



Untitled, 2017, acrylic and paper collage on canvas, diptych, 250 x 360 cm

ELIAS IZOLI SEVEN YEARS

13 February – 30 March 2018

Opening reception: Tuesday, 13 February from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to announce *Seven Years*, a solo exhibition of artist Elias Izoli. Featuring a new body of work, the exhibition highlights figurative paintings representative of the state Izoli has witnessed living in Syria over the past seven years.

About the Show

Izoli continues to introduce new figures through his strong grasp of draftsmanship and sensitivity to colour. Drawing from his surroundings and the overarching atmosphere in his country of residence, somber yet softly coloured, the paintings depict children who appear to reach out to the viewer. With hunched shoulders and evocative gazes, either looking directly at the viewer or off to a distance unaware that anyone is looking, the children's presence invokes a sense of intrusion in the viewer and a heightened sense of one's own presence in front of the painting. The children's strong gazes resonate with the viewer, building an empathic connection between viewer and subject. The melancholic nature of the works, combined with the muted palette Izoli uses, draws the viewer to step into these private spaces.

In some of the works, the children are placed alongside toys or objects with which they would usually playfully interact. In *Untitled* (2017), a beach ball is floating near a seated girl while she longingly gazes at it. Her

body slightly turned towards the ball, hands in her lap, seemingly yearning, she shows no intent to get up and play, resigning herself to her chair. Izoli uses colours that on their own without context would be regarded as joyous and pleasant. However in the works, as in *Untitled* (2017) the yellow in the girl's dress and in the ball contrast to the dark chair and background that Izoli paints, creating an honest depiction of what walking into these spaces, taken from real life, feels like.

Izoli's latest works lie in a space between intimacy and invasiveness. Through these works Izoli depicts the general atmosphere he's been living in over the last seven years, without highlighting small details that upon closer inspection, however, find their own way of making it into the works.

About the artist

Elias Izoli is a self-taught painter whose creativity was harnessed at an exceptionally young age. In Damascus, his talent was recognised early on and he was given a solo exhibition at the Russian Cultural Centre at age seventeen. With consummate draftsmanship, a marked command of colour, and an intensive approach to capturing his subjects, Izoli's compositions defy conventional portraiture. Colour is meticulously distributed and contrasted in sections, creating volume and dimension, and serves as an emotive indicator, while different uses of texture and clear divisions of the painting's surface allow the viewer to enter the psychological depth of his subject matter.

Born in Damascus, Syria in 1976, Elias Izoli lives and works in the city. Izoli has exhibited regularly since 1993, and was included in exhibitions at Ayyam Gallery Beirut and Dubai in 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2016.

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organisation that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art spaces in Beirut and Dubai, 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. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship programme that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also contributed to recent efforts that document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 13 February – 30 March 2018

Opening Reception: Tuesday, 13 February from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Regular Hours: Mon-Fri: 10.00 am to 8.00 pm, Sat: 12.00 to 6.00 pm

Location: Beirut Tower, Ground Floor, Zeitoune Street, Across from Beirut Marina

T: +961 1374450/51

Email: beirut@ayyamgallery.com

Website: www.ayyamgallery.com

For media requests or interviews with the artist, please email the gallery's press office at press@ayyamgallery.com or call +961 1374450/51.