

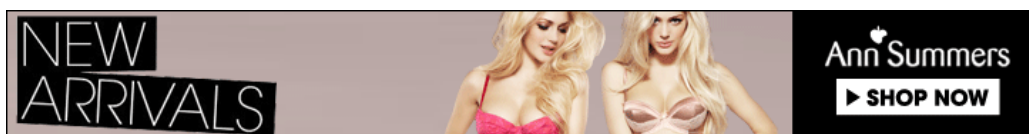
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## Safwan Dahoul – Repetitive Dreams at Ayyam Gallery and Edge Of Arabia | Exhibition review

Safwan Dahoul: "How long can I prolong this dream?"

This breathtaking series, which has taken shape over twenty years, is the treasured endeavour of Safwan Dahoul. *Repetitive Dreams* not only examines recurrence, but also, more emotively, the familiar circulation of events and experiences in actual life. Dahoul explores mankind's creation of motifs and icons to reinforce our purpose: symbols that we use to support personal faith in our mere glitch of an existence.



Dahoul's late wife is the captivating protagonist of the series, almost in its entirety. Used magically to escort the viewer into "a dream through eternity", she becomes an emblem for the audience to follow and interpret with freedom. Her visualisation is reminiscent of De Lempicka's ultra-feminine style, but with a humbleness and simplicity that is heartbreakingly beautiful. The artist did not number any of his dream series until the death of his wife. From this point, his awareness of time measurement was awakened and directed into his paintings.

When the Syrian uprising began, Safwan Dahoul moved himself and his family to Dubai, and continued his trademark style, still passionately fixated by home but now tainted with an explicit fear and sadness. You see these reflections in his more recent works in which the female character's once black and calm eyes become wide, terrified and desperate. On one level, Dahoul expresses the desperation of an onlooker who is both trapped and powerless to help, but on another, their eyes are now open and focussed: with devastation there has come enlightenment and wakefulness. As we watch developments in Syria from a safe distance, these more recent artworks re-engage us with the subject in a most intimate and stirring way.

There is much to be said for Safwan Dahoul and this most bewitching body of work. The cinematic quality is astonishing, while the juxtaposition of many cultural styles in its creative execution is remarkable. The artist himself is humble and gentle, and the emotional response triggered in the viewer bears testament to the way in which his work speaks with sincere openness.

*Repetitive Dreams* must absolutely not be missed. Both Safwan Dahoul's personal commentary on Syria and the wondrous beauty and magnificence of his works are a hair-raising introduction to Middle Eastern art. Dahoul is a gifted artist whose visualisations speak of fathomless emotional depth and creative genius.

**Verdict: ★★★★★**

**Hannah Wallace**

Safwan Dahoul: *Repetitive Dreams* is at Edge of Arabia until 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2013 and at Ayyam Gallery until 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013. For further information visit [here](#).

For further information about Safwan Dahoul visit [here](#).

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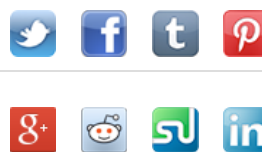


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Added: 9th May 2013  
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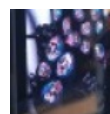
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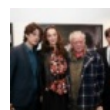
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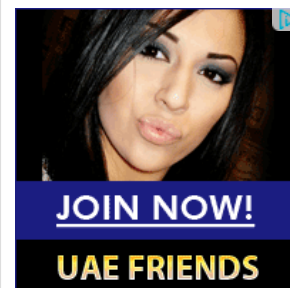
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