

HOUMAM AL SAYED

أجياال
للفنون التشكيلية



AGIAL
art gallery

Futile

All too often, the cycle of violence seems unstoppable, and it looks like oppression is as pervasive as it is able to resist challenges. In Houmam el Sayed's paintings, it is neither a man, nor an ideology, but a nameless and faceless structure whose countless metamorphoses reemerge anywhere they find detractors to silence and citizens to abuse. In fact, we never see live oppression in El Sayed's works: instead, his characters propose a version of what one might be reduced to when the pressure of religion, the state, and ideology is too much to bear.

When freedoms of speech and movement are a thing of the past, the effects of brutal injustice manifest themselves physically. El Sayed's men end up looking like children stunted in their growth and pushed to the ground. They've turned disproportionate: they carry their burden not on their diminutive shoulders, but inside their huge distorted heads – some kind of powerful external pressure might have flattened them from above, and ironed them out in front. In the process, their foreheads turned slanted, rendering one of their eyes bigger than the other. Perhaps these men are half-blind to the circumstances surrounding them, whether they choose to ignore them, or avoid facing them fully. In either case, they are missing half of the picture, but one wonders what there is to miss when the picture is so bleak.

The men's bodies prevent any kind of meaningful physical movement, stranded in the semi-void of a civilization in jeopardy. These beret-clad workers no longer produce anything; they cannot find the energy to move objects, carry their pets, or even walk. Yet, however isolated they stand, they do share their predicaments with others just like them, but just cannot reach out to them.

It's effectively impossible to run away from this barren land, especially with only absurd tools at one's disposal. One of the men found a precarious boat, but might have forgotten the sea was made of rocks. He looks at us with a mixture of fear and resignation – what's next, then, for someone too big for his boat and for what he's been reduced too? Another seaman, made delusional by desperation, fancies himself the captain of a ship that's far gone. And when one man flies, it cannot be away from his city: he's really been turned into a human bomb, projected haphazardly, and ready to explode back where he came from.

The men's eerie features and paralysis might just be the external symptoms of their considerable psychological damage: their blue eyes suffice to translate the depth of their anguish. Actually, the glassy-eyed characters look like they've given up. Despite their lifelessness, though, they do retain dignity, and, sometimes, display faints signs of improbable resistance. (The quite literal keffiyeh, for one.) There is somewhere a paradoxical call for change – their own disoriented, horrified, and resigned condition, El Sayed's mistreated figures could suggest, is no solution. So they call out viewers to think of a way out.

Marie Tomb
April, 2016

عَبَثِيّ

ها... وقد استمر العبث مُؤْتِياً ثِمَارَه على هذا المشرق التعيس، كرحلة لا تنته من تكرار الهرب الى المجهول، حيث يسطع الماضي بوشاحه المرفرف، يظلل نومنا خوفا علينا من ضربة شمس في ليل تيهنا المكتوب.

ها هو الماضي محملاً بثقل ذنوبنا وفخرنا، نرفعه في وجه الحضارة التي نعيش على فُتَات إنتاجها درءً للحسد، وتميمة تحمينا من جهل الجاهليتنا .

فأصبحنا صناديق من شحم ولحم ودم تكسر بعضها بعضاً،تهوى لعبة العبث، لعبة التيه بالطريق المسدود، فذاك الذي يضرب بالعصا.. وهذا الذي تقوقع في مكانه منتظراً من الصخور ان تنقله إلى جديد الأيام، كأنه لم يعرف بأن تلك النظرة المتوسلة لا تُسقط المطر ولا تضيء ظلّه الذي لا يرى إلا من خلاله. فإذا بالتنين اصبح قِطاً أليفاً، ليرغم هذا القط بالرؤية كما يريد.

فهاهي رحلته قد انتهت، ساقطاً في حضيضه، صارخاً بكل ما حمل، وسقطت معه هويته ومعتقداته ومؤامراته كبرميل متفجر.

