

# SULGER-BUEL GALLERY

## *Our Home / دارنا*

a solo show by COMBO

25 November 2021 - 7 January 2022

Private View reception with drinks on the 25 November from 6 to 9 pm



The Sulger-Buel Gallery is proud to present "Our Home / دارنا" a solo show by COMBO. The gallery's exhibition will be on display from the 25th of November 2021 to the 7th of January 2022.

To welcome back visitors in security, the gallery will ensure all necessary control measures are in place to mitigate risks of Covid-19. Disposable face masks and hand-sanitiser will be provided.

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## About the artist

COMBO (aka Combo Culture Kidnapper) is an artist born in 1989 Aménies, France to a Lebanese-Christian father and a Moroccan-Muslim mother. Having graduated from Villa Arson in Nice, his work began with graffiti around the French Riviera. After some time working as artistic director for advertising agencies in Paris, by 2012 he decided to dedicate his time to his real passion through street art, wherein his signature style imports and recycles popular cultural icons, urban myths, comics, cartoons, video games, paintings, photography; and, also, calling for peace between people of different faiths through his 'CoeXist' posters after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in 2015.

Combo's work is always an expression of his humanistic ethos, a call for understanding as well as taking risks to convey strong messages combined with his travels around the world. For example, he infiltrated the forbidden area of Chernobyl to post advertising posters denouncing nuclear energy in relation to the anniversary of the accident at the Fukushima Plant. He also posted Google pages in Hong Kong that had been banned by the communist party including the arrest of artist Ai Weiwei. Later in Beirut, Lebanon he posted 'Less Hamas, More Hummus'; and, at the start of 2017, he parodied posters of the candidates for the French presidential election by posting electoral billboards.

With the majority of his work made of wheat-pasted prints that he un-pastes and then pastes back on canvas, his most famous graffiti work to date has been the 'CoeXist' project in which the artist campaigned for religious tolerance by a visual text incorporating the signs of the three Abrahamic faiths: a Muslim crescent (for the letter c), a star of David for the X and a Christian cross for the T. He was, in fact, beaten up and attacked in 2015 whilst painting a wall at Porte Dorée near Paris as part of the project.

Always making reference in his work to current and topical news, he is a master at manipulating cultural symbols with historical and contemporary figures as well as by adding textual quotes to encourage the viewer to think about freedom, civil liberties, capitalism, consumerism, religion and extremist politics. The purpose of his practice is to advocate peace, harmony, diversity and to challenge all stereotypes. According to the artist himself: "My pieces work in a disruptive way, they surprise. They are where they shouldn't be."

## Curator's notes

Combo's North African cultural roots mix with a European consciousness, gifting him with an unusual perspective that is reflected in his artwork. With this particular installation, he tackles the social and political environment, taking the observer into a space of familiar and unfamiliar iconography that reference the duality of the diasporic culture. With this work, also, he is exploring the issue of contemporary identity, which is driven by hyper consumerism and materialism.

Influenced by a fun pop art sense of humour with glimmers of cynicism, Combo acts as a public

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commentator who is rejoicing in his hybrid identity. In particular, he likes to manipulate globally recognised consumerist objects that we can all relate to and share; and, then, allowing them to encompass a critical interplay between Western and non-Western culture. He then playfully pushes forward the maghrebisation of the Western brands to at once critique Western superiority yet presenting their new added value when they are adopted by the local Arab market.

The interactive installation works by recreating the intimate domestic space of a sitting room and how it may be fantasised by the Orientalist gaze, thus inviting the participant to discuss and investigate the evolution of the relationship between two complex cultural entities, using art as a space of a new narrative and perspective.

## **About the curator**

Najlaa El-Ageli an architect with over twenty years of experience in the profession, founded Noon Arts Projects in 2012. A small private arts foundation, with a mission to bring the best of contemporary Libyan art, from both emerging and established artists, and expose it to the world stage.

Collaborating with various cultural foundations and galleries, she has curated over 16 projects and successfully shed light on the current Libyan cultural and artistic scene. She has collaborated with the London based Shubbak festival 2015, The Nour Festival 2015 curating the solo retrospective exhibition " Birthmark Theory" for the late Libyan/Canadian artist Arwa Abouon, The Benetton Foundation 2016 Italy for the Imago Mundi Libya project, and went on to curate two successful group exhibitions with Casa Arabe in Spain between 2018 and 2020. One of them, 'Pop Art from North Africa', with a collective of 19 artists from North Africa exploring the phenomenon of Pop Art; and, the other one titled 'Retracing A Disappearing Landscape', featuring another collective of 18 artists with a link to Libya, addressing collective memory and personal histories relating to modern day Libya.

Since 2020 Najlaa has been collaborating with Sulger Buel Gallery in London, she curated "Waves", a collective of five emerging North African artists, and most recently curated "Soul Taming" for renowned and established Egyptian/ Nubain artist Fathi Hassan.

**END OF THE PRESS RELEASE**

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