

The shape of art

LAYLA HAROON (Contributor)

6 January 2008

Nabil Helou interprets his contentment using diverse forms of expression. Be it realism, figurative, symbolism or abstraction, he has not deserted any medium of expression. Yet, renowned Lebanese sculptor Nabil Helou seeks more... more impression in expression.



Nabil Helou started his artistic journey at the very young age of 10. "My drawings became more realistic, and I discovered oil painting at the age of 13," recalls Nabil. The artist was speaking to City Times while setting up his exhibition 'The Contemporary Art show - Winter 2008' at Ghaf Art Gallery.

"I began to work on wood, then on everything I saw, and then I worked with a person who taught me the wood technique. I changed a lot of material until I decided to pursue my career in art."

Born in Beit Eddine, 1969, he began assisting international painter Uguette Calan in 1994. With a diploma in Superior Studies (sculpture section) at the Lebanese Academy of Fine arts he earned another specialisation — Diploma in sculpture at the "Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Art de Cergy" ENSAC, France and in Virtual Sculpture on the computer (CD-Rom realisation) at the ENSAC, France.

Sculpturing, he believes, is his personal language that is self-sufficient and acts conclusively on its observer. The curves, volumes and carves mixed with serene ambience of liberty designs a chemistry of asceticism.

"It is a way of expressing yourself, like other artworks, but, the concept, the idea, the material and the sculptor himself makes it different from other artworks. It builds a challenge in every chisel hit," says Nabil.

"The nature and beyond, harmony and contrast, light and shadows, materials and emptiness of figures inspires me a great deal. These are well represented in my work — creating an inner dialectic dormant malleability of the materials used, whether stone, marble, concrete or resin."

Every medium, according to the artist, has something special. "With stone, you feel the wonder of creation and the pain of birth. With bronze, you feel the power of the lava. With wood, you feel the tenderness of nature. Every medium has its own language."

"It is the medium that gives sculptures an unusual feature; four-dimensionally," Nabil reveals further. "The sculptor defends a personal theory, that of the sculpture in four dimensions rather than three as is commonly admitted. The vacuity is the fourth dimension."

To fashion a structure, his attention lingers on details, which he deems swivels on every work of art. Needless to add, Nabil always begins with an idea and then searches for the elements.

In this fashion, his work starts with imagination that is a concept of a dream and goes on to sketches of an idea. Then it goes for the choice of the material, and finally, reproducing the dream into reality.

"The cosmic, the space, is the only element that is divided in the universe," he says. "It has the smallest things existing and contains everything. It has the galaxies and the atom as well. It is actually a place, where you sense yourself as a small being; and simultaneously, you feel that you are big, too. My aim is to change these shapes of elements we are used to seeing."

Withal, his composition is arranged with aesthetic intent and is further organised for the sake of communication.

"As I always work on a concept, I organise my work in order to communicate my inspiration, but all along the work, the artistry is a main issue. At the end, the sculpture has to be artistic. Nevertheless, the aesthetic is something subjective to the viewer."

A retrospective of several periods of his work, excluding the realism phase, is brought to Abu Dhabi and will be showcased at Ghaf Art Gallery in the capital. The exhibition is expected to run until January 10.

"It describes the human element along with other special and weird elements as well as water ebullition and movement," he says.

If visitors had to take away one thought after viewing his sculpture, what should it be? "Multi shapes with a common idea," he replies.

At 37, Nabil Helou brilliantly excels in his thoughts and more importantly in their realisation. His wife Zeina Basbous, daughter of the renowned sculptor Alfred Basbous, is also an artist and a graphic designer.

"A public art is something I have been working on, since a long time. I try to create a harmony, but it again depends on a base. Anyone who shares the same reflections as I do is the beholder of my work."

"Some twenty years ago, it was my dream to be famous and memorable, now I don't find it important. What is important to me is to work on myself and search for a way to express what I want. To be a part of history is only a matter of time."



WOIBEX
2008

GLOBAL
POWERFUL
BUSINESSWOMEN
& LEADERS
SUMMIT

8 - 9 March 2008
Burj Al Arab Hotel
Dubai - UAE

www.woibex.com

• DIFF In Picture

CITY TIMES

WEEKEND

COLUMNS

- M.J.Akbar
- Aljaz Zaka Syed
- Praful Bidwai
- Noam Chomsky
- Henry Kissinger
- Jonathan Power
- Tom Plate
- Virendra Parekh
- Matein Khalid
- Ramzy Baroud
- Nasim Zehra
- Prof. Tom Lambert
- P.V. Ramanathan
- Barkha Dutt
- Cherian Thomas
- Joyce Njeri