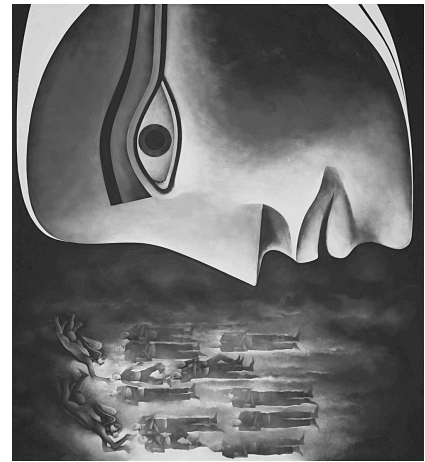


PRESS RELEASE

Ayyam Gallery
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Sun-Thu: 10:00am-6:00pm
Sat: 12:00pm-6:00pm



Safwan Dahoul: *Almost a Dream*

Ayyam Gallery, Dubai (DIFC)

5 February - 13 March 2014

Opening reception: Monday, 3 February from 7:00 - 9:00pm

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (DIFC) is delighted to announce *Almost a Dream*, an exhibition of new work by acclaimed Syrian painter Safwan Dahoul from the 5 February - 13 March. Firmly established as one of the most prominent Arab artists working today, Dahoul will exhibit paintings created within the last year, since his hugely successful 2013 debut UK exhibition, *Repetitive Dreams*.

While incorporating Dahoul's signature monochromatic, minimalistic style, the paintings in *Almost a Dream* import a new, more direct engagement with reality on the ground as they relate to recent catastrophic events in the artist's native country of Syria.

Having been invested in *hulum*, the dream, for the past 25 years, Dahoul has begun to distance himself from the realm of the dream and examine whether it is actually dreams which inspire his paintings or something else entirely. This in-between realm of dreaming and not dreaming is evident in several of his bold works. The first of these grey and white paintings shows a wide-eyed angel figure looking down towards a group of children lying motionless, a reference to the innocent children who died last year as a result of chemical warfare in Syria. With eyes open widely, Dahoul's angel continues to witness the ongoing atrocities in his homeland.

The angel protagonist is often employed by the artist as a symbolic embodiment of Syria. One work sets the angel's visage in profile against a black background, her winged eye vacuous and dark. The angel who usually looks down at the people of her country is here physically pointed downwards and subjected to the gaze of the viewers, like Syria to the external world.

A large, light greyscale canvas centres Dahoul's female face with an effect of crinkling visible across the surface. This crumpling effect is a dissolving of sorts, which mirrors the fractionating state of Syria. Dahoul states that what is happening in Syria is not 'normal', so in the face of this terror, destruction and grief, he presents the face of his signature narrator in an suitably abnormal fashion, creased and with closed eyes suggestive of resignation and to the events unfolding around her.

Notes to Editors

About the Artist

Safwan Dahoul's evocative canvases, all of which share the title *Dream*, examine some of the most intimate moments of the human experience: slumber, companionship, solitude and death. The soulful, dreamy human figures that populate his work are 'substance matter' for the artist, a tool through which he depicts and preserves his own biography. Dominated by black, white and muted tones, Dahoul's canvases explore the relationship between the figure and its background, between the human being and space. His minimalist use of colour references his surroundings and is a response to the absence of colour now seen on the streets of Syria and the rest of the Middle East.

Born in 1961 in Hama, Syria, Safwan Dahoul lives and works in Dubai. Dahoul attended the Suheil Al Ahdab Center of Plastic Arts and the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus. In 1987, he received a scholarship to study abroad from the Ministry of Higher Education and relocated to Belgium, achieving his Doctorate from the Higher Institute of Plastic Arts in Mons in 1997. His work is held in numerous private and public collections including the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; The Samawi Collection, Dubai; The Farjam Collection, Dubai; and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Kuwait.

Previous solo exhibitions include: Ayyam Gallery London (2013); Edge of Arabia, London (2013); Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2011, 2008) and Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2011). Group exhibitions include: Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi (2013); Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2012); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2011); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2009); and Ayyam Gallery Damascus (2006).

Exhibition Facts

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (DIFC)

Exhibition Dates: 5 February - 13 March 2014

Location: Gate Village Building 3, DIFC, Dubai

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