

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ayyam gallery



Samia Halaby, *Scattering Yellow*, 2013, acrylic on linen canvas, 145 x 145 cm

P A I N T I N G A C R O S S G E N E R A T I O N S

8 February - 29 March 2017

Opening reception: Wednesday, 8 February from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to present *Painting Across Generations*, a collective exhibition that highlights contemporary painters from the Middle East who are recognised as international trendsetters.

About the show

Featuring works by Samia Halaby, Safwan Dahoul, Thaier Helal, Tammam Azzam, and Afshin Pirhashemi, *Painting Across Generations* showcases some of the recent developments in art that are steering a new wave of painting in the Arab world and Iran. This diverse selection of artists represents a multigenerational lineage of ongoing experimentation in the region.

A series of 2013 paintings by pioneering abstract painter Samia Halaby, for example, demonstrates how colourist compositions can recreate the sensations of nature. Using abstraction as a means of describing the interplays of light, tones, and shapes of foliage, or the movement, density, and reflectivity of water, Halaby encourages the viewer to recall similar environments, to rely on memory and experiential experience in order to complete the picture. Thaier Helal also uses the formalism of painting to capture the physical characteristics of natural settings and the evolution of organic forms, alluding to the regenerative power of water in works that depict the Assi River in Syria. By incorporating rocks, leaves, and sand, Helal builds the textures of waterways that have survived the rise and fall of civilizations over centuries, serving as an essential resource for communities that must start anew.

Selected from his ongoing *Storeys* series, Tammam Azzam's untitled work places an emphasis on the formal properties of painting in order to approximate the devastation of the Syrian war as he documents the human toll of the conflict. After a two-year hiatus due to forced migration, Azzam returned to using the medium with a new approach that emphasises how painting can serve as a form of art intervention. His recent large-scale works make Syria's ruin inescapable with imposing compositions and tactile surfaces that appear on the brink of collapse.

Safwan Dahoul represents the Syrian conflict through allegorical representations in his ongoing *Dream* series, a body of work that has evolved over the span of three decades. The most recent iteration of the series demonstrates how Dahoul uses colour, or the absence of it, and vacant space to further emphasise the affective details of his recurring protagonist. In *Dream 107* (2015) Dahoul's alienated heroine wades through a sea submerged in fog as a small paper boat—an evocation of the current refugee crisis—floats in the foreground. The artist's figure is rendered with attributes that are taken from the history of visual culture, such as a Pharaonic eye and the hands of saints in Flemish icon paintings. These details are given new meaning in Dahoul's work, as our increasingly connected world is essentially described as shattered and beyond repair.

Afshin Pirhashemi uses allegory and historical references to comment on the status of women in his native Iran. In *Vitruvian Woman* (2015) a female figure is painted as the ideal of man as she defiantly stares at the viewer. Two additional women are shown behind her in straight jackets, attempting to break free from the physical restraints. The artist's central character is depicted with a mix of realism and expressionism, as Pirhashemi represents a moment of transcendence with dramatic lines and fluid brushwork.

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 that document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 8 February 2017 – 29 March 2017

Opening Reception: Wednesday, 8 February from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Regular Hours: Mon-Fri: 10.00 am to 8.00 pm, Sat: 12.00 to 6.00 pm

Location: Beirut Tower, Ground Floor, Zeitoune Street, Across from Beirut Marina

T: +961 1374450/51

Email: beirut@ayyamgallery.com

Website: www.ayyamgallery.com

For press information and artwork images, please contact press@ayyamgallery.com or +971 4 3236242.