



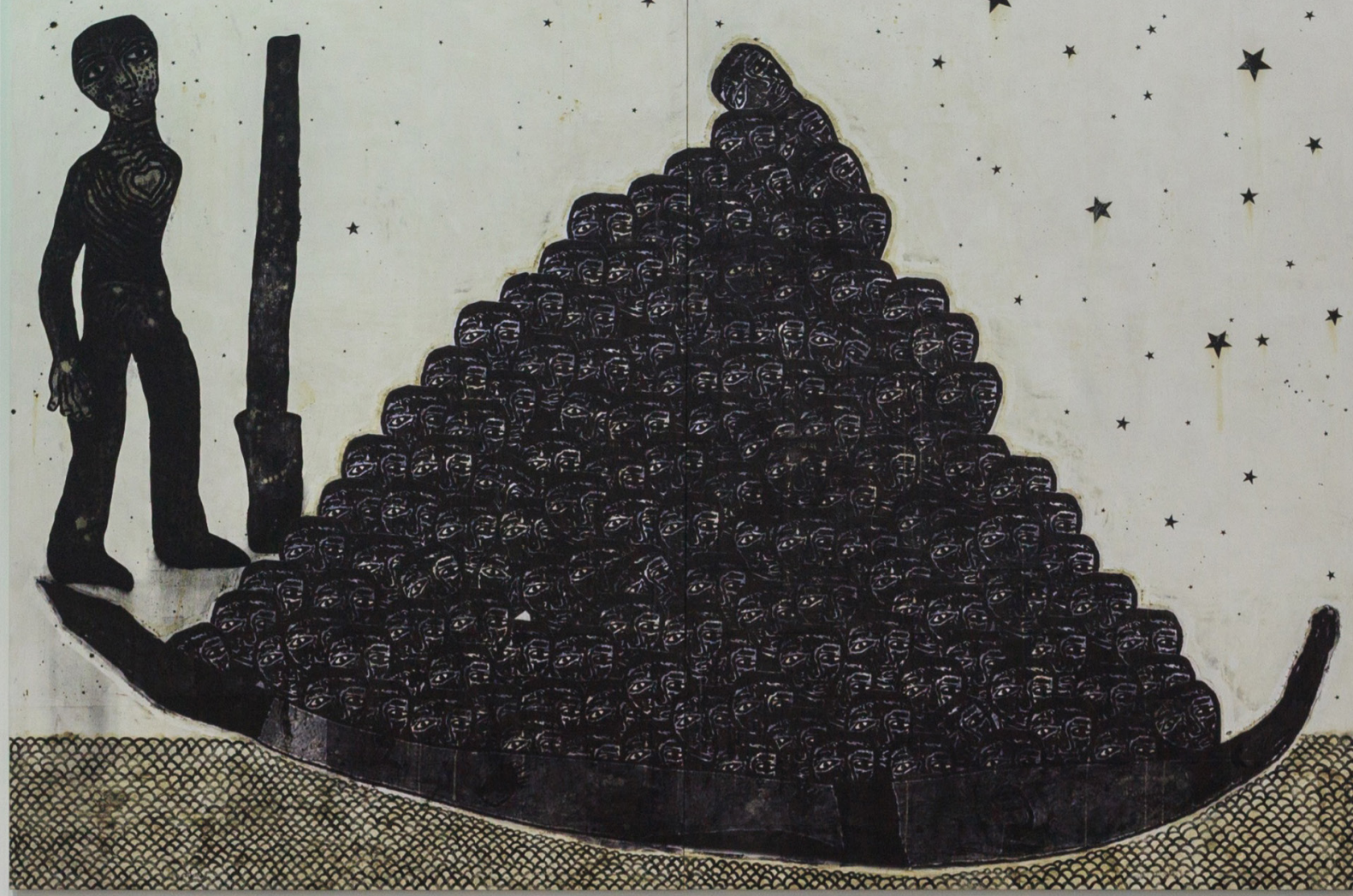
Two Decades Of Cultural Anchoring *Ayyam Gallery*

When we spoke with Maya Samawi, Managing Partner of Ayyam Gallery, what became instantly clear was that this was more than a commercial art space it was a lifeline. A lifeline for artists, for memory, for the cultural narratives of a region long flattened or misrepresented.

**When we opened in Damascus,
we weren't just filling a gap we
were building the foundation
of something much larger.**

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery emerged in a time and place where artistic excellence existed, but infrastructure did not. Syria had brilliant painters, thinkers, and creators but few platforms through which they could be seen, documented, or collected. Ayyam became that platform.

The artists were there, but their work was staying inside the country.



We wanted to show that what they were creating deserved and demanded an international stage.

