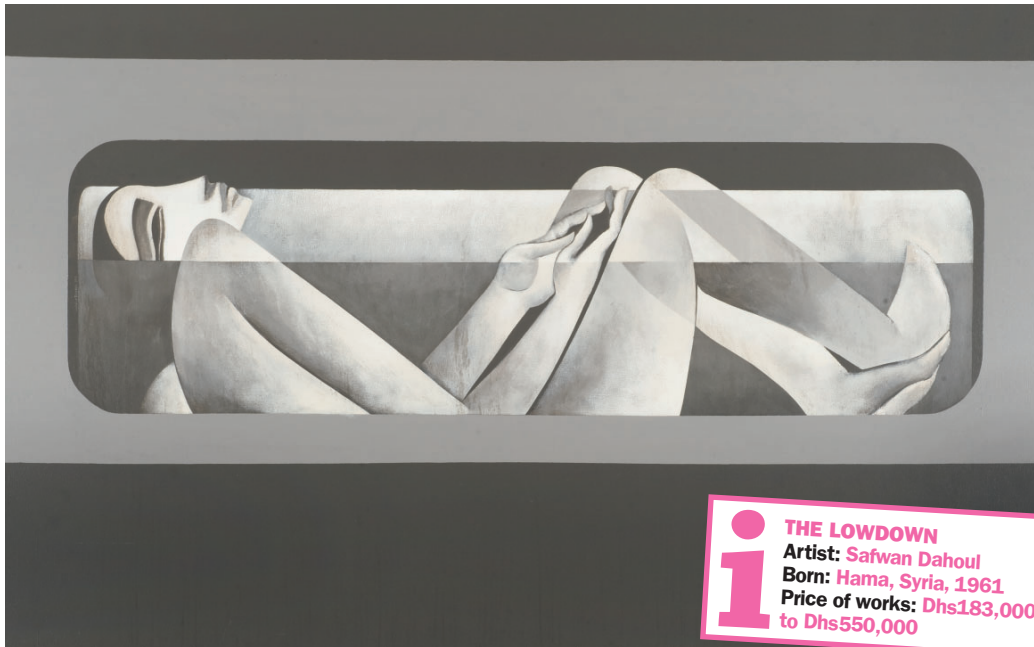


Art & Culture

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A Syrian master comes to Dubai



THE LOWDOWN
Artist: Safwan Dahoul
Born: Hama, Syria, 1961
Price of works: Dhs183,000 to Dhs550,000

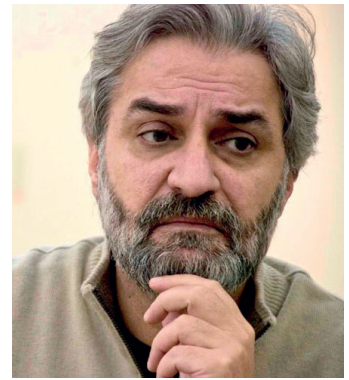
Syrian artist **Safwan Dahoul's** works have caught the attention of the world with their bold, lyrical, timeless aesthetic. *Nyree Barrett* discovers why you should take a look

Every time you stare at a painting by Safwan Dahoul, you'll notice something new. Upon first glance, viewers are usually so taken with the technical precision and geometrical, almost illusory quality that they notice little in the way of symbols. The muted colours and strong sense of line mean you'll often walk away from that first viewing with a sense of the sombre overtaking you.

Yet during a repeat viewing, almost miraculously, your experience of the painting will shift completely. You'll notice a sense of calm in the warmth of the earthy tones, tenderness in the way the female figure strokes the head of another, calm on the women's faces and a sense of poetry in the way their fingers are held.

This journey of perception is a sign of great art. It seems the world, too, is now recognising Dahoul as one of the greats from this region, with his work having skyrocketed in price in the past decade. So we implore you to pay a visit to his latest exhibition, 'Still Dreaming', and take your time when you do. In preparation for your visit, and to help you understand more about his work, here are some words from the man himself.

Still Dreaming continues at Ayyam Gallery in DIFC until February 28



The artist in his own words

How would you describe your work to someone who knows nothing about it? My work is a picture of my daily life and feelings, which are very similar to everybody's daily life and feelings. So my work is a picture of all our lives.

Many of your pieces refer to the idea of dreaming. What is it about this that intrigues you? In order to be alive, one must dream. My dreams have not ended yet.

Are there any psychological references in your work? In each painting, I like to capture or steal the very private moment or glimpse of truth that all humans possess. I believe we all look the same when experiencing this moment.

Your aesthetic has been consistent for 20 years, in both style, content and form.

Why is that? The whole universe has not changed in millions of years: trees, rivers and humankind still look the same. We don't notice minor changes from the outside, yet the universe is in a continuous movement, and while the outside changes are subtle, the internal changes are larger, invisible and felt.

Another thing that has been consistent is the women in your work. What do they represent?

The women in my paintings represent humankind, not gender.

Who are your artistic inspirations? My mother; Bruegel [a Flemish painter from the 1500s]; and Elias Zayat [a Syrian modern artist].

What else inspires you? Nescafé, love, and death.

What's the one question you've always wanted to be asked?

How long I have been alive.

What are your aspirations?

To see my three boys grow up.

Additional research: Vanessa Cappelli