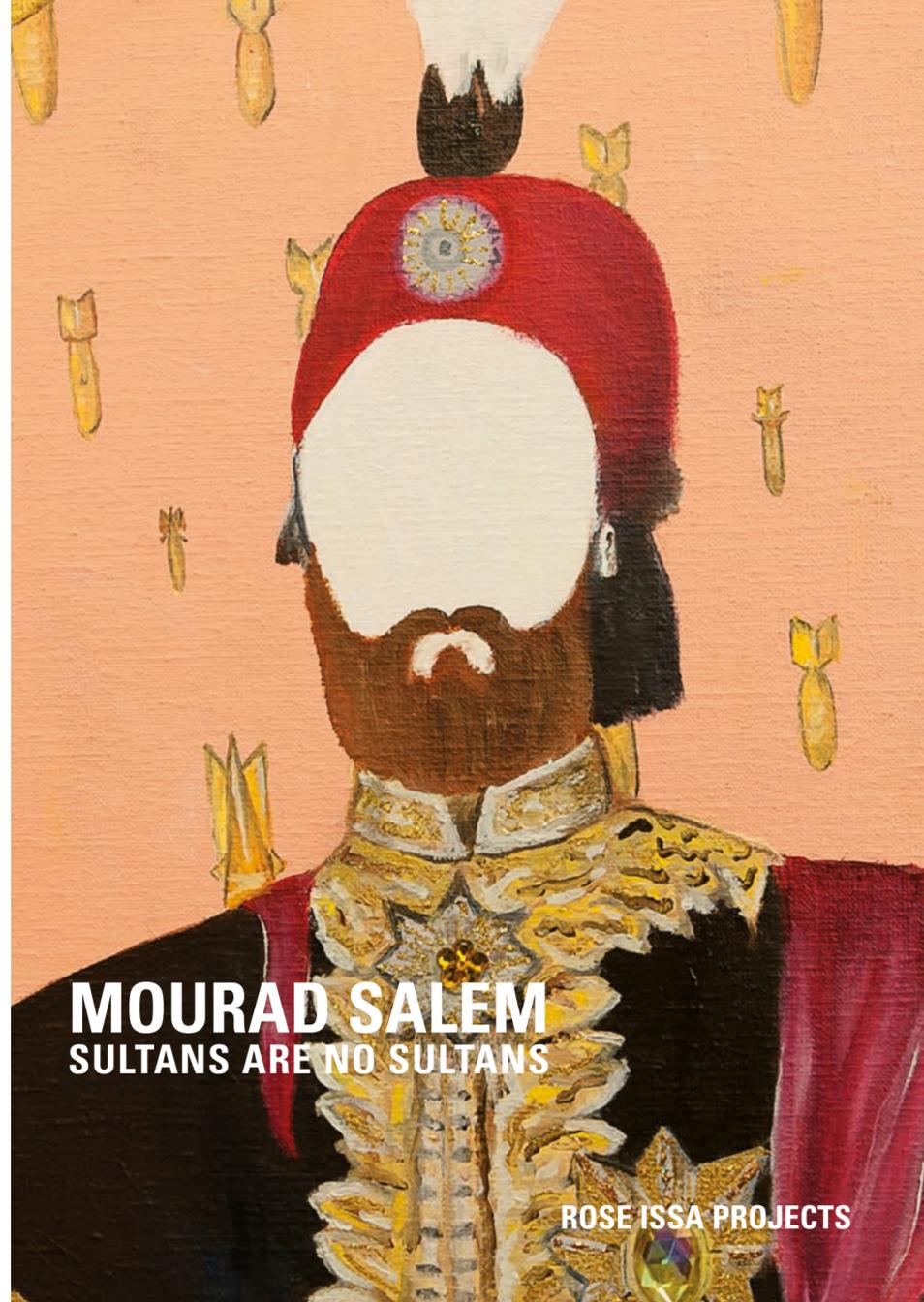


DON'T TRUST SWEET LEILA, mixed media on canvas and collage, 195 x 130 cm, 2011-13
BEWARE OF THE ORCHIDS ATTACKS, mixed media on canvas and collage, 152 x 122 cm, 2010-11

