



Untitled, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm

KAIS SALMAN *CITIES*

12 April – 30 May 2018

Opening reception: Thursday, 12 April from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to announce *Cities* presenting Kais Salman's newest paintings.

About the Show

In his older works, Kais Salman utilises satire to subvert the normalisation of greed, vanity, and ideological extremism that is rapidly defining our era. Seeking to confront and exorcise sociocultural manifestations of such depravity, Salman taps into ugliness and abjection through intentionally hyperbolised imagery accentuated by punches of colour and aestheticised forms. In his latest series, the artist takes these forms and explores their abstraction, in search of new compositions.

Drawing upon folktales, epics, and myths, Salman creates alternate realities in which the characters he introduces, sometimes seen lined side by side, make up the basis of these worlds or 'cities'. Introducing more figures than in his older works, each takes on an interdependent role, playing a part in the collective consciousness of a place and the work. The artist explores the roles that these characters play in the making up of a social fabric and their part of making up alleys, streets, and entire cities. In many of these works, the figures are placed in imperfect rows and columns, overlapping and interacting, appearing from far as though they are a building – they are the columns, floors, and windows – they are the make up of a structure. Through this, Salman touches upon the effect a people have on their 'cities' urban architecture and vice versa. The presence of the inhabitants of a place in the 'streets', the interactions that take place between people, and the overall surrounding environment, are a source of inspiration for Salman, shedding light on the universality of human interaction.

Through the creation of these worlds, Salman aims to blur the line between our personal realities and those imposed on us by varying media channels. The artist does not attempt to recreate specific situations, but rather create new spaces in which the figures in his works come from an exploration of his own imagination. The paintings take the viewer through the many layers of human emotion, ranging from laughter and joy to fear, anger, and existentialism. The artist proposes abstract ideas and the possibility of new potential realities.

About the Artist

As one of Syria's foremost expressionist painters, Salman has contributed to a decades-long artistic tradition that continues to serve as a powerful outlet for social commentary. A consummate formalist, he is recognised as one of the Arab world's most accomplished painters.

Since the early 2000s, Salman has sought to reflect the psychological violence that occurs when excess becomes rationalised and accepted by societies. Political corruption, terrorism, consumerism, cosmetic surgery, religious fanaticism, imperialism, and the voyeurism of the digital age have all served as topics of Salman's carnivalesque compositions.

Born in Tartous, Syria in 1976, Salman lives and works in Beirut. He received a Bachelor of Art from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus in 2002, where he trained with leading painters such as Safwan Dahoul.

Solo and group exhibitions for the artist include the Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2017, 2014, 2011, 2010); Alexandria Biennale (2014); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2015, 2014, 2012); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2014, 2010); Damascus Museum of Modern Art (2009); The Park Avenue Armory, New York (2008); and Carthage Festival for Coast Mediterranean Sea Artists, Tunisia (2005). Salman's paintings are housed in collections throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. Salman has been featured in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, among other international publications, and was listed for the second time in *Arabian Business' 100 Most Powerful Arabs Under 40* in 2016.

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: 12 April – 30 May 2018

Opening Reception: Thursday, 12 April 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

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For media requests or interviews with the artist, please email the gallery's press office at press@ayyamgallery.com or call +961 1374450/51.