

7 DAYS

## MetroLife

Food, fashion, movies and more...

Banksy on 'Dismaland'

"I think a museum is a bad place to look at art; the worst context for art is other art."



# Working in Dismaland

## UAE-based artist talks of his part in Banksy's 'bemusement park'

**A** dilapidated Disney-like castle, Grim Reaper on a bumper car and miserable staff wearing mouse ears - these are just some of the 'attractions' in the new 'bemusement park' art project by enigmatic British graffiti artist activist Banksy. 'Dismaland' is a dark and dystopian temporary theme park secretly built at the seaside resort town of Weston-super-Mare in Somerset, UK. It features beautiful and bizarre works from artists from around the globe, including UAE-based Syrian artist Tammam Azzam (right) and other Ayyam Gallery artists Syrian Ammar Abd Rabbo and Saudi Huda Beydoun. Things have happened fast. The 35-year-old Tammam, who's been living in the UAE for four years, explains how they were first approached for the project in June. Tammam tells 7DAYS: "Banksy's team, Waste Management, approached Ayyam Gallery asking if I'd be interested in participating in a large, undisclosed project opening in the UK in August. "We were sworn to secrecy. Since then we have been coordinating the production and work with the team in the UK. I can only imagine the mountains that had to be moved to deliver Dismaland on time, especially in such a covert way." Pieces from more



than 50 artists focus on different social, political and ecological issues we're facing in the 21st century. Though Tammam wasn't present at the show, Jules McDevitt, who handles

**THE ART OF IT:** Tammam Azzam's (inset left) artwork 'Freedom Graffiti' (centre) is on display at Dismaland



institutional and third party relationships at Ayyam Gallery, represented him. Jules described the offbeat park as an "immersive and wickedly clever project full of world-class art and a sinister but distinctly playful atmosphere." True to form, the park carries Banksy's distinct dark humour as he puts a grim spin on a fairytale world: imagine depictions of a mushroom cloud from an atomic bombing, Cinderella in a pumpkin-car crash swarmed by paparazzi, a boat full of refugees and Cookie Monster in a car with armed men. There are also DJ sets, bands, puppet shows, cinema and fair games. "The grim realities of immigration, unemployment, corruption, oppression, climate change in the real world are satirically played out in front of a captivated audience," Tammam explains.

One of his favourites from the park was Jimmy Cauty's Mayor of the ADP (Aftermath Displacement Principle). "It's an enormous model of an entire town frozen in the moment just after a period of unrest - it's extraordinary and really sad," he describes. Tammam's art contribution to the project hits close to home. His 'Freedom Graffiti' made in 2013 is a digital work wherein he superimposed Gustav Klimt's famous painting 'The Kiss' on a war-torn building in his homeland of Syria. He says: "The intention was to draw the outside world's attention to the problems taking place in my home country by enlisting the recognisable images of iconic artworks." A huge fan of Banksy, Tammam is honoured that his artwork was handpicked to be part of this huge and meaningful project: "What Banksy does best is to bring art to a much wider audience. His anti-establishment attitude should be an inspiration to all artists." When asked if he had met the elusive artist - who doesn't reveal his identity - in person, Tammam only says "no comment" with a wink. Dismaland is open until September 27, but with the flood of people coming through its derelict gates, the website says online tickets are sold out until September 7. [glaiza@7days.ae](mailto:glaiza@7days.ae)

### THREE TO SEE AT DISMALAND

**DAMIEN HIRST** is best known for his work 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living', an installation art of a tiger shark in formaldehyde. His works 'The Child's Dream,' a foal in formaldehyde, and 'The Fragility of Love', a beach ball above a bed of spikes, are on display.

**BILL BARMINSKI** created the music video for Baz Luhrmann's spoken-word song 'Everybody's Free (To Wear Sunscreen)'. The American's showcase is the satirical security entrance that boasts x-ray machines and metal detectors made entirely of cardboard.

**PENCIL ARTIST NETTIE WAKEFIELD** does reverse portraits, which are sketches of the back of people's heads. She is doing live drawings at the show.

# Dismaland



**PRETTY DISMAL:** Banksy's art park promises "amusements and entry-level anarchism"