

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Ayyam Gallery  
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Mon-Fri: 10:00am-8:00 pm  
Sat: 12:00pm-6:00 pm



*The Witness*, 2014, Acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150 cm

## ***Asma Fayoumi: Untitled***

4 June – 12 July 2015

Opening reception: Thursday, 4 June from 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to announce *Untitled*, the forthcoming solo show of pioneering Syrian painter Asma Fayoumi. The exhibition will feature a new body of work by the artist, which she began in 2011 after the start of political unrest in Syria. A leading member of the Damascus art scene since the 1960s, Fayoumi has often utilised painting to chronicle the ever-changing social landscape of the Arab world, including the setbacks that have been brought about by various conflicts.

Although not a politicised artist in a conventional sense, Fayoumi has remained committed to her subject matter by focusing on the family unit and the intimate moments that bind its members. Whether in moments of war or the quiet of love's contentment, the influential artist has sought to articulate the anxiety and pain or tenderness and warmth surrounding her protagonists with a painting style that details their experiences through expressionist brushwork, cubist divisions of space, and a somber palette saturated with white and grey. Fayoumi's recognisable colour scheme indicates that the realism of her scenes lies not in the figurative representation of subject matter but rather in the perceptible emotive content of each work.

In her latest series, Fayoumi depicts couples, mothers and children, and lone heroines that occupy the entire surface of the canvas. This compositional space outlines restrictive settings that form the larger context of her works, as the artist zooms in on the frenzied state of vivid scenes. With each successive painting, and over time, the artist's compositions have become increasingly fragmented and chaotic. The exhibition's included works are all titled *Witness*. In a 2011 vertical work, a couple is turned towards each other, their faces becoming one despite a clear indication of individual features. Thin diagonal lines that intersect and extend across the painting give the illusion of spatial depth, and situate her figures in the centre of a cage-like structure that begins in the foreground of the composition and stretches to the background. At the same time, due to Fayoumi's heavy use of abstraction, this structure can be read as a window pane, the glass of which has been shattered by an unseen ravaging force. The man and woman reappear in a 2014 painting but are separated by a white void that travels from the foreground of the composition to the central point of the work and fades into a background of urban edifices. Fading into the recesses of a city, their features morph into the weathered facets of its structures.

## About the Artist

From her early days of depicting Damascene scenes using colourist principles of abstraction to her more recent expressionist works that combine her signature style of layered and laboured figurative compositions, Asma Fayoumi has remained committed to depicting the world around her with fervent imagination.

Born in Amman, Jordan in 1943, Fayoumi's formative artistic years occurred in the 1960s with the emergence of a particular school of Syrian abstraction that was led by the Italian artist and studio art instructor Guido La Regina. At the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus she worked alongside peers who later became recognised as seminal artists, including Asaad Arabi, Faek Dahdouh, and Sakher Farzat. As such, her journey as a professional artist unfolded at one of the most critical periods of the regional art scene—when modernist schools first displayed evidence of a gradual transition into contemporary modes of representation and a charged political climate urged regional culture to address the call for social change.

A well-received solo show in Damascus in 1966 solidified Fayoumi's arrival on the local art scene, as it created a significant buzz. Since then she has been featured in countless solo and group exhibitions both at home and abroad and is acknowledged as a seminal female painter, one whose career has paved the way for subsequent generations of women artists. Today, Fayoumi's paintings are admired for their distinctive approach to depicting a range of subjects—from mythological figures to the stark realities of war, she freely reflects 'an explosion of internal struggle,' giving her work a profound sensitivity and intuition.

Asma Fayoumi has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout her decades-long career, most recently at Ayyam Gallery Damascus (2008; 2010) and Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2011).

## About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation, managing the careers of a diverse roster of established and emerging artists from the Middle East. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut, Dubai, and London, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts programme have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art by introducing the dynamic art of the region to a global audience. With its widely respected multi-language publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also spearheaded recent efforts to document the region's art history.

## Exhibition Facts

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Opening Reception: Thursday, 4 June from 7:00 to 9:00 pm

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

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