

Errors in my works turn into Beauty Hassan Sharif, a U.A.E Artist:

I spend time in Meditation, as life is a continued Meditation

By Talal Moualla

The new successive art trends appeared in Europe have achieved a lot by our having new generations that have absorbed its philosophies and lines. They assumed different slogans linked by the will for innovation...this has led to divergencies among the public opinion especially among supporters or partisans of “mental arts” of the 1960’s and 1970’s and the “romantic perplexity” of the abstract expressionism. However one should confess the existence of an acute crisis in our world that caused many abortive attempts for change. In the year 1962 wrote Marcel Duchamp a letter to Hans Richter: This “modern realism” and traditional art and installation...and so on constitute a simple means for resolving the dilemma and it feeds itself on its predecessors.

In the new realism they borrowed my new objects they found in it a new form of beauty... I have thrown my objects in their faces as a gesture to challenge them...and today they admire its aesthetic beauty. “It is art set against art – Richter” – In the 1960’s it seemed that art at least has decided to confront the problem of self-purification, excluding the strange only that has led to some of a shock society wise. The installation, the popular, environmental, the visual and the physical, all sorts of unfamiliar arts all seem to be heading towards the verge of a resolution in the form of minimal art. It seems that the latter artists have understood the far-fetched (self-estrangement) should stay as far to an extreme.”

Edward L Smith quoted the above from Greenberg in his book entitled “Post-Modernism”; that was for the purpose of emphasizing estrangement from traditional roots of arts enjoying a certain sacredness imparted to it by society... The rationale behind change in 1966’s and the following period had emphasized or expressed the struggle by the single-handed man in this world. He had to accept challenge it promises liberation for him and it assumes itself to be central for his future creations.

Sharp-edged instruments:

Hassan Sharif, studied fine art in Byam Shaw School in London, UK from end of the 1970’s up to the beginning of the 1980’s – He wrote the following testimony in the book he edited about the Emirates experience (sharp tools for creating art): “I had a feeling since 1982 that many paintings impressionistic expressionist abstract of everywhere have begun to loose their significance to me, I feel no more any visual pleasure when I see them. I felt a certain gap between painting and traditional sculpture. One should search out art in this gap, and since that moment it seemed to me that art is neither painting nor sculpture, it is “something else”. By behaving as such I tried my best to fill this gap”.

Each experience leads me to another new one, and I believe that all my works since 1982 and up to now constitute a single continued experience. Sometime I go back to some old works

that I have already displayed and I continue to complete them after coming to a stop that lasts many years... The making of these works is one repeated non-stop action, it doesn't necessitate physical power or any other body experience. We are here just in need of the movement of our fingers; this movement resembles to the one of playing a stringed musical instrument. The difference being it is played needless of any skill as you play on a single string repeatedly and in a non-stop manner.

A second advantage to these works lies in its lack of both a beginning and an end to it, so, it is in eternal continuity and it shall always resemble to the original miniature, I feel during this work that I reached a minimal degree of "attention" where art transforms itself into a "mechanical or automatic action", it is irregular, in the sense that you committed lots of errors but such mistakes are useful for the work in the end. They differ from "Systematic Art" imperfections. Systematic art is mathematical and subconscious; as for these works they were conscious and tangible as they lack the "attention" that usually accompanies any art work... This is how I feel that errors in any work turn into beauty.

These works might somehow resemble to each other but there is no duplication. Each one of them has its own specificity. It was created in its singular moment. Each needle stitch, during the perforation action to papers, differs from its predecessor because it has its own different time. imagine – for example – the movement of a sewing – machine...It is a brief and very quick movement, so, it reduces or economises time, an advantage lacking in the brush strokes when we paint, for creating 20 stitches... we just need a one second (the going up and down of a sewing-machine). But the difference between a given stitch and another is one of time, even if seen in fragments of a second.... Despite of all this I took many months time have I "lost" in producing these works?...The viewer might think that I have "lost my time", but actually people do engage and immerse themselves into daily monotonous work called as "daily duties" without thinking for a single moment that they were sometimes "losing their time"

Life is a perpetual state of meditation:

