



BINOCLE MEETS THE ILLUSTRATOR

MOHAMMAD BARRANGI



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IN THIS SERIES, BINOCLE TRIES TO GRASP THE CORE OF WHAT AN ILLUSTRATOR INSPIRES AND THRIVES IN 10 QUESTIONS.

I DISCOVERED MOHAMMAD BARRANGI'S WORK AT THE 2018 BOLOGNA CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR AND WAS INSTANTLY CHARMED BY THE MIX OF VISUAL REFERENCES, THE PRINTING AND THE SOBER, SOMEHOW MELANCHOLIC COLOURS. HE SHOWED A COUPLE OF PRINTS, ONE OF A SMALL GIRL IN A LARGE DRESS. SHE INSTANTLY REMINDED ME OF FRIDA KHALO, IN HOW SHE DRESSED AND HOW SHE SELF CONSCIOUSLY LOOKED IN THE PUBLIC'S EYE. ALTHOUGH MOHAMMAD BARRANGI DOES NOT MAKE ANY REFERENCE TO THIS ARTIST IN THE INTERVIEW, I FOUND IT A CURIOUS COINCIDENCE THAT BOTH KHALO AND BARRANGI HAVE A PHYSICAL HANDICAP WHICH DOES NOT PREVENT THEM FROM DOING WHAT THEY DO, BUT ON THE CONTRARY STRENGTHENS THEM TO MAKE ART. THE PRINTS OF BARRANGI HAVE AN ANCIENT LOOK AND FEEL AS IF THEY COME FROM A FAR AWAY LAND AND TIME. BARRANGI WORKS WITH A MAIN FIGURE IN A FRAMED SETTING, SURROUNDED BY OTHER, SOMETIMES STRANGE CHARACTERS, AS IF HE FOUND HIS INSPIRATION IN THE FAMOUS BAYEUX TAPISTERY WHERE THE SAME INGREDIENTS ARE BEING USED.

1. WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO MAKE THE DRAWINGS YOU SHOWED IN BOLOGNA? WHAT WAS YOUR SOURCE OF INSPIRATION?

MY ILLUSTRATIONS ARE A PART OF MY LIFE AND I ILLUSTRATE MY LIFE IN CONJUNCTION WITH COLOR AND EASTERN MOOD. I DO SO BY USING PERSIAN TYPES AND TRANSFERRING THEM ON MY HANDMADE PAPERS. I DEPICT MY FEELINGS. I RECENTLY KNEW AN ARGENTINIAN POET, MARIEL ZUCCHI. SHE WRITES POEM BASED ON MY ILLUSTRATION.

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR AT BOLOGNA AND OTHER FESTIVALS LIKE THIS ARE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME WHO HAVE NEVER HAD A BOOK PUBLISHED. THIS COMPETITION WAS WORTH IT BECAUSE AT LEAST I COULD SHOW MY WORK TO A HUGE (PROFESSIONAL) PUBLIC AND IT HAD GOOD FEEDBACK.



2. WHAT DO YOU DO BESIDES YOUR ART THAT INSPIRES YOU?

MY LIFE MAY BE DIFFERENT TO OTHERS BECAUSE OF MY DISABILITY. BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE ANY LIMITATION ON ME. I AM AN ATHLETE, A RUNNER. I GAINED 4 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MEDALS. CONSIDERING MY PHYSICAL SITUATION, I LEARNED TO FIGHT AND TRY FOR MY LIFE. ART AND SPORT BESIDE OF EACH OTHER... I SPEND MY TIME ON ART WHENEVER I DON'T EXERCISE. THEY ARE BOTH CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER AND CREATED ME, MOHAMMAD BARRANGI.

3. IS THERE AN ARTIST THAT INSPIRES YOU OR WHOSE WORK HELPED YOU TO FIND YOUR OWN VISUAL LANGUAGE?

YES, BUT NOT ANY SPECIFIC PERSON. I WAS BORN IN A NORTHERN CITY OF IRAN. THIS CITY IS FULL OF OLD WALL PAINTINGS FROM A LONG TIME AGO. THEY INSPIRE ME ENORMOUSLY. IN GENERAL, I DON'T HAVE ANY HERO IN MY LIFE, IN ART OR EVEN IN SPORT. I INSPIRE MYSELF. I THINK THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VISUAL LANGUAGE IS EMOTION.

4. WHERE DO YOU WORK? DO YOU HAVE AN ATELIER OF YOUR OWN?

I AM AN IMMIGRANT AND IT IS ABOUT A YEAR THAT I LIVE AT WAKEFIELD, A NORTHERN CITY OF ENGLAND. I HAVE A STUDIO AT A ART-HOUSE ORGANIZATION. I HAVE MY OWN SPACE. I USED TO WORK EVERY DAY AND I ENJOY THIS.

