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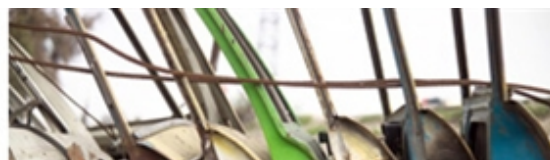
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Jaber Al Azmeh: Picturing the Syrian Revolution

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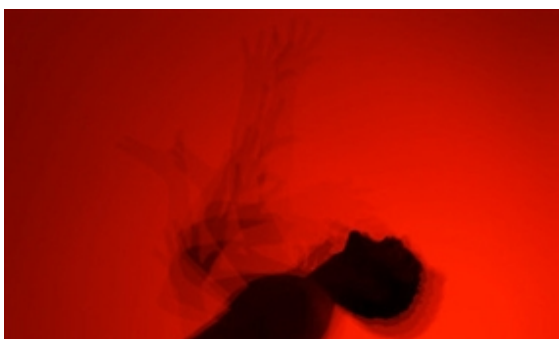


Damascus-born photographer Jaber Al Azmeh began his latest series during the crucial early stages of the revolutionary movement in Syria. The artist asked those in his social circle to reenact their experiences demonstrating, until clashes between activists and the regime forced him to flee to Doha, Qatar. While in exile, he completed this project of striking red and black photographs, even appearing himself as the subject of a few of the images. MutualArt spoke to [Jaber Al Azmeh](#) about the difficult climate for artists in Syria and his vision for this poignant series, "Wounds," currently on view at [Green Art Gallery](#) in Dubai.

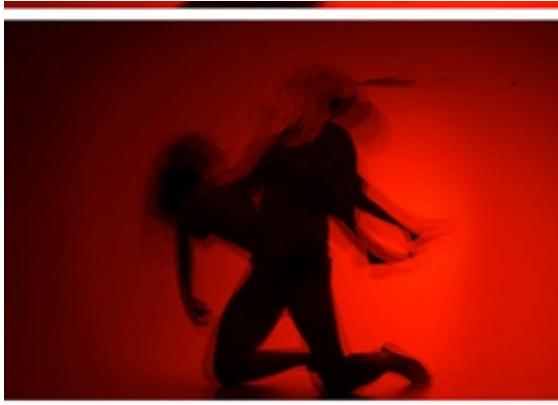




Although Syrian contemporary artists face harassment, detention, or worse if their work is considered subversive, this is not the first time Jaber Al Azmeh utilized art to make a powerful political statement about his homeland. The artist called the photographs 'portraits' in his previous series "Traces" although the images contained no people at all. Focused on mundane objects like rusted oil barrels, dilapidated houses and abandoned busses in the suburbs of Damascus, the images manage to portray ugly, forgotten objects in a visually compelling manner, making statements about waste and those who left the discards behind. Al Azmeh reflects, "That series was very eerie, almost haunting, and looking back at it now it feels like it was almost a premonition of what was to come - The quiet before the storm..."



And once the situation in his native country erupted, the artist began his latest body of work, "Wounds" in the crucial first ten months of the revolution in Syria. "With "Wounds" there was more of a sense of urgency and necessity to express what I was feeling about what was going on around me, whereas with other series a concept developed over time." the artist



explained. Working discreetly, this pressure influenced Al Azmeh to choose subjects he trusted to reenact their experiences during the revolution, continuing even while in exile. The artist explained that the creative process "flowed naturally" because of his emotional investment in the statement and outcome.

The result of this process manifested itself in a series of blood-red and black portrayals of people out of focus. When asked why he chose to represent his subjects with only silhouettes, Al Azmeh responded, "I chose to express the stories through silhouettes of people because the experience of revolution: its process, its small failures and victories, the victims that it claims, is a subject everyone can relate to. This not about politics, religion, or the like. It's about the human experience behind every kind of

revolution."

While the images, devoid of individuality, may be more relatable for the collective identity of Syrians facing a dire political situation today, the artwork exudes an inevitable feeling of isolation as the viewer attempts to focus on each photograph. The sense of seclusion could be explained by the fact that the artist finished the series while abroad, escaping persecution.

"In the beginning, everything that was coming out of the country was through social media outlets, and everyone was completely hooked to the Internet for information" explains Al Azmeh, addressing the solitude he felt. Referencing the virtual revolutions of Iran in 2009, the artist began exhibiting his photographs on the internet in response to the dissemination of information for the Syrian people.

After his exhibition of photographs opened at [Green Art Gallery](#), the viewers of the photographs were primarily international, accustomed to the images of violence seen on the news covering Syria. The artist told MutualArt he wanted to go "back to the basics" with abstract artwork, and he gravely explained "[The international audience was] particularly curious to see a different viewpoint of a subject that was so tied up with politics and religion. When a region has been focused on to such a large extent in political terms, art



religion. When a region has been focused on to such a large extent in political terms, art becomes even more of a necessity."



"Wounds" by **Jaber Al Azmeh** is on view at **Green Art Gallery** in Dubai until 29 October 2012.

Read more [here](#) about Al Azmeh's next photographic project, "A Small Group of Syrians," in which he captures prominent activists using newspapers to spread their messages.

MutualArt's Christine Bednarz; Images Courtesy of the Artist and Green Art Gallery Dubai.

How does the work of Jaber Al Azmeh affect you? What is the role of art during a revolution?

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