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The Syrian artist who superimposes Western masterpieces onto bombed buildings

Tammam Azzam hopes his use of identifiable artworks will 'draw attention to the tragedy' of the Syrian conflict

Daisy Wyatt | @daisy_wyatt | Tuesday 8 September 2015 15:48 |

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Tammam Azzam, 'Freedom Graffiti', Syrian Museum series (Tammam Azzam)

Syrian artist Tammam Azzam has found his own way of speaking out against the **Syrian crisis**. Using famous paintings from the Western world projected against bombed buildings, Azzam aims to “draw attention to the tragedy of Syria”.

His most popular work, “Freedom Graffiti”, shows Gustav Klimt’s well-known painting “The Kiss” superimposed onto a bombed Syrian building.

“I chose it as an icon of love, a way of looking for the stories of love behind this wall that was completely obliterated by the machinery of war,” he said.

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Azzam, who is one of the artists currently exhibiting at **Banksy’s latest UK show Dismaland**, has drawn on a number of famous paintings from the likes of Matisse, Goya and Dali in his work.

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He says there is an “element of critique” in his use of Western masterpieces, but his main emphasis is to show “we are all citizens of the same world”.

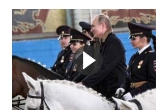


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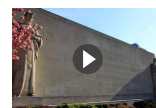


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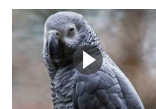
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In addition to Dismaland, Azzam has donated work for exhibition ART4PEACE

in London, including an image of a bombed Syrian building being transported by balloons in front of a burning 9/11 tower.

“The event was one of the most dramatic and tragic events of our lifetime, but the lack of empathy and assertive action for the other acts of terrorism and humanitarian disasters around the world troubles me,” he says of the work.

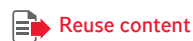
“Empathy should not be limited to the first world.”

Azzam, who left Syria for Dubai, also hopes the international community will **do more to help Syrian refugees**.

“People are truly desperate, they feel like they have nothing to lose, they would rather take the risk drowning in the Mediterranean than to stay and suffer under the dual persecution of Assad’s forces and the Islamic State.

“Most have no other recourse; they just want to stay alive. We don’t want to be a burden we just need help from the international community.”

ART4PEACE runs until 12 September at The Old Truman Brewery, east London. Opening times: 10am-8pm. www.talkingpeacefestival.org.



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