

Edward Shahda

born in 1952 is a contemporary Syrian painter and sculptor. He began his creative journey in 1968 at the Suheil Ahdab Center in Hama before joining the Faculty Of Fine Arts in Damascus (1971-1976). He then resided at the Anatoli Klankov Atelier in Russia (1991-1992). As early as 1980 his work had been on display at numerous prestigious international solo and group exhibitions in Syria, Russia, Lebanon, Egypt, Dubai, Turkey, USA, Canada, France, Switzerland and China. Recent exhibitions include the Biennale exhibition in China in 2005 and 2008, as well as The Institute of The Arab World exhibition in Paris in 2008.

His work ranges from acrylic and oil paintings to collages and China ink on rice paper. It exposes an underlying tension in line thicknesses and colour contrast. Surfaces of strong, lively colours often fade out and blurry outlines come together to create vaguely defined shapes with colour gradation. Figurative and symbolic shapes, portraiture, and female figures are predominant.

To Shahda, the human subject is the main concern in painting, and colour treatment and juxtapositions are his preoccupation during the painting process. Figures are central to his painting. They define the expression of space and frame the meaning of "place".

Unconventional in his representation of women, the artist is also known for his ability to create vibrant and emotional images from real life scenes. He bends and sometimes breaks perspective rules in favour of strong, contrasting and dynamic colours. Contrasting colour with emotion, the artist often incorporates symbolism and mythology even when he tackles contemporary themes.

Statement

"Painting has always been my biggest concern, yet I can't pinpoint when it started to preoccupy me. It has been a necessity since my early childhood... and has remained ever since. Why painting? I simply do not know. But it drives me.

The representation of the human subject is my obsession. I've been treating it through painting and reflection throughout my lifetime. And I'm sure it will continue to be something I explore as long as I live.

Art is a playground of bliss and pain. An area of gravity and play. Across the canvas is a white space asking to be filled with one's apprehensions, thoughts and emotions.

Place and time play an important role in the creation of my paintings. The forms that I paint do not belong to a specific time. They are outside the framework of time, yet nowhere. They are often the place itself (and define it) since there is no place without form, and no form without a place.

Color is my biggest preoccupation.... For it is my only tool for expression. I take special care to prepare the color for each painting. The visual tension issued by a specific color, by its proximity to others, tempts me... I believe that a small spot of color can carry a vaster amount of drama and expression than a whole novel.

What always exhausts me are the recklessly beautiful shapes and forms spawned on canvas, violating the harmony of the rest of the fabric. So I am faced to two choices: either eliminating them, and, therefore, losing their charm, or destroying the whole work.

At the end of the day, I wipe out the defiant color for the sake of the whole, and start anew, with Sisyphean options that end only when one of us is tired... so I sigh, and from here, release the painting."

Edward Shahda, 4/10/2012

Solo exhibitions

- 1981** Solo exhibition at the Russian Cultural Center, Damascus
- 1983** Solo exhibition at the Damascus Military Housing Foundation
- 1992** Exhibition in Stavropol, Russia
- 1995** Personal exhibition in Ishtar Gallery, Damascus
- 2002** Personal exhibition at Atelier Fateh Al Moudarres, Damascus
- 2006** Personal exhibition at Atassi Gallery, Damascus
- 2011** Personal exhibition entitled "To Mahdmoud Darwich" at Tajalliyat Art Gallery
- 2013** Personal exhibition at Art on 56th Gallery, Beirut Lebanon

Group exhibitions

- 1984** Exhibition with Assem Al Basha, George Maher, Ghassan Nana at Al Shaeb Gallery, Damascus
- 1992** Exhibition with 3 Russian artists in Stavropol, Russia
- 1996** Personal exhibition with the sculptor Zaki Salam at Al Shaeb Gallery in Homes
- 1996** Exhibition with Karam Maatouk and Ghassan Nana in Al-Khanji Gallery in Aleppo, Syria
- 1998** Co-exhibition entitled "Life's Theater" in the French Cultural Center, Damascus
- 2000** Monterosa Forum in collaboration with Lebanese artists
- 2001** The Women and War exhibition at the Red Cross, Damascus
- 2001** Pinnelli, Alexandria
- 2003** 'Europe Art' exhibition in Geneva, Switzerland
- 2004** 'The Little Painting' exhibition, Souad Issawi Gallery, Jordan
- 2004** Co-exhibition in 'Dar Culture and Art' Gallery, Drousha
- 2005** Second International Biennale Beijing exhibition, China
- 2005** 4 artists exhibition in Istanbul, Turkey
- 2005** 'Little Painting' exhibition, Canada
- 2006-7** Project Tal Al Hijara (Artists' street)
- 2008** Third International Biennale Beijing exhibition, China
- 2008** 5 Syrian artists exhibition in Fort Hamilton Gallery, New York
- 2008** Camel Arts Gallery opening exhibition
- 2008** 'Damascis seen by Paris' exhibition, Institute of Arab World, Paris
- 2009** Ghayath Al Akhrass tribute exhibition
- 2009** Dubai Arts exhibition
- 2009** 'Damascus seen by Paris' exhibition, National Museum, Damascus
- 2012** Beirut Art Fair, Art on 56th Gallery, Beirut Lebanon
- 2013** Beirut Art Fair, Art on 56th Gallery, Beirut Lebanon
- 2013** Summer Collective Exhibition, Art on 56th Gallery, Beirut Lebanon
- 2013** Contemporary Istanbul, Art on 56th Gallery, Istanbul Turkey

Participated in the state's inner and outer exhibitions since 1975.

Co-designed and co-executed the Dideo and Aeneas Opera house's interior design.

Painted two murals for the Faculty of Political Science, Damascus (1987).

Executed the interior design and pavement of The Damascus Opera House.

International Biennale Beijing acquired two Shahda paintings as chosen by the organizing committee 2005-2008.

'Memory revival' exhibitions within the Damascus capital of Arabic Culture 2008 festivities.

Mural designs for the Syrian Martyrs Monument in Suwayda with a 130-m2 area executed with Mosaic in 2010 with the participation of both Ghassan Nana and Nabil Al Seman.