

## eL Seed (France, b. 1981)

eL Seed is a French-Tunisian multimedia artist who fuses the beauty of Arabic calligraphy with the roughness of graffiti. Typically, Arabic calligraphy is associated with Islamic Art and Qu'ranic texts; nonetheless, the artist tries to break this tie. Keeping away from traditional Arabic calligraphy rules, the artist created his own style to spread universal messages throughout the world. eL Seed's style embodies open-mindedness and freedom in opposition to restraints in art and specifically Arabic calligraphy. The artist's vibrant work evokes the marriage between the traditional and the modern.

Born in France, eL Seed grew up disconnected from his Arabic roots and mother tongue, only speaking the Tunisian dialect at home. In a quest for identity, at the beginning of adolescence, eL Seed decided to further his knowledge in Arabic, learning how to read and write the formal language. Very quickly, he found himself playing with Arabic lettering and created his own style.

eL Seed's works became free, organic, and curvilinear expressions of researched quotes and phrases. The artist's values of love, respect, and tolerance are vital to his work. While viewers are not necessarily familiar with the words and expressions portrayed, they are able to capture their essence making the work both global and abstract in nature. The forms become themselves expressive of eL Seed's beliefs, through color, line, rule-breaking, and instinct. The artist accentuates the complexity of Arabic lettering, molding each letter in infinite ways, adding yet another layer of abstraction.

eL Seed's artwork and specifically his large scale street interventions intend to redress stereotypes and build bridges between the East and West while staying true to his artistry and ethos. His goal is to create dialogue and promote tolerance as well as change global perceptions of Arabic culture. eL Seed aspires to prove that art in the Islamic world is rich in history, and is still growing in practice and potential.

Selected large scale site-specific street art interventions include L'Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris; the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro; the DMZ in between North and South Korea; the slums of Cape Town; and the heart of Cairo's garbage collectors neighborhood.

Selected solo shows by the artist include Lazinc Gallery, London, UK (2019); Royal Monceau, Paris, France (2017); Galleria Patrica Armocida, Milan, Italy (2017); ArtTalks, Cairo, Egypt (2016), Tashkeel, Dubai, U.A.E. (2014); Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris, France (2014); and Itinérance Gallery, Paris, France (2012). He has participated in recent group shows at Sharjah Calligraphy Biennale, Sharjah, U.A.E. (2018); Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt (2016); Museo Palazzo, Platamone, Catania (2015); and Pergamon Museum, Berlin, Germany (2012).

In 2017, eL Seed won the UNESCO Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture. In 2016 Foreign Policy named the artist a Global Thinker for his project *Perception* in Cairo. In 2013, he collaborated with Louis Vuitton on their famous Foulard d'Artiste.