

## **Mohannad Orabi Solo Show at Ayyam Gallery    October 1 - 24, 2009**

Ayyam gallery Dubai is proud to reopen its doors after a summer hiatus with an exhibition featuring the paintings of Mohannad Orabi, one of our rising young talents. Scheduled to be held from October 1- 24, this solo show will highlight the artist's exciting new body of work. With the significant buzz generating from Orabi's solo exhibition at Ayyam Damascus in 2008 and his recent success in Beijing and Hong Kong, where his canvases were met with great acclaim, the unveiling of this latest collection is being met with much anticipation.

Born in Damascus in 1977, Orabi graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in 2000. Recognized as part of a promising generation of Syrian artists, he has exhibited frequently at home and abroad, in venues across the region, and has participated in collective exhibitions and festivals in North America, Europe and Asia, while his work is housed in private collections across the globe. As part of Ayyam's popular exhibition "Shabab Uprising," which was held at our Dubai outpost earlier this year and provided a landmark display of Syria's new wave of contemporary painters, Orabi's distinct portraits quickly made an impression on the Middle Eastern art scene.

The artist's unique style of painting is marked by mixed-media compositions that are dominated by round, childlike figures. For the artist "there is a story behind every face" of his subjects, as he explores the details of his "latest mission and artistic preoccupation," one that reflects the recalling of the early formative years of his life. "I reflect on personal experiences and memories and reminisce through my paintings. I am inspired by the history of my childhood experiences," says the artist.

The playfulness of his subjects and the overwhelming sense of energy and life that emanate from them speak of the artist's examination into the spontaneous nature of life. This is achieved with the suggestion of movement and time that can be found in his use of quick line work, which, as Orabi emphasizes, he revels in. "Adding three seconds more or less (to the moment); this leaves the condition open to change," he confirms. Executed with fleeting lines, elaborate geometric patterns and a bold palette, his colossal figures are surrounded by even fields of color, producing solid spatial planes that result in a striking visual effect. Washes of paint and the vigorous application of medium add an element of texture alluding to depth.

In one of his latest self portraits Orabi's signature figure is shown with his head slightly tilted to the side as he holds a balloon in his hand. Wearing a colorful striped hat and clothing rendered in yellow and orange blotches of paint, the geometric shapes that makeup the figure's body are emphasized through the use of vertical and horizontal strokes and meticulous white highlights, an approach that speaks of a confident command of medium and a thorough understanding of how color can inform form.

In another work, a series of these same figures comprises a panel of portraits. Executed in a limited palette of blue, grey, black, red and white, the artist uses variations in shape and color to suggest individual moments while delving into explorations of space by obstructing his subjects so that their bodies seem to go beyond the visual planes of the composition. This newest series of portraits demonstrates the refined quality of Orabi's continued exploration into the principles of painting, as he works to push the boundaries of the artistic tradition and maintains a profound grasp of international developments in art.