



بدیل

ALTERNATIVE

A SOLO EXHIBITION BY

HOUSSAM BALLAN

22 FEBRUARY - 19 MARCH 2023

يستخدم الفنان عناصر قليلة في العمل وايضا مجموعة لونية قليلة ضمن نهج مينمالي اصبح مؤخرا ظاهرا في اعماله تارة يكرر استخدام العنصر نفسه في اماكن ووظائف عديدة وتارة يستخدم التكبير والتصغير لذات الشكل في العمل.

وفي الاخر يصبح الشكل وسيلة طيعة لرسالة بصرية عبر حديث الالوان وتناوب المساحات والتلاعب بالتكوين هي اساس العمل الذي يبدو رمزيا وذا بعد سيكولوجي في ذات الوقت مستمدا من حياة الفنان.

لانعلم المكان الذي تعيش فيه هذه الشخصيات فقد تم قطع كل صلة بالمكان وتضاءلت العناصر واصبحت بديلا عن شيء ما صورة عن صورة.

انها كصيغة شعرية مكثفة يراد منها البلاغة والايجاز.

Artist Statement

The artist takes a minimalist approach, using only a few elements and color groups that have become the most prominent in his work as of late. At times, he utilizes the same element repeatedly, offering different perspectives on one shape by altering its size.

In the end, each form is a visual message speaking through the language of color, space, and composition. The work, which is symbolic, also serves as a psychological depiction of the artist's life.

We do not know where the characters in these paintings live for that connection has been severed. Each piece is a poetic formula — intentionally rhetorical and brief.

About The Exhibition

Houssam Ballan's *Alternative* highlights a large body of work that he produced during a year of significant transition, at a time when he left his home in Damascus to resettle in Beirut. In Lebanon, Ballan experienced a distinct symptom of exile, the feelings of detachment and disorientation that colors displacement, as his life was essentially severed from his native Syria. In this new city, a place where waves of mass exodus and influxes of migration have alternated over the last fifty years, Ballan quickly identified the emotional burden that comes with this experience. While these recent artworks are not outwardly autobiographical, as the artist intentionally limits recognizable symbols that reflect aspects of his life, they are deeply in tune with the experiences of Beirut's diverse communities.

Among the surreal scenes of these paintings, the viewer finds children playing in historic city quarters or safely indoors in a room that seems saturated with a psychological heaviness. Within these paintings, Ballan builds narratives that have multiple references points, thus making illegible any sense of singularity or linear perceptions of time, the objective being that time and place collapse into each other, making details obsolete.

In *A Game of Hide n' Seek* (2022), for example, several figures (who appear to be children) are shown crouching in a shipping container just beyond the arched doorway of a traditional home. The viewer notes that the building is historic based on its architectural attributes, yet with little embellishment other than checkerboard floor tiles, it is difficult to discern the scene's context. Outside the house, another figure is shown walking barefoot on a pair of stilts, the ends of which are attached to combat boots. These same objects appear in a painting that hangs just above the children's hiding place. This type of imagery has been a symbol condemning the militarization of society since the 20th century's interwar period, which was rampant with uncertainty and tumult. The black objects immediately grab the viewer's attention, clueing them into the anxiety that punctuates a safely guarded world. According to the artist, the boots also can be read as a stand-in for an adult male figure, namely the absence of a father, a common experience for children under siege. The alternative reality that Ballan depicts is not necessarily detached from everyday life, on the contrary it is tied to a deep capacity for empathy. From within the depths of his experiences, Ballan locates the dreamscapes of the subconscious.



Houssam Ballan, *When I Was Beautiful* | عندما كنت جميلا

2022, oil on canvas, 130 x 150

AED 36,800 | USD 10,000



Houssam Ballan, *Beirut Corniche Little Girl* | فتاة الكورنيش بيروت
2022, oil on canvas, 130 x 150
AED 36,800 | USD 10,000



Houssam Ballan, *The Monster and the Dinosaur* | البيع والدنصور
2022, oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm
AED 33,150 | USD 9,000



Houssam Ballan, *The Toys* | الدمى
2022, oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm
SOLD



Houssam Ballan, *Playing at Suhoor* | اللعب وقت السحور
2022, oil on canvas, 130 x 150 cm
AED 36,800 | USD 10,000



