

ASAAD ARABI (SYRIA, B. 1941)

Widely respected as an early innovator of contemporary painting in the Arab world and a prominent art theorist and critic, Asaad Arabi has continuously reinvented his painting style in an attempt to depict the rhythms, sensuality, and concealed narratives of urban environments, particularly in his native Syria. Arabi's fascination with cities and the spaces that define them has included an extensive investigation of how inhabitants influence the formation of culture in such settings—a focus that has led to colourist approaches and abstracted forms in addition to early experiments with modernist figuration.

Arabi's decades-long career dates back to the 1960s, when he trained with Guido La Regina, an Italian painter that encouraged a new school of abstraction among students at the University of Damascus. Emerging from this aesthetic shift, Arabi's insistence on formal experimentation quickly secured his status as a leading painter in Syria. The artist's later usage of geometric abstraction reverberated throughout the region as a renewed interest in Islamic art and aesthetics took hold in the 1980s. In recent years, Arabi has alternated between pure abstractions that are reliant on tonal variations as affective details to expressionist depictions in which figures appear to merge with their environments.

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Born in 1941, Asaad Arabi graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus before moving to Paris, France in 1975, where he received a diploma in painting from the Higher Institute of Fine Arts, and subsequently earned a PhD in Aesthetics from the Sorbonne University.

Arabi has exhibited in the Middle East and North Africa for more than sixty years and has been featured in solo and group shows throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States, most recently at Galerie Roy Sfeir, Paris, France (2019); Ayyam Gallery, Beirut (2017); Galerie Frederic Moisan, Paris, France (2017); Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, USA (2017); Galerie Frederic Moisan, Paris, France (2017); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2015); and Sircov Gallery, Brest, France (2019).

Arabi's works are housed in public and private collections such as Institut du Monde Arabe; the Barcelona Contemporary Museum of Art; the National Museum, New Delhi; the National Museum of Korea, Seoul; Los Angeles County Museum; and Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah.