



● German Fernandez Cantos

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**The Journeyman.**

FN Designs, Al Serkal Avenue. 2013, 2016



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Should not be forgotten that painting is a trick of the mind, a perceptual set up that allow colours in a canvas to show us different realities. This has been known since the times of the legendary Apeles. I use to base a significant part of my works in my fondness to old illustrated history books. Playing over these references in my mind, I have generated a series of narrative images approaching the subject of history/travel. Travel is to adventure in new places, without really not

knowing what to expect, and history is an adventure in the realm of the future. But travel has nowadays been marketed as fun, and it wasn't always the case in the past. More of a hazardous exploration, vulnerable to fate and unknowns. The travel of Ulysses, of the book of the Dead, of Dante. Survival journeys.

Maybe, somehow, journeys of unwanted changes. Usually, they are not individual portraits, but depictions of groups, for what interests me is the interaction and the dynamic of the relations between the characters. Most of the works have a certain connection with the traveller's feelings of non established, of temporality and maybe ephemerality; either

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they are small or foldable. Like any experience, travel defines you, but your identity is also mutable to some degree; some of the characters wear impersonal masks while other are animal-headed, may be masked as well; this is a strange world, familiar to some degree, but anyway distant.

Basically, the aim of my work was to be a continuous exploration of the notion of identity, throughout as different mediums and approaches as I can. It could be an identity at a personal level or other levels, national, geographical, historical, etc., as for me all these levels are linked in our daily experience of life. Identity implies a definition of the world and your place in it. Identity is not static, is an evolving thing.

For example, in a series of works I worked over pages made of collage, patches of paper forming a page over which the drawing expands. In this case, the paper forms predetermined geography in which the drawing is established, as we sometimes establish ourselves in a reality beyond our control.

Also, I worked with boxes, which connect me to the implied temporality of the life- boxes used for moving- as an expat or any émigré who has not really established in their context. Also, in working in these materials, that are not traditional in the artistic practice, is implied the believing that art as a corpus of knowledge, can transform and enrich, as these raw





materials, part of the prosaic daily life, and which have no big value outside their function, are changed into something more valuable; is a kind of optimistic view of the possibility of knowledge in the human society, and as such, is representative of the action of mankind over the world.

The 26 or more pieces were arranged across the big hangar that host most of the galleries in the Al Serkal complex, a fact that gives the experience a curious feeling of amplitude. At the entrance you were received by the painting of The Journeyman itself, waving his hand at you, painted over a group of 26 boxes more or less, forming a wall with a scene on each side. After you pass that you would find two more ensembles of cardboard boxes playing a game of juxtaposed images drawn

won the boxes, and, to the right side a group of six drawings and to the left, a group of five or six paintings-I might have to check again the photos to remember it clearly. The exhibition was held at FN Designs gallery, in Al Serkal Avenue, at the gracious invitation of Sheikha Wafa bint Hasher Al Maktoum.

















