



# Time Lapses

By Manar Harb



The Gregorian calendar is reaching the end of its 2014<sup>th</sup> year. Once the Chinese year wraps up, we will transition from Year of the Horse to Year of the Goat, an Earth element, driven by eight. Compared to the Hijri timeline, we are between Muharram, Safar, and Rabi Al-Awwal, 1436 years after Prophet Muhammad immigrated to Medina from Mecca. Peace be upon the souls of all our Prophets, our ancestors. When I think about time, my clock takes me back twenty years. Younger self, over a hilltop in a small village, wandering for hours, gazing at the horizon. Looking with admiration at the leaves of fine grass, my eyes take me up 30 metres to a rustic brown. These leaves are stiff and dusty, they lean towards a light-hazelnut colour. I have seen them in luscious green. They vary, depending on the seeds.

Leaves come in a variety of shapes, textures, and colours. Some have triangular curves, like the large forest-green leaves of fig trees, which do not change colour. And some have sharp edges and come in different tones, like the leaves of cypress and pine trees. They appear gold in winter. The leaves that grow on flower stems remind me of teardrops: two lines connect at the tip, emerge from nature's inner force. They also stay green, all year long. The genetic selection of plants is very diverse. Travelling introduced me to several kinds of leaves, trees, and flowers. The fall is distinct for leaves. Thankfully, we are in the rainy season. Water drizzles, after a full cycle of dew, vapour, clouds and thunder. Is that a year or a moment?

Here in Oakland, the Oak Tree is very significant, kind of like the Olive Tree in Jerusalem. A strong bright-green large tree with a wide trunk and thick roots to withstand the weight and size of its



*Fleeting Moment from Present Danger, by Zachary Greer, 48 x 36, acrylic on canvas.*

leaves and branches. Understanding trees is important for understanding our environment. When I walk by and observe the landscape of the Americas, I see many parallels, biologically, with our narrative. The language of the Universe speaks the loudest. We are surrounded by life and death. Constantly moving objects, matter, particles, engage and interact. Energy is exchanged. Things are happening!

## Facing death

A big polar bear jumps out the window with an uproar. His claws can snatch your head off! But he looks worn out and tired. His mouth dangles open and his eyes roll up!

"The bear is symbolic of the degradation of our planet and its resources. The polar is an extremely endangered species living on ice-caps and limited food supply!" said Zachary Greer, the artist, when I asked him about his painting.

"The Present Melting the Yet to Be. I sense the boy's degradation from his posture," I replied.

Sitting on a bombshell, he appears dressed in black shorts, suit jacket, and tie. He rests his tilting head on one hand, while the right one holds the gun.

"The children in the painting derived from a reference photo from World War II," Zachary adds. Beside him, two girls, around the same age, sit with tears in their eyes.

I remember him saying something about deriving the image for the boy in his painting "Fleeting Moments from Present Danger" from a photo. The reason I noticed the painting is because it reminded me of the photo I saw of the four boys who were spotted by the shore of Gaza on July 7, 2014 A.D. Those four boys don't stop running. "I believe it was Afghanistan," he answers. "I want you to know that you are in my heart. I make art, attend rallies and protests, and keep up on current events in honour of your people. I hope that someday soon there will be a way to freedom and independence for the people of Palestine."

Thoughts about death continue. I imagine life.

Starting with soft leaves, and becoming crisp.

Transforming from luscious, to rustic.

Holding on so strongly

Falling so gently

Swerving with the wind

Moving with the tide

In vibrations: sounds, rhythms and vibes



*The Present Melting the Yet to Be, by Zachary Greer, 36 X 72 Acrylic on canvas.*

Friction  
with the ground  
Life makes noise!  
Death makes noise!  
Which is louder?

### To my classmate Mira

I miss you!

Your picture reappears in my mind  
and in my heart too. Remember at the  
Friends, we made peanut butter and  
chocolate mix, barely ate two spoons!  
Or when we took the yearbook pictures,  
Miss Vera, your mom, pulled your pink  
head-strap and put it on mine! We  
looked so funny then! I can see you  
smiling! A candle for you is lit for life.  
Two flowers from my back garden,  
picked one for yesterday and one for  
tomorrow. Love, م.

