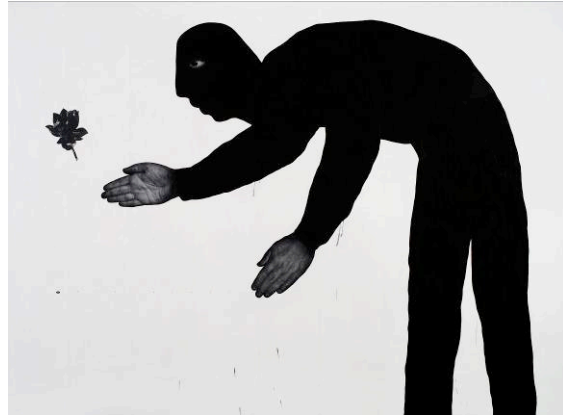


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition: Sadik Alfraji,
I Do Not Feel That I Am Free
Location: Ayyam Gallery London
Preview: 14 March 2013, 6-8pm
Dates: 14 March - 27 April 2013



'I do not paint out of luxury, and do not seek beauty; I paint as an attempt to reason with the world and myself.'

Sadik Alfraji

Ayyam Gallery is pleased to announce the solo exhibition, *I Do Not Feel That I Am Free*, by Iraqi artist Sadik Alfraji from 14 March - 27 April 2013. The second exhibition at the newly inaugurated Ayyam Gallery London, this show marks the first time Alfraji has exhibited in the United Kingdom and will feature new works including paintings, drawings and the video installation *Godot to Come Yesterday* (2013).

Alfraji describes his work as 'dealing with the problem of existence'. He confronts the viewer with solitary figures depicted in profile and set against stark backgrounds. These simple forms possess a quiet sadness and sense of isolation; through them, he is able to undergo a cathartic process and address his own displacement from his native Iraq.

Alfraji admits that the changing face of his homeland has informed his practice and continues to do so. Since the American invasion in 2003, both his and global perceptions and beliefs have changed irreparably. This was a conflict that for much of the world was experienced through a television screen with many of the people directly involved becoming anonymous shadows, reduced to a series of statistics of casualties and conflict.

At the core of his work, Alfraji is intrigued by the idea that as humans we are endlessly waiting for something meaningless and futile. This is perhaps most evident in the video *Godot to Come Yesterday*, which sees two textured grey figures moving and interacting against a black void-like backdrop in a reconstructed vision of Samuel Beckett's famous absurdist play, *Waiting for Godot* (1952). In Beckett's play, two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, wait in vain for the arrival of a third character named Godot, attempting to distract themselves through various activities and conversations.

In Alfraji's compositions, the viewer can easily recognise the shape of a human figure taking shape from bold swathes of black. Despite the impression of a uniform application of colour from a distance, upon closer inspection delicate layers of Indian ink and charcoal become apparent. The layering gives the figures an intensity and denseness, making them all the more distinct from their often completely white backdrops. When speaking of his monochrome palette, Alfraji refers to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*; that perhaps we are all watching the world as shadows, and as a result our perception of what is real has been limited – and never more so than during a bloody war.

The simplified forms in his works are often punctuated with strikingly detailed elements – a hand lined by the years, or a pensive eye gazing out at the viewer. These details lift Alfraji's characters out of the two-dimensional realm and breathe life into them, transforming them from an anonymous shadow into a being seeking a human connection.

Born 1960 in Baghdad, Sadik Alfraji lives and works in Amersfoort, The Netherlands. His work is housed in numerous private and public collections including The National Museum of Modern Art, Baghdad; The Art Center, Baghdad; Royal Association of Fine Arts Amman; Shoman Foundation Amman; French Cultural Center, Amman; Novosibirsk State Art Museum, Russia; and the Cluj-Napoca Art Museum, Romania. Solo shows include Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2011); Ayyam Gallery Damascus (2011); Stads Gallery, Amersfoort, Netherlands (2010); Station Museum, Houston (2008-9); Stedelijk Museum, Den Bosch (2007-8). Selected group exhibitions include Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012); Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Qatar (2010-11); CBKU & Centeaal Museum, New Salon, Utrecht (2008).

Notes to Editors

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.

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 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 Ayyam Publishing, Ayyam Editions, and 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 January 2013, Ayyam Gallery launched a new space in London, with a second to open in Jeddah in late-February.

Exhibition Facts

Preview: 14 March 2013, 6-8pm

Exhibition Dates: 14 March – 27 April 2013

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

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