

PRESS RELEASE
Thaier HELAL: "LIBERATED SPATIALITY"
Solo Exhibition at Ayyam Gallery, Beirut
10/6 - 5/08/2010

From June 10th till August 5th 2010, Ayyam Gallery Beirut will proudly present "Liberated Spatiality," the solo show of Syrian artist Thaier Helal. Featuring an impressive new body of work from one of the Arab world's most sought-after abstract painters, the exhibition will highlight Helal's recent explorations into the energy, shape and movement created by massive gatherings or large bodies of people or objects. Taking inspiration from such events as religious ceremonies or political demonstrations, he taps into the visual impact of these forms as singular units come together to make an imposing whole. These exciting new experiments further the cutting edge techniques that Helal has become known for.

Born in Syria in 1967, the distinguished artist has become a significant member of the Arab and Gulf Art scene since moving to the United Arab Emirates in the 1990s. A senior faculty member of the University of Sharjah, Fine Arts College, he has participated in prominent exhibitions and events throughout the region, including the Sharjah, Alexandria and Tehran Biennials and Christie's and Bonhams auctions.

A graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus, his prominence is confirmed by the countless honors that have been bestowed upon him, such as the Al Burda International Award from the Emirati Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development (2008), the Grand Gold Award at the Tehran International Biennial (2005), the Award for Painting at the Sharjah International Biennial (1997) and the Distinguished Works Award at the 15th General Exhibition of the UAE Fine Arts Association (1996). Yet Helal's long exhibition history is not limited to the Middle East, as he has been featured in international art fairs, biennials and exhibitions throughout Asia and Europe.

Inspired by the world around him, including the physical and psychic aspects of society and culture, his abstract paintings boldly utilize palette, texture, and medium to draw the viewer in and to trigger the senses. Communicating movement and energy through detonations of color, the vertical and horizontal division of space and the labored layering of surface, his compositions are marked by profound expressionism and an electrifying spontaneity that alludes to the internal and the sublime.

The Beirut leg of Helal's Ayyam solo exhibition comes at a time when Lebanese audiences have been showing great interest in his work. His 2007 untitled mixed-media painting, dominated by a rich blue palette, was a standout lot in the gallery's first Beirut Sale auction in January 2010, as a large number of collectors expressed enthusiasm for the dramatic canvas.

His striking masterpiece “Paradise Gate” (2008), currently on view at the city’s chic downtown hotspot Le Grey Hotel, has been drawing constant praise from regional and international visitors alike. Well versed in the numerous movements of abstraction that have had long runs in the Lebanese art scene, local audiences are most drawn to Helal’s sensational use of color, one that exudes a certain spirituality and power. This can be found in the thin lines of paint that lie amongst areas that have been built up, resembling the dramatic terrain that surrounded his childhood home in Syria. Perhaps this dichotomy in representation, the freedom illustrated in the thin lines of paint versus the aggressive nature of the areas of coated medium, refers to the duality of society, the paradoxes that emerge on a daily basis as humanity teeters between progress and degeneration – a juxtaposition that resonates all too well in Lebanon.

Please note that the artist will be present on the opening day and during the first week of the exhibition:

- For interview with the artist or any further info, please contact us at: +961 1 37 44 50 / 51 or at: beirut@ayyamgallery.com.
- Press kit including HR pictures: <http://www.ayyamgallery.com/#/press/thaier-helal-liberated-spatiality/>.