



Athar Jaber, *Marble Head - Opus 5 nr.2*, 2015, Carrara Marble, 38 x 33 x 53 cm

ATHAR JABER

Vestiges

4 February | 1 April 2025

Ayyam Gallery is pleased to present *Vestiges*, a solo exhibition featuring the newly signed Athar Jaber's largest body of work.

About the exhibition

Athar re-imagines the human form, creating figures that transcend mere physical disfigurement and serve as symbolic representations of how individuals are torn apart by the weight of the world. As his largest body of work to date, this series is an exploration of the fragile relationship between the human form and the forces that shape it. This exhibition's core is the human body, portrayed as broken, fragmented, and vulnerable. This rendering is not accidental; the raw violence present in Athar's sculptures expressed through shattered limbs, distorted faces, and torsos seem caught in a paradox: they are sculpted to embody an ideal of beauty, but their fractured state suggests that this beauty is, in fact, an illusion.

Athar is equally invested in capturing existential depth, influenced by Francis Bacon's use of psychological portraiture to expose internal conflicts through contorted forms and features. His approach also merges classical influences, particularly Michelangelo's Prisoners Series, known for its powerful, unrefined quality.

In adapting these influences, Athar explores themes of identity, loss, and transformation while staying rooted in the sculptural tradition. His use of unconventional tools like shotguns and sandblasters adds new layers of disfigurement and texture, enhancing the visceral impact of his work.

Yet, Athar's exploration of destruction is not without hope. The brokenness does not signify defeat but the reality of human experience, it mirrors internal and external battles, suggesting that rebirth is possible. In this sense, destruction becomes an act of liberation, a means of unearthing hidden truths.

Artist Statement

Human forms emerge and recede—fragmented, eroded, and incomplete—yet alive.

The sculpted figures exist in a delicate tension between creation and destruction. They appear as remnants of something once whole, as though time has worn away at them.

Smooth, polished surfaces are interrupted by rough textures, mirroring the interplay between fragility and permanence, absence and presence. The broken and fragmented forms amplify the humanity of the figures. In the absence of features, the viewer is invited to project their own reflections of memory, identity, and impermanence.

This body of work contemplates our struggle to remain whole in a world that fractures us. It evokes a sense of silence, as if the sculptures are caught mid-formation, on the cusp of becoming or dissolving. Are these figures emerging from the stone, or are they being reclaimed by it?

Vestiges is a meditation on what remains—of ourselves, our histories, and our bodies—when time, loss, and experience have taken their toll. These works ask us to dwell in the tension of the incomplete, to reflect on the traces we leave behind, and to recognize the beauty in what is unfinished.

About the artist

Born in 1982 in Rome to a family of artists, Athar Jaber grew up across Europe, particularly in Florence, Italy, which profoundly shaped his artistic vision.

Building on the classical notion of the mind trapped within the body, as put forward by Michelangelo in his series of Slaves or Prisoners, Athar expands this concept, using the body as a metaphor for socio-political dynamics that entrap both individuals and entire societies. The body becomes a means to address power dynamics, social structures, and the human condition.

The sculptures and drawings present the body as distorted, fragmented, and broken, simultaneously evoking both beauty and brutality. The body stands as a testament to structural and systemic violence; the central focus of the artist's PhD research, which provides a strong theoretical foundation for his practice.

Known for his technical skills, Athar is a sculptor who honors the tradition of classical sculpture while infusing it with a contemporary perspective through experimental approaches. In contrast to the traditional sculpting method—where detailed clay models are created first and then transposed into stone by a team of specialized assistants—these figures are carved directly by the artist himself into the prestigious Statuario marble from Carrara, using a technique known as Taille Direct. This approach reflects an inherent dialogue between artist and material, with the stone — its history, texture, and form — and the artist's conceptual framework guiding Athar's hand and mind to shape figures that transcend the purely visual.

While Athar's primary focus is on stone sculpture, his artistic practice also spans performance, video, photography, and text. He has exhibited his work extensively across Europe. Solo exhibitions include the National Museum of Fine Arts,

Havana, Cuba (2018) and Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence, Italy (2015). His work has also been featured in major international group exhibitions and public programs, including the Abu Dhabi Public Art Biennale (2024), the Bruges Triennale, Belgium (2021), the 6th Lubumbashi Biennial, DRC (2019), Rudolfinum Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic (2019), and The Palestinian Museum, Birzeit, Occupied West Bank (2017).

Athar's sculptures are part of numerous private and public collections, including SMAK Ghent, the Barjeel Art Foundation, The Palestinian Museum, the National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana, the National Museum of Lubumbashi, and the FAO Headquarters in Rome, among others.

The artist currently lives and works in the U.A.E

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organization that manages the careers of both established and emerging artists. Originally based in Syria, it expanded its reach with ventures in London, Jeddah, and Beirut, its blue-chip art space in Dubai has since become its permanent home. Additionally, the gallery's multinational non-profit arts program, furthered its mission to broaden the horizons of international art. The gallery's impact is evident in its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship program that manages the estates of pioneering artists. These efforts have contributed significantly to documenting underrepresented facets of global art history.

Ayyam Gallery is deeply committed to nurturing the growth of its artists, offering them substantial opportunities for visibility through projects that foster dialogue between various cultural and artistic perspectives. Through its roster the gallery hosts an extensive program of group and solo exhibitions showcasing a wide range of mediums and messages that highlight the diverse voices of the region, which include Samia Halaby, Faisal Samra, Safwan Dahoul, Sama Alshaibi, Kais Salman, and many more.

The gallery's influence extends beyond the MENA region through collaborative projects, loans, and artwork placement in global museums and institutions such as The Institut du Monde Arabe, LACMA, Centre Pompidou, The British Museum, and many more. Reflecting its dedication to engaging with a global audience, Ayyam Gallery participates in a selection of art fairs.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibitions Dates: 4 February | 1 April 2025

Regular Hours: Monday - Friday: 10 am - 7 pm

Saturday: 12 pm - 6 pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery, B11, Alserkal Avenue, Street 8, Al Quoz 1, Dubai

T: (04) 323 6242

Email: info@ayyamgallery.com

Website: www.ayyamgallery.com