

# MARWAN CHAMAA'S ECSTATIC



Beirut, it is the summer of 2015, the summer of discontent...

Marwan Chamaa currently living in Beirut, Lebanon is witnessing what is being baptized as a revolution. The use of the word "revolution" may be used too leisurely and too loosely according to Marwan Chamaa. True, the voices of the people are loud, the social media pages all full with slogans, satire, critique, poems, songs, velfies, and selfies in the midst of the demonstrators, all in support of change and accountability. This is a reality TV revolution, every minute, angle, viewpoint, and aspect is being broadcasted live on most local TV channels. Even eager TV reporters are throwing themselves amidst of the action, sometimes losing their objectivity and credibility. This is bold, brave, innocent, chaotic, and naive. "All of this is very inspiring" says Chamaa, "it brings out the creativity of many" but is this enough to make it a true revolution, are we really ready to pay the price, do we have the endurance? A "revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another" - Mao Zedong.

In his latest series, *Ecstatic*, Marwan again uses his surroundings as his muse as he sets forth two large paintings. Inspired by the likes of Vitaly Komar, Alex Melamid, Wang Guangyi, and Alexander Kosolapov who use communist propaganda symbols as a base to convey a message. However, unlike those great artists Marwan is not criticizing the communist drives but rather using the original propaganda posters of Chairman Mao Zedong, the founding father of the People's Republic of China, as a backdrop to *Lebanize* his message. The success of the massive revolution in China has many similarities to the success of McDonald's mass branding according to Marwan.

The Chinese revolution started in the 40s, McDonald's was founded around the same time - China has the world's largest population, McDonald's is the world's largest fast food restaurants chain - the Chinese revolution affected in one way or another millions around the globe; McDonald's serves around 68 million customers daily in 119 countries - they both lead and reorganize their operations using production line principles. The main recipe for success of McDonald's and the People's Republic of China is the well greased organization and purposeful leadership. Therefore, it is fitting to use slogans from McDonald's that seem at first glance to convey a straight forward message of love towards its products/ leader and to question the secret ingredient of its/ his success. Maybe things are not what they seem, maybe a simple message associated to a household name like McDonald's points out that a revolution can be easily high-jacked by giant conglomerates, moguls, and tycoons by hiding their agendas using the people's just demands, subliminal brainwashing perhaps? Or can a revolution only succeed if it is organized and operated like a business? Or could it be the combination of the colors red and yellow that make it successful?

In "Ma huwa al-sirr?" (What's the secret?) Marwan uses an Arabic slogan used on McDonald's packaging. Chamaa inserts the slogan on his canvas using a Chairman Mao propaganda poster from the 50s and 60s. The original poster promotes great accomplishments through the Chinese people's unity. The audience is left wondering what the secret is? How is a revolution deemed successful? Marwan's interpretation of the poster has the hints laid there in red, yellow and white for the audience to speculate.



"Ma huwa al-sirr?" (What's the secret?), *Ecstatic series*, 2015, acrylic paint, latex emulsion paint, and paint marker on canvas, 100 x 200cm (39.37 x 78.74inch).

"Ana A7ubuh" (i'm lovin' it), is another McDonald's slogan. Marwan superimposes this famous phrase, which also means in Arabic "I love him" on another Mao propaganda poster. The original poster says that soldiers and civilians can jointly overcome any obstacles. The smiling Mao has his hand extended over the heads of his people. What is loved exactly? How is a successful revolution led? What are the ingredients? The clues to the puzzle are all there on the 100 x 200cm canvas.



"Ana A7ubuh" (i'm lovin' it), *Ecstatic series*, 2015, acrylic paint, latex emulsion paint, and paint marker on canvas, 100 x 200cm (39.37 x 78.74inch).