

Exhibition: Khaled Takreti, *Complete Freedom*

Location: Ayyam Gallery London

Preview: 5 September 2013, 6-8pm

Dates: 5 September – 5 October 2013



From 5 September – 5 October 2013, Ayyam Gallery London will present *Complete Freedom*, the first UK solo exhibition by acclaimed Syrian artist Khaled Takreti. The exhibition will present a new body of mixed media and film works examining the validity of the term ‘freedom’ and its relationship to personal and group identity.

Best known for his large-scale painted compositions exploring the psychology of their female subjects, the exhibition at Ayyam Gallery London marks a shift towards a largely monochromatic, graphic style and intimate subject matter. Employing and subverting both found images and his own photographs – most recently, those taken by the artist on the Paris Metro – Takreti’s collaged canvases are photographed, manipulated, reprinted, and then meticulously reworked through a process of drawing, cutting and painting. The process functions as a visual diary and a means of recording memory and charting time.

The delicate, fragile compositions that form the exhibition are both deeply personal and playful reflections on current social issues and everyday life. *Chaos* presents an absurdist critique of the chaotic nature and uncertainty of contemporary existence. In *Photocopy*, animal-human characters pose and preen in a desperate attempt to present their idealised selves to the world. Their reliance on plastic surgery and other tools of personal modification exposes the fallacy of the cult of individualism; the multiplicity and accessibility of consumer choices available today actually causes us to lose our individuality. We become human ‘photocopies’, each of us exactly like the last. The hybrid creatures that both populate this work and others in the show reference Takreti’s hybrid approach to artistic practice, as well as the culture and mythology of his former home country of Egypt.

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The issue of immigration and displacement is explored in two works on show. *Les Enfants des Syria* depicts a group of children in hanging chairs on a fairground ride. Seemingly spinning high in the air with no sky or ground visible above or beneath them, they function as a metaphor for the disrupted lives and dispersed children in war-torn Syria; “*lost between sky and earth*”, as Takreti refers to them, they endlessly spin, trapped in a state of limbo. Meanwhile *This is London?* probes the issue of multiculturalism in the UK capital, examining the melting-pot of ethnicities and sexual identities that define the city. Populated by symbols and stereotypes of London life past and present, such as phone boxes, the London Eye, surveillances cameras and club dancers, the work challenges our understanding of freedom, in particular the freedom to choose one’s national identity and home.

Notes to Editors

About the Artist

Born in Beirut in 1964, Khaled Takreti lives and works in Paris. His work is housed in collections including the Mathaf Museum of Contemporary Art, Doha; Syrian National Museum; and the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts. Solo exhibition include Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2012, 2010); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2010); Ayyam Gallery Damascus (2009). Group exhibitions include Mathaf Museum of Contemporary Art, Doha (2011); French Cultural Center, Damascus (2012); Paris et l'Art Contemporain Arabe, Paris, Beirut, Sanaa (Traits d'union touring exhibition, 2011-12). In 2012 Takreti was named among the top 101 greatest artists living in France from the past decade by arts publication Art Absolument.

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded by collectors and cousins Khaled and Hisham Samawi in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery sought to nurture Syria’s burgeoning and dynamic contemporary art scene through landmark non-profit initiatives such as the Shabab Ayyam Project, an incubator for emerging artists. Expansion into Beirut and Dubai enabled Ayyam Gallery to broaden its scope from the promotion of work by Syrian artists to those from the wider Middle East region. In doing so, Ayyam Gallery has established itself as one of the foremost exponents of Middle Eastern contemporary art to the international community.

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Today, Ayyam Gallery is recognised as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Arab and Iranian artists with an international profile and museum presence, such as Abdalnasser Gharem, Khaled Jarrar, Nadim Karam, Safwan Dahoul, Samia Halaby, Sadik Alfraji, Afshin Pirhashemi and Khaled Takreti. A number of non-commercial exhibitions, as well as the launch of initiatives like The Young Collectors Auction, have further succeeded in showcasing the work of Middle Eastern artists with the aim of educating a wider audience about the art of this significant region. Ayyam Gallery Damascus currently functions as a studio and creative haven for artists who remain in the war-torn city. In early 2013, Ayyam Gallery launched new spaces in London and Jeddah.

Exhibition Facts

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Location: 143 New Bond Street, 1st Floor, W1S 2TP

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