



# MAN OF WAR

**IRAQI-BRITISH  
ARTIST ATHIER  
DEBUT'S FIRST  
SOLO SHOW IN  
LONDON**

**FEB 18 - MAR 29 2014**

**OPENING:  
17 FEB 6.30-8PM**

**LOCATION:  
Edge of Arabia Gallery  
40 Elcho Street London  
SW11 4AU**

Edge of Arabia Projects and Ayyam Gallery are proud to present *Man of War*, the first UK solo exhibition of paintings, drawings and prints by London-based Iraqi-British artist, Athier. Renowned for his iconic style that draws on a range of influences, from European Modernism to contemporary Iraqi art, Athier's striking new body of work explores notions of fluidity and the circumstances in which we become detached from human destruction, themes with profound resonance in recent Iraqi history.

Athier left Iraq before the first Gulf War in 1990 and has divided his life since then between London and Paris. His works reflect his past, with each canvas a deft and imaginative integration of motifs, which include Mesopotamian and Assyrian symbolism, figurative abstraction and Islamic geometry. Elsewhere there are echoes of a pre-revolutionary Iraq, testament to the powerful and enduring sense of exile and nostalgia, which suffuses so much of Athier's work.

The central symbol throughout this new series of works is the Portuguese *Man of War*, a highly sophisticated 'colonial' organism, often mistaken for a jellyfish, which is made up of many separate parts incapable of independent survival. This creature exists without a central brain or what we would call thought. Yet it has perfected the ability to hunt, kill and destroy. Like a jellyfish, its movement appears intuitive, its abiotic form collapsing inwards and pushing outwards, creating the tenuous expansion and release that propels it through the water. In Athier's paintings, this fluid movement is broken up and distorted by a rigid structure which traps a diversity of life within its trailing tentacles. Subverting the concept of this marine life-form is a reflection of Athier's experience of watching warfare in the Middle East from his position of exile in the West. His dense, painterly compositions, replete with human teeth, hands, eyes and pockets of blood cells, echo both the kinetic energy of an explosion and the organic form of the *Man of War*, always on the move, homing in on its target, stealthily and with precision.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### PRIVATE VIEW

Monday, 17 Feb 2014, 6:30pm

Artist's tour of the exhibition from 7:30pm

17 Feb - 29 Mar 2014 Tue - Sat, 10am - 6pm

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

The son of renowned Iraqi architect and artist, Ali Mousawi and Maysaloun Faraj respectively, Athier Mousawi (b.1982) and his approach to painting can be traced to a respect for the rigidity of bold Arab architecture with the colour and vibrancy of Iraqi painting. Having studied his MA in illustration at Central Saint Martins in London, Athier's attention to the minute and narrative began here. Upon moving to Paris, the spiritual home of Modernism, Athier's style of painting began to combine all aspects Modernism, architecture, illustration with his strong Iraqi influences. Athier currently lives and works between Paris, London and Istanbul. A keen advocate of art education, he has led art workshops in refugee camps in Beirut, Istanbul, Amman and Jarash (2012), and throughout London as The National Portrait Gallery's 'Chasing Mirrors' artist in residence (2011) and British Museum artist in residence 2007-2009. Previous solo exhibitions include: Ayyam Gallery, Beirut (2013), Cuadro Fine Art Gallery, Dubai (2012, 2011); and The Empire Project, Istanbul (2012). Selected group shows include: Traffic Gallery, Dubai (2012); National Portrait Gallery, London (2011); The Royal Academy, London (2011); Al Mansouriyah Foundation, Paris (2010-2012) and British Museum, London (2007-2009).

[www.athier.com](http://www.athier.com)

### ABOUT EDGE OF ARABIA

Edge of Arabia is an independent arts initiative developing the appreciation of contemporary Arab art and culture. As a social enterprise Edge of Arabia is committed to reaching local and international audiences and improving understanding through free exhibitions, publications, and an international education programme.

[www.edgeofarabia.com](http://www.edgeofarabia.com)

## LOCATION:

Edge of Arabia Gallery 40 Elcho St, London SW11 4AU

For press information and images about this exhibition please contact: [info@edgeofarabia.com](mailto:info@edgeofarabia.com)

### ABOUT EOA. PROJECTS

Born out of the international success of Edge of Arabia, EOA.Projects (EOA.P) is a gallery and production platform committed to supporting the careers of Middle Eastern artists, and generating a sustainable income for the artists and the non-profit work of Edge of Arabia.

### 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 Abdunnasser 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.

[www.ayyamgallery.com](http://www.ayyamgallery.com)



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