

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Event: Selections from The Samawi Collection

Location: Ayyam Art Center, Dubai

Dates: February 1— March 31, 2011



From February 1 until March 31, the Ayyam Art Center in Dubai will proudly present “Selections from The Samawi Collection,” a large-scale exhibition that will feature several periods of Arab art through three distinct curatorial themes. By identifying particular threads amidst three-dozen seminal works, this museum-quality show will provide unique insight into one of the region’s most significant collections of international art, demonstrating the ways in which the Middle East has increasingly obtained global leverage with a broadening scope of patronage.

Beginning with works that boldly explore pertinent sociopolitical issues, “Then What?” draws its title from a 1965 painting by Syrian modernist Louay Kayyali. The last surviving canvas from the artist’s most revered series, the large, nearly monochromatic painting speaks of the plight of Palestinians in the post-Nakba Arab world with an astounding sense of foreboding. With the monumental work as a point of departure, the exhibition is divided into two periods, from 1960-2000 and from 2001 to 2010, bringing together several groundbreaking artists, including Naeem Ismail, Assad Arabi and Safwan Dahoul while simultaneously drawing attention to the longstanding tradition of committed art in the region with examples by budding talent such as Oussama Diab.

Presenting the formalistically driven experiments of one of the region’s most politically forthright cultural figures, “A Tribute to Samia Halaby” sheds light on two important periods of painting by the leading Palestinian artist. Known for work that has pushed the boundaries of non-figurative representation on an international scale, Halaby has continued to search for new means of abstraction for over fifty years. Examining an impressive body of canvases from the 1970s and 1980s, this visual vignette will include works that have remained out of the public eye for quite some time, offering a rare opportunity to revisit the artist’s previous achievements while providing the aesthetic links to the late style of painting that has been garnering significant praise.

Ending with “Looking Forward,” which focuses on the latest trends in Middle Eastern visual culture, “Selections from The Samawi Collection” is a staggering survey of art that spans several generations, countless local and international schools and a number of national art scenes. With examples by cutting-edge painters Khaled Hafez, Khaled Takreti and Kais Salman, “Looking Forward” offers a look into the future of Arab art.

Including over 3,000 works by modern and contemporary artists in a variety of mediums, The Samawi Collection traverses several schools and periods of Middle Eastern and international art. The collection spans a range of genres, from politically minded canvases to painting and sculpture that remain at the cutting-edge of global art with technologically driven approaches. Rotating selections of this collection will be on display at the Ayyam Art Center as part of a new cultural

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initiative that seeks to bring museum-grade exhibitions of private and public art holdings to regional audiences. Including over 3,000 works by modern and contemporary artists in a variety of mediums, The Samawi Collection traverses several schools and periods of Middle Eastern and international art. The collection spans a range of genres, from politically minded canvases to painting and sculpture that remain at the cutting-edge of global art with technologically driven approaches. Rotating selections of this collection will be on display at the Ayyam Art Center as part of a new cultural initiative that seeks to bring museum-grade exhibitions of private and public art holdings to regional audiences. For more information visit www.ayyamgallery.com.