The artist Hassan Sharif continues to say "I just fix papers or imagine no more, yes I lost time in contemplating...but isn't life after all a continued state of contemplation". In this way Hassan Sharif signals his singularity or individuality in achieving his works... the call for creating ideas is the precedent that describes best his transformations. The latter have benefited from the space where it is born and from the singularity of its creator a subject that Hassan Sharif has often referred to its absence this is although reference to it is vital or inevitable for achieving the artist's career is a reflection of a strong desire for change that have reached his feelings and ideas in the western style. The second half of the 20th century was a reflection of visual and intellectual movements of minor importance, a succession of (abstract expressionism, installation, and pop art. Folk art, intellectual or mental arts, the surrealist art, modern expressionism, colour painting, op art, minimalism...) All developments that we might refer to have flourished among the above arts by juxtaposing them or intersecting with their ideas. One could not deny the natural sequence or extension of such styles is among all of its members. Refusing to do so is contrary to the logic of history and leads to unforeseen surprises. Abstract expressionism, for example, goes back to well

before surrealism (dadaism, and the visual art op art) goes back to the Bauhaus; as for traditional arts they combine the dada to the Bauhaus. So, we feel to have every right to indicate that art in its successive adventures has moved between two radical poles...in a struggle of conflicting styles and at the expense of unwanted content.

The critic and historian Eduard L. Smith, with who (I and Hassan Sharif) have met as members of the Biennial's judging committee during its 3rd session, he estimates that (the attempts made to class the art of the 1980's as "post-modernism" and not "modernism" seemed to be non convincing; and even the art that revolts against the established measures of modernism still recognizes implicitly the persistent modern tradition. As for renewal it establishes for itself a position within the large institutional framework; and the art of this era has been mainly distinguished by the wide development of ideas and not by new inventions...such an exaggerated and stagnant action gave birth to a number of very conflicting attitudes regarding both art and artists towards the end of the 20th century"

Abstract Style and Adventure:

The focus on time by Hassan Sharif out of which he weaves his visual objects that go repeating themselves (rhythm and pulse-wise) such a focus contains within itself a new imagined plan for Arab visual art work especially seen the inability of galleries to show such exceptional enthusiasm in order to urge experimentation and inventive adventure. This is particularly to address the question of social recognition to the artist, after he has took his art to outside the art scene. An artist who behaves as such is likely to confront with the surprised viewer by the scientific and technological developments – the fact that has led the artist to quit the area of creative art as a real participant turning into a fictitious practitioner of the modern creativity system. This takes place after the diversion to his memory by new technologies all while nourishing the ambition to substitute his traditional vision system by a new one that does not recommend form as an objective for art but it recommends situation, real or stipulated. The artist has grown into a creator of visual material, a key center for change and transformations as well as a father of symbols to be spread into the world of the viewer and not directly to the latter.

This is exactly what Hassan Sharif has done in building up his medium or language not just obeying to the authority of time but to the one of place "Lieu" as well. I wrote sometime ago that if we take Hassan Sharif as relying mainly on the relaxed time or vice-versa in the presentation of his works, he also relies on repetition (remaking) and prolongation of his ordinary medium that he uses. This is to be contrasted with his condensed extra ordinary language that relates his open challenge to the art scene, the viewer's culture and meaning structure in his visual language. It is in order to enhance his open vision to the philosophical aesthetics of the present and the dynamics of the future lost between production and consumption as two concepts in criticism on which the artist relies to understand the present "age" as well as the "art scene".

The "object" or "work" or "installation" created by an artist could ultimately be envisaged as a visual image no matter whether hanged on a wall or kept on floor or inside a closed tin or inside a current river or on slope of a high mountain. It is a semiotic relation based on "the

relation between subject of expression with forms of expression”, this besides the link of the two with message conveyed by that expression... This gesture or the total of gestures attempt to open the door wide to the temptation of resisting the authority of the “Lieu”.

In his continued declarations and testimonies, he used to emphasize his relegation or rejection of the painting image that turned to be a decisive refuge for expression in times of technological desertification or aridity. Such testimonies disconnect us with the destiny of painting the (visual art reference) and the first source of interpretation or understanding for the soul perplexity of which man has suffered through his civilization developments. The concerned negation comes in a compensatory Western framework lived by the artist in Europe and America. This is in order to compensate for the romantic self-charge that humanity has lost as part of the process to build a parallel life to its existence. This is not to be achieved through nature and its laws but through rules of fiction and presupposition that were open to the future and its sciences and the strict adherence or bias to the concept for ensuring a higher degree of intimacy for the enchanted aesthetic communication by dissociating itself from opportunism. However, the attitude of Hassan Sharif in addition to the influences by Western art movements and styles is indicator of a civilization crisis lived by the Arab intellectual in his present dilemma between his glories spiritual intuition and his openness to the changes of the modern era.

