

INSIDE THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

FEATURE: OLIVIA JENSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: AL-MUKHTAR ZEYAD

Ghassan Abu Laban

Painter Ghassan Abu Laban talks to *Trendesign* about his latest works on exhibit this month at Orient Gallery.

- **Place of birth** Bethlehem
- **Studio location** Amman, Jordan
- **Years as an artist** Ghassan has been a professional artist since 1987.
- **Formal education** He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in drawing and painting from Yarmouk University.
- **Type of art** While his art is contemporary, the style and technique has transformed to become more blended and abstract. "I have been dealing with colour and technique for 30 years. Over time, my work has developed into a more expressive colour scheme with a harsh, rough surface," Ghassan explains. "Improving is a slow process, but if you compare my recent works to earlier ones, you can see the difference. Before, I used to divide the spaces, now they are more integrated and diffused. I experimented with many techniques to fully grasp this skill," he adds.
- **Inspired by?** Ghassan explains a lot of his inspiration comes from personal observation and particularly the human figure. "It's a mix of thoughts, ideas and visual inspiration that influence my work," he says. "Sometimes, I also take old sketches and turn them into a painting. I always keep building my library. Even when I'm not working on a particular painting, I'm visualising it in my mind so when I sit to paint I'm ready. I have all the tools in my hand, I just need to work."







Oil on canvas painting of a young woman

- **Artistic process** "There are a lot of things involved in the process," says the artist. "Sometimes, ideas begin to develop when I see something new that connects to a memory; it could be something I read or see daily. I start to envision the composition; how it will look painted. First, I must visualise it in a realistic way, then I begin to shift it into abstraction and simplify the spaces and geometric shapes. Sometimes I change the image completely and other times it stays the way I saw it in the moment."
- **The importance of being an artist** Ghassan believes that defining art is not something you can condense in to a few words. "Art is a way of living and understanding the world. That's how I see it and that's what I teach my students," he tells. "It is a universal language and you can understand yourself, life, nature and reality only by understanding art. It's a way to interpret cosmic codes. Once you visualise yourself as an artist, you cannot step back out of it because you start to see everything differently. The shape of the world is different from the artist's point of view. It's like decoding life and the only way to describe it is to put it in a painting."
- **How is Amman's art scene evolving today?** "For me, I like the way it's going these days, even if it's very tough and hard with artists not always properly compensated. We always have new ideas and very good artists coming in and out; you really have to prove yourself as an artist because there is tough competition. That is the healthy part of the situation and maybe it's enough to sustain one's hope that it will get better."



An expressive painting of a woman's back



A painting of a sitting woman



A colourful painting of a woman's profile

“ART IS A
WAY OF LIVING AND
UNDERSTANDING THE
WORLD”



A pensive oil painting



A vibrant painting of a woman