

## RAOUF RIFAI KUALA LUMPUR EXHIBITION

26 October - 16 November 2013

**Malaysia's TJ Fine Art** and Singapore's **Sana Gallery** are collaborating to bring "The Carnival of Darwiches," an exhibition by Lebanese artist **Raouf Rifai** to **Kuala Lumpur**.

TJ Fine Art:

[A-3-10](#)

[Centrio Pantai Hillpark](#)

[Jalan Pantai Murni 1](#)

[59200 Kuala Lumpur](#)



### The Carnival of Darwiches, an Exhibition by Raouf Rifai

In the "Carnival of Darwiches," Kuala Lumpur's TJ Fine Art Gallery presents an extensive collection of contemporary art and masterpieces by a doyen of Lebanese artists, Raouf Rifai.

Rifai's Darwiches are an extensive body of work created by the artist over the past several years. Rifai introduced the Darwiche as the point of departure for his art in 2008. Rifai's Darwiche is a folk character created by the artist and representing the common man ("darwiche" in Arabic means a simple and simple-minded person). Rifai's common man also encompasses - through the name the artist chose - the dervish, or Sufi mystic, thus imbuing a spiritual and physical duality to the character.

Rifai's Darwiches are many and varied, a cultural icon in the making through the deliberate, obsessive application of the artist over the past six years, an application which doesn't show any signs of abating. Rifai has painted the Darwiche in many guises, all of which share some common characteristics, foremost the fact that they are all rooted in human existence: they have weaknesses and flaws, a myriad of expressions, attitudes and emotions; they are secular and spiritual; they are handsome and ugly; they are stupid yet at the same time wiser than everyone around them; they are full of worries or playful; they cry yet derive humor from everyday tasks. In short, we recognize ourselves in them: they are us.

Rifai's Darwiches are almost always accompanied by a rich array of explicit and implicit Middle Eastern symbols, including a fez (or tarboush), a Damscene sabot, Egyptian peasant dresses and many others. Darwiche also often wears a Songkok, the cap or hat widely worn in Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, the southern Philippines and southern Thailand, mostly among Muslim males, and originating from the Ottoman fez. Often, the Darwiche is represented as a folkloric character such as Juha (better known outside the Arab world as Nasreddin), Abu Zayd al-Hilali (an 11th-century Arab leader featured often in Arab folklore), Abu El Abed (a Lebanese fictional character who is the centrepiece of jokes in Lebanon) and others from the rich history of the Middle East. Darwiche is also portrayed as a common man, a Sheikh, a woman, a drag queen, a Pope. Inspired by Nasreddin, Rifai's Darwiche wants to be popular across the entire Arab Middle East, and his stories almost invariably take the form of humorous anecdotes.

The paintings selected for the exhibition paint a wide canvas of the Middle East's social and political conundrums.

"The Middle East in its reality resembles a circus, or a theatrical play, where you have your heroes and villains monsters and angels, as well as the brave and the cowardly," says Rifai, "I want to give them all a role, and highlight how society and politicians under-estimate the common man at their own peril." "My art's main subject is Humanity; it is nourished by the history of our civilization and our heritage."

### About the Artist

Born in Lebanon in 1954, Raouf Rifai lives and works in Beirut. He holds a Ph.D in Urban Planning from the Sorbonne-Paris I, and teaches art at the Lebanese University.

Rifai has taken part in numerous collective shows throughout Europe; the United States the Middle East, Singapore and Japan.

He has also had more than fifteen solo exhibitions since 1984.



In 2010, he was awarded the first prize of the Sursock Museum's Salon d'automne in Beirut. His art work has also been successfully auctioned at Christie's, acquired by several museums and collected by private buyers in New York, Paris, London, the Middle East and Asia.

### TJ FINE ART

TJ FINE ART was founded by renowned contemporary Malaysian artist, Tajuddin Ismail in June 2004. The gallery is managed by his wife, Puan Khaliyah Ismail, who is also the Managing Director and co-founder of the gallery.

**The gallery opens from Monday to Saturday 10:30AM - 6PM (by appointment)**