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An Interview with Lebanese artist, Pascal Hachem, from London's Selma Feriani Gallery, Art Dubai 2013

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JS: When and how did you decide you wanted to be an artist? What was it like growing up in Lebanon, personally and artistically, and why did you leave?

PH: No decision in being an artist or not, simply doing what I felt the need to do.

And maybe Beirut was the one to push me to do and say what I have to say...

To face things instead of neglecting them,

It was simply a "Need",

the need to venture beyond the shelter of my university and confront the reality of the city's state of affairs. I was inspired by aspects of everyday life in the city, which tend to contextualize my way of thinking so that they influence my work in an unconscious way that I cannot escape. I don't impose any set of rules upon myself, but rather prompted by nothing but a single impressionable moment, to produce. As a result, using various mediums, including my own body and elements and forms of everyday life.

Oh! I am based now and here in Beirut!

I didn't leave on anytime - the only times was leaving for a short period in order to accomplish my mission and going back, like intervening with my project or , I did my study here and I am struggling with my everyday life here in Beirut like any citizen...

JS: What artists, movements, or schools have had the most impact on your work?

PH: The real impact came from with my confrontation with: social and political situation in my everyday life in Beirut.

JS: Describe the thinking that went into the three pieces you're showing at Art Dubai. What's the English translation of the Arabic printed (on what appear to be disks of bread) for Aysh? (Please translate "Aysh" as well.) What's your general intention that went into the series, "No Condition is Permanent" from which is comes? Likewise with "My Martry...No My Matyr." How does it fit into its "Beliefs in Self-Deception" series?

Finally, "From Dawn to Dusk," why include lipstick that looks like blood-dripped bullets? Is there any significance in the way you've arranged them, face down, in that particular linear squiggle?

PH: Aysh: This public intervention was inspired by wordplay, specifically the notion that citizens live on law, "Aysh al-Qanun" in Arabic. "Aysh" literally means "to live" but in popular usage 'aysh can also mean "bread." This play on words transforms the original rather abstract expression into "Bread of Law," which is at once more mundane and more poetic. A way of expressing this bon mot artistically was to take several loaves of Arabic flatbread and stamp them with the slogan "Aysh al-Qanun."

No condition is permanent: works created in Amman, under the theme "no condition is permanent." All these pieces work with public space and food as metaphors of inclusion, national and otherwise.

on one level, these messages were my reading of Amman and how people are trapped within the Hashemite authoritarianism. Individual messages were meant to read like legal injunctions, while, as a group, the banquet's messages could be seen as a kind of legal code encouraging the citizenry to accept the status quo.

"Beliefs in Self-Deception" series: the title seem to be bold and delicate in terms of content - beliefs is very personal but "here" it is a life style... anyway so the general idea came from the idea of the "arm" (weapon) power, and how they exist out of nowhere in our context, they say for us we manage to have them in very discreet manner,

one of these examples is "fajir 5" is a 6.7meters rocket transported to Lebanon and Ghaza and they can reach a long distances so this why the raison to have them, to reach the center of the enemy!

in order to have conflict you need to have two opposing sides,

in order to have it this way you need to "feed" the other in order to keep a raison why you are in conflict with them...

so "from dawn to dusk" serving the "fajir 5" on a used tray like table used in our areas to welcome friends, this long rocket has these colours gold and red head,

"offering" is when you receive - since they feed us with few items but in parallel they destroy our countries completely (example summer 2006 war in Lebanon)

but we are so proud to say "we won"...!

"we are so proud to send one rocket"....! but in parallel we receive thousands in one shot, downward direction as a receiving gesture,

So wining is a will - that follow us in whatever we do even when the city is destroyed,

This will reach the martyr, opposing is always the other side even if we are all Lebanese, believing that he is "ours" will makes it as a competition to simply "declare this is belong to us" as simple as is, the martyr is an object to deal with by pulling and pushing arguments... "My Martyr...No My Matyr."

JS: Is this work any different than the work you've done for your current show in London at the Selma Feriani Gallery? Does it follow your same thought process, are there any departures?

PH: Yes same direction - pointing same issues differently - elaborated to understand the link between the lipstick and beauty idea and resistance...

JS: Do you consider yourself a Lebanese artist, an expatriate artist or a global artist? Why or why not?

PH: My work and the city are highly integrated. In Beirut, life goes on from one day to the next without the knowledge of what tomorrow will bring. Therefore, my perception of the future and its uncertainty defines the transitory nature of my work, so that a piece has fulfilled its purpose once is it exposed and the message is conveyed. This transient feature can be considered to be motivated by the instinct of survival during a politically volatile time in Beirut when artwork was often requisitioned by the authorities. For example, Protesting against the political situation in 2003, performance "01-02" lived only for 24 hours.

JS: As an artist, how do you differentiate, if you do indeed differentiate, between an art fair, a biennial, and a one-person show at a museum? I'm thinking in terms of prestige, branding, sales, and dialogue.

PH: Anyway each project for me is unique and I have to deal with it following certain criteria, Mainly context and type of public...

JS: What are your impressions and thoughts on the international art world? On the Middle Eastern art world? In 2013, does art have a purpose in local, regional, and global society?

PH: Art is becoming more and more for an elite - for selective public - for selective titles,

Plenty of theory and less of application which makes the art world with plenty of coding system and we are loosing the tangible aspect to do and change things with art!

JS: Do you pay attention to art criticism, about your work or in general? If yes, do you think it orients people's thoughts and feelings about the world in which they live? And, if yes, does it have any retrospective impact on your own work?

PH: Yes i pay attention on this when I have the chance to,

But people have the tendency to applaud more and more these days anything they see since they forget that Art has a purpose to change things and say things.

JS: What are you working on now?

PH: Public intervention in the north of Lebanon in April,

Building a piece for the collection of the Yacht Club in Beirut,
Group show in Beirut in July,

Participating in "Jeux de la Francophonie" that will happen in Nice - France,

And my solo show "Federica Schiavo Gallery," end of September, Rome - Italy.

"From Dawn to Dusk"

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