



Between Before and After, 2023, Acrylic on canvas, 73 x 77 cm

ABDALLA AL OMARI

Unsuspecting State

18 September | 8 November 2023

Ayyam Gallery is pleased to present *Unsuspecting State*, a solo exhibition featuring Abdalla Al Omari's recent body of work. This will be his second solo exhibition at Ayyam Gallery, but his first as a represented artist. Please join us for the vernissage on September 18th from 6 pm - 9 pm, in presence of the artist.

About the exhibition

Stepping away from his characteristic sarcasm and semi-caricatural representation, Abdalla represents the mundane to express themes that are everything but that. He captures our quotidian and intimate gestures alluding to our deepest secrets and regrets. Deep beliefs and the most discrete thoughts come through when immortalizing moments of everyday life. The unspoken taboos emanating through the movements, sexuality, religion, and addiction, are all part of the conversation. All along, Abdalla plays with anonymity, keeping things universal: The trivial and banal shared by the ordinary person.

The artist leaves the viewer questioning, what the character is doing, and who it could be. Is it an auto-portrait or people in his life? The paradoxical ambiguity, incompleteness, and uncertainty invite the viewer to delve into the image. A sense of voyeurism, where the headless character is viewed without consent, not as a sexual fetish but as an unexplainable urge to observe.

Scale and composition play a significant role in the perception of the work. Tight and tangible spaces are created within a state of awkwardness, while cutting down the elements to the bare minimum. It becomes a visual depiction of fragmented story and a sense of detachment and isolation. The absence of the landscape and the limited space around the subject suggests a dense, yet minimalistic, compositional play between the subject and the background; an eternal fight between the individual and the surrounding environment.

About the artist

Currently based in Belgium, Abdalla Al Omari, first launched his career in Damascus, shortly after the outbreak of conflict in Syria. Driven by his own experiences of war, he plays with the displacement of identity and power.

However in his new body of work, he conceals the face, where the bodily act or gesture takes precedence over identity, through which he reveals complex psychological states. Situated in everyday scenarios, his figures are caught in a moment of intimacy and unawareness, where he presents their true self, one that is relatable and universal.

Photography occupies a central place in his work, as it serves as the starting point for all paintings. He relies on precise framing to tell a story through the image, while giving clues to what lies outside the field. By playing with perspective and angles, he seeks to create a realistic atmosphere that engages the viewer. His work, consisting of extracting poetic and aesthetic elements from the banality, gives a new perspective on the world around us.

Omari graduated from the University of Damascus with a degree in English Literature while also attending the Adham Ismail Institute for Visual Arts. Later, he worked with pioneering Syrian artists Ghassan Sibai and Fouad Dahdouh. His paintings are housed in the collections of Barjeel Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates; Fenix Museum, Rotterdam; Kamel Gallery, Syria; the Syrian Ministry of Culture, among others worldwide.

Recent exhibitions for the artists include Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico (2022); Ayyam Gallery, Dubai (2017); Gangwon Biennale, South Korea; Pinchuk Art center, Kiev; Affenfaust Gallery, Hamburg; Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Kusseneers Gallery, Brussels; Strombeck Cultural Center, Belgium (2017); NW Gallery, United Kingdom (2015); Kozah Gallery, Lebanon (2014); and Berlin Biennale (2012).

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organization that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art space in Dubai, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, Africa and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts program have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship program 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

Exhibitions Dates: 18 September | 8 November 2023

Regular Hours: Monday - Friday: 10 am - 6 pm

Saturday: 12 pm - 6 pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery, B11, Alserkal Avenue, Street 8, Al Quoz 1, Dubai

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