

Moustafa Fathi Solo Exhibition at Ayyam Gallery, Dubai
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On March 9, 2010, Ayyam gallery Dubai will proudly present a solo show in memoriam for the late Syrian painter Moustafa Fathi (1942-2009). Featuring two decades of Fathi's work and accompanied by a recently published monograph on the artist, the exhibition will underscore the importance of one of Syria's most influential contemporary pioneers.

Born in Deraa, Fathi received a Diploma in Engraving from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus in 1966 and a Diploma in Engraving and Lithography from the Ecole Superieure des Beaux Arts in Paris in 1978. Throughout his career he exhibited regularly at home and abroad, most notably in a number of important French institutions, including the Picasso Museum in Antibes, which acquired one of his works. Between 1966 and 1987, he was a member of the Faculty of Fine Arts, a position that intensified his contributions to the Damascus art scene. A prominent figure, as both an academic and practicing artist, Fathi worked not only amidst Syria's heyday in modernism but during its establishment of new formalistic and theoretical frontiers. As such, his work possesses elements of modernist approaches blended with recent experiments in art, a combination that furthered the country's contemporary painting.

With a rich artistic life that spanned four decades and two continents, Fathi labored intensely on a painting style that was in line with developments in both Arab and international art. Like his Iraqi colleagues Dia Azzawi and Shakir Hassan, who transformed visual culture with groundbreaking aesthetics that combined the use of abstraction and figurative representation to tap into the region's rich artistic heritage while looking to the future, Fathi turned to Syria's often overlooked folk art for inspiration. This not only had great implications for the direction of local culture but for the breaking through of social barriers by fashioning a style of art that spoke to a greater portion of the population with an aesthetic that combined imagery found in everyday life with cutting-edge approaches to painting reflecting global trends.

The artist once elaborated on this point by explaining, "I derive my inspiration from shapes. Shape has taken a long journey until it took its final configuration. Tools are a form of human thought. They are the trace of the human being. They are human being themselves. I like a tool and it always captures my attention, not because it is a scene, but because it is a living thought. Paintings, on the other hand, are an accumulation of the images and shapes of tools and stones in my head."

Deriving inspiration from artisan printing materials after years of intensive research, Fathi carved hundreds of woodblocks, which he then used in the creation of elaborate mixed media canvases that reflect the freedom of Abstract Expressionism and the sophistication of Islamic art and ancient hieroglyphs. The result was a large body of work that sets small cells of complex designs against flat color planes, using symbolist and colorist explorations to produce an innate tension within the composition. Yet with careful arrangement, these works provoke the mind's eye with a

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visual harmony that reduces nature to its most organic state, as pockets of dynamic force are contained by an infinite vastness.

The exhibition will run from March 9th until April 17th at Ayyam Gallery in Al Quoz.