

THE MULTI- EXPRESSIONIST

By Elspeth Dehnert

Syrian painter, sculptor and poet Suheil Baddor is a truly multifaceted artist. This month, he displays his newest collection of paintings at the Orient Gallery in Amman.



A true master artist, 55-year-old Suheil Baddor has created over 5,000 works of art during his 35-year career. He is a sculptor, a painter, a poet, an art critic, a published author as well as a former actor and singer – he is the human embodiment of art in its various forms. But, despite his multiple talents, Baddor is most known for his expressionist-style paintings, which for the past six years have featured two of his life-long passions: music and women. “Women are beautiful; they have immense space for love, giving and prosperity, and they are a mother in every way,” he says. “Women are the lungs of the universe – its sand and trees.”

Born in the Syrian principal port city, Latakia, in 1957, Baddor was raised in a culturally-rich, coastal environment that encouraged his passion for art, music and literature at an early age. One of his first artistic expressions was sculpting the trunks of olive trees – a staple in his Mediterranean town.

While at Damascus University, Baddor read philosophy for a year before studying art with local masters Saaid Makhlof, Mahmoud Hamad, Fateh Al Moudarres and Nasir Shura. During this time, the young artist immersed himself in the





expressionist style of painting. “In Syria, they are famous for expressionist art schools,” he says. “The man who opened one such school was a teacher, a brother, a friend and a mentor who had a huge influence on me.”

In addition to a philosophical, intellectual influence due to his studies, Baddor’s art was also shaped by his several-year stint as an actor and singer when he was in his 20s. And, although recognizing that acting is an art form like painting, he does distinguish a difference between the two practices. “An actor performs whatever the script says and there’s a producer and a director and they tell him how to move and what to say,” he

says. “A painter, however, is the artist and the painting itself is the script, so unlike the actor, he creates something on his own.”

In 1979, the young artist and thespian had his first solo exhibition, which not surprisingly was a huge success. A couple of years later, Baddor moved to Switzerland where he became a resident artist. While living there, his acrylic, oil and watercolor paintings continued to woo viewers, but his wood, bronze, granite and marble sculptures also began to garner some major attention.

However, his quench for all things art didn’t stop there. In 1986, Baddor published the first of three self-authored

Arabic poetry books. Not long after his debut as a professional poet, he made a name for himself as an art and culture critic for various newspapers and magazines.

In 1991, Baddor relocated to United Arab Emirates where he continues to work as a professional artist and art teacher to this day. When he is not enjoying his life in the Gulf, he can be found traveling around the world for international forums and workshops. “The most important one was in America at the International Center of Asian Art, where I was the first Arab artist who was invited to host workshops and lectures about my experience,” he says.

Currently, Baddor is displaying a collection of paintings at the Orient Gallery in Amman. In line with his signature expressionist style, the pieces portray multi-colored, abstract female figures playing musical instruments – such as the ney, oud and violin – within pastel, color-blocked surroundings. “I have been working on women and music for over six years now,” he says, “and I’m still searching and looking for solutions through my experiences.”

As Baddor further explains, “There is no longer someone or something that inspires me, and all I have, honestly, is what is stored in my soul, my notebooks and my mother.” ■