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*Yana Moshkar XXXXVI.*



NABIL MOUSA

# Veil of ignorance

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**A**t first glance the artwork of Nabil Mousa may seem to be abstracted fields of color and mixed media collages, but further exploration reveals the artist's interpretation of culture, society and religion. Born in Syria and having lived in the United States since age 11, Mousa reflects on his firsthand experiences and looks to promote understanding of all people. Through January 30, Salamatina Gallery in Atlanta, where the artist lives, will host an exhibition of his latest series titled *Veil of Ignorance*.

"Initially in the project I was talking about hidden beauty within and the women who wear the burka and go their entire life without people knowing who they are, what they look like, if they smile, are happy, sad or lonely," he says. "...When we lift the veil we're going to be introduced to the person who is hiding behind it. They're a person

full of life, hope and creativity and thought."

Each of these initial works was created using household paint to cover most of the canvas, while around one-third of the canvas was left for the artist to make a geometric design. Included among those pieces is *Red on Orange*, which was done with gesso, oil paint and charcoal on canvas on board. He explains, "Each painting has a different design on it and it was really to talk about how we're all individuals and each one of us is so unique."

Later works in the series developed where the artist collaged scared texts together with burlap painted in different colors. "The reason I use the Bible, Quran and Torah is to talk about the oppression of religion where you have to conform to their teaching instead of taking what we're taught and expressing it in our own views and how it can be meaningful in our lives," he says.

As a whole, the artist has found that the series has become representative of his own life. "Even though initially I was making work that talks about the oppression of women, I was also talking about me and my personal oppression in being gay and hiding and being afraid of who I am and rejection and being afraid of being made fun of as well," he says.

Color also plays a predominant role in the artist's work with orange being one of the main hues he uses. It is a base in his artwork, and among the first colors he puts down on the palette. "I talk about orange in a way, if you look it up it's this color of soothing, comfort and that is what it embodies," says Mousa, adding that the color has come to symbolize fear or high alert for some, such as in the use of Code Orange in the United States. "I play on that theme; fear creates ignorance.



- 1 A view of Nabil Mousa's exhibition *Veil of Ignorance*.
- 2 Works from Nabil Mousa's *Veil of Ignorance* series.
- 3 *Red on Orange*, mixed media, 60 x 48"
- 4 *Veil of Ignorance* #19, mixed media, 28 x 22"



Unless we get rid of fear, ignorance will always be there. Educating people about who we are and being open minded to other people's lives and allowing them to express themselves without judgment it can change—it can end wars."

Along with the exhibition, the gallery will have a book signing for a new publication

on the artist titled *Nabil Mousa: Breaking the Chains*. The event will be held on January 12 at 6 p.m. Oksana Salamatina, owner of the gallery, says the book is divided into three parts: a section on his early life and how he became an artist, a chapter by Charles A. Riley, and an essay on the artist's use of color by Matisse

scholar John Cauman.

Of the book's title Salamatina says, "[It's about] you breaking your own chains. He's breaking out of a burden within him and something he was always very much ashamed of and being someone he's not. Within himself he became completely free." ●