

2010

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Monday

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Exhibition - Works on Paper: Hikayat at Green Art Gallery

Monday, October 20, 2014 at 12:55AM



Installation view of Works on Paper: Hikayat

Last Saturday I visited [Green Art Gallery](#) to see [Works on Paper: Hikayat](#). The exhibition includes over 50 works on on paper by Modern Arab artists including [Khouzayma Alwani](#), [Mahmoud Hammad](#), [Adham Ismail](#), [Jamil Molaeb](#), [Fateh Moudarres](#), [Aref El Rayess](#), [Khaldoun Shishakly](#), [Seif Wanly](#) and [Elias Zayat](#).

Taking storytelling as its main theme ("hikayat" means stories in Arabic), the exhibition brings together works that offer a glimpse of drawing's potential to make cultural, social, and political proposals or stories, through diverse formal processes.

Drawing is a medium that offers an intimate and open field for imaginative elaboration, in which concepts and ideas can emerge and change with relative ease. Uninhibited by the obligation to create a finished and independent object, as is traditionally associated with painting and sculpture, drawing as a medium lends itself readily to the theoretical and the experimental.

The exhibition includes work that is beautiful, harsh, emotional and sensual. Despite all the artists being male, there is a strong female presence in the exhibition. There are some rare works here, so if you are in Dubai, don't miss this, it's on till Sunday, 26th October.

My only gripe is that I wish the gallery includes a small description about each artist or work to help visitors understand the importance of this work, and to put it in cultural and historical context relevant to this region.)

My favourite work from this exhibition is a one of a kind piece by **Khaldoun Sheishakly** (see images below). Titled **Shops and Vendors of the Past**, it is a collection of 500 works on paper and due to its delicate condition, we cannot browse through each sheet. But the few pages that were laid out had such amazing details drawn with an ink pen, each one telling stories visually and with words. This piece ought to be in a museum for more people to see it. It is sublime.



Khaldoun Shishakly, Shops and Vendors of the Past, Ink on paper, set of 100 works, each 26 x 21 cm



Installation view of Khaldoun Shishakly's Shops

and Vendors of the Past, Ink on paper, set of 100 works, each 26 x 21 cm

Shops and Vendors of the Past is a rare account of 500 works on paper by a Syrian artist, **Khaldoun Sheishakly**, who has spent his entire life drawing and documenting 500 Damascene professions in intricate detail.

It represents an important history of storytelling and life in Syria and summarizes the artists' needs to carve a cultural identity that reflected the groundbreaking social and political changes that were taking place at that time.

Here are more works from the exhibition.