### Seeing life

A bang on a metal plate makes a sound  
and emancipates. "Music," Gibran  
Khalil Gibran says, "is soft melodies  
coming to life, over the pages of  
memory, hours and hours of sadness  
and sorrow, if they were sad, or hours  
and hours of clear moments and joy, if  
they were happy."

Happy or sad, sorrow or joy, the rhythm  
takes on.

### Friday, November 7, 2014 A.D. 14 Muharram, 1436 A.H.

Big sculptures of Africa fill OMI Gallery.  
Words scribbled on paper and canvas,  
Black, Queen, King, Hip-hop. Outside  
in one of the main rooms, colourful  
portrait-like paintings smile. "Live  
Cultures," a solo-exhibition by Githinji  
Wa Mbire, otherwise known as Omiroo,  
sits at the Impact Hub Oakland, from  
November 7 to 28. The yellow, blue,  
and green colours are fierce. First  
in the mother piece, a drawing of a  
symbolic rice bean turns to be the  
face of a grandmother peeking inside,  
checking up on her sons and daughters.  
"How long have you been constructing  
sculptures of Africa?" I asked him.  
"About ten years."

"Did you start drawing Africas and then  
constructing them, or did the process  
happen the other way around?"

"At first I drew them very abstractly.  
Then one night, I was walking in West  
Oakland. I passed by a tree, stopped,  
and decided to climb up. The point  
where I stood was very high, kind of  
dangerous actually! I looked down and  
saw scattered wooden pieces on the  
ground in the shape of Africa. So I went  
down, picked them up, and made my  
first Africa sculpture!"

Omiroo is an Oakland-based Kenyan  
artist, Africa sculptures have become  
part of his signature work. He makes  
them in various sizes and has produced  
multiple series, both in drawing and in  
wood. He collects organic materials  
from his environment and reuses  
them in his pieces. Cans, street signs,  
stickers and ice-cream sticks are  
examples of items he has recycled. In  
2014 A.D., he returns to drawing on  
paper and evolves his portraiture and  
figure drawing style. His generous use  
of colour does not change. When I ask  
him about pain he says, "Just the way  
people treat each other. It's sad to see  
people everyday, and everyday we greet  
them, but they don't look up or try to  
connect on a human level!"

When I ask him, "What keeps you  
happy?" He says, "The sun, the  
children, love! I am in love with my  
work and I am in love literally! Simple  
things really! Good food, my mother,  
home. I haven't seen my mother for a  
long time. She keeps me happy!"

### Hope

In Arabic the two words are closely  
related. They contain the same letters:  
Alef, Mem, Lam, AML, أمل (Hope), light  
with the accent. Alef, Lam, Mem, ALM,  
ألم (Pain). Mem, Lam, Alef, ML2, ملأ  
(Saturated). There is no life without  
death, and each is equally mysterious!  
Equally beautiful! We are somewhere  
in between at all moments, in each



*-Wedding Day- Rabie Dabit  
to Natoos Ibrahim 11 June,  
2011- In Loving Memory of  
Mira Dabit (September 11,  
1985-December 15, 2012).*

2014

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clock takes me back twenty  
years. Younger self, over  
a hilltop in a small village,  
wandering for hours, gazing  
at the horizon. Looking with  
admiration at the leaves of fine  
grass, my eyes take me up 30  
metres to a rustic brown. These  
leaves are stiff and dusty, they  
lean towards a light-hazelnut  
colour. I have seen them in  
luscious green. They vary,  
depending on the seeds.

time lapse. There are billions of human  
beings breathing, breeding, making  
love. We learn from animals, squirrels,  
sheep, and turtles. Like birds, we have  
wings. When hungry, we sing; when  
sad, we dance! Protected by the sun  
and moon, we feel great. Our parent  
planets know the run, they spin in  
power and confidence; feel no pain.  
Feel. Hope.

*Manar A. Harb is a contributor to This  
Week in Palestine.*

-Ref: Al Green, ^ Lets Stay Together, ^ 1972. Sade,  
^ Feel No Pain, ^ 1992. Gibran Khalil Gibran,  
^ Music ^ 1905.