

## **Hassan Sharif: I am the only realist of the Arab World Artists.**

**One of them has accused him of isolation from his Environment and the Real.  
The Majority praised his Experience.**

**By Adil Khuzam**

In the halls of the Sharjah “Expo Centre” have met a group of renowned artists in the U.A.E, The Arab world and others. Their presence was due to participation in the activities of the Sharjah International Art Biennial. All of them have had the opportunity to acquaint himself with the experience of Hassan Sharif, one of the best artists of the United Arab Emirates who won the Jury Award of the Biennial.... Meanwhile Hassan Sharif briefly narrated his experiences reminding his listeners with his various stages and he showed some slides beside giving technical details on each of his works.

The experience of Hassan Sharif gives rise to many questions on the feasibility of art. His works seen as strange were behind the charge of distancing himself from treating the real and its problems or belonging to it. This is instead of the fact that he repeatedly said in public qualifying himself as the only realist artist of the Gulf Area if not of the whole Arab world... The pictures that he has shown contained very special works e.g. a few perforated or stitched papers. The entire group is put in a sack or he uses or cloth pieces, ropes and newspapers and so on, all arranged in an unstable style. They represent the outcome of the artist’s experience in the era of changes in the concept of an artwork. He also resorted to more serious issues or points in the question of the concept of art and its feasibility. The stage of canceling the painting concept in the personal experience of Hassan Sharif started with his early refusal or abstinence to put a frame to his works and he moved a step further to cancel it wholly. And he displaced the display area from wall to floor as obviously seen in his last works.

In face of such quantity of questions the discussion meeting with him is inevitably full of question marks and surprises as well... Some people have evoked his experience with much admiration; they belong to the class of intellectuals, great artists and scholars. Others have charged him with distance from reality and blind revolt...In both cases the response of Hassan Sharif had been very spontaneous and highly informed...Nawaf Yunis, a story writer, inaugurated the discussion meeting by raising his question: we are well aware of biases against artist forms as well as departures from the stereotyped or typical and the readymade but you have destroyed completely such a bias; in your view why does this happen in art?

Hassan Sharif: A big prejudice was done to art since Cezanne’s stage and his followers. And instead of being affected by Van Gogh or others the artists came to undergo influences of writers and poets. From that time on a big change took place in the life of art - a change from the visual pleasure to intellectual pleasure. This has resulted in not caring for form or a fixed proto-type or example in the act of highlighting art or beauty. Therefore Rimbaud and Baudelaire grew to be very influential in art.

One among the audience asked Hassan Sharif about the intention behind his works, is he keen to create communication between himself and the viewer or does he only mean to create a

shock...Hassan answered: "I never tried to produce a shock for the viewer... As for the question on communication, I believe that any such communication needs a medium or language to impart intellectual joy to the viewer and in the absence of such a language viewer could not fully appreciate any painting or work of fine art... I mean by language the viewer's background culture on art and works of artists as Marcel Duchamp and others. And if a reader lacks such knowledge that implies the existence of a gap he should fill in order to respond positively to the visible artwork in front of him.

A question by a French artist: what is the principal underlying idea and content in your works and do they have a cultural link with the area...I couldn't understand the link between your works and French poets and do you like to highlight your native heritage...?

Hassan Sharif: I used to paint till I discovered to my surprise Marcel Duchamp and I got much interest in his works. I read about his career and the way he presents or displays his works. I discovered his closeness to Rimbaud and Baudelaire... My link came through my knowledge of this artist as well as others. There were many Western figures, but I was affected mainly by the Modern West Art. This does not imply that Modern art could have no link to environment. On the contrary it has gone bankrupt after impressionism and it began to search for new modes of expression in cultures of other nations. So it is a hybrid forms of art that could inspire itself from various sources and settings and any artist has the right to use them.

A Romanian artist mentioned: I feel glad to discover Hassan Sharif in these works. I experience moments of great creative tension and unlike others I do not judge them to be distant from the immediate local environment; and if we mediate the work of another artist Gaodri a Spanish, who succeeded in creating superb time using superb media or substances. This is the way I view Hassan Sharif has done similarly.

Dr. Yousef Aydabi talked about Hassan Sharif's experience calling it to be "unusual" in a society where modernity and modern culture seem to be unusual... He described such an experience as having its source in the real, emphasized that Hassan Sharif started his career a conventional artist then he developed his art following his studies, then came maturity stage then modernity; and he is one of the first to form a special school intended to teach the young in one of the Ateliers. One of these groups of students won the award of Muscat Biennial for youth. What he builds as an artist. Could be seen as a sign of modernity challenging to the traditional as well as the contemporary intellectual. Again and through such a prospect, as Dr.Aydabi states, we donot believe Hassan Sharif to be a derailed unusual artist. And what is the so-called new revolt dissidence?

A question by one of the audience: I was surprised by the content of your works...Do you estimate it to be a rebelled act and what type of modern dissidence?

Hassan Sharif: This is not an act of rebellion or dissidence I do not paint or make a painting but just arrange manually or hand made objects ...there were no colours or the like. This is not rebellious but some sort of art moving from the concept of a painting or artwork and I never entertained the idea of giving a little for my works.

Another question by one of the audience...do you intend to alter the nature of your substances and is there any sort of intimacy between you and the time period in which you work? Hassan Sharif: concerning the dream side...I am not a surrealist, but I just dream and keep my dreams to myself. In a previous time I mentioned that through these work I might be the only realist artist in the Gulf Region if not the entire Arab world. I choose my works in a very simple way and display them in a simple way as well. As for time, art for me is a decision... I decide to produce and I do not wait till the idea intervenes; and the artist who manipulates colours feels great joy during his work hours as colours have a magic of their own when mixed. But I don't need such joy, my joy is when a viewer stops in front of my works.

Time pre-requisites have caused questions and dialogue to stop. The last part of the discussions centered on the same question of the realism and non-realism of this artist.

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**Translated by Dr. Hassan El-Rayah.**