

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: Mounzer Kamnakache - Venus of the Clouds

Location: Ayyam Gallery Beirut

Dates: January 20 – February 28, 2011

Opening: January 20 at 7pm



Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to announce “Venus of the Clouds,” the forthcoming solo exhibition of Syrian painter and sculptor Mounzer Kamnakache. Known for sensual figures that possess mythical overtones, Kamnakache is a prominent artist of his generation. With his latest body of work he resumes the themes found in earlier pastels with the buttery forms of his female protagonist dominating airy compositions.

Interested in the origins of man and the cyclic rhythms of nature that define our existence, his rubenesque heroines stand as symbolic representations of “the connector,” that which gives a “pulse” and “tenderness” to life. Surrounded by the serenity of a cloud-filled sky, Kamnakache’s nude goddess-like subject is shown in the midst of regeneration, as new creatures are born and the heavens seem to welcome them.

The presence of swans, recalls the ancient Greek myth of Leda, who was seduced by Zeus as he lay in disguise, resulting in the birth of a pair of immortal children, one of which was the notoriously beautiful Helen of Troy. Taking from a long tradition of creation myths as they have appeared in the Western cannon, Kamnakache’s works also employ the image of a woman as the personification of Venus, the Roman deity of love, beauty and fertility. The artist’s bronze sculptures on the other hand, are comparably austere, as he seems to portray the mortal end of the spectrum, with such representations as “the family,” creating an intriguing dichotomy not only in medium but in subject matter as well.

Born in 1935, Syrian artist Mounzer Kamnakache works in sculpture and pastels, creating ethereal works that are at once existential and mythological. A graduate from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus in 1968, he went on to pursue graduate studies in Paris, where he spent nearly two decades. Returning to his country of origin in the 1990s, he took up a teaching position at his alma mater and currently resides between Switzerland and Syria. A respected multidisciplinary artist, his sculptures and paintings have been shown in prominent galleries in the Middle East and Europe.

Since its founding in 2006, Ayyam Gallery has become one of the Arab world's leading art spaces. With a selection of cutting-edge painting, sculpture and photography that represents some of the Middle East's most exciting talent, the gallery has sought to promote the region's dynamic cultural scene at home and abroad. For more information visit www.ayyamgallery.com