5. HOW DO YOU PROCESS AN IDEA INTO AN ILLUSTRATION?

I GROW AN OBJECT ON MY MIND AND THEN MAKE A PRELIMINARY SKETCH ON PAPER. AFTER THAT I START WRITING BY PERSIAN TRADITIONAL CALLIGRAPHY PEN AND INK. IT MIGHT BE ANY LETTER AT THE MOMENT. I MAKE MY CHARACTERS, THEN I MAKE A COPY ON THEM BY PHOTOCOPIER MACHINE. THE NEXT STEP IS ADDING COLOR BY COLLAGE TECHNIQUE. IN THE END I MAKE ANOTHER COPY OF THE FINAL CHARACTER AND PRINT IT ON PAPER BY PAINTING THINNER.



6. ARE THERE THEMES (OR COLORS, COMPOSITIONS, PERSPECTIVES) THAT YOU ESPECIALLY LOVE TO WORK WITH? COULD YOU SAY WHAT IS TYPICAL ABOUT YOUR WORK? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE? WHICH MEDIA DO YOU WORK WITH?

I LOVE REPETITION AND MIRRORING IN MY WORKS. I THINK IT COMES FROM MY BACKGROUND AND MY INTEREST TO PERSIAN RUGS WHICH HAVE MIRRORING IN THEIR COMPOSITION AND CREATURES. ALSO USING SHARP COLORS IN INDIAN AND PERSIAN PATTERNS.

7. IS THERE A PURPOSE WHEN YOU MAKE AN ILLUSTRATION? WHAT DO YOU AIM AT (IF ANYTHING?)

“I BELIEVE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VISUAL LANGUAGE IS EMOTION”

OF COURSE THERE IS. I ALWAYS DEPICT MY ISSUES. MOST OF MY CHARACTERS HAVE NOT HANDS BECAUSE I HAVE NOT TOO. WAR IS JUST A SLOGAN FOR ME AND I THINK IT IS PLANNED BEFORE IT IS HAPPENING. IT IS JUST A GAME BETWEEN POLITICIANS. I COMBINE IT WITH MY MOOD.

WOMEN, I USED TO MAKE A STORY ON MY MIND WHICH HAS WOMAN ON ITS FIRST ROLE. WOMAN IS A SYMBOL OF MOTHER AND CALMNESS AND I TRY TO SHOW THIS ON MY WORKS. THE COMBINATION OF IMAGINARY CREATURES WITH WOMAN’S HEAD. I HAVE NEVER REALIZED WHY I DO THIS. BUT MOTHER AND WOMAN ARE REALLY HOLLY FOR ME.

8. DO YOU HAVE A READER IN MIND WHEN YOU WORK? WHAT DOES THIS READER LOOK LIKE?

MY READER IS A PART OF ME. HE IS DISABLED AND ALSO A PERSON WHO IS FACED WITH SO MANY HARDSHIPS IN HIS LIFE. HE WANTS TO BE IN HIS OWN REALITY. THIS READER DOESN’T IGNORE MY FEELINGS AND HE LOVES MY WORKS. BECAUSE HE KNOWS I MADE EVERYTHING FOR HIM. THIS READER IS A PART OF ME. I AM THAT READER.

9. WHAT DO YOU FIND ESSENTIAL IN AN ILLUSTRATION?

I ALWAYS WANTED TO HAVE A SIGN OF ME IN MY ILLUSTRATION. THIS WOULD BE MY CULTURE OR A SUBJECT IN MY CHARACTERS THAT COMES FROM ME, COMBINED WITH LINES. I ALWAYS BELIEVE THAT VIEWERS MIGHT NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRAVEL TO OTHER COUNTRIES BUT I MAKE THIS POSSIBLE FOR THEM: THEY CAN SEE IRAN THROUGH MY WORK.

10. ARE THERE ANY ARTIST-ILLUSTRATORS THAT YOU LOVE AND YOU WANT US TO KNOW ABOUT?

I LOVE TO GIVE YOU THREE ARTISTS THAT ARE SO PRECIOUS TO ME. NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THEIR GOOD WORK. I DEEPLY BELIEVE THAT, RATHER THAN BEING A GOOD ARTIST, BEING A GOOD PERSON IS REALLY VALUABLE. IT WILL DEFINITELY HAVE A GOOD IMPACT ON THEIR WORKS. I LEARNED FROM THEM TO BE GOOD: VIVE NOOR, ANASTASIA ARKHIPOVA, ROGER DE MELLO.



DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE?
FOLLOW MOHAMMAD BAR-RANGI ON FACEBOOK, OR BUY THE SUMMER EDITION OF PRESSING MATTERS MAGAZINE.