

Artist of the Month

BASHAR KHALAF

By Eid
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Born in Ramallah in 1991, Bashar Khalaf is a promising young talent on the Palestinian art scene. Having obtained a bachelor of fine arts degree from Al-Quds University in Abu Dis in 2013 (where he studied under Sliman Mansour), Bashar won the Young Artist of the Year Award (YAYA) of the A.M. Qattan Foundation in 2014 and the Ismail Shammout Award in 2015. In 2018, the Palestinian Ministry of Culture granted him the State Order of Honor for a Young Artist. In 2019, he was among the fifteen artists chosen to create and present a portrait for the exhibition *Assassination ... The Intellectual Martyrs of the Palestinian Revolution* (presented by TWiP in February 2019).

From 2014 to 2016, Bashar participated in several art workshops and exhibited his work at Al-Mahatta Gallery in Ramallah. Sixteen new paintings in the series *A Shadow of the Shadow* were presented in a solo exhibition at Gallery One, Ramallah, in 2016. In addition, he has participated in numerous group exhibitions, such as the *Opening Exhibition* at Gallery One, Ramallah, in 2014; *Perspectives* at Zawyeh Gallery, Ramallah, in 2015; and The Palestinian Art Court–Al Hoash Auction at the Executive Club in Ramallah in 2015. Internationally, his works have been presented at the Frauenmuseum (Women’s Museum), Bonn, Germany, in 2013; at Supermarket–Stockholm Independent Art Fair, Sweden, 2015; and in the exhibition *Suspended Accounts* at The Mosaic Rooms in London, United Kingdom, in 2016.

The six-month process involved in winning YAYA was decisive, shaping Bashar’s orientation and confirming his decision to turn his passion into a profession. He initiated the collection *A Shadow of the Shadow*, creating works that John Halaka described as “an admiring elegy to Mansour’s massive influence on contemporary Palestinian art ... [yet] also ... a

declaration of independence from the work of an iconic master and his influence on a generation of visual artists.”ⁱ While referencing works by Mansour, Bashar’s paintings are spare and lack the abundance of symbols that permeate Mansour’s works.

Titled *In Search of a Portrait*, Bashar’s second collection examines transformations in Palestinian history by focusing on popular visual symbols and their related connotations at different times. Yet, in parallel, he searches for his role as an artist while the Palestinian cause experiences significant transformations. Bashar experiments with a variety of materials and presents his works in five sets, each examining a different visual form, including a set that digs into his own portrait.ⁱⁱ

The collection *Protective Shield* tackles the theme of resistance against the occupation.

Bashar connects abstraction not to the visual image but to a way of thinking and to its utilization in expressing a political, social, and economic reality. He is considered prominent among the few young artists who practice their art on a solid intellectual foundation.



ⁱ John Halaka, “Meditations from the Shadows of History: Reflections on paintings from the series *A Shadow of the Shadow* by Bashar Khalaf,” available at <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/33078/Meditations-From-The-Shadows-of-History-Reflections-on-Paintings-from-the-series-%E2%80%9CShadow-of-the-Shadow%E2%80%9D-by-Bashar-Khalaf>.

ⁱⁱ “In Search of a Portrait,” Zawyeh Gallery, available at <https://zawyeh.net/in-search-of-a-portrait-by-bashar-khalaf/>.



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

You have stood by us in
the past...it is time for
This Week in Palestine
to stand by you



Hoping that together
we'll overcome this
difficult period and get
back on track