

## **Tammam Azzam (Syria, b. 1980)**

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.

Recently, he has 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 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 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.