In the nearly two decades since, Ayyam has grown from a pioneering initiative into a regional force. The gallery has expanded its footprint across Beirut, Jeddah, London, and Dubai, but its soul remains rooted in its original purpose: to represent artists from the Middle East with integrity, depth, and continuity.

A Platform for Urgency

Ayyam's exhibitions are never passive. They reflect the urgency of their time, echoing through war, exile, resistance, and resilience. The gallery has consistently shown work that confronts, questions, and sometimes unsettles.

We've never shied away from political or emotionally charged work. These are not abstract issues for our artists they are lived realities.

From the fragmented memoryscapes of Sadik Kwaish Alfraji to the raw stillness in Rula Halawani's photography, Ayyam curates not for spectacle, but for impact.



KHALED AKIL

The Infinite & the Finite

25 April | 25 June 2024

"To follow the cosmic order and become one with the universe, I must go to the corners of my mind. At the Event Horizon, the movement of thought is drifting like clouds, colliding like dust from the beginning and glowing with all colors of love, the infinite element of existence."

The artist aims to depict the unseen, the felt, and the omnipresent.

"What I see is only chaos, and my consciousness craves order. I must get out of my comfort zone; in other words, I must break the boundaries and come out of myself."

How can one paint what is within and all around? From the micro to the macro, an overview but also a detail. To portray something that's never been seen, the artist starts with light, the beginning of everything we perceive, the abstract facets of realities. Akil creates his compositions through infinite strata, one atop the other, slowly building, the artist uses intuition and memories to find balance in the relationship between cause and effect. Dozens and dozens of thin layers create such depth while avoiding impasto.

Oil is the chosen medium, governed by time, the drying process presents and provokes questions and answers in the artist's mind, creating multiple effects to choose from. Akil's work brings time and space together through medium and concept, putting all his tools together to tackle the immensity of the universe.

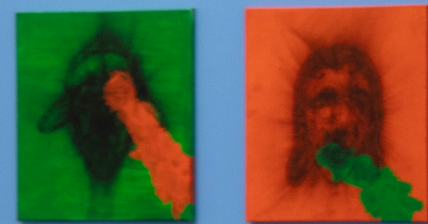
Layering colors, light, and darkness becomes therapeutic and even performative. The artist loses control, by reshaping molecules of pigment and mixing them on the surface. The result illustrates faith, energy, and emotion, touching upon the duality of existence, life and death.

The paintings hold the fabric of the universe, atoms, photons, and microcosmos made of living things. They expand with the universe and breathe with every heartbeat.



We are not interested in following market trends. Our focus is on artistic merit and the story the artist is trying to tell. Some works are subtle. Others are forceful. But they all have weight.

In a region where censorship, displacement, and instability are ongoing realities, the gallery has played a vital role in preserving voices that might otherwise be lost.



Visibility is everything.

If artists are not seen, they are erased.

Our job is to protect them from that.

A Philosophy of Beauty and Truth

Yet, for all its political and cultural significance, Ayyam's philosophy also honours aesthetics.

We are aesthetes.

We believe in the power of beauty not as something superficial, but as something essential.



This curatorial approach has allowed Ayyam to walk a rare line one that doesn't sacrifice critical content for visual appeal, or vice versa.



A beautiful work can be a form of resistance, a declaration of dignity, a bridge between pain and transcendence.



You don't have to choose
between beauty and meaning.

You can have both.

Memory, Legacy, and the Work of Documentation

Beyond exhibitions, the gallery's work in archiving and publishing has been equally vital. Ayyam has long committed itself to producing catalogues, books, and retrospective texts that preserve artistic legacies.

We have artists who are no longer with us. It's our responsibility to ensure their voices remain part of the conversation. We don't just exhibit we remember.

This was deeply evident in the gallery's recent tribute to Leila Nseir, one of Syria's pioneering women artists.

The retrospective wasn't just a show. It was a reclamation of history.

We didn't always have state funding, or institutional frameworks. So we built our own. From launching nonprofit initiatives to mentoring emerging artists, we've always done what needed to be done.



**The work doesn't end with a sale.
It begins with trust.**



Building What Didn't Exist

For much of its history, Ayyam has operated in the absence of larger support systems.

This spirit of cultural stewardship remains central. Whether investing in emerging voices or safeguarding established ones, Ayyam functions not just as a gallery but as a custodian of contemporary Arab art.

Looking Ahead

Even now, as the gallery continues to adapt and evolve, its compass remains steady. Ayyam is expanding its roster with new voices, exploring collaborative formats, and rethinking its approach to representation and audience engagement.

We don't want to exist only within the white cube. We're exploring new formats, new ways of telling stories through video, archives, public engagement.

The world is changing, and we're evolving with it. But the mission remains the same.

And that mission is clear: to show the world the depth, power, and resilience of artists from the region and to honour them, not just in the moment, but across time.