

**PRESS RELEASE**

Ayyam Gallery  
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Mon-Fri: 10:00am-8:00pm  
Sat: 12:00pm-6:00pm



**Lara Zankoul: *The Unseen***

10 February - 30 March 2014

Opening reception: Monday, 10 February, from 7:00 - 9:00pm

From 10 February to March 30, Ayyam Gallery Beirut is pleased to announce *The Unseen*, the second solo exhibition by conceptual photographer Lara Zankoul. With elaborately composed photographs, *The Unseen* presents two visions within one viewing experience; commenting not only on the surface of things, but also on what may lie hidden beneath.

The twelve photographs in the exhibition each display that which is known, and hint at that which is slowly revealed to be the truth. As in her previous series, through distorted perspective on the natural order, space and time, Zankoul challenges the role of photography as a means of capturing truth in the world. She is able to further challenge the parameters of photography in *The Unseen* with a clever device: a water tank around which the various tableaux of life are centered. Each photograph is thus divided into the surface above water and the space below the water level. The state of truth is to be found just under the water's surface.

All photographs exhibited have soft colours and natural light. As if filtered in a delicate prism, hues of violet and lilac, pink and sky blues dominate and are often accentuated with bright pops of red, cobalt and black.

From estrangement to the growth of life, Zankoul's images encapsulate the spectrum of human emotions. In lighter moments, Zankoul's models appear in ballerina tutus and flowing dresses, which due to being submerged underwater, have a greater billowy, lighthearted visual effect. Those approaching darker subject matter reference paranoia, human propensity to mask lies, betrayal and manipulation, and the trials of those struggling to find their voice.

Often, Zankoul's imagery approaches the surreal. In one example, *The Zoo*, a seated couple enjoys tea. Yet on second glance, they are not a regular couple, but one with the heads of animals. Such an image is captivating in its sense of whimsy and prompts the audience to reflect upon domesticity and habit in the animal world in contrast with the human world.

With highly crafted, life-sized sets, all the photographs are essentially 'true to life', as the artist does not employ any digital manipulation in her works. With new advances in set design, Lara Zankoul's wondrous imagination will undoubtedly continue to take form in her ever-growing body of fantastical, surrealist-inspired artworks.

## **Notes to Editors**

### **About the Artist**

The dreamlike compositions of Lebanese photographer Lara Zankoul are contemporary fairy tales that explore the charm and mystery of the human psyche. Whimsical and playful, they represent an attempt to invent new worlds, to push against the boundaries of our reality and escape the monotony of everyday life. The characters inhabiting Zankoul's work are anonymous and timeless, universal symbols existing within a fantastical and surreal landscape.

Born in Lebanon in 1987, Lara Zankoul lives and works in Beirut. She has participated in group exhibitions within the Middle East and France. Part of the Shabab Ayyam incubator programme, she was an award recipient at the 2011 Shabab Ayyam Photography Competition and in 2013, she held her first solo exhibition at Ayyam Gallery Beirut.

### **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. 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**

Exhibition Dates: 10 February – 30 March, 2014

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

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