

ARTIST
OF THE MONTH

Yazan Ghareeb



"In Syria in 2006, I was waiting for my parents to call and tell me that the money transfer was completed, so that I would be able to buy the colors I needed to finalize my painting of the great dramatist William Shakespeare's King Lear. I was frustrated and angry, smoking shisha and drinking my cup of coffee. While I was waiting, my cup of coffee spilled over the sketch I had worked on overnight, making my hard day complete. So I decided to take a break from waiting and go for a walk. When I returned, I found that the coffee had dried, and I loved the brown color on my sketch. So I started putting more coffee onto my brush to create more

layers of different shades of brown. My first coffee painting turned out to be to a marvelous work."

Palestinian artist Yazan Ghareeb, originally a refugee from Jerusalem, currently lives in Dheisheh Refugee Camp near Bethlehem. He began drawing at the age of eight, taking his inspiration from his surroundings – animals, fruits, flower vases, etc. Later on, he joined Khaima Cultural Center in the refugee camp and followed the guidance of his schoolteacher at UNRWA's Dheisheh primary school.

His parents believed in his talent but continued to emphasize the importance of Yazan's studies that would lead him to a traditional profession. Nevertheless they encouraged him to participate in the first exhibition that was organized by his school in cooperation with Hebron Polytechnic University when he was 14 years old. Yazan continued to draw and participated in several exhibitions in high school. He was especially distinguished at drawing faces and natural landscapes.

After finishing high school, Yazan decided to develop his talent and continue his studies by combining art

and theater through the design and painting of theatrical scenery. He completed his bachelor's degree in scenography at the Higher Institution for Arts and Music in Damascus.

Back in Palestine, Yazan began to participate in international and national exhibitions. The most striking feature of his art is how he uses raw and simple materials. He draws murals, portraits of well-known personalities such as the late president of Palestine, Yasser Arafat, Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Darwish, and others, in addition to scenes from nature and from his immediate surroundings. In some instances, he uses unusual tools such as toothpicks instead of a paintbrushes.

In addition to his creative work, Yazan teaches drawing and painting in various schools and centers in Palestine, to share his experience and talent with children and adults, hoping to provide them with opportunities he did not have when he was young.

Yazan most recently participated in the exhibition *Nakhet al-Rooh* (Flavor of the Spirit) in the Russian Center for Science and Culture in Bethlehem in April 2016. His exhibition included 17 paintings of subjects taken from the ancient history and heritage of Palestine and of other countries that he considers sisters to Palestine, such as Russia. The works were painted on paper or poster board using his nontraditional medium of Arabic coffee. At present Yazan is preparing 30 paintings for his second exhibition of coffee works that will be held during the First Festival of Cultural Tourism in Bethlehem in September 2016.

Yazan's work is not limited to painting; he is also involved in acting and theatrical directing, and has played a distinguished role in Palestinian, Jordanian, Syrian, French, and Swedish artistic productions.

