

# INSIDE THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

FEATURE: MALLORY WILSON-DEGRAZIA. PHOTOGRAPHY: AMER SWEIDEN

## GEORGES BASSIL

This month self-educated Lebanese painter, Georges Bassil displays his latest portraits in his 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary showcase at the Orient Gallery.

- **Place of birth** Beirut, Lebanon
- **Studio location** Shmeisani, Amman
- **Formal education** Georges Bassil was born with an instinctive ability to take the mundane and make it beautiful. This is why he cannot pinpoint the moment when he realised he wanted to pursue a career in art. He has been creating his whole life – capturing emotions and feelings on canvas – and it was only logical that he would eventually become an artist.  
At the age of thirty, the self-taught painter decided he was ready for his first exhibition. He held his premier showcase in his home city of Beirut and his works were very well received. It was after this exhibition that Georges began to pursue a career in art full time.
- **Type of art** Georges' paintings are dominated by the human form and are characterised by the presence of meek figures juxtaposed with simple and often bleak backgrounds. "The background for me is irrelevant. Sometimes I use black, white or red, but most importantly there are no details behind the silhouette. It is the person which evokes my interest; it is the figure that is most important," the artist explains.  
New to his works this year is the recurring red bloom. Red symbolises love and passion, an idea that Georges includes in his otherwise bleak portraits in defiance of the current disheartening world situation. His figures are literally draped with blankets of flowers perhaps hinting at the protective shield that love and hope provide.
- **Artistic process** The artist doesn't have a defined process for his work, but in Amman, his adopted home city, he can hear himself think. He finds that his inspiration comes in an instant and presents itself in a variety of forms, but he needs to be in the tranquility of Amman to hear it. The artist works



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from his home studio, surrounded by his favourite pieces, which both inspire and encourage him to continue creating. His pieces are strongly influenced by his state of mind and he aims to reconstruct his emotions on the canvas.

- **Next exhibition** Georges' upcoming exhibition, *Love in a Time of Darkness*, which marks his 20<sup>th</sup> year as a professional artist, will run from May 19<sup>th</sup> until June 11<sup>th</sup> and will be held at Orient Gallery. "This exhibition will be similar and different from my previous exhibitions. I will continue with the same subject, but there will be a happier mood to this work," the artist discloses. "This showcase is very personal. My 'sentiment' is very different now than before and I believe people will see this in my work. I hate the current situation in the world; People are becoming more fanatical, more racist only in a modern way. I try to push these thoughts from my mind when I work and attempt to make something different, something more positive. I want to draw people, love and flowers. I insist. I will not put the war or this bitterness on a canvas."
- **Inspired by** The artist is inspired by "music, movies and dancers", which shows in his lyrical works. To set the mood, he paints with music or a good film in the background.
- **Interesting detail** His works are known for their contrast of thick, textured brushstrokes with delicate and expressive subject matter. He is most intrigued by the female form, but occasionally depicts males and landscapes. Most important are the feelings conveyed by his models. These figures are distant and indifferent to the gaze of the viewer, but express emotion through large, dark eyes.
- **Advice to young artists** The artist is not keen on giving advice to aspiring artists as everyone's experience and talent is so varied, but he thinks that Amman is a good place to develop artistic ability. "Amman's art scene is moving forward slowly, but the direction is good. Amman is authentic. I am not personally very active in art here. I don't really go to exhibitions or events, but I read local magazines and there are some very impressive young artists here. This new blood, they have talent."





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