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"Marwan Sahmarani Shows 'Drifting Island' at Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai" *The LUXE Diary*. (May, 2017)

the LUXE diary

Marwan Sahmarani Shows 'Drifting Island' at Leila Heller Gallery in Dubai



Marwan Sahmarani: Drifting Island | Until 4 June 2017 | [Leila Heller Gallery](#), Alserkal Avenue, Dubai

Vitality and spontaneity arise from Marwan Sahmarani's current exhibition, from his expressive use of colour and his use of gestural abstraction to his use of perspective to illustrate figuration. His preferred subject matter reflects his lived experience including the day-to-day politics of Lebanon, the landscapes of Spain, and events of our contemporary moment.

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Marwan Sahmarani, *Tribute to a Tragedy*, 2017, Oil on canvas, 700 x 240 cm, triptych

Exploring violence is particularly significant for Sahmarani: he attempts to situate the violence he has grown up with as well as the violence now seen daily on television news and in popular culture within the context of traditional representations of violence in art history.

In an attempt to access emotions as raw and dynamic as the acts of violence what often get depicted is a record of man-made violence on a large-scale, using a vigorous gestural style of movement. Sahmarani's figurative work deliberately avoids specificity with respect to location, suggesting the sheer chaos of conflicting ideologies leading to this moment and raising the question of social action whatever our subject position and location. And yet these works often reference Syrian refugees, in particular, but moreover the general dislocations of people around the world.

This communication, grounded not in words but in emotional gestures, does not offer a resolution to the complexities of socio-political strife. It does, however, promise a beginning.