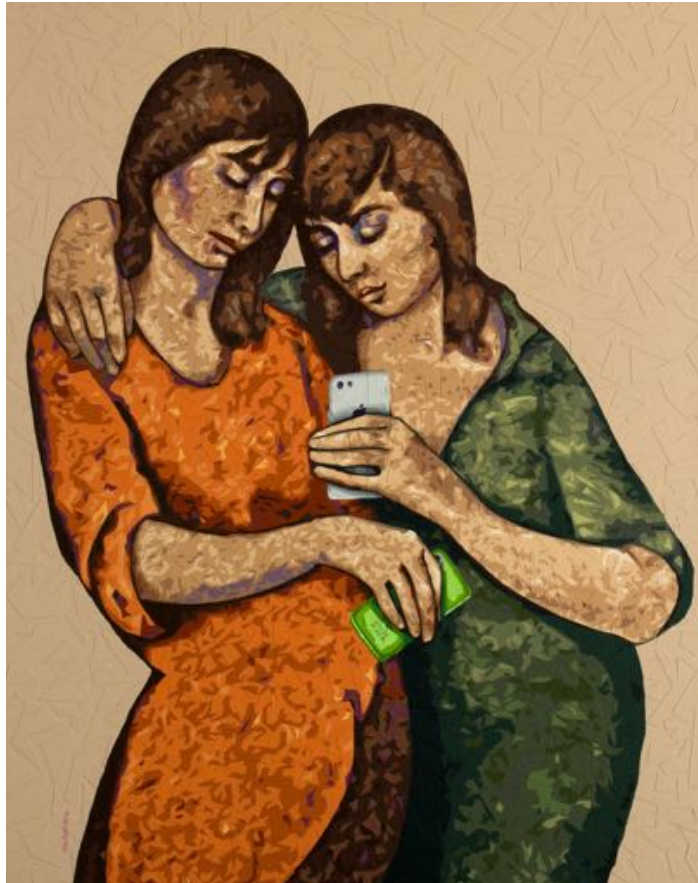


Ayyam Gallery
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Gallery Hours:
Sun-Thu: 10.00am-8.00pm

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Untitled, 2014, Acrylic and canvas collage on canvas, 150 x 120 cm

Elias Izoli ***Connected***

20 January – 3 March 2016

Opening reception: Wednesday, 20 January from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (DIFC) is pleased to announce *Connected*, the solo exhibition of artist Elias Izoli. Featuring a new body of work, the exhibition highlights a recent conceptual departure for the Damascus-based painter. As a response to current events, Izoli has sought to address the suspension of ordinary life in the face of large-scale conflict through the imagery of Syria's most celebrated figurative painter, Louay Kayyali (1934-1978). In doing so, Izoli comments on the relevance and urgency of Kayyali's work in the political context of today.

Kayyali's portraits of everyday subjects established a benchmark in modern Syrian art, and were shown throughout the country during his career. His widely recognised painting style, through which the poor and downtrodden were rendered with the elegant forms of Early Renaissance icons, spoke to the diverse spectrum of twentieth-century Syrian society while drawing attention to socioeconomic disparities. Izoli summons Kayyali's figures, depicting

them with painstaking detail in order to communicate how the melancholy that is displayed in the late artist's compositions continues to appear, most vividly at a time when Syria is no longer recognisable. For the artist, these new works are connected to the conscience of Syria that Kayyali depicted 'with the hope of finding a scene that would be less harsh, perhaps at a later stage.'

Added to the weight of the mid century portraits are indicators of how modern life is also defined by what Izoli describes as 'the reproduction of fixed and mobile scenes,' as the digital age has swept across the globe. Kayyali's popular figures are shown clutching laptops and electronic tablets or otherwise sell American snacks and candy. Alluding to the effects of globalisation, Izoli complicates his conceptual homage to Kayyali with images that point to escapist culture, yet in the case of Syria such objects do not signal a break from the mundane but rather a momentary exit from the catastrophic.

About the Artist

Elias Izoli is a self-taught painter whose creativity was harnessed at an exceptionally young age. In Damascus, his talent was recognised early on and he was given a solo exhibition at the Russian Cultural Centre at age seventeen. With consummate draftsmanship, a marked command of colour, and an intensive approach to capturing his subjects, Izoli's compositions defy conventional portraiture. Colour is meticulously distributed and contrasted in sections, creating volume and dimension, and serves as an emotive indicator, while different uses of texture and clear divisions of the painting's surface allow the viewer to enter the psychological depth of his subject matter.

Recently, the impact of the Syrian war has inspired him to produce psychologically laden portraits of children caught in the crossfire of violence. Although his young protagonists are rendered with small areas of colour, suggesting a broken, destabilised state, they stare directly at the viewer, demonstrating determination.

Born in Damascus, Syria in 1976, Elias Izoli lives and works in the city. Izoli has exhibited regularly since 1993, and was included in exhibitions at Ayyam Gallery Beirut and Dubai in 2010, 2012, and 2013.

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 to document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

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Opening Reception: Wednesday, 20 January from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery, Gate Village 3, DIFC, Dubai

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