An Explosion of the Era:

Who could stop the link to the traditional beauty? And, is viewing art has gone archaic or outdated? Or, is art products of today express a different reality in terms of the rules that have led in the past to the creation of the known arts which have won the intimacy and sympathy of the viewer...and do works like those of Hassan Sharif modernize tastes by its departure from the traditions of displaying and viewing artworks outside the walls of traditional museums. a new vision reflecting the exiled self in its real as a result of era new complications... Art is no longer a loss since the artist represents the conscious that is appealing to the life and its love.

Man, desert and sea were three entities representing the focus of art themes in the Emirates, and all productions by Hassan Sharif and his colleagues who follow his same line, they create their own works from this reflecton, depth and infinite dimension to sea and the remote desert...Man in face of leisure time, and man in face of the deep...were such confrontations placing the artist in a severe confrontation with his desire in full awareness by their society which is heading toward consumption and post modernism as a new world...It is an attempt to revive memory and to link it to a world belonging to sea pearls and desert sand that overwhelm life.

Hassan Sharif states: My studies in the U.K have greatly influenced my art and my thought...it was in the year 1979 and I remember the first lecture in the preparatory period...I viewed slides for Van Gogh, Cezanne, the impressionists and others...and suddenly I saw works for Marcel Duchamp, and Kasimir Malevich a thing that have prompted me to interrogate myself immediately. Why do they prepare works of the sort...I started immediately my research and investigation in the works of Marcel Duchamp up to my final year and my graduation final research dealt with this also. I penetrated deeply in his works

and so I constructed by this Hassan Sharif who creates his works...Many an artist has been sent to Iraq, Egypt, Syria, America and Britain...and they returned...haven't they the right to experiment after finishing their studies and all these studies...do we just say that this art belong to the West and we should not produce or create it?

The mere questioning by some, to me, could be considered as putting obstacles in the way of an artist...they charge me always by Westernism and therefore I maintain that each artist, impressionist or another tackles ingredients of Western painting and must therefore accept that the new concepts in a work of art were after all a Western idea and we must agree to this.

A Quadrilateral Exhibition:

Regarding the rao over the a group of artists that follow the directives of his different art, he says: we haven't tried to build a group...i.e such an objective has not preceded to our existence, it is an attempt by five or six persons discussing issues on art and our interest started with my usual return for summer holidays...In the year 1983 we organized the (+ & -) Exhibition in the Ahli Club of Dubai; I was accompanied by Hussein Sharif, Abdul Raheem Salim and Abdul Latif Al Smoudi. This 4 Exhibition has witnessed the achievement of lots of works by each of us, then one should mention the Mreeja Atelier of Sharjah where I and Abdul Raheem Salim have held the One Day Exhibition this besides the presence of a group of youth for example Khalid Bader Obaid, Nujoom Alghanem, Ahmad Rashid Thani and Najji Elhai, all of them are now active in the creation and cultural scene in areas of drama, poetry and so on...We held exhibitions in the Central Market in 1984. Our activities persisted by various participations in exhibitions and biennale events abroad besides our distinguished presence in our country as well.

Art is a medium or language having its own set of symbols and meanings, and...language leads to core content and the relationship existing between form, symbol and content necessitates the use of knowledge in achieving the required harmony, otherwise the art will stay outside the realm and capacities of this language or expression... Each art has its function that obliges the artist to prefer one style to another and explore it.

In the year 1985 and 1986 I prepared some monotonous works and I produced works that seems for me to be impossible to do again. So I just keep them with me. It was all like playing on two strings in a repeated and monotonous manner. By now things are different than in the year 1986. I right now reuse old cardboard in my latest works; I picked up my material from the streets. It is a collection of "Cartons" for consumer goods, even I kept the trademarks to serve my purpose and without any deliberate reference to any – this is in order to impart them a theme and an artistic dimension. I call what I have created as objects and not installation and despite the abundance of natural environmental substances , I label what I produce as environmental art...Artist Mohammad Ahmad Ibrahim is by far closer to the environment art as he uses trees, stones and places...Also, Abdullah Al Sa'edi deals with place (a coffee house in Khorfakkan)

