

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.



Ayad Alkadhi: Silent Words

Curated by
Dr. Shiva Balaghi

Opening: November 21, 6-8 pm
November 21- December 11, 2014

Leila Heller Gallery, 8th floor
43 West 57th Street - New York, NY 10019

Leila Heller Gallery is pleased to present 'Silent Words,' an exhibition of new works by Ayad Alkadhi curated by Dr. Shiva Balaghi at the gallery's W. 57th location from November 21 through December 11, 2014. Reflecting on the tumultuous aftermath of war, Alkadhi's art speaks to the silenced voices of those living with the everyday realities of conflict. The exhibit serves as a visual diary, showing Alkadhi's intimate images of recent events in the Middle East.

Working from his studio in New York City, Alkadhi takes it all in—the chatter of political analysts, the thunderous speeches of the politicians, the deadly warnings of the terrorists—and insists that the quiet voices of those whose lives have been torn asunder be heard. Alkadhi's art embraces the voice of Nazem Al-Ghazali, singing lyrics taken from his grandmother's favorite Iraqi poem: *I say as a dove perches close and weeps. I say, 'Oh neighbor, do you know how I feel?'*

Words on newspaper print anchor Alkadhi's *I am Baghdad* paintings. Through the glaze, one sees his self-portrait rendered in charcoal. Across his face beautifully calligraphied words are painted layer upon layer, until they become indecipherable, and slowly overwhelm his being. Alkadhi's deeply personal paintings are about specific events in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, but they reflect a broader human condition of lives touched by violence, turmoil, and dislocation.

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When a struggle for justice dims and hope fades, what is left? Even words seem drowned in silence.

Ayad Alkadhi was born and raised in Baghdad, Iraq. He left his home in the aftermath of the first Gulf War and lived in the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and New Zealand until moving to US. Since receiving his MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in 2004, he has continued to practice in New York City, creating works that focus on cultural and political issues concerning Iraq and the wider Middle East. Alkadhi has exhibited across the Middle East, Europe, Australia, and North America, including solo exhibitions at NY's Queen Museum of Art and the Maraya Art Center in Sharjah, UAE.

About the curator:

Shiva Balaghi is a cultural historian who teaches history and art history at Brown University. She has published widely on contemporary Middle Eastern art and Iranian visual culture—for such publications as *Artforum*, *Canvas*, *Harper's Bazaar Art*, and *MERIP*. She is a Contributing Editor of *Jadaliyya*, has served on the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Focus Group, and is a Trustee of the American Institute of Iranian Studies. Balaghi has been a curatorial consultant for the Grey Gallery at NYU, the Davis Museum at Wellesley College, and Leila Heller Gallery. Her books include *Saddam Hussein: A Biography* and the edited volume *Picturing Iran: Art, Society, and Revolution*. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

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