olive tree being cut down, just as when a house is being destroyed.

Visions and dreams in a continually changing world, with elements in harmony with the olive tree, human figures and houses pervade my work. I aim to capture these ideas by mixing colors and textures into strong forms separated by warm shades and strong lines. I also use a knife to scalp in areas comprised of colder hues to evoke feelings that are strong and dynamic; movement, anger and sometimes tranquility. Through this experience, I hope to discover more possibilities of expression, to help me reach out to viewers and inspire them to engage with the issues related to my country. I encourage them to be as one with the movement for change, to keep pace with transformations as they take place in the Arab world.

Palestinian rights under occupation and the targeting of the people in all aspects of their daily life dominate my thoughts. I address these issues with my chosen icon the olive tree, deeply rooted as it is in Palestinian culture. As a result, I have devoted the major components of my artistic expression to its representation. With its elements distributed in various dimensions in the work's composition, I strive to create a strong unified form in its shape, color and texture separated by soft lines of bright color in dark spaces. The background is made distinctive through knife scalping, to evoke a more tangible sense of nature, such as strong winds or feelings like anguish and rage. Knife scalping creates contrasting colors which outlines the two or three dark objects in the painting. This gives complementary colors value and a dramatic feeling related to the forms rendered.

The way that spatial depth is explored in my work is neither a photographic nor 'realistic' representation of space. The one-dimensionality of my composition is quite apparent; I sometimes create this effect by focusing on large and small spaces. This is very much the case with my works based on the olive tree. My use of color remains the same, thus creating formal contradictions that aid in achieving the desired contextual impact for the artwork.

Landscape Art

The beautiful Palestinian landscape with its lush olive trees are beautifully depicted in Nabil Anani's latest work. It profoundly demonstrates the natural brilliance of our environment and the resoluteness of the Palestinian people in the face of an ongoing dehumanizing occupation. Looking at the stone houses along the hilly terraces and the firmly rooted olive trees, you won't fail to realize how resolute and consistent the people are in protecting their history, culture, beliefs and the outward look to a brighter tomorrow.

The captivating glory of the Palestinian landscape is stunningly captured with the olive trees as a constant in the face of ongoing land theft, settlements and abhorrent colonial infrastructure. These pose the greatest threat to this precious ancient terrain. The Palestinians' determination to remain on their ancestral lands in the face of constant threats is an enduring theme in Anani's work.

With Anani's landscapes, the mind is left in awe at the assimilation of the landscape, olive trees and the resolute men, women and the entire children of Palestine as shown in these masterpieces. His paintings dig deep into the Palestinian consciousness, its pride as a Nation, to the continuous futuristic march of the people as indivisible and soul-soothing landscape despite human intruders and political opportunists. That, one will positively be affected by the ever-present message in his paintings is an understatement.

Great artistic effort is deployed here to caress the inner cravings for beautiful arts while masterfully portraying the awesome Palestinian landscapes and serenity. Admittedly, the careful and well thought use of art to project what a Nation stands for, the stories from within, the non-bulging of the people towards exploiters and the values there in as a people. Colors, which depicts the, mostly undeserved difficult reality of the people, the beauty of its environment, the pride and dignity in being a Nation.

Suliaman Mleahat
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