The Quest for the New:

Hassan Sharif continues to say: change is certainly there and it seems to be very difficult for me to tell the new in my own works, you might conclude that it remained as it is since ten years; and today you can follow the new with others like Mohammad Kazim who has dealt with the curriculum vitae and photographs...I haven't dealt with all this...The other persists on the way of renewal that I have already inaugurated. My works will be retained and I have no ambition to search for the new. The one who searches for the new has to consider the period starting the year 1983 and up to now... And since tomorrow will arrive that means I create the new; and here I must make reference to my writings and the theoretical issues of concern to me. In fact Hassan Sharif has used tins in a newly different way that has surpassed my own imagination and he ultimately displayed them in his own way... There is Abdullah Al Sa'edi, Moammad Ahmad Ibrahim and others like Mohammad Yousef and Abdul Raheem Salim who has regressed a lot by presenting works addressing no other person than himself. The prevailing is monotonous and it is in the very nature of art to go dissident and to say abnormal views; we would like to say that there is a monotonous as well as your vision. We are not in disagreement with all who despise our art; but we are fully aware that what the others despise is art par excellence and should spread it. I do actually apply all instructions for learning art by beginners in my classes; and it occurred that some have brought unsatisfactory works to be displayed and I opposed this...Another issue to be signaled out is the museum; our museum is so traditional; its building is traditional; I couldn't exhibit a work by Mohammad Kazim containing sand and earth they judged it not displayable, and we were obliged to add them new ingredients for the sake of altering the works structure... We recommend the inauguration of a contemporary museum near to this traditional museum or to build an extension it to be specified for contemporary art, to enable us to exhibit our works that do not need a nail to be hanged on wall, our artist view the "Lieu" differently and we do respect what we have, but again we are in need of natural place for our works so that the viewer does not look to them in a surprised way...Arts were not definitive and are still taking the right path.

What Hassan Sharif says is a perfect expression to the movement of the parts away from the center in the West " so that the extra-ordinary might win the recognition of the youth public where traditional art has overrun academic arts and the modern styles in art have made their return and they challenged criticism movements as mediators, and they undermined their importance as well as the critics. They called for disruption of senses and absolute belief in technology. It might well be the case that art in Europe has headed toward. Democracy since the 1960's. This is in order to leave aside its known materialism. This has caused Pierre Marcel, a French critic to call for discarding the old conception for a distinguished object that is the " luxury product" for individual use, "the artist participates in the effort to invent a new communication medium for people to use among themselves; and it is by neglecting his dual or ambiguous role of a marginal adventurer and a producer exploiting others, he, the artist, has become too ready to assume his role in a future society "that is the Leisure Management"

The Self-Debut:

Existentialism had been a human philosophy, this is according to Sartre who signaled since the year 1946 the importance of accepting the principal in his philosophy based on the idea

that “existence precedes to essence”, in other words we should start debut with the personal or self. Such a change has immediately achieved the concept of an artist’s attitude’s or stance towards both his art and his society (undertaking an existential stance) and inclination toward viewing individualism as a chief subject for art. At a later stage stressed Joseph Beuys the prominence of individualism as a theme or subject—objects attest only to their own contact more than any other thing. They were materially and psychologically interesting not in terms of form and constitution. So, Beuys is an equal to society but not part of it.

And if public is still hesitant in his regard or consideration, the works of Hassan Sharif, one should go to the style fashionable in the West and the reasons behind its popularity. And apart from the tactics used by America to overturn Europe as a traditional producer of arts, we discover that the post Second War Europe had been working hard to rehabilitate art and artists more particularly to compensate for Nazi prejudices against art!! Edward L. Smith, a critic, remarks on this aspect: “the public has been ready to welcome these exhibitions as items of aesthetic pleasure. Art has thus become a media event and part and parcel of the era press. This is in addition to the various books that have helped to enlighten the public; even art as a whole used to experience beside self-meditation, the myth of modernity inherited from pre-war time. In this way the grand international exhibitions came to be supported by states the (Venice Biennale, Youth Biennale of Paris, Sao-Polo Biennale, Documenta Castle in Germany) and they turned into a matter of pride for nations, the developing countries went in their path especially seen the regression of traditional culture in these countries that has led the intellectual to follow examples obviously borrowed by him from the European and American styles; and this is what has actually happened in Japan and South America. (Jerioshiha – atypical abstract style and the murals of Diego Rivera in Mexico)