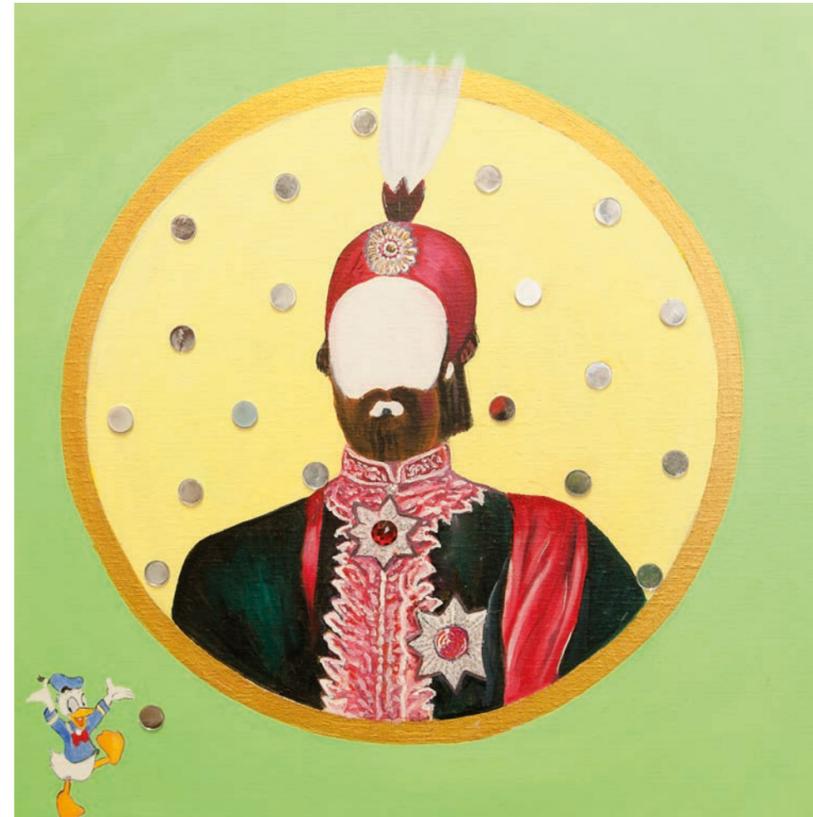


SULTAN ON SOFA, mixed media on canvas, 216 x 130 cm, 2011
IT'S COLD TODAY, mixed media on canvas and collage, 152 x 122 cm, 2012
COVER: SLEEPING (detail), mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm, 2013



MOURAD SALEM
SULTANS ARE NO SULTANS

ROSE ISSA PROJECTS



A *SUNNY DAY*, mixed media and collage, 61 x 46cm (91 x 78 cm with frame) 2012-13
MISSED, mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm, 2013



SLEEPING, mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm, 2013



NOOOOOOO, mixed media on canvas, 60 x 60 cm, 2013

MOURAD SALEM

2–30 OCTOBER 2013

LEIGHTON HOUSE MUSEUM

12 HOLLAND PARK RD, LONDON W14

This exhibition inaugurates the 2013 Nour Festival of Arts from the Middle East and North Africa at Leighton House Museum and is the London debut of Mourad Salem, a Tunisian artist based in Paris. Salem has selected eight recent paintings that will be exhibited in the exquisite Drawing Room of Leighton House.

Having Tunisian, Turkish and Ottoman roots, Salem questions the Arab world's leaders of yesteryear, which he often portrays as figures of fun. His funky and kitsch Sultans and Sultanas are painted on canvas surrounded with fake fur, ostrich feathers, costume jewellery, floral accessories or elaborate frames, emphasising their immaturity as figures of power, although they are portrayed with some affection. History has shown that for the most part, these were leaders who did not lead; men in power who abused their power or used religion as a tool for power. Salem's work hints that old times may be coming back; that there are now leaders who continue to ignore the demands of the public and the requirements of our times.

In his smaller format works, Disney characters pop up in the borders – a faceless Sultan might be surrounded by Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck as a humorous comment on the character of tyranny. When there are no facial features, we become the reflection of that face, suggesting that anyone can become a despot. As Salem says, "Despotism is faceless, death is faceless and so is life, for each of us puts their own face on their life and death."

Salem also finds similarities between old and new tyrants, especially in their love of "bling" and power. Former potentates and presidents-for-life have their own vision of taste, and the artist wants to symbolise this feeling of a fake life and shabby wealth and blow the minutiae of a dictator's life out of proportion. Ultimately, Salem's work is about the interconnectedness of periods, styles, regions, and how intercultural and intergenerational exchanges can take place. Through his paintings he hints at bigotry and prejudice in order to invite reflection.

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