

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: 'Melting Pot'

Location: Ayyam Gallery, Beirut

Opening: Wednesday, July 4

Dates: July 4 – July 31



From 4 July to 31 July 2012, Ayyam Gallery, Beirut will proudly present 'Melting Pot', an exhibition featuring a selection of work by some of the Arab world's most exciting artistic talents. Showcasing five of the most promising emerging and mid-career abstract and figurative painters from Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, this exhibition will provide an overview of the new wave of contemporary Arab painting presently produced throughout the Middle East and the Diaspora.

Syrian artist Abdul Karim Majdal Al-Beik and Lebanese artist Walid El Masri are two abstract painters whose compositions revolve around a single, ordinary object, yet their varied investigations into each constantly challenge our perceptions. For Al-Beik, it is the solemn walls of Damascus' Old City with their multitude of graffiti, etchings, marks and cracks, each telling a different story, each influencing and reflecting an anonymous life. Fascinated by the layers of patina and untold stories, Al-Beik simulates these surfaces with a meticulous attention to detail, utilizing charcoal, plaster, starch and ash to reconstruct these facades. The canvases of Walid El Masri simply investigate a chair. Yet this simple object transforms into a device that delves the artist and his audience in a deeper investigation into the fundamental components of painting.

Figurative painters Elias Izoli, Oussama Diab and Hilda Hiary provide a comprehensive look at the variety available in contemporary Middle Eastern portraiture with their distinctive styles.

Jordanian artist Hilda Hiary's diverse oeuvre spans multiple media. Hiary's paintings are reminiscent of patchwork as textures, textile patterning, color blocking and dripping paint all collide to create richly varied, luxuriant works. Solid colored grounds encase large, centrally placed heads which hold the embellishment and narrative of the canvas. Each face is unique and minimal in line as it is each pattern and color placed onto the visage that carefully displays a particular emotion.

Self-taught Syrian artist Elias Izoli and Palestinian artist Oussama Diab produce Pop-inspired works in very different manners. Izoli's consummate draftsmanship and marked command of color results in strikingly modern compositions that defy conventional portraiture. Even when utilizing grey as an overall color palette, Izoli's decisive application of paint creates beautifully solemn portraits that with jagged rendering of light and shadow allude to sculpture and the inability of action. Appearing almost digitally produced, these portraits have a distinctive technical feel, which elevates their message

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towards propaganda. Diab's graffiti-inspired expressionistic canvases employ symbolist interpretations of current events and are equally known for their serious subject matter and playful character, a juxtaposition that reflects the duality of his work. His present work portrays three women, each with their eyes and heads covered, yet is the simple difference of circumstance that defines whether these women are engaged in a free act or constrained by it.

Since opening in 2006 Ayyam Gallery has become one of the most prominent galleries in the Middle East, with four exhibition spaces throughout the region, notably in Syria, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates. Ayyam Gallery proudly represents some of today's most recognized emerging and established Arab artists.

For further information, please contact us at +961 1 374450, email beirut@ayyamgallery.com, or visit can www.ayyamgallery.com