

## Adania Shibli: A Decade of Palestinian Artists in Paris



A piece by Hani Zorob titled: A Long Egyptian Series.

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**The award-winning Palestinian novelist Adania Shibli interviewed 15 up-and-coming Palestinian artists for her new book, *Hirak, or Movement*.**

**Jerusalem** – Between 1999 and 2009, 15 Palestinian artists passed through the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris (CIAP), which offers residencies to artists from around the world to work in the city for a period of two months to a year.

This is where Palestinian novelist Adania Shibli got the idea for her latest book, *Hirak*. Using

video conferencing, she interviewed the group of Palestinian artists who were offered residencies at the CIAP.

The book, available in both Arabic and French, probes questions at the heart of the Palestinian experience such as occupation, exile, and the state of constant movement to which the artists are subjected.

The Palestinians featured in the book are sculptors, painters, and installation and video artists. One of them is painter Hani Zorob, born 1976, whose experience in many ways captures that of a new generation of Palestinian artists.

None of these instructors critiqued my work based on its appearance – they took it easy on me because I was a Palestinian student.

“My place of birth in the Rafah refugee camp in Gaza greatly influenced my life overall. Growing up during the first intifada, the resources available to a child interested in art were very limited,” he said. “My canvas was the walls of the city, especially on national occasions. My tools were either a pencil or the shabby wax crayons distributed by UNRWA.”

He remembers being overwhelmed the first time he entered an art store in Paris. “I didn’t buy anything because there were so many things I hadn’t seen before and had no idea how to use them.”

As for Shadi Zaqzouq, born 1981, he raised the issue of how foreign audiences tend to interact with Palestinian art as “political production.”

He began to think about the issue after successfully selling every single one of his pieces displayed at his exhibit titled “Merely a Dream.” When he discovered that most of his works were bought by people who actively support the Palestinian cause, it made him wonder whether this meant that he was a good artist.

Artist Majd Abdul-Hamid, born 1988, had a similar experience while attending the International Academy of Art in Ramallah.

“I noticed there were a lot of foreign artists who come to work with students at the academy due to the fact that we are Palestinians,” he said. “None of these instructors critiqued my work based on its appearance – they took it easy on me because I was a Palestinian student.”

This article is an edited translation from the Arabic Edition.

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