

RANINE JAKOBIC EL HOMSI ON URBAN BLOOMS

URBAN BLOOMS IS A COMMUNITY CENTERED PUBLIC ART INITIATIVE THAT REVITALIZES NEGLECTED URBAN SPACES BY TRANSFORMING OVERLOOKED WALLS INTO CULTURAL LANDMARKS. THE PROJECT LAUNCHED ITS FIRST MURAL IN COLLABORATION WITH BEMA, LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH EMBEDDED WITHIN BEYART'S VISION.



The "Why" Behind Urban Blooms

Urban Blooms is a very dear project to me. It started while brainstorming with a consultant friend, Valerie Dalati, and continued developing with Mayassa Mehdi and Joe Chahine, with whom I started BeyArt about five years ago. We do see murals in big cities in Lebanon, like Beirut and Tripoli, for example. Batroun was developing rapidly at that time, and many new attractive places by the sea and on the rooftops were opening. As the city grew vertically, walls and buildings would appear, sometimes stealing from its original charm. Since BeyArt's main mission is to democratize art and promote Lebanese talent, I thought it would be beautiful if these walls were filled with art intrinsically linked to their location.

What made me launch

Urban Blooms now, after years of development, is that the idea finally matured, and the frustration with our current reality reached a peak. Most importantly, having my toddler daughter completely shifted my understanding of time. She made me realize that each one of us has a responsibility to build a better world for future generations, to teach them, and to ensure our memories and stories are kept alive and passed down. We all must contribute from our own place, using our own expertise and energy.

Lebanon has a beautiful soul and deeply rooted stories that BeyArt wishes to preserve through art. By reclaiming public spaces alongside selected artists who are familiar faces to the Batrouni community, we dream of a communal project. Urban Blooms are not only created by the community but also protected by the community, for the community.

Overcoming Challenges

The challenges are huge, but they also act as powerful motivators. How else are we to live in our particular Lebanese context? It is the duty of artists to preserve our stories from today and from the past; they reflect our image like mirrors. Urban Blooms allows public mural art to be simultaneously on the streets and online so that art & memory speak boldly to everyone in their daily lives.

All murals are within walking distance to allow visitors to explore Batroun on foot differently, in all its aspects, and time-travel through art while diving into our heritage.

In the near future, we hope to take Urban Blooms to Google Museums to gain maximum visibility and be available for anyone worldwide.

LEBANON'S GREATEST RESOURCE IS FOUND WITHIN ITS PEOPLE. OUR ARTISTS CARRY THE MEMORY OF OUR PAST AND THE VISION OF OUR FUTURE, AND EVERYONE HERE AND AROUND THE WORLD DESERVES TO SEE THEM.

Art's impact on society

Artists are an essential part of the societal mesh; they are highly sensitive to everything happening around them. Each artist, according to their own preferences, finds a way to express these subjects visually, in a language that speaks to all age groups.

The necessity for money to make such productions happen pushed

us to seek sponsors, look out for donors, and allowed us to meet with wonderful collaborators who believe in the importance of Urban Blooms on many levels. Let us make dreams come true together, wall after wall, hand in hand with our artists and communities, filling our lives with meaningful, blooming colours to revive our collective memory and sense of belonging to our beautiful nation. ■