Khouzayma Alwani

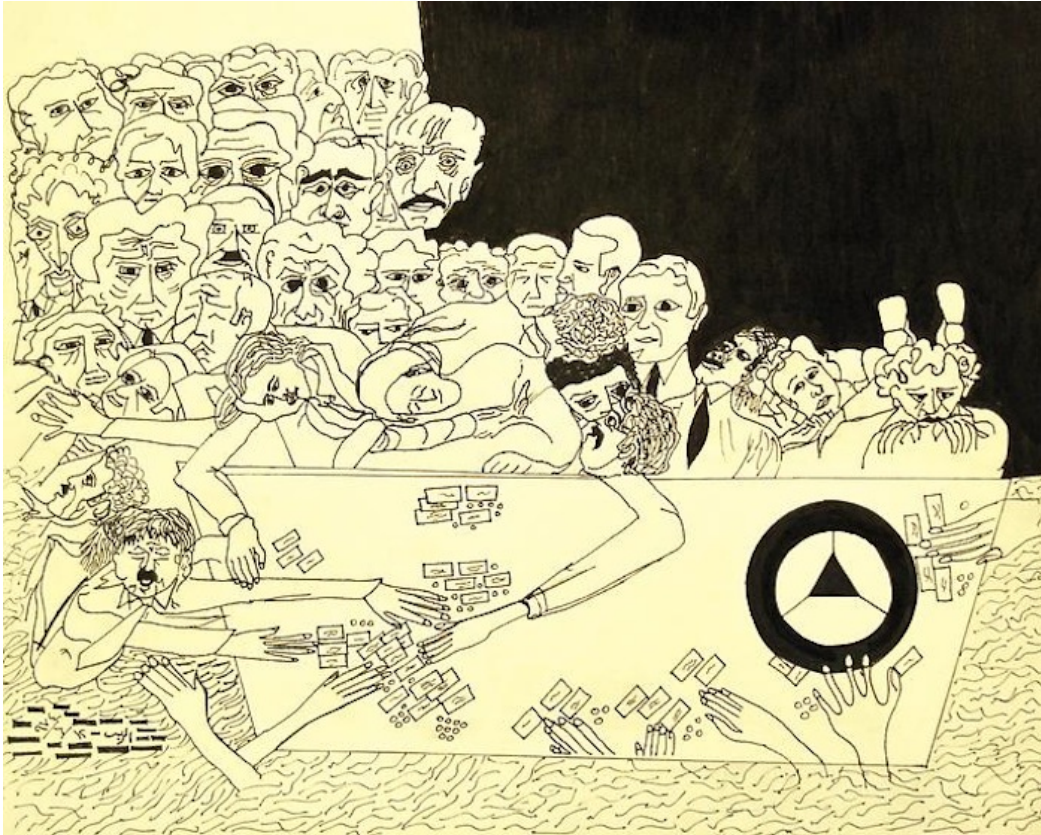


Khouzayma Alwani, Untitled, 1999, Ink on canson paper, 35.5 x 26.5 cm

*The region's political turmoils in the 1970s and 80s are portrayed by **Khouzayma Alwani** (b.1934, Syria). Alwani's delicate horrors are so exquisite they beguile the viewer into fascination with intricate imagery. Following the Hama Massacre of 1981,*

his work revolved around the world as a big dramatic theater of monsters and beasts, in a tacit allusion to the Syrian society in a state of devastation.

Aref El Rayess



Aref El Rayess, *Untitled*, c. 1973, Ink on
canson paper, 36 x 44.5 cm



Aref El Rayess, Untitled, c. 1973, Ink on canson paper, 37.5 x 38 cm

The work in the exhibition by **Aref el Rayess** (1928-2005, Lebanon) belong to a series of drawings he produced in the early 1970s to denounce the corruption he was witnessing within the political circles governing the Middle East after the Cairo accord in 1969 and the 1973 Arab Israeli war.

For El Rayess, it is as if the leaders and politicians were gambling our destinies through fishy manipulations and tacit agreements, hence jeopardizing the ideals of the revolution his generation firmly believed in and fought for. The age of deceit has started, and the political scene in the Arab world seems like a big farce.

Mahmoud Hammad



Mahmoud Hammad, Untitled, 1957, Gouache on paper, 35 x 26 cm



Mahmoud Hammad, Untitled, 1958, Gouache on paper, 36 x 46 cm

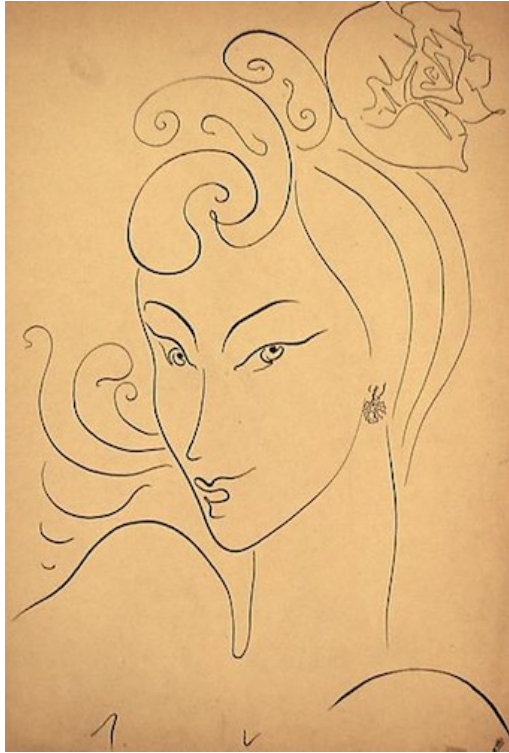
Syrian master **Mahmoud Hammad** (1923-1988, Syria) recounted rural Syrian life, earlier in his career. Although he has been widely known for his late Abstract Calligraphic period (during the period 1964 till his death in 1988), in which the Arab script and letters became the main element, Hammad's earlier work are of equal importance.

