

# WHAT IS #007

## Who Is Really On The Canvas?



Sentiment d'incomplétude I, II, III

Acrylic on canvas - 80x40cm 2020

Michelle Al-Ferzly, art historian, writes: *“In his most recent body of work, El Chamaa turns away from realistic portraiture to embrace the abstract. Sentiment d'incomplétude 1 (feeling of incompleteness) features a figure in a seeming typical portrait stance: facing the viewer, while framed from the bust up. However, the figure's head is composed of swatches of yellow, grey, and black leaving us to ponder: who is really on the canvas?”*

The same art-work means different things to different people and that is grace. Because of this, no matter how much I say or anyone says, the work sings a different song to each and every. To me, a good work of art is the one that escapes from exegesis despite my constant ‘mining’ for clues, this kind of work seems to keep punching till I have no force to continue then I surrender to its inexplicable aesthetics. On the other hand, a bad work of art is a work that has a sense of completeness, this work is usually beautiful and stops punching me after a while or not at all. In this case, I win, I feel nothing.

Speaking of punching, a famous quote by Mike Tyson has a deep resonance in my life these days and the subject at hand, “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.” Like art, life punches us in the face which allows us to change, hopefully for the better.

Starting today Oct 27 and to offer you a new opportunity to help rebuild Beirut, *Sentiment d'incomplétude I, II and III* and many other works by kick-ass Lebanese artists are on auction [@Li Beirut artscoops.com](https://www.li-beirut.com)

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Seated Woman

Oil on canvas 80x70cm - 2020

### Ode to Babel نشيد الانتظار

Zeina Hasem Beck - 2019

الطابق الأرضي لمن يؤمن بالحدائق  
والطابق السادس للتسوق  
والطابق السابع للذين يرمون بأنفسهم.

On every floor, someone waits.

I don't understand what my neighbor asks every morning.

لا أدري ما يسألني جاري كل يوم.

Perhaps: do you have some salt?

Or: would you choose the known or the unknown?

ربّما: أتفضّلين القهوة المرّة؟  
أو: هل تعود الأرواح؟

& though I don't understand me either,  
I say I am devoted to lemons.

أؤمن بالبحر والموت  
لأنّي أجد حبات رملٍ تحت أظافري كلّ صباح.

The people who look up at airplanes are not from here—

شجرة عائليتي تمتدّ أمامي  
أغصاناً مبعثرة في الضباب

the metro never moves,  
the metro station is full. One day, a man  
stepped through the sliding doors & waited,  
then another. Then another. Whole families. Etc. etc.

وأُمّي لم تجدل شعري  
منذ يومين منذ دهر.

The cars never start.

A blonde woman gets into her Mazda every day  
to smoke a cigarette, then returns to the tower.

أقصد الطاولة البعيدة عن النافذة  
في المقهى الدافئ.  
النادل الوسيم لا يجلب أبداً ما أطلبه  
ولكنّي لا أعترض.

Once you mispronounce something  
you can't pronounce it ever.

يكفيني أنّه يرحّب بي بلغةٍ ما.

It doesn't matter because no one knows  
what anyone else is saying.

أشعر أنّي نسيت أشياء كثيرةً  
لأنّ حزناً أليفاً يأتيني من ضوء شاشة التلفاز.

Perhaps we only understand the dialects of rain.  
Want beauty? Add water to any landscape.

أحبّ جسدي أحياناً.

I don't love my body. I eat when I thirst,

أدوّن السطر نفسه ثمّ أمحيه.

& I can't decipher my handwriting.

يكلّمني حبيبي ونغني معاً.  
تُشيد حيطانٌ جديدة في المدينة.

No one calls.

Another wall is built in the city.

أنشئتم الزمن الذي جمعنا؟

I look up at the airplanes.

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## Bona Fide Errors



Tiny Fruits

Fired earth - ceramic - 3x3 cm - 2020

I am a man of many theories. As a species, is our aim to pursue perfection or protect our humanity? It seems we cannot do both simultaneously. From my observations so far I found out that Error, to err, to make a mistake or be imperfect have a tendency to be exclusively human. I haven't seen flowers, trees, spiders, or meteorites make an error. In 10 years I probably saw Shisha our cat make one blunder; It was a miscalculation, she jumped from the balcony to catch a pigeon and couldn't, hence she fell on her feet from the second floor and ran back up. The claim that Error is exclusively human might be a little of a stretch, but humans are notorious for a misjudgment, inaccuracy, impulsiveness, delusions, and oversight. So, when the pursuit of no-error, flawlessness, perfection, and idealism was hailed by academia and religion throughout centuries as a prerequisite for beauty and deity (intelligence), we saw the emergence and supremacy of the artist as the pinnacle of the human genius. And this turned us into worshipers of everything perfect...

Today we are in a catch 22. Technology and coding are taking us to a new world. We are building incredibly fast machines, and we are writing code with an incredible outcome. Everything we thought of happened. Eventually, machines will get so sophisticated they will do 99.99% of what we can do better than us and lots of others we never imagined they are possible. The world we will be living in would be perfect. Utopia.

In 200 years max, we would have implants to tell us what exactly we should be doing at any given moment to get the desired result. The quandary of the common good and personal benefit would have been resolved ages ago. No room for error. We will all be talking perfectly, writing perfectly, living perfectly and doing art perfectly... Artists would materialize their work just by thinking of it. Using hands would be dépassé. And even if you use your hands, the machine won't let you make an error, you will have to break the system to make an error. You are in a perfect world. Utopia. In the year 2220 spotting an error would be like finding a gemstone. The history of art would be re-written to value errors and imperfection as a reminder of our lost humanity (if it still holds any meaning by then.) Errors will be discovered, studied, classified, visited, enshrined, and at the end worshiped. New religions would emerge, new art will arise. Hallelujah.

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BACH  
MESSEYEMEN  
BLUESELGAR  
CELLO

#001

#002

#003

#004

#005

#006

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