



Sorcerer, 2022, Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 180 cm

KAIS SALMAN

Fables in the Unknown

19 September - 1 November 2022

Ayyam Gallery is pleased to present Kais Salman's most recent body of work in his solo *Fables in the Unknown*. We look forward to welcoming you at the gallery for the vernissage in presence of the artist from 6 to 9 pm on September 19th.

About the exhibition

A fable is a literary genre, a succinct fictional story that features animals and legendary creatures and leads to a particular 'moral' lesson. Kais does the visual equivalent in his work, creating his imaginary world in which his characters represent the masses. He illustrates civilization's pros and cons and the chaos of the human condition. There's a difference between reading and seeing an idea; a writer dictates his concept. Visually, the artist is only giving you tools to provide you with a glimpse at the complete picture. Leaving it open-ended. There's no solution, no answer; it's a chance to dream. Creating emotions, taking you to a different world, a different universe.

This body merely continues his previous work, in which he plays with technique, stepping away from flatness and playing with impasto. This transition is also a significant part of the storytelling and plot. Kais explains that he does not visualize the composition before working on a canvas, the painting starts in abstraction, layers of dark tones, and through it, he finds forms and highlights those with brightness. Creating composition through light and finding meaning in the dark. Playing with size, alternating big and small limbs, creating depth. Makes your eye jump through the background and foreground and the spaces between.

Taking the comparison to fables even further, the artist focuses on sarcasm in his work. Placing evil alongside good, creating groups and multiple narratives at once, and creating a specific scenography. That said, the dark humor is meant to enlighten reality and envisions a better place. The closest layer of paint is where the truth lies, where the plot thickens. The chaos gives us options and freedom in reading what we desire. Each painting has a specific thought process and narrative, placing some type of comedic character and main character.

Kais's paintings are a representation of emotions and sentiments. Charges of positive and negative thoughts, feelings, and energy are projected onto the canvas with motion. He believes each person has evil and kind traits. Kais removes the wickedness and only shows the positive when creating his animated characters. Kais focuses on their eyes and hand, explaining that they're the source of expression in all of us. Creating caricatures and sweet monsters, they unveil Kais's naiveté.

About the artist

Embarking on a different path than that of his contemporaries and predecessors, Kais Salman's work has been described as monochromatic, abstract expressionism. The artist uses satire to subvert the normalisation of greed, narcissism, and ideological extremism that is rapidly defining our era. As one of Syria's foremost expressionist painters, Salman has contributed to a decades-long artistic tradition that continues to serve as a powerful outlet for social commentary. A consummate formalist, he is recognised as one of the Arab world's most accomplished painters.

Since the early 2000s, Salman has sought to reflect the psychological violence that occurs when excess becomes rationalised and accepted by societies. Seeking to confront and exorcise sociocultural

manifestations of depravity, Salman unearths a world of ugliness and abjection through intentionally hyperbolised imagery accentuated by punches of colour and aestheticised forms. Political corruption, terrorism, consumerism, cosmetic surgery, religious fanaticism, imperialism, and the voyeurism of the digital age have all served as topics of Salman's carnivalesque compositions.

Born in Tartous in 1976, Salman lives and works in Syria. He received a Bachelor of Art from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus in 2002, where he trained with leading painters such as Safwan Dahoul. Salman's paintings are housed in collections throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. Salman has been featured in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, among other international publications, and was listed for the second time in Arabian Business 100 Most Powerful Arabs Under 40 in 2016.

Solo and group exhibitions for the artist include the Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2018, 2015, 2014, 2012); Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2017, 2014, 2011, 2010); Alexandria Biennale (2014); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2014, 2010); Damascus Museum of Modern Art (2009); The Park Avenue Armory, New York (2008); and Carthage Festival for Coast Mediterranean Sea Artists, Tunisia (2005).

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organization that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art space in Dubai, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, Africa, and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts program have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship program 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

Exhibitions Dates: 19 September - 1 November 2022

Regular Hours: Sun - Thur : 10 am - 6 pm

Saturday : 12 - 6 pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery, B11, Alserkal Avenue, Street 8, Al Quoz 1, Dubai

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