



Dream 177, 2020, Acrylic on Canvas, 220 x 200cm

SAFWAN DAHOUL

The Awakening

23 March - 30 June 2020

Due to the postponement of Art Dubai 2020, Ayyam Gallery is pleased to exhibit the commissioned works that were destined for the fair alongside the scheduled exhibition at the gallery by Rula Halawani.

The gallery is temporarily closed until further notice. The vernissage scheduled for the 23rd is thus canceled. To enjoy a virtual tour please visit alserkal.online and contact info@ayyamgallery.com for further information.

Since the late 1980s, Dahoul's *Dream* series has explored the physical and psychological effects of alienation, solitude, and longing that punctuate the human experience at various stages in life. Partly autobiographical, this seminal body of work uses the formal properties of painting to recreate the subconscious sense of enclosure that surfaces during times of crisis, whether in the event of mourning, estrangement, or political conflict.

In his last body of work, with the aptly titled exhibition *Still Dreaming* Dahoul questions "Are we still dreaming?". Moving away from the romanticism of dreams and the shelter they offer while still expressing himself through a subconscious voice, Safwan has awoken, and so has his protagonist, placing his voice in what seems to be a more lifelike environment metaphorically. Reality and its inconsistency are mirrored in the canvas through sharper lines and, most importantly, folds and ripples, illustrating life's obstacles.

The artist is posing questions through disfiguration, and distortion, stressing hardship and troubles while leaving some space for hope and answers. As the artist explains it, his paintings are his life's chronicles. The artist's loss of stability is explored in this new series. Explicitly, and unintentionally the artist found himself tackling the story of the displaced through crumbled images; with his ripples, the artist is exploring uncertainty through the imperfect reflection of contemporary humanity.

About the artist

With a career spanning over three decades, Safwan Dahoul is now a household name both regionally and internationally. As one of the foremost painters in the Arab world, the artist has repeatedly demonstrated how contemporary modes of figuration can describe the psychic terrain of a region that is in constant flux. Throughout his career, Dahoul has managed to include varying artistic styles while still keeping to his core identity and style.

Dahoul is mostly known for his beautiful melancholic and monochromatic works that present influences from the Cubist style of Picasso ranging to Assyrian and Pharaonic art. Since the late 1980s, the artist began an ongoing body of work investigating the dream state. Simply entitled the *Dream* series, these works have explored the physical and psychological effects of alienation, solitude, and longing that punctuate the human experience at various stages in life.

Partly autobiographical, this seminal body of work uses the formal properties of painting to recreate the subconscious sense of enclosure that surfaces during times of crisis, whether in the event of mourning, estrangement, or political conflict. The artist's recurring female protagonist facilitates this visceral experience through her contorted body, often-vacant eyes, and minimised yet monumental physicality. Depicted in the confinement of ambiguous settings, her presence is defined by the placement of various objects that seem to deepen the state of her disaffection, as even the familiar becomes a trigger of distress.

Born in 1961 in Hama, Syria, Dahoul was initially trained by leading modernists at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus before travelling to Belgium, where he earned a doctorate from the Higher Institute of Plastic Arts in Mons. Upon returning to Syria, he began teaching at the Faculty of Fine Arts and was a prominent member of the Damascus art scene. In the span of a decade, Dahoul nurtured a

new generation of artists as an active mentor whose evolving aesthetic often ignited new directions in painting. Given the trajectory and status of his painting style, Dahoul's career is regarded as a crucial link between modern and contemporary Arab art.

Dahoul's paintings are held in numerous private and public collections, including the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; National Museum, Damascus; The Samawi Collection, Dubai; The Farjam Collection, Dubai; the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Kuwait. Recently, he has participated in solo and group exhibitions at Ayyam Gallery DIFC and 11 Alserkal Avenue, Dubai (2018, 2017, 2016); Samsung Blue Square and Busan Museum of Art, South Korea (2014); Ayyam Gallery DIFC, Dubai (2014, 2011); Ayyam Gallery Beirut (2014); Ayyam Gallery London (2013); Edge of Arabia, London (2013); and Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (2012).

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: 23 March - 30 June 2020

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

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

T: +971 4 323 62 42

Email: maya@ayyamgallery.com

Website: www.ayyamgallery.com