



Shurooq Amin, *It's a Mad World*, 2016, Mixed media, 200 x 110 cm.

SHUROOQ AMIN

IT'S A MAD WORLD

17 September - 5 November 2016

Opening reception: Saturday, 17 September, from 6.00 to 8.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to present *It's a Mad World*, a solo show of recent work by Shurooq Amin.

About the Show

Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to present *It's a Mad World*, a solo show of recent work by Shurooq Amin. Featuring mixed media paintings that explore a number of sociopolitical issues, the exhibition will travel from Kuwait, where it debuted at Contemporary Art Platform, a leading art space in the Gulf. There, *It's a Mad World* was organised in collaboration with Ayyam Gallery under the direction of guest curator Martina Corgnati. Corgnati previously served as the curator of *In the Eye of the Thunderstorm: Effervescent Practices from the Arab world and South Asia*, an official collateral event of the 2015 Venice Biennale that highlighted a diverse group of established artists, including Amin.

The Kuwait installment of *It's a Mad World* marked the first time in four years that Amin exhibited in her native country after facing censorship from local authorities. In 2012, controversy arose when a selection of paintings depicting the hidden, transgressive lives of Khaleeji men were banned from public view. Although the exhibition *It's a Man's World* was shut down, Amin's paintings brought attention to the social mores that dominate the region, and the frequent clashes that occur between an increasingly globalised youth culture and the religiosity of traditional life in the Arabian Peninsula.

It's a Mad World references this earlier exhibition while updating the context of Amin's work, invoking the toll of violent conflicts that have devastated parts of the Arab world. Several paintings in *It's a Mad World* depict the worsening conditions of decimated cities while commenting on the social issues that continue to affect entire populations.

The titles of the selected works reflect Amin's background in Ekphrasis, the tradition of considering a work of art through a literary interpretation that might offer new insight. Each title is inspired by a celebrated novel but includes a twist such as *The Toy Luck Club*, *The No. 2 Ladies Detective Agency*, and *For Whom the Bed Tolls*. The artist's evocation of renowned literary works invites the viewer to enter the weighty content of her paintings, which unfolds as a dystopian world where mounting devastation is compounded by growing apathy.

Central to Amin's new series are the struggles of women and children who must navigate daily political violence. Among the topics explored are the plight of voiceless child brides, and the political and economic disparities that exist in oil-rich Kuwait, where the experiences of stateless residents stand in great contrast to the consumerist mindset that steers local popular culture.

About the Artist

Shurooq Amin is an interdisciplinary artist known for her provocative mixed media paintings. Following a series of critically acclaimed exhibitions in her native Kuwait, Amin has emerged as a leading feminist voice in the Arabian Gulf, often speaking on the intersections of art, politics, and social issues that influence the region's cultural landscape. Amin's bold sometimes-controversial portrayal of the hidden side of Khaleeji society, which captures the existence of significant subcultures, urges viewers to consider the malleability of religious norms, notions of piety in public and private spaces, and the impact of globalisation. As a result, Amin is recognised as an influential member of a generation of artists that is redefining the parameters of regional visual culture.

Utilising a postmodern approach to portraiture that combines photography and painting, Amin depicts her anonymous, multi-generational figures with humour and irony as she reveals the intrinsic contradictions of a conservative state and explores the cultural chasms of modern-day global society.

Exhibiting since the mid 1990s, Amin's paintings are housed in public and private collections in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. A monograph highlighting two decades of the artist's oeuvre was published by Ayyam Gallery in 2014.

Amin's selected solo and group exhibitions include: Contemporary Art Platform, Kuwait (2016); In the Eye of the Storm, an official collateral event of the 56th Venice Biennale (2015); Ayyam Gallery London (2014); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2014); Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2013); Lahd Gallery, London (2011); CAN, New York (2010); Tilal Gallery, Kuwait (2010); and the International Cairo Art Biennale (2008). In 2016, Amin was an artist in residence at the Villa Lena Foundation in Tuscany. More recently, she was a juror for the Visual Arts division of the Arab Fund for Culture.

In addition to Amin's noteworthy career as a visual artist, she is a widely published, Pushcart Prize nominated poet, and holds a doctorate in Creative Writing and Ekphrasis from Warnborough College, England.

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut and Dubai, 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. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also contributed to recent efforts that document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 17 September - 5 November 2016

Opening Reception: Saturday, 17 September from 6.00 to 8.00 pm

Regular hours: Mon-Fri: 10.00 am - 8.00 pm / Sat: 12.00 - 6.00 pm

Location: Beirut tower, Ground Floor, Zeitoune Street, across from Beirut Marina

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