

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: Walid El-Masri, *The Seat of Perception II*

Location: Ayyam Gallery Beirut

Dates: 21 February - 4 April 2013

Preview: 21 February 2013, 7pm



Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to announce *The Seat of Perception II*, a solo exhibition of new works by Lebanese artist Walid El-Masri from 21 February - 4 April 2013.

El-Masri's dynamic canvases continuously explore and reinterpret the form of the chair, taking it as a point of departure for an investigation into the act of painting itself, which he describes as a condensing of a greater reality. To El-Masri, the simplicity and lack of ambiguity of the chair allows for endless visual possibilities; while a circle could be taken as a reference to countless other forms, from a ball to our planet, a chair is always identifiable as a chair. This easily recognisable form also serves to anchor his paintings somewhere between figuration and the abstraction filling the rest of the canvas.

The repetition of the chair gives both El-Masri and the viewer the freedom to focus on more formal concerns such as colour and pictorial depth, and even the more elusive meaning of existence. El-Masri's distortion of pictorial space in order to construct his own reality recalls the practice of artists working in the late 19th to early 20th Century, most noticeably Cezanne. Much like Cezanne, who innovated the depiction of space in painting through his masterful use of colour, El-Masri ignores the laws of classical perspective and builds dimension within his compositions through the application of layers of colour.

Rendered with rough brushstrokes and often overlaid with ornate patterning, the chairs hover at the upper edge of the canvas before disappearing from view, as if thrones surveying a realm of flat colour below. By depicting his works from an extreme angle and placing the vanishing point beyond the surface of the painting, El-Masri reinforces movement within his paintings. The sharp truncation of the top of the chairs also lends a tension to the works, forcing the viewer to consider what remains unseen, what extends beyond the space of the canvas.

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Born in 1979 in Syria, Walid El-Masri lives and works in Paris. A graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus, his solo exhibitions include: Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2012); Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2009); Ayyam Gallery Damascus (2008).

Notes to Editors

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 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 Ayyam Publishing, Ayyam Editions, and 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 January 2013, Ayyam Gallery launched a new space in London, with a second to open in Jeddah in late-February.

Exhibition Facts

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Location: Ayyam Gallery Beirut, Beirut Tower, Ground Floor, Zeitoune Street

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