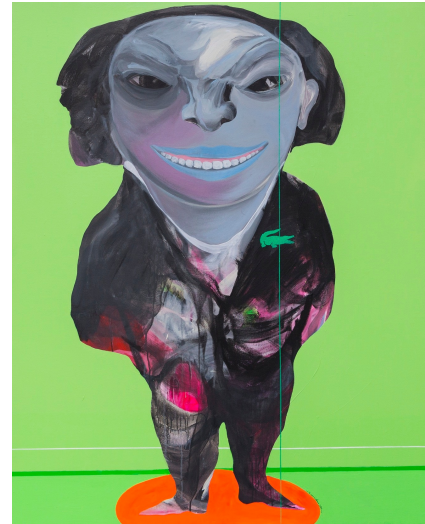


## **PRESS RELEASE**

Ayyam Gallery  
Beirut Tower, Ground Floor  
Zeitoune Street, Solidere  
Gallery Hours:

T: +961.1.374450/51  
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Mon-Fri: 10:00am-8:00 pm  
Sat: 12:00pm-6:00 pm



## **Kais Salman: *Civilised Society***

29 January – 20 March 2015

Opening reception: Thursday, 29 January at 7.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to present *Civilised Society*, the solo show of Syrian painter Kais Salman. Debuting the artist's latest body of work, the exhibition will feature paintings that satirically explore the realm of politics in the Arab world through its various archetypes. Deconstructing the historical tradition of portraiture as a demonstration of power or social status, Salman scrutinises the public posturing of political figures—from armchair activists to international delegates.

Underlining each composition is the frequent point of departure of all his work, namely how the corrupted state of society can be read in the intricacies of daily life, above all in the formation of identities based on constructed realities, and the hypocrisy with which such personas are often built.

At the same time, the new series demonstrates a shift in Salman's painting style as he employs a brilliant palette with a combination of expressionism and realism and introduces vividly described settings. These formal elements draw the viewer into each composition as mundane trappings surround monstrous figures. In *The Anonymous Arab* (2014), for example, a protagonist is enlivened by painterly brushmarks as he holds a meticulously rendered mask of the international hacktivist group. Outfitted in a tuxedo while lounging on an antique sofa, he is portrayed as a self-assured dandy experiencing a life of privilege.

The insignia of ISIS is depicted among the many luxury fashion logos that make up the backdrop of a red carpet event in the painting *Brands* (2014). Television cameras capture a dapper figure that is ready for his close up, as the artist comments on the intersections of mass consumption and media in the spectacle of the political arena, particularly the enabling of terrorist groups as they gain ground through savvy marketing and multimedia propaganda.

In his recent paintings, the artist focuses on the purported indicators of 'advanced' society, revealing the faulty foundation of the culture that drives it.

## About the Artist

Kais Salman utilises satire to subvert the normalisation of greed, vanity, and ideological extremism that is rapidly defining our era. Each series of Salman's work has sought to reflect a type of psychological violence that occurs when excess becomes rationalised and accepted by societies. Seeking to confront and exorcise sociocultural manifestations of such depravity, Salman taps into ugliness and abjection through intentionally hyperbolised imagery accentuated by punches of colour and aestheticised forms. Terrorism, consumerism, cosmetic surgery, religious fanaticism, imperialism, and the voyeurism of the digital age have all served as topics of Salman's carnivalesque compositions.

Born in Tartous, Syria in 1976, Kais Salman lives and works in Beirut. He received a Bachelor of Art from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Damascus in 2002. His paintings are currently housed in private collections throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. Solo and group exhibitions include the Alexandria Biennale (2014); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2014, 2010); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2015, 2014, 2012); Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2014, 2011, 2010); Damascus Museum of Modern Art (2009); The Park Avenue Armory, New York (2008); Carthage Festival for Coast Mediterranean Sea Artists, Tunisia (2005). In May 2010, a work from his Fashion Series appeared on the cover of the Wall Street Journal's Weekend Edition magazine, a first for an Arab artist.

## About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is recognised as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Middle Eastern artists with an international profile and museum presence. Spaces in Beirut, Dubai, and London have further succeeded in showcasing the work of Middle Eastern artists with the aim of educating a wider audience about the art of this significant region.

## Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 29 January – 20 March 2015

Opening Reception: Thursday, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm

Location: Beirut Tower, Ground Floor, Zeitoune Street, Across from Beirut Marina

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