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Untitled, Laundry series, 2011, iron, 99 x 85 cm

TAMMAM AZZAM 2007-2017

8 January- 20 February 2019

Opening Reception: Tuesday, 8 January from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery Dubai is pleased to announce *Tammam Azzam 2007-2017*, a selected collection of his body of work over the past ten years.

About the Show

Tammam Azzam's creations put forth an image of Syria, his native home, throughout the turmoil and changes, which it has undergone over the past years. Though perhaps unintentionally, Azzam has been able to document its evolution from beginning tensions of unrest to the aftermath created on both the country's physical landscape and his own personal journey he was forced to embark on.

Through these changes, his approach to his practice has also undergone transformations. Most notably, the evolution of his *Laundry* series illustrates his ever-deepening exploration of media and representation. Hinting at the Arab idiom "Don't air your dirty laundry in public", Azzam explores the visual possibilities of depiction, while suggesting the country should resolve their issues neatly and quietly at home before having them aired in public.

Upon relocating to Dubai at the outbreak of the war, Azzam's practice took an unexpected turn. With neither the time nor space for a full time artistic practice, Azzam began working with digital media. From this, was born the *Syrian Museum* series, which rose him to international recognition after his piece, *Freedom Graffiti* went viral. This series, along with others produced at the time, makes reference to both the beauty and destruction human kind is capable of creating.

Whether it be a longing for city escapes present in *Metalica*, or a chronologizing of his own journey seen through his evolving use of colors, each series reflects key stages in the artist's life. His latest *Paper Series*, returns to the ideas playing between reality and abstraction, originally seen in his debuting *Horizon* series. A build up from his past ten years of experience, this series demonstrates the lasting influences of his experimentations. Bringing forth the study of new horizons from the perspective of a matured artist, the *Paper* series bridges together Azzam's entire body of work, while demonstrating his talent for refinement in the face of abstraction and restraint in the face of reality.

About the Artist

Born in Damascus, Syria in 1980, Tammam Azzam received his artistic training from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus with a concentration in oil painting. Alongside a successful career as a painter in Syria, Azzam was a prolific graphic designer, an experience that would inform his digital media work after relocating to Dubai with the start of the country's conflict.

The initial phase of Azzam's work was distinguished by a 'hybrid form' of painting with applications of various media that allowed him to arrive at tactile interactions between surface and form that multiply as compositions evolve. These semi-abstract works use unconventional materials such as rope, clothespins, and other found objects in order to accentuate the depth, texture, and space of laboured picture planes, creating a visible tension. Although outwardly different in appearance, the series that resulted from these early experiments were inspired by the artist's changing perceptions of specific urban environments.

Following the start of the uprising in Syria, Azzam turned to digital media and graphic art to create visual composites of the conflict that resonated with international viewers. These widely distributed works are informed by his interest in the interventionist potential of digital photography and street art as powerful and direct forms of protest that are difficult to suppress. In early 2013, Azzam made worldwide headlines when his Freedom Graffiti print went viral on social media.

He returned to painting with *Storeys*, a series of monumental works on canvas that communicate the magnitude of devastation experienced across his native country through expressionist compositions of destroyed cityscapes. Chronicling the current state of his homeland, Azzam delves into a cathartic exercise of reconstruction, storey by storey. Alongside these new paintings, he has produced a significant body of giclée prints and installations that depict the facets of cities through similar themes.

Azzam has contributed to large-scale international exhibitions such as Art Dubai (2018); the FUU-Street Art Festival, Sarajevo (2015); Vancouver Biennale, where he was in residence (2014); FotoFest Biennial, Houston (2014); Dak'Art: Biennial of Contemporary African Art, Dakar (2014); Alexandria Biennale (2014); and the 30th Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana (2013).

In recent years, Azzam has participated in solo and group exhibitions at such venues as Art Dubai, Dubai (2018); Galerie Kornfeld, Berlin Germany (2018); Bienal del Sur, Caracas (2017); Künstlerforum Bonn, Bonn (2017); For-Site Foundation, San Francisco (2017, 2016); European Capital of Culture-Pafos, Pafos (2017); City Museum of Oldenburg, Oldenburg (2017); Künstlerverein Walkmühle, Wiesbaden (2016); Columbia University, New York (2016); Tainiothiki Twixtlab, Athens (2016); Ayyam Gallery - 11 Alserkal Avenue, Dubai (2016); Banksy's Dismaland, Weston-super-Mare (2015); Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice (2015); Framer Framed in de Tolhuistuin, Amsterdam (2015); Forum Factory, Berlin (2014); Lena & Roselli Gallery, Budapest (2014); Liquid Art House, Boston (2014); Rush Arts, New York (2014); Busan Museum of Art, Seoul (2014); 1x1 Art Gallery, New Delhi (2014).

In 2016, Azzam received an artist fellowship at the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg Institute for Advanced Study in Delmonhost.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibitions Dates:

8 January- 20 February 2019 | *Tammam Azzam: 2007-2017* | Dubai

Opening Reception: Tuesday, 8 January from 7.00 to 9.00 pm

Regular Hours: Sun – Thu: 10.00 am to 6.00 pm, Sat: 12.00 to 6.00 pm

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

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