Hassan Sharif in his reference to the importance of theoretical writings in upgrading the experiences of his group, he actually draws force and presence from the quotations he frequently cities to us referring to their impact on him. so, he wrote in the (New Art) citing Donald Judd: (Instead of the fact that critics oppose his works, he continues to produce works of rich Frankness and spontaneous compared to his abstract expressionist style. The later believes that modern works by Europeans from Cezanne to Paul Klee including the abstract style of Kandinski besides the works of abstract expressionism all create on the viewers side a bad habit that is the viewer – finds it difficult to view the world in correct way, it is because these works – the so called modern works – address only part of the eye. They encourage the viewer to think in an iconic mode and he finds it difficult to accept a modern new work, it is because he keeps thinking on theme, way of mixing colours this is even in the use of Kandinski’s works. The viewer must sacrifice these things or considerations (e.g. theme, way of mixing colours that address the eye for the sake of reaching another thing that is “rigour and spontaneity”)

Some critics consider that pre-targeting or orientation of painting to serve beauty is a way of expulsing the implausible and denial of non-sense and chaos; and it is not helpful in any way to claim that contemporary art in its essence is an attempt not to abide by any rules; it is a rational line employing an immense creative energy for the sake of reaching a higher degree of rationalism.

Works incarnating objects possess a strong power to motivate paint, shape, disposition and change as part of the aesthetic principles expressive of the spirit of the anxious time and the spirit of an optimistic era yearning towards wholeness perfection and creativity. And all that we witness right now we can describe as conform to the framework of the plausible and the capacities of artistic medium that does content itself just with splendour and sacredness but it explores the revelation and openness of the mind to all forms of expression and the latent essence or core as a result of the material apparent presence of an artwork as well the symbolic mental one nourishes our imagination.

A Journey to the Orient:

Hassan Sharif states: I resemble or liken myself to a work by Herman Hesse (The Journey to the Orient); it is group, a group of persons traveling from west to the Orient, their objective had been one; and we as a group we have set one objective before us, it is changing the persistent understanding or conception to visual art... we, in the same way as Hassan group have got one objective and each of us maintains his specificity or privacy there is the one who enjoys himself in collecting snakes, another looks for insects and third sits by the side of the River Nile to meditate...we put the stress on localization... And we could tell that we were by far the most strictly adhering ones by this localization idea as proper... the works of Alsa'edi were constituted on an indigenous or local condition (Letters of my Mother)...Mohammad Yousef and I and the rest of my colleagues were faithful to this localization and the surrounding objects to us.

Our main objective is to integrate art, poetry, drama, music, cinema, politics and works, all to be integrated into one another, we are more totalitarian when we request people to help us in achieving a work of art. This is how society can be integrated or enrolled in art... We do not isolate ourselves in our studies and ateliers...we record the real and our interaction to it is greater. Hassan Sharif pushes persistent ideas to more than trying to present a new invention and as did Andy Warhol attempt in the year 1946 (Marketing of the Ambiguous) in reference to the tendency of man towards treating art as goods or articles put in boxes; the attitude of challenge or challenging attitude towards society has never dropped from any of the mutineers who dislodged the artist from his social and existential position...The epithet of a mutineer goes with the idea of challenge that I have frequently referred to in more than one context. Hassan has also referred to it by (his) refusing professionalism in art; the only condition to be knowledge and no more. Such an attitude of challenge persists similarly in the case of artists of the Western World who urged audacity and this is why Hassan Sharif quotes Manzoni in his book (New Art): the only commonly widespread inconvenience or deficit among lots of artists is some sort of mental lack of audace and boldness and such a thing prohibits them from taking or assuming a more vital role in their art career. It turns them stupid in their lives and in turn in their work and their vision. One could say that their vision is opaque and ambiguous and it is reflected in their works. Here is the reason why their works were lacking in quality and bad”.

Requesting Hassan Sharif for a dialogue is always possible and he shows great courage in his thesis on creativity and knowledge in all its circumstances... As Hassan Sharif tests our viewing of visual art, he surprises us by keeping aloud silence, a medium of information

exchange between art and viewers..It is an exchange of secrets era...as well as of refined pure simplicity.

Al Bayan
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