

# 9 QUESTIONS... OUSSAMA DIAB

It's difficult to get Oussama Diab on the phone these days. Based in Damascus, the artist was only available to talk to us about his work through a series of sporadic emails, rather than risk the Syrian crisis' tapped phone lines. Born in 1977, the prize-winning Palestinian pop artist is known for his huge colourful canvases and graffiti-inspired Neo-Expressionism. We think he's bananas.

**1. How did this piece "Human Being" come about?**  
My inspiration was man. A lean and delicate creature that resembles a banana.

**2. And the nails?**  
The nails symbolise the tortures that burden this lean matter.

**3. What's the difference between the banana in "Human Being" and Andy Warhol's famous cover art for "The Velvet Underground & Nico"?**

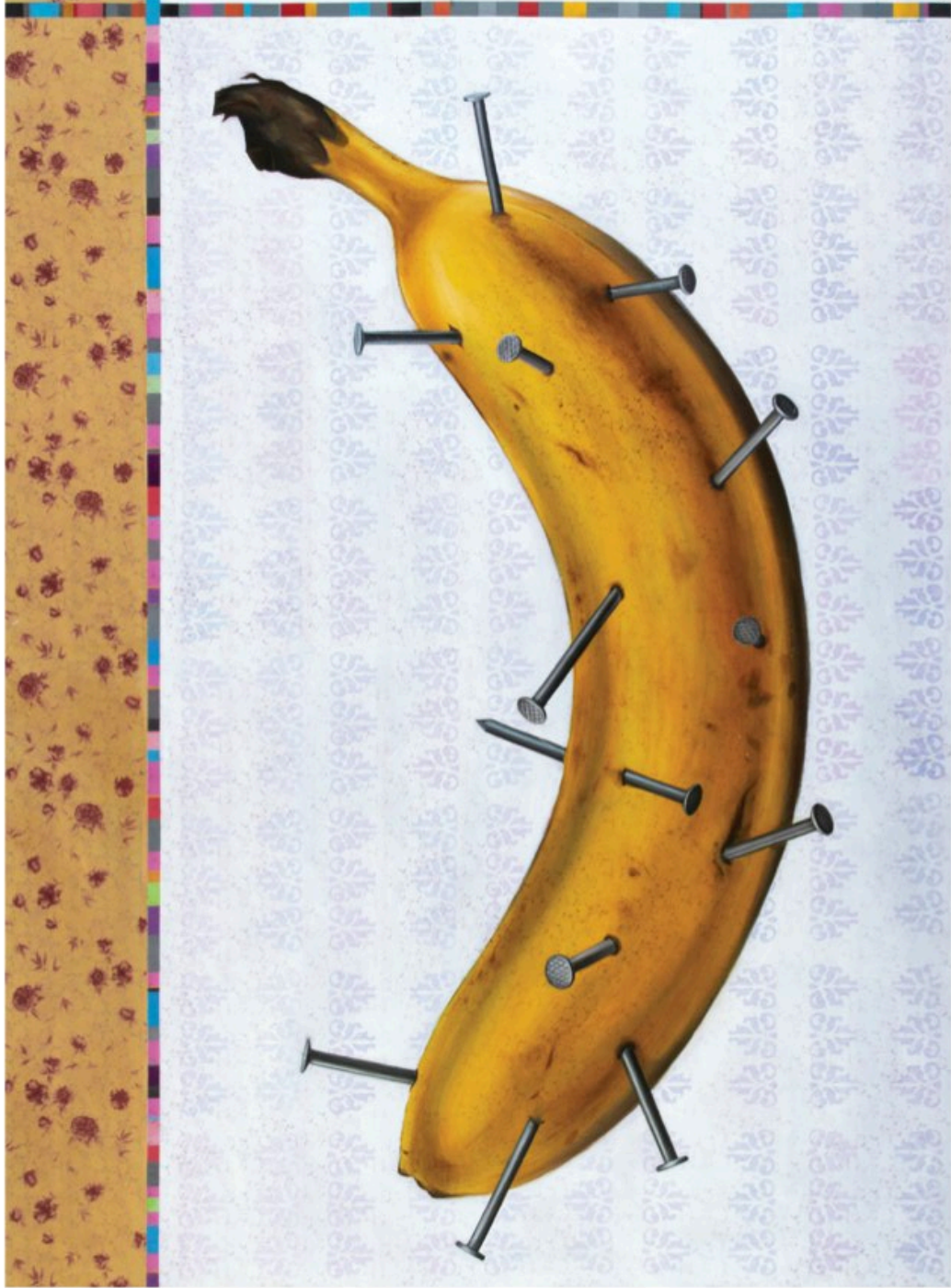
On the creative path, the work of one artist that surpasses another's does not exist. For art influences and is influenced. Every artist presents an addition, in some form, to this overall "Art".

**4. When did you first start painting?**

I used to draw on my school textbooks when I was young and my friends in school used to ask me to draw on their textbooks. I was passionate about two characters in the books, Bassem and Rabab, created by the artist Bassam Bahra.

**5. Where do you consider home?**

Damascus is the place that embraced me and I grew to love



its trees, sky and the scent in its air. Palestine holds my family's memories and I dream of a return.

**6. What's your most vivid food memory?**

I remember sitting by my mother, waiting for her to hand me a warm loaf of bread that she'd been preparing and sincerely enjoying it.

**7. There's a discreet recurrence of fruits in your work (a banana, an apple...). Why?**

Because for me, art is like a person eating an apple and painting what it tastes like.

**8. What are you working on right now?**

I'm currently working on a piece that revisits Picasso's Guernica, in which I'm embodying the events happening around the Arab world. We're waiting for an end to what's happening in Damascus and Syria as a whole.

**9. The banana, green or ripe?**

It's man to me and man is both. 🍌

"Human Being"