

Exhibition: Faisal Samra, *MAJAZZ (METAPHOR)*

مجاز -

Location: Ayyam Gallery Jeddah

Preview: 24 September 2013, 7pm

Dates: 24 September – 31 October 2013



Ayyam Gallery Jeddah is pleased to announce the solo exhibition of Saudi Arabian artist Faisal Samra from 24 September – 31 October 2013. This hugely significant artist is returning to Saudi Arabia for the first time in 13 years, where he will present a series of works, including two new triptychs and *Arab Spring*, a major new installation reflecting on recent political events in the Arab world. The exhibition marks the first show of a Saudi artist at Ayyam Gallery Jeddah.

As one of the first practising conceptual artists in Saudi Arabia, Faisal Samra, who now lives and works in Bahrain, is among the most influential Gulf artists working today. Having broken with tradition early in his career, the artist now works mainly in video, installation and photography. Samra has spoken in the past of *'dissolving the border between painting and sculpture by freeing the canvas from the frame'* and this ethos permeates the works shown at Ayyam Gallery Jeddah.

Central to Samra's work is the belief that the function of art is to expose the truths hidden by the constructed visual culture through which humans must navigate. In *Distorted Reality* (2005/2011), he investigates constructed social identity and the idealised image. Using a series of performances documented through photography and video, Samra depicts what he perceives as the theft of individuality, a consequence of the increased use of the fabricated and 'photoshopped' image. The artist questions the widespread trust people place in these fabricated constructs, and the ways in which the mediated image compels humans to aspire, to desire, and to buy.

Samra is the performer in these works, a characteristic common to his practice. This ritual, which is usually presented as a triptych, allows the artist to create sculptural shapes with his body as he hides his features from view, simultaneously creating and removing an image.

At the heart of the exhibition are two works presenting the universally recognised characters of the angel and the devil. In *Distorted Reality Performance # 43* (2006), a veiled angel defies categorization; its smudged and feathered wings introduce a painterly quality to the picture plane that references Samra's early relationship with painting. Here though they are rendered

as part of a hazy soft-focus photograph, recalling the constant stream of airbrushed imagery which can be found in film, advertising and publishing content around the globe.

By contrast, in the series *Text Image (Azazeel – Satan -2010)*, the artist assumes the role of the devil. Samra dons a series of brightly coloured and disconcerting masks to become this demonic character, staring out of the frame beneath the numbers '666' scrawled across the background. The artist's juxtaposition of these two powerful and symbolically loaded characters asks the question: *"does the mass media hypnotize and control us through a disguised and distorted visual language of hypnotic characters, of angels and devils, which we have all come to accept as truth?"*

Notes to Editors

About the Artist

Born in Bahrain in 1956 of Saudi nationality, Faisal Samra currently lives and works between Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Paris. Samra's works are held in numerous private and public collections including: The British Museum; Institut du Monde Arabe; The Jameel Art Foundation; Almansouria Foundation; and K. Shoman Foundation.

Recent solo exhibitions include HD Galerie, Casablanca (2012); Traffic Gallery, Dubai (2011); Albareh Gallery, Bahrain (2010); Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris (2009); XVA Gallery, Dubai (2008). Group shows include E.O.A, London (2012); Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012); Haeinsa Temple, South Korea (2011); Maraya Art Center, Sharjah – U.A.E (2010); Singapore Biennial (2008); Cairo Biennial (2008).

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded by collectors and cousins Khaled and Hisham Samawi in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery sought to nurture Syria's burgeoning and dynamic contemporary art scene through landmark non-profit initiatives such as the Shabab Ayyam Project, an incubator for emerging artists. Expansion into Beirut and Dubai enabled Ayyam Gallery to broaden its scope from the promotion of work by Syrian artists to those from the wider Middle East region. In doing so, Ayyam Gallery has established itself as one of the foremost exponents of Middle Eastern contemporary art to the international community.

Today, Ayyam Gallery is recognised as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Arab and Iranian artists with an international profile and museum presence, such as Abdunasser Gharem, Khaled Jarrar, Nadim Karam, Safwan Dahoul, Samia Halaby, Sadik Alfraji, Afshin Pirhashemi and Khaled Takreti. A number of non-commercial exhibitions, as



well as the launch of initiatives like The Young Collectors Auction, have further succeeded in showcasing the work of Middle Eastern artists with the aim of educating a wider audience about the art of this significant region. Ayyam Gallery Damascus currently functions as a studio and creative haven for artists who remain in the war-torn city. In early 2013, Ayyam Gallery launched new spaces in London and Jeddah.

Exhibition Facts

Preview: 24 September 2013, 7pm

Exhibition Dates: 24 September – 31 October 2013

Location: Bougainvillea Center Jeddah, Gate 2, Third Floor, Malik Road, next to etoile and stars avenue, Al-Shati District, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Tel: +966 2 613 4111 / +966 2 613 2011

Email: jeddah@ayyamgallery.com

Website: www.ayyamgallery.com

For press information and images please contact:

Amy Sutcliffe and Victoria Wedderburn at Pelham Communications

Tel: +44 (0) 208 969 3959

E: amys@pelhamcommunications.com or victoria@pelhamcommunications.com