Houssam Ballan, *Venus* | فِينوس
2022, oil on canvas, 130 x 150 cm
AED 36,800 | USD 10,000



Houssam Ballan, *My Hand Is A White Dove* | يدي حمامة بيضاء
2022, oil on canvas, 172 x 190 cm
AED 60,800 | USD 16,500



Houssam Ballan, *Face Like A Loaf* | وجه كرهيف خبز
2022, oil on canvas, 130 x 150 cm
AED 36,800 | USD 10,000



Houssam Ballan, *The Absence of the Father* | غياب الأب
2022, oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm
AED 33,150 | USD 9,000



Houssam Ballan, *Graffiti for Beirut* | جرافيتي لبيروت
2022, oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm
AED 33,150 | USD 9,000



Houssam Ballan, *WWE*
2022, oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm
AED 33,150 | USD 9,000



Houssam Ballan, *A Game of Hide 'n Seek* | لعبة الإختباء
2022, oil on canvas, 150 x 120 cm
AED 33,150 | USD 9,000



Houssam Ballan, Silver Like The Sea | فضة كالبحر
2022, oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm
AED 36,800 | USD 10,000



Houssam Ballan, *Alternative* | بدیل
2022, oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm
AED 36,800 | USD 10,000



Houssam Ballan, *Leda and The Swan* | ليديا و البجعة
2022, oil on canvas, 130 x 150 cm
AED 36,800 | USD 10,000



Houssam Ballan, *Toys and Cacti* | صبار و لعب
2022, oil on canvas, 120 x 120 cm
AED 27,600 | USD 7,500

Houssam Ballan (b. 1983 , Syria)

Over the last fifteen years, the paintings of Houssam Ballan have grown increasingly pared down, incorporating abstract elements while eliminating any indication of place and time, as he relies on the potential of emptied settings to signal a particular psychic space. A limited palette, unadorned architectural elements, and scaled down depictions of figures who appear frozen in midair all work to transport the viewer to a place outside their current reality. The sources of inspiration for Ballan's paintings are as varied as Christian iconography, newspaper clippings, and historic photographs, references that point to consciousness and experiences across time and space. Gathering these images blurs the lines that normally separate them, forming what the artist refers to as "a compound image."



Ballan was born in Sweida, Syria in 1983. In the mid 2000s, he pursued an undergraduate degree in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Damascus while training with a number of international artists via workshops. He was a tutor and member of the Teacher's Association at the University of Damascus for over a decade, and now lives and works in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Ballan has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions across the Middle East and in Europe at venues such as the MENART, Brussels (2023), Fann A Porter, Dubai, UAE (2022, 2020, 2019, 2018), Art Cairo, Egypt (2023), Agial Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon (2022), Lighthouse Gallery, London, U.K. (2020), Cairo Biennale (2019), Hafez Gallery, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (2019), BBA Gallery, Berlin, Germany (2019), Atelier Stories, Paris, France (2018), Mark Hachem Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon (2014), and Ayyam Gallery, Damascus, Syria (2006). His work can be found in private and public collections.

About Fann À Porter®

Fann À Porter is a contemporary art gallery at The Workshop Dubai that represents a diverse selection of emerging international and regional artists.

The gallery aims to nurture the burgeoning and dynamic contemporary art scene through quality exhibitions, non-profit events, auctions, and an active community program.

The gallery's exhibition program includes eight curated exhibitions a year, and features artists working across diverse media.

Fann À Porter has established a series of dialogues and collaborations with curators, writers, governmental entities, and institutions to affirm its commitment to support the long-term development of young contemporary artists from the Middle East.

By hosting a regular public programming including exhibitions, talks, non-profit and charitable initiatives and by participating in fairs, Fann À Porter has established itself in forefront of the region's exciting arts landscape.

Founded in 2006 by Ghada Kunash, Fann À Porter is based at The Workshop, a unique interdisciplinary community space consisting of an art gallery, a sustainable store, design studio, and a cafe. The Workshop aims to engage the audiences, and support the development of Dubai's arts scene through its extensive programs, educational initiatives, and community projects.



Fann À Porter

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www.fannaporter.com

info@fannaporter.com

+971 4 341 2595

Villa 45, Street 23B, Jumeirah 2, Dubai, UAE

P.O. Box 215457 Dubai

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