

## ALI KAAF (SYRIA, B. 1977)

Creating works on paper, paintings, glass works, videos and installations, Ali Kaaf explores the infinite ways of seeing matter and void. Positive and negative shapes; the contrasts between black and white; and the transformative quality of consuming and eroding forms all give his work a variety of emotive qualities that can be sober or even painful.

Ali Kaaf, born in 1977 in Oran, Algeria to Syrian parents, lives and works in Berlin. He graduated from the Institut des Beaux-Arts in Beirut, Lebanon, and continued his studies at Universität der Künste (UdK) in Berlin under the supervision of Professors Marwan Kassab Bachi and Rebecca Horn.

Interested in the materiality of the work itself, Kaaf creates media with blacked out sections, holes, burns and cuts. The various series take on an evolving yet repetitious theme of presence and absence, which he explains, is necessary “visually and in relation to the emptiness. Repetition of the form takes me to something new.” Influenced by Sufism, his consistent pattern has a spiritual quality, an introspection that transmits the ideas of scars, loss and grief.

In 2004, he was awarded the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Prize for Outstanding International Students assigned by UdK in Berlin. He was also awarded the Young Collectors for MAXXI prize by the Young Collectors Association in Rome in 2010, and in 2014 he was awarded the Honorary AIR Award by the Kala Art Institute in Berkeley.

He previously showed his work in numerous solo exhibitions such as at Darat al Funun-The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman (2004); the Khan Ashad-Bacha, Damascus in collaboration with Goethe Institute (2006); Solidere, Beirut (2005); Galerie Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin (2008); Galleria Marie-Laure Fleisch in Rome (2009); Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings, USA (2010); the Moontower Foundation in Bad König-Zell in Germany (2013); C&K Gallery, Berlin (2020); the Pergamon Museum, Berlin (2021); and at Documenta 15 in Kassel (2022). He was artist in residence at the German Foreign Office through the Berlin Gallery Association's Artist in Residence Program in 2022 and at Darat al Funun in Amman, Jordan in 2023.

Kaaf has also exhibited at venues such as the Contemporary Art Museum, Maribor, Slovenia; Villa Grisebach, Berlin; Martin-Gropius Bau, Berlin; Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Palma, Spain. His work has been acquired by institutions such as Collection Solidere, Beirut; MAXXI – Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Roma; Moontower Foundation, Frankfurt; Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin and Peter-Raue-Collection, Berlin.