

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: Mohannad Orabi "It's No Longer About Me"

Location: Ayyam Gallery, Dubai (DIFC)

Opening: Monday, April 30

Dates: April 30 – June 16



From April 30 until June 16, Ayyam Gallery DIFC will present 'It's No Longer About Me', a solo show of Syrian artist, Mohannad Orabi. Featuring a new body of work by the rising painter, the forthcoming exhibition will present a shift in the artist's subject matter and display an evident progression in stylistic rendering and a maturing of technique.

Diverging from his trademark playful, infantile subjects with deeply cavernous almond-shaped eyes that seem to float within the confines of the canvas, his new works are less gestural and less sharply delineated by shape. Where once empty ocular cavities stared hauntingly, glimmering irises now pierce the viewer. The heavy emphasis of his previous series on movement created by a multitude of scratched lines and the emphasis on boldly dripping color, though not lost in his new works, is now secondary. What is primarily relevant in his new body of work is the awareness of the individual. When questioned as to why he had not produced works in response to the Arab Spring, Orabi replied that his series does in fact reference the present situation in Syria. His characters are now forced to open their eyes to the events unfolding around them. They are no longer able to shut themselves away from this reality.

Humanized subjects portrayed with developed, intentional realism focus less on his personal reflection and more on the depiction of individual personalities through a varied cast of characters. Each figure is decidedly masculine or feminine, human or hybrid. With an overwhelmingly grey-scale palette with simple additions of primary colors, heavy deliberate shading adds corporeality to each figure.

'It's No Longer About Me' portrays the diversity and fragility of human emotion and experience. A dotted, subdued painting of a family portrait reminiscent of those from the 1970s is permeated by a melancholic sadness while a whimsical portrait of an oversized Chihuahua-headed boy lends a light hearted and childlike innocence. With his head tilted towards the photograph clasped in his hands, a young boy caresses the image of his departed father while white paint on his face in the manner of a clown masks his pain from the outer world. The juxtaposition of the veiled woman with a woman wearing a human muzzle similar to that featured in the film *Silence of the Lambs* is immensely thought-provoking and, as all of Orabi's canvases, leads the viewer to question perception, force introspection and reflection, and invoke empathy for the subjects of the paintings.

Born in Damascus in 1977, Orabi graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in 2000. Noteworthy among a dynamic generation of young Syrian artists, he has exhibited frequently at home and abroad in venues across the region and has participated in collective shows and festivals in North America, Europe and Asia, most notably at Art Hong Kong in 2009, where his oversized canvases impressed international viewers. Through widely acclaimed solo exhibitions at Ayyam Gallery's Beirut, Damascus, and Dubai spaces and several successful sales with Ayyam Auctions, Mohannad Orabi has quickly become a favorite among Middle Eastern collectors.

Since its founding in 2006, Ayyam Gallery has become one of the Middle East's leading contemporary art spaces. With a selection of cutting-edge painting, sculpture and photography that represents some of the Arab world's most exciting talent, the gallery has sought to promote the region's dynamic cultural scene at home and abroad. For more information visit www.ayyamgallery.com

For interviews with the artist or any further details, please contact us at +971 4 4392395 or email difc@ayyamgallery.com