Upon his return from Rome, he moved to Daraa where he lived for two years and started a series of paintings depicting the social scenes of the Southern area of Horan (Daraa). During that period, Hammad's central theme was the concept of the family, in addition to the role of the mother.

He was also concerned with the political landscape during that period such as February 1958, a work through which he evoked the union between Egypt and Syria by depicting the metaphorical birth of the two nations' child and at the same time, alluded to the Palestinian cause in many of his works amongst which A Girl from Horan, Wounded and Exile.

This exhibition includes Hammad's works on paper from the Horan period, most of which became studies for much larger paintings, and many of which have never been shown to the public.

Adham Ismail



Adham Ismail, Untitled, Ink on carton, 47.5 x 32.5 cm



Adham Ismail, Untitled, Ink on carton, 44 x 32 cm

Jamil Molaeb



Jamil Molaeb, *Untitled*, c. 1992, Gouache on carton, 50 x 70 cm

*For many artists of his generation, storytelling included the representation of the traditional rural life they were witnessing. This is true of Lebanese artist **Jamil Molaeb's** (b. 1948) works, which were inspired by the landscapes he saw in the mountains of Lebanon and other sceneries from the traditional life of different Arab communities, depicting in his own way the villages, cities, fields and the people in their daily life.*

Fateh Moudarres



Fateh Moudarres, *Untitled*, 1981, Watercolor on paper, 29.5 x 38.5 cm

For **Fateh Moudarres** (1922-1999, Syria), his representational language was engaged with mythology, religion and popular lore as well as a deep political engagement. An accomplished writer and poet, his "dessins" were also featured in several of his published short stories.

Moudarres was once quoted: "It looks childish, but it is not childish. In my paintings one can see, how much I love human beings, in my art I stand near them, when the power of fate and oppressive structures beset them".

Seif Wanly



Seif Wanly, Untitled, c. 1953, Pastel on canson paper, 30.5 x 47 cm



Seif Wanly, Untitled, c. 1953, Pastel on canson paper, 30.5 x 47 cm

*The theatrical and the sublime is present in the work of Egyptian artist **Seif Wanly** (1906-1979). The exhibition includes several works on paper in which he portrayed society's more esoteric dimensions, featuring medieval traditions, circus acrobats and ballet dancers.*

Elias Zayat

Elias Zayat, *The Rider*, 1967, Ink and watercolor on paper, 63 x 43 cm

Another artist who has been thoroughly engaged with mythology is the Syrian artist **Elias Zayat** (b. 1935). Considered among the great modern artists in Syria, Zayat has had a long and rich career in painting and drawing over many decades.

Known for his dramatic portraiture of mankind, his practice has been thoroughly engaged with the visual legacy of mythology, ancient civilizations and religions in the region. Figures intertwine, almost floating, while recurring images of faces, some classical, others saintly and yet others tortured, recall Zayat's other endeavor - conservationist and restorer of orthodox icons.

Exhibition details

Date: On till Saturday, 26th October 2014,
Saturday - Thursday 10am - 7pm
Venue: Green Art Gallery, Alserkal Avenue, Al Quoz, Dubai ([location map](#))