

A Mathematical Artist

BY REBECCA BISSET



Currently showing at REDSEA Gallery in Dempsey Hill are paintings by TAHER JAOUI. We learn more about this self-taught artist, including the inspiration he finds in maths and music.

A French artist with Tunisian roots, Taher Jaoui studied financial mathematics, engineering and computer science – he didn't have a formal education in art. His mother, a maths teacher, familiarised him with the world of formulas when he was a child, and it's the symbols and signs from these formulas that are now incorporated into some of his compositions.



A Sliced Bread - mixed media on canvas 200 x 180cm

Tell us about your paintings on display at REDSEA Gallery.

During the process of making my compositions, I like to listen to music, and sometimes I integrate the influence of the songs in my painting process. For example, one of my paintings, *You Can't Make No Mistake*, is inspired by the song "Make No Mistake" by Keith Richards. *The Ecstasy of Gold* refers to a song by Metallica – the beginning of the song is from the movie *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly*. I really love this movie and I pay homage to it in this painting. I refer to the interaction between the different energies of the characters, something like the cyclical fight between yin and yang.

The Elephant is in the Room was made in 2020, when Donald Trump was in the media a lot. I see Trump as an elephant in a Chinese porcelain shop – and that's what I'm referring to in the painting!

I'm also inspired by movies quotes or scripts that I like. It's usually something ironic, or funny at first, but with a specific meaning for me. One of the most memorable to me is "A cat with seven souls". It's a personal message to remind myself that failure is not permanent and you can always start over again – like the famous myth that cats have multiple lives.

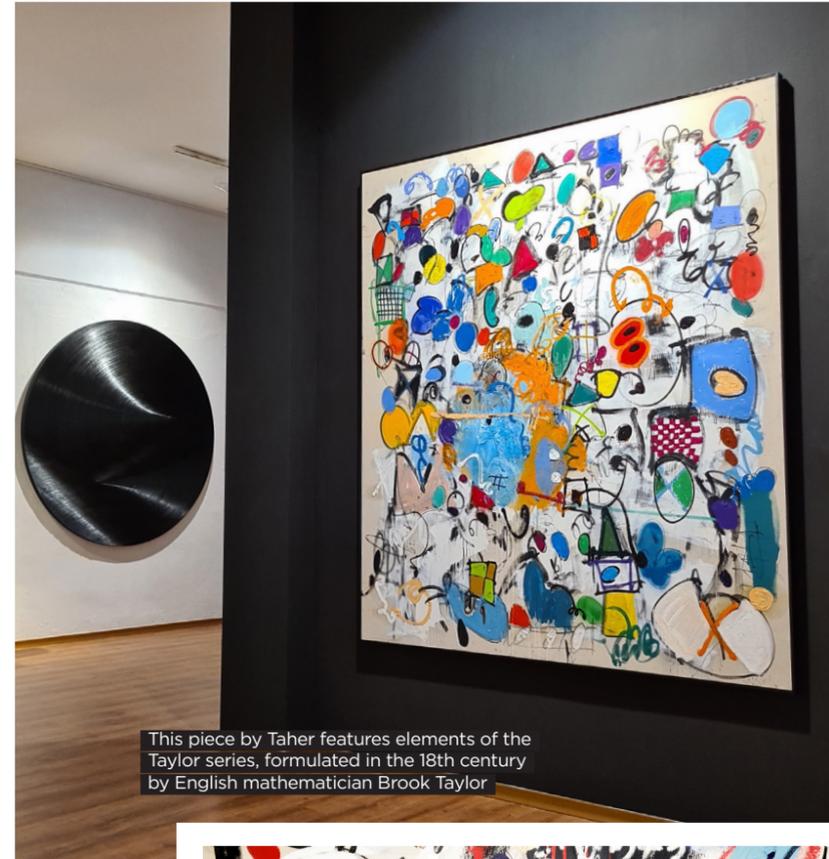
Another of my paintings, *A Postponed Dream*, was done when I was full of colourful ideas and a burst of bright energy. To me, this work is an invitation to believe in dreams, and focus on what you want to achieve in life, without procrastinating all the time.

How does your non-art background impact on your art?

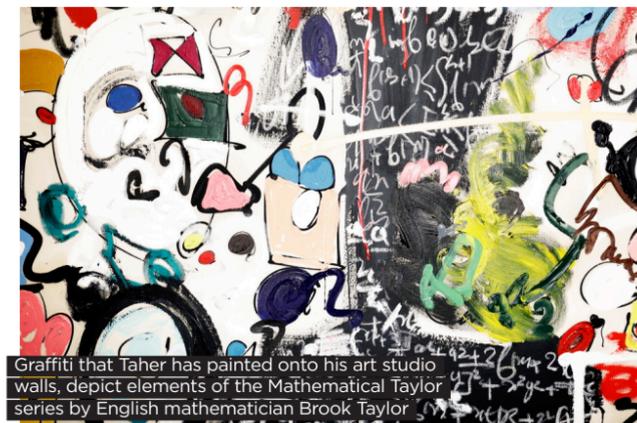
It has a huge impact. It impacts my vision of my paintings and the structure of my compositions. Mathematical symbols and formulas are for me a natural language; it's something I grew up exposed to. So I perceive it as an artistic expression in itself, and it's why it appears in my artworks. I also have a scientific background, which is why I'm constantly thinking of new ways to integrate science into my artistic expression! For example, apart from painting, I also create 3D sculptures.

How did your current art style come about?

My painting style is built on my different inspirations, from science to the abstract expressionist art movement, and from cartoons to cubism.



This piece by Taher features elements of the Taylor series, formulated in the 18th century by English mathematician Brook Taylor



Graffiti that Taher has painted onto his art studio walls, depict elements of the Mathematical Taylor series by English mathematician Brook Taylor



Taher's art studio in Madrid

What's the most enjoyable part of your art creation process?

For me, it's the first drawing that establishes the first steps of the composition. I find it the most free and intuitive moment in the whole construction of the painting!

What is your studio setup usually like when you're creating art?

I like to rotate between paintings, so I'll work on several pieces at any given time. They will usually be at different levels of completion as well. I usually listen to more instrumental music while I work, so I can stay concentrated and have all my energy focused on my paintings.

Where are you currently based, and what are some things you like about the location?

Until a year ago, I was based in Berlin, but I have since moved to Madrid. When I was in Berlin, I loved to explore the green areas, forest, lakes – especially the Planterwald area; I love its quiet solitude and authenticity.

Now, here in Madrid, my favourite spot is the famous El Retiro park, for running, meditation, walking and hanging out with my friends. It's the most inspiring place for me in the city.

What's the next step for you in your art?

I'm experimenting with integrating more and more physical and tactile elements into my paintings and compositions. I would love to experiment more with sculptures and installations.

I've also recently started experimenting with airbrushing. I'm excited by the level of freedom and precision it offers, and I love the liberating feel, precision and the different depths it gives to the painting surface.

Lastly, what piece of advice would you give to somebody who wants to make a living from art?

Work, work, work! Create as often as possible, trying different mediums and different materials and staying connected to the art world by following art blogs, reading books and articles about the history of art and contemporary art. My favourites to follow are Artnet.com and artsy blogs, and my favourite books are *Seven Days in the Art World* by Sarah Thornton, and *The Value of Art: Money, Power, Beauty* by Michael Findlay. el.com

To see Taher's art at REDSEA Gallery, visit Block 9 Dempsey Road, #01-10 Dempsey Hill. 6732 6711 | redseagallery.com/artists/taher-jaoui