

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Exhibition: Safwan Dahoul, *Repetitive Dreams*

Location: Ayyam Gallery London

Preview: 9 May 2013

Dates: 9 May – 15 June 2013



Ayyam Gallery London is delighted to announce Syrian painter, Safwan Dahoul's first solo exhibition in the United Kingdom, *Repetitive Dreams*. Firmly established as one of the most prominent Arab artists working today, he will present the first series of paintings he has created since leaving Damascus for Dubai last year. This coincides with an exhibition of large-scale works by Dahoul at Edge of Arabia London from 8 May - 15 June 2013.

The exhibition title, *Repetitive Dreams*, refers not only to the subject of Dahoul's works, but to the enduring influence that dreams have had in his career. He first started titling his paintings *Hulum*, or *Dream*, 25 years ago and sees the process of consistently re-interpreting the theme as an artistic challenge which inspires creativity. Essential to the artist's work is the universality of dreaming, and the dream's potential for multiple interpretations: in responding to Dahoul's dreams as they would theirs, the viewer is able to form their own, unique understanding of the artist's meaning.

For Dahoul, every event that happens in our life time is a repetition of another past moment. Examining a diverse range of subjects, from love to war, his canvases feature images that recur and evolve while remaining essentially unchanged. Working in a predominantly monochromatic palette, the artist uses black and grey to suggest deep hollows of space. These muted tones also offer a reflection of his personal life, echoing the absence of vibrant colours which Dahoul perceived when living in his native Syria.

Each of the eight panels that make up the polyptych *Dream 59* depicts a lone abstracted female figure situated within a linear landscape. In each successive painting, the image becomes more indistinct as the intensity of the light tones gradually increases, evocative of a film reel over-

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exposed in its last few frames. These tonal differences make each portrait distinct, yet their otherwise identical form indicates a single, immutable instant. His paintings often contain a cinematic quality, and the nature and history of dream sequences in cinema are of interest to the artist. Dahoul has recently expanded his practice to experiment with the medium of film, directly engaging with notions of evolution, time and repetition through introducing a durational element.

The exhibition of Dahoul's monumentally-sized paintings at Edge of Arabia's London space marks a collaboration between the not-for-profit art initiative and Ayyam Gallery. In addition to the work on show, there will be a book signing of Ayyam Gallery's 2009 monograph on Dahoul's work and a talk at the opening event on 8 May. The artist has also produced eight new limited edition prints, which will be on sale throughout the exhibition.

Born in 1961 in Hama, Syria, Safwan Dahoul lives and works in Dubai. Dahoul attended the Suheil Al Ahdab Center of Plastic Arts and the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus. In 1987 he received a scholarship to study abroad from the Ministry of Higher Education and relocated to Belgium, achieving his Doctorate from the Higher Institute of Plastic Arts in Mons in 1997. His work is held in numerous private and public collections including the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; The Samawi Collection, Dubai; The Farjam Collection, Dubai; and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Kuwait.

Previous solo exhibitions include: Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2011); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2011); and Ayyam Gallery Al Quoz, Dubai (2008). Group exhibitions include: Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi (2013); Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2012); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2011); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2009); and Ayyam Gallery Damascus (2006).

## 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 early 2013, Ayyam Gallery launched new spaces in London and Jeddah.

### **About Edge of Arabia**

Edge of Arabia is an independent, not-for-profit arts initiative developing the appreciation of contemporary Arab art and culture with a particular focus on Saudi Arabia. As a social enterprise Edge of Arabia is committed to reaching local and international audiences and improving understanding through free exhibitions, through publications, and through an education programme incorporating talks & seminars, artist residencies and vocational training. Following its launch in London in 2008, this grassroots initiative has travelled to Riyadh, Berlin, Istanbul, Dubai, Jeddah, twice to the Venice Biennale and most recently to London's Brick Lane with #COMETOGETHER.

Edge of Arabia's new space in Battersea is supported by their Founding Partner Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives as part of their mission to inspire a positive and timely discussion about contemporary Arab culture.

[www.edgeofarabia.com](http://www.edgeofarabia.com)

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## **Exhibition Facts**

### **Ayyam Gallery**

Preview: 9 May 2013, 6-8pm

Exhibition Dates: 9 May – 15 June 2013

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

Tel: +44 (0) 207 409 3568

Email: [london@ayyamgallery.com](mailto:london@ayyamgallery.com)

Website: [www.ayyamgallery.com](http://www.ayyamgallery.com)

### **Edge of Arabia**

Artist Talk, Book Launch and Preview: 8 May 2013, 6.30pm

Exhibition Dates: 9 May – 15 June 2013

Location: Edge of Arabia, 40 Elcho Street, London, SW11 4AU

### **For press information and images please contact:**

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