

Hassan Sharif Exclusively to Al Bayan

**I refuse charging My Works as Provocative
Every Artist Lives a Dilemma, he has to confess it**

By Shahira Ahmad

He works outside the framework of a frame...he liberates himself from the rules of a painting...to freedom in creativity...he passes through a narrow space to wider fields...This is the artist Hassan Sharif who has decided to build his own specificity in another field far from painting and canvas...and he stays closer to the soul of life and its readiness using scrapes of paper or ropes, we dialogue with him for our firm conviction in his experience and its identity attempting at the same time to read his experience.

Despite of his act of breaking away from to the traditional framework of a work of art, he deliberately works to draw his own painting by using various tools and different techniques that raise many a question into the viewers mind meanwhile liberate him from stereotyped thinking or ideas about art – And in this dialogue talks Hassan Sharif about his concerns, ideas and the reasons behind ceasing to use colours. Moreover he expresses his views on his own experience and art movement at the local and Arab levels as well as its various problems.

The artist takes the written media as limited to reporting news and informing the readers that such an exhibition will be held somewhere at a given date and time...and in this framework the press is going to play a certain role. As for the talk about art in a profound manner, this is not press field, but it is the responsibility of specialized art journals and art critics...Their writings could possibly create a group taking interest in or concerned with art; and this how a criticism base could be founded...but the problem lies in the absence of a specialized journal of criticism and the educated critic – A journal entitled “Arab Arts” used to fulfill partly this role but it has ceased to appear.

-The critic's absence that you are talking about, how does it affect both artist and art?

* It is not part of the vocation of an artist to be a critic, but there is a critic (must be enlightened) to be charged with the mission of investigating a painting or work of art, and I believe that the art critic must explain and interpret a work of art and by the help of his education or knowledge he makes his work reach the public...the main condition is to be perfect and deep in his understanding.

- Do this require a critic to be an artist? In the sense of having art academic education?

* If an artist posses theoretical knowledge this allows him to review the subject of his work, its idea, style...but a talk about colours, light, shade, colours distribution and other techniques necessitates basic studies in art (and it is not a condition to practise drawing), the crises might lay here, as the absence of such a background means or implies the incapacity of a critic to communicate the enchanting Medium of art to the public, the thing that has to do with a profound consideration to such matters in psychological and philosophical terms.

- Do you think that your experience has been sufficiently commented?

* No, of course. But I am well confident that many persons appreciate my works and their significance...when I participated in the Cairo Biennial for example, someone wrote (I don't remember his name) about my works in a detailed way demonstrating his understanding to these works and their content...there are people who know but they are dispersed!

- This might be attributed to your differences with persistent views in the art scene, this might sometimes cause difficulties in understanding...or push some to resist (fight) you sometime?

* I am not a fighter and I would like to stress here that I fight nobody...I do not refuse others experiences in condition they were genuine and I might be different because I produce different works...but I am not in conflict with anybody, I view myself through others, and all my works – the last ones in particular – express or reveal me...and in each work of it I realized part of myself...I try through my works to say to people, here is me!

- Do you mean self-realization through art?

* I am present in every bit of my works...art is a dilemma...who is the artist he is the one who is aware of his implication...each artist is implicated but he is supposed to disclose this...I can not talk about the presence of a psychological or philosophical big concern...probably no...I would like here to cite for you a favourite line of poetry to me, it states “you could easily reach fiction or imagination when you imagine moon as a piece of green cheese”

- It is the desire for distinguishing oneself that has pushed you to search in a new field and experiment in new lands?

* Yes, an attempt for distinction and forming my own self identity. The identity of an artist implies his style in using colours differently...in millions of ways leaving no new method for applying colours, and in this I am not a new comer but there were others who preceded me...There had been Marcel Duchamp, for example, who started the idea of dropping the traditional painting or artwork; and in his talk about sculpture, he interrogates himself as to why do we consider the sculpture work (a piece of stone) shaped by a sculptor to be a sculpture work and forget to call a sculpture the little pieces left over by the artist? This is a key question that I remember; and finally I do not confirm these experiments to have roots and not being new.

- But such available and existing objects attract the attention of no body, so how could they be of importance?

* I used to discuss this with Abdul Azziz Jassim, a friend, and the mission of a sculpture (a potter) was at the center of our conversations; actually, the potter who makes a narrow-necked

pot is the one who sees what is inside it; of course if we like to see inside it we must break it and by then we get no pot anymore!

- Your works were judged as ambiguous, provoking the fact that renders them impossible to understand or appreciate by the public...what is your comment on this?

* A viewer must reach a stage to appreciate fine art, I believe that things are clear, but the public does not take the pain of trying to understand them. Moreover, I feel puzzled to see a person degrading himself to a point of declaring not to understand a heap of ropes...

Many believe me to be a provocative man and they link this to Dadaism...I refuse this, I am not so, but that I raise questions or interrogations, this is good in itself. Each work of art must do the same.

- And what about the local fine art movement and how do you view its development. And has it established for its own characteristics or features?

* There is local fine art, in the sense of getting exhibitions, and it is known the date of the first exhibition, when and by who...all this is documented and clear.

- This is from the formed point of view, what about quality?

* There is art recording for environment and heritage, many an impressionistic, symbolic or abstract good works were there. More recently we note the presence of significant art experiences more particularly among serious young artists, to conclude one could note the presence of a developing art movement that adapt local art to the real through descriptive works.

-Is this quite enough? Does the artist content himself with describing real life, paint a boat, a camel, or is there a modern way of treating matters?

* Having in mind the experience of the latest group to debute, one could note their hold on modernity; they own knowledge and deal with art on this basis. May be they are possessing a memory through which they attempt to reconstruct or repair the original.

On the other side that there are endeavours to take these beginnings to a specific identity; This does not exist at present in neither local nor Arab level.

Regarding the concerns of local art, they were many; I would like only to focus on exhibitions, their ways of organization to appeal to institutions to take more precautions in choosing what to be exhibited for viewers; and what worries me is that some names should be cancelled from the art scene, because it jeopardizes art movement and even destroy it; and this is absolutely inefficient...it is of importance to decide on what to be displayed or presented and such a choice does not exist now.

- Do you believe in the ability of institutions to decide?

* In the present time no but few attempts exist, and they may bear some fruits in the future.

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Translated by Dr. Hassan El-Rayah