

PRESS RELEASE

Ayyam Gallery
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Sun-Wed: 10:00am-10:00pm
Thur - Sat: 2:00pm-10:00pm



Asaad Arabi: Return to Abstraction

4 May - 18 June 2015

Opening reception: Monday, 4 May from 7:00 to 9:00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Dubai (DIFC) is pleased to announce *Return to Abstraction*, the solo show of Asaad Arabi, a pioneering contemporary Arab painter and acclaimed art theorist. After years of musical expressionism, with colourful series portraying the iconic Um Kulthum, Arabi returns to lyrical abstraction, all the while preserving a vibrant palette, harmonious compositions, and multi-angle method of execution.

During his doctorate studies at the Sorbonne, Arabi conducted a decade-long research project and produced subsequent writings on the spiritual relationship between music and form that undeniably marked his artistic practice, whether through figuration or abstraction. In his flamboyant paintings, both seem to mingle, confirming the artist's belief in a certain correlation of these genres.

His new body of work springs from the urban and musical components of cities that impacted his formative years—Saida in south Lebanon and his native Damascus. Paris, his base since 1975, is another endless source of inspiration for the artist, through its rich architectural and musical heritage. The subject matters peek through the titles of Arabi's works, which he creates after completing each painting with the aim to intimate a graspable narrative for the viewer.

In *The City of Silence* (2014), a predominance of green and yellow shapes, contrasting with a background of hazel hues, allows the visualisation of an urban form despite a clearly abstract painting style. And while the carefully orchestrated assemblage of forms seemingly tunes down the city's ambient sounds, Arabi's harmonious game of brushstrokes and contrasts instills a peaceful melody into the painting.

Intensified in *The Melody of the Twilight* (2014), outlines of an urban environment turn to scarlet shades while their black interior contributes to create a multidimensional portraiture of a city through which colourful musical notes seem to flow, filling streets and structures.

Turning to verticality in *Memory from The Green* (2014), Arabi alludes to a creative process that he has used in his whole oeuvre: painting through memories rather than nature, for he believes in the purifying power of recollection, that only preserves elements deserving to remain.

Operating yet another seamless passage from figuration to abstraction, Arabi converts buildings into music and symbols as a colourful harmony. Subtle tones emerge out of his urbanist landscapes, translating into an almost audible musicality.

About the Artist

Born in 1941, Asaad Arabi graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in his native Damascus, where he studied under the Italian artist and instructor Guido La Regina, leader of a new abstractionist school. Following his move to Paris in 1975, Arabi received a diploma in painting from the Higher Institute of Fine Arts, and later earned a PhD in Aesthetics from the prestigious Sorbonne University. His subsequent studies, essays and critiques have been widely published in both French and Arabic, elevating the painter to the rank of prominent art theorist. Selected solo exhibitions include Ayyam Gallery Jeddah (2013); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2011); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2010); Ayyam Gallery Damascus (2009); Cairo Biennial (2004); Sircov Gallery, Brest, France (2003); Kuwait Museum (2003). His works are housed in museum collections including Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Barcelona Contemporary Museum of Art; The National Museum, New Dehli; South Korea's Museum in Seoul; and LACMA, Los Angeles.

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation, managing the careers of a diverse roster of established and emerging artists from the Middle East. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut, Dubai, and London, 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 by introducing the dynamic art of the region to a global audience. With its widely respected multi-language publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also spearheaded recent efforts to document the region's art history.

Exhibition Facts

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

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