START星美术馆

Genealogy Study of Artists No. 20

Safwan Dahoul

Date：November 14th – December 27th 2025
Address：START Museum S Space
No 111 Ruining Road Xuhui District Shanghai

START Museum will present Syrian artist Safwan Dahoul s first museum solo exhibition in Asia opening to the public on November 14th 2025 The exhibition will feature a comprehensive overview of the artist s sustained creative practice alongside new experimental paintings from the past decade

The exhibition will feature over 40 of Dahoul s works including many of his iconic large-scale black-and-white portraits as well as a series of experimental small-scale figurative works from his recent practice This marks the artist s first museum-level solo exhibition in China showcasing his sustained creative efforts over the past decade and his latest experimental paintings This exhibition marks the 20th case study of the museum s ongoing Genealogy Study of Artists project

Safwan Dahoul one of the few internationally acclaimed contemporary artists from Syria is also one of the most important and distinguished artists in the Arab world He excels at using contrasts of light and shadow to create distorted and abstracted human forms Over his more than 30-year artistic career he has blended diverse artistic styles while maintaining his unique artistic qualities and characteristics His works reflect the influence of Picasso s Cubism while also incorporating elements of Assyrian Art and Pharaonic Art The artist projects his understanding of humanity society politics and history into the context of dreams using large-scale hyper-close-up portraits to delve into the visual expression of alienation solitude and human desire

The Genealogy Study of Artists project initiated by START Museum in 2018 is an ongoing research project It innovatively establishes a continuous academic research platform focused on the interplay between an artist s personal genealogy and their artistic creation utilizing exhibitions publications sound documentation visual materials and historical literature to systematically explore the artistic evolution of the featured artists

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ARTIST PROFILE

Safwan Dahoul

Courtesy of the Artist and Ayyam Gallery
Image by Mustafa Azar

Born in 1961 in Hama Syria Dahoul was initially trained by leading modernists at the Faculty of Fine Arts University of Damascus before travelling to Belgium where he earned a doctorate from the Higher Institute of Plastic Arts in Mons Upon returning to Syria he began teaching at the Faculty of Fine Arts and was a prominent member of the Damascus art scene In the span of a decade Dahoul nurtured a new generation of artists as an active mentor whose evolving aesthetic often ignited new directions in painting Given the trajectory and status of his painting style Dahoul s career is regarded as a crucial link between modern and contemporary Arab art

Dahoul is mostly known for his beautiful melancholic and monochromatic works that present influences from the Cubist style of Picasso ranging to Assyrian and Pharaonic art Since the late 1980s the artist began an ongoing body of work investigating the dream state Simply entitled the Dream series these works have explored the physical and psychological effects of alienation solitude and longing that punctuate the human experience at various stages in life