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ayyam gallery



Machine Hearts, 2015, Acrylic on canvas, 140 x 137 cm

ATHIER MACHINE HEARTS

14 March – 30 May 2016

Opening reception: Monday, 14 March from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (12, Alserkal Avenue) announces *Machine Hearts*, the solo show of British-Iraqi artist Athier.

About the show

Machine men with machine minds and machine hearts! You are not machines! You are not cattle! You are men! - From The Great Dictator's Speech, Charlie Chaplin, 1940.

Machine Hearts centres on large-scale, semi-abstracted paintings made over the last two years. Full of aggressive, visceral energy, the eponymous, featured series is a continuation of the *Man of War* series, in which the artist explored the contemporary phenomenon of drone warfare. Still preoccupied by the spectre of war, Athier's new body of work attempts to visualise the mechanical heart of an active soldier and asks: What is the unseen core that powers a human killing machine?

Vibrantly coloured canvases depict twisted, organic elements wrapped around and seamlessly fused with rigid structures, creating dense clusters with a three dimensional, sculptural quality. Arteries and veins become entwined with industrial cables and pipes, and steel construction rods puncture soft, tissue-like matter, leaving the viewer with doubts about the humanity of the subject.

Pockets appear throughout the works trapping parallel worlds within self-contained spaces. Integrated into the fabric of the overall composition as secondary layers, they depict a parallel macrocosm beneath the tangible surface. Using these 'pockets' to change the scale of his painting, the artist explores a subconscious anthology of imagery absorbed through books, films, television footage, and memory throughout his life.

Accompanying these large-scale canvases are several smaller works. A group of paintings depict looser manifestations of the artist's idiosyncratic forms in the mode of still lifes. Other, detailed, monochrome works on paper echo the artist's background in illustration and demonstrate the manifold complexities of his larger compositions.

With his iconic style that explores the intricacies of human identity and destruction, Athier's work can be experienced on several levels. His intense, bombastic abstracts are heavily laden with disconcerting statements that tell the story of a schizophrenic, broken reality.

About the artist

In recent years Athier's work has centered on posing unanswerable questions against undefined answers, forming a visual narrative between the two. Since 2007, the subject of much of his work has been Iraq and his diasporic relationship to his foreign homeland, as well as the concept of nostalgic referencing in how we idolise and remember our past, present, and future. Of the main constructs used in the artist's painting, the initial response is that of scale and colour, which guide the viewer through his multidimensional compositions. Symbolism in these large-scale paintings is weaved through layers of fluid figurative forms and hard edge geometric shapes.

Separate to his artistic practice, Athier has worked extensively as an educator in the United Kingdom and abroad. For three consecutive years, beginning in 2007, the artist worked as a British Museum Arab Artist in Residence, working in schools throughout the UK. In 2011, he was selected to serve as the Chasing Mirrors Artist in Residence at the National Portrait Gallery, leading workshops in community centres across London. Athier has also worked in a number of refugee camps as a workshop leader in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan, and in 2014 was invited by the Palestinian Museum as a Visiting Artist to conduct workshops with children in the West Bank. In 2015, he was selected to work at the artist-run interdisciplinary space Beirut Art Residency.

Born in 1982, Athier lives and works between Paris, London, and Istanbul, and holds a graduate degree in Communication Design with Illustration from Central Saint Martins, UK. The artist's selected solo and group exhibitions include: Nest Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland (2014); Ayyam Gallery London (2014); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2013); Edge of Arabia, London, UK and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (2013); Cuadro Fine Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE (2013); National Portrait Gallery, London, UK (2011); The Royal Academy, London, UK (2011); Tashkent International Art Biennale, Tashkent, Uzbekistan (2011).

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut and Dubai, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts programme have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also contributed to recent efforts to document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 14 March - 30 May 2016

Opening Reception: Monday, 14 March from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Regular Hours: Sun-Thu: 10.00am-6.00pm / Sat: 12.00pm-6.00pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery Dubai (12, Alserkal Avenue), Al Quoz 1, Dubai

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