

From May 15 – June 19 Ayyam Gallery Damascus will proudly present the solo exhibition of Syrian artist Mouteea Murad, a rising painter who has been seizing the attention of regional art critics and collectors with complex interpretations of geometric abstraction. A standout young artist, his colorful, multilayered compositions have rapidly set him apart.

Born in Homs, Syria in 1977, Murad graduated from of the Faculty of Fine Arts where he was initially interested in drawing. Prior to entering Ayyam's "Shabab" competition for emerging talent in 2007, he produced a series of brooding monotone portraits that spoke of human angst. Despite critically acclaimed exhibitions throughout the Arab world and successful sales from such compositions, he dramatically changed his artistic direction, choosing to abandon his dark figurative style for vibrant explorations of the contours of shapes, the effects of sharp lines and the contrasts of gallant hues. The result has been the creation of a captivating body of work that speaks of an optimistic rejuvenation.

Although his earlier abstract works displayed nods to such influential twentieth-century painters as Russians Kazimir Malevich and Wassily Kandinsky and American Stuart Davis, his most recent canvases exhibit a break from these modernist references.

His latest mixed media paintings reflect a certain independence and innovation. Labeling the majority of these pieces as "Trials," Murad's new series stands as evidence of a creative process that is constantly evolving. As he explains, "The life of an artist is a continuous state of experimentation." And so he has fashioned a painting style that is limitless, as he leaps forward with cutting-edge approaches and reaps the benefits of reinvention. Abstraction manifests in various forms, be it with a strong emphasis on optical illusion or the construction of dimension through the overlapping of geometric shapes that act as solid color fields.

With an energetic palette he creates symphonies of color, taking cue from the endless possibilities and combinations that can be drawn from his mind's eye. "I am totally inspired by color," explains the artist. This aspect of the artist's work is paramount, as he seeks to extract the beautiful and sacred, situating Murad within a movement of contemporary Arab art that has continued the magnificent legacy of Islamic art.

Accordingly there is also something distinctly mathematical about his canvases. Careful design allows for lively exchanges between various tones while a sophisticated dissection of the picture plane is achieved through the seemingly endless layering of thin lines and solid forms. Each stroke has been placed with painstaking precision, as the surface of the paint appears flat. Unlike the multitude of contemporary painters that seek to evoke emotion through the tactile nature of medium, Murad aims for the focus of his canvases to be placed on the way in which lines and shapes interact when placed within intricate compositions. Whether converging in a glorious collision or intersecting through a grid of interlocked dimensions, his forms exist in a harmonious universe. For Murad, this recent artistic journey has been about "a search for a completeness...for perfection," one that is passionately presented to the viewer.