

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Event: “2012”

Location: Ayyam Gallery Damascus

Dates: September 6 – October 13, 2011

Opening: September 6th at 7 pm

On September 6 Ayyam Gallery Damascus will proudly present the exhibition “2012.” Spotlights recent work by several Damascus-based artists, this forthcoming group show provides an unprecedented look into the complex intertwining of art and politics that has arisen over the past year as artists have intrepidly responded to widespread turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa.

Featuring painters Nihad al Turk, Oussama Diab, Mohannad Orabi and Kais Salman, “2012” explores how some artists have been compelled to address the explosive nature of today’s sociopolitical sphere in a variety of ways, often altering their artistic approaches and/or reoccurring subject matter as they are challenged to represent the manic instability of cities and landscapes that have been overrun by domestic upheavals. As issues of isolation, destruction, strife and the act of witnessing become vehicles for nuanced commentary on the condition of regional politics, these selected works act as visual dispatches of engulfed states.

Although known for his startling representations of a materialistic world run amok, Kais Salman’s latest paintings are dominated by newly introduced macabre representations. As Salman’s ubiquitous female subjects stand frozen before the viewer, the ominous tentacles of death consume their grotesque forms. The slow surfacing of this ill-omened presence can be identified from canvas to canvas, with a final work that possesses a ravaged body that is indiscernible from an explosion of blood.

Demonstrating a similarly grave transformation of his frequent protagonists, Mohannad Orabi’s carefree, childlike figures now take on adult like features. Gone are the exaggerated details that once defined his androgynous characters. Hallowed eyes are given glimmering pupils that stare coolly at the viewer. Decorated with irony-ridden clown faces in one composition, Orabi’s subjects have adopted a more serious disposition. In two self-portraits in which his image has abandoned its cartoon-like reflection, the artist appears with clearer definition and an added sense of realism, as though everything, including his own being is in clearer focus.

The solemn still-lives of Nihad al Turk utilize a symbolically powerful element of collage as the artist layers newspaper images beneath anthropomorphic representations. Thinly applied paint conceals the contents of these clippings, as his recognizable mythical subjects are depicted with cyclonic markings, evoking a chaotic dimension that lies within the underbelly of a demonic reality.

Continuing a series of paintings in which toys and objects of whimsy are positioned in great contrast to an unyielding cruelty that is comprised of acts of torture and moments of betrayal, Oussama Diab’s seemingly pop-inspired paintings are anything but lighthearted. By incorporating a colorful palette, floral patterns and innocuous everyday items, Diab captures a world in which the illusion of normalcy is difficult to maintain.

Since its founding in 2006, Ayyam Gallery has become one of the Arab world's leading art spaces. With a selection of cutting-edge painting, sculpture and photography that represents some of the Middle East'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.