



Shadi Al Zaqzouq

Born in Bnghazi in 1981, Shadi Al Zaqzouq has had an unusual route, deprived from a passport and a homeland. He grew up among the Palestinian community in Libya and was expelled with his family and other Palestinian refugees right after the Oslo Accords were signed. The young man was 15 when he and his family had to flee the desert where he grew up. But, the environment in which Shadi had spent his childhood and teenage years would leave major traces on his work to come.

The double frustration of isolation, both due to the hostility of the local population towards the foreigners who were benefiting from their special status and to the geographic separation created by the desert, created an artist obsessed with the desire for freedom and encounter with the other.

Right before the second Intifada was sparked at the end of the nineties, Shadi and his family returned to Gaza, which proved to be another experience of confinement. After the borders were closed, this new situation, an echo of the first one, increased the artist's desire to escape. In 1999, he passed his baccalaureate and decided to take up musical studies, selecting the guitar as his instrument. A young graduate in classical music, Shadi became a music teacher. But, he was also a painter, and he never stopped. He found his inspiration in the streets, which he mostly roamed at night.

Surrounded by numerous friends, mainly musicians, he joined the group Windows from Gaza in 2002, and became a regular visitor to the French Cultural Centre, the one and only foreign cultural centre in the Gaza Strip. It is there that he showed his paintings for the first time, with his project *Gaza Upside Down*, which then toured Palestine. In 2006, he won the Young Palestinian Artist Award from the A.M. Qattan Foundation, followed by a six-month residency at the International City of Arts in Paris from the French Consulate in Jerusalem. His first paintings were very figurative and expressive. He also used the genre of caricature in an attempt to develop an art vibrant with comic energy. In 2010, he worked on the performance of a third Intifada. Shadi's creation then met the Arab revolutions. The religious scarecrow of Islam waved by the political class and the media, the energy of youth, and the modernity of the fight soon became the material of his new production. The work, titled generically, *USE IT GENTLY*,



Use it gently: Pencil on paper, 32 x 50 cm, 2011

has a decidedly humorous touch. His work has been shown in France and finally reached Dubai. Recently, in spring 2012, he showed one of his paintings, which was framed with a bicycle tire and displayed a woman with a bandana on her face, uncovered hair, and sharp gaze, holding bomb-painted pants in her hands and a sign written in Arabic with the motto that chased the dictators away in 2011, "Get off." The work was censored by the Dubai Art Fair and taken down without debate.

His other paintings remained in the show.

Shadi's work can now be seen as steadily moving towards more collective themes in reaction to his family status as a young father, the living conditions of a stateless people, the yearnings of a hopeful Arab youth, and the international creations spanning from the Occident to Asia, as the promise of encounters goes beyond confining identities. His creation widens as he collaborates with other artists.



Visitor: Oil on canvas, 65 Cm, 2012



Al Mutashaeh: Oil on canvas, 65 Cm, 2012



After washing: Oil on canvas, 65 Cm, 2011