هُمام السيد
بيروت، حزيران ٢٠١٦

Noah
Oil on canvas
150 x 150cm
2015



Saint Georges
Oil on canvas
210 x 155 cm
2016



Moses
Oil on canvas
210x150 cm
2016





Puppets
Ink and acrylic on carton
101 x 121 cm
2015



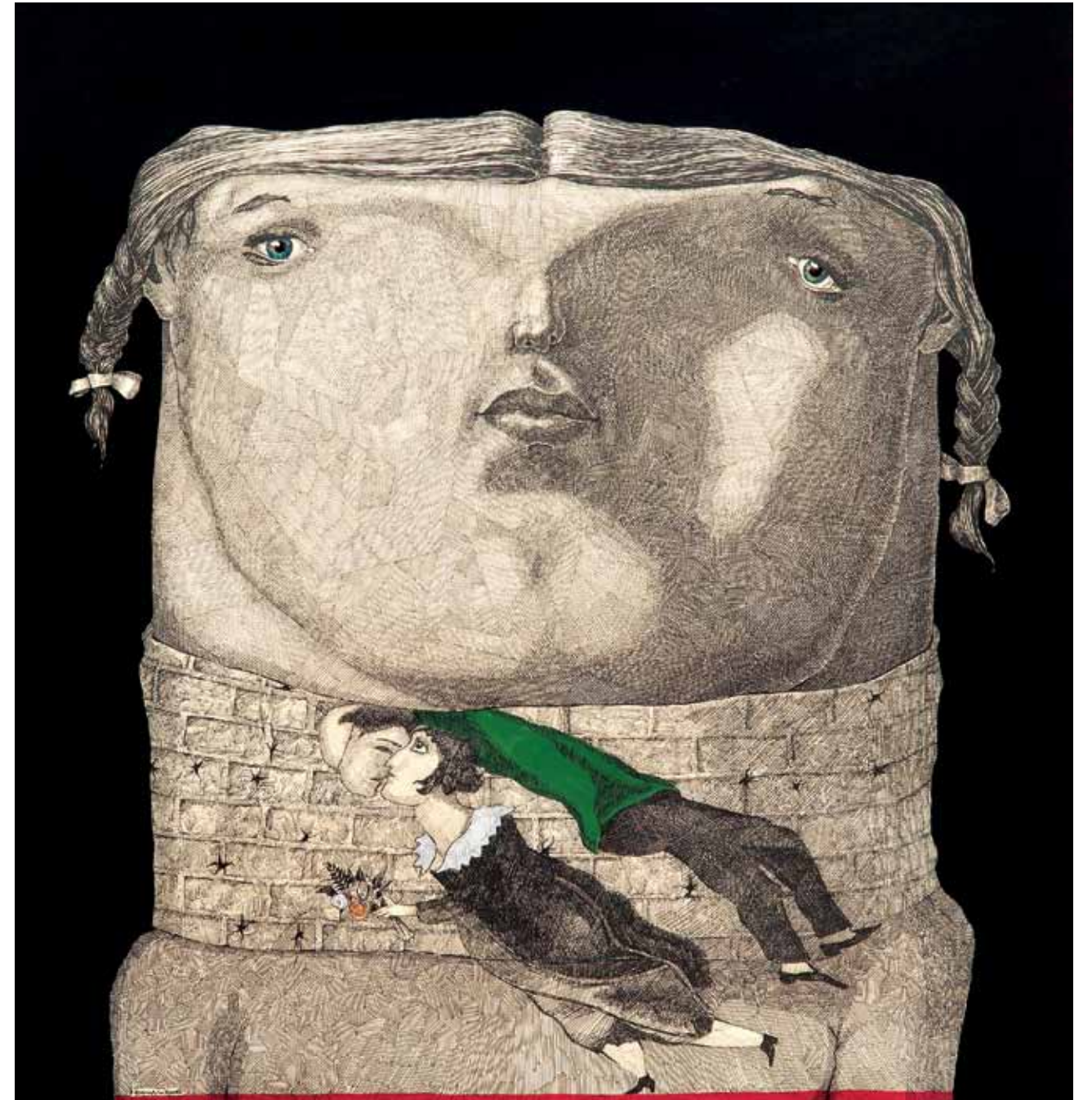
Lamassus
Ink and acrylic on carton
91.5 x 100 cm
2015



Leftist Clown
Ink and acrylic on carton
110 x 91.5 cm
2015



Love by Chagall
Ink and acrylic on carton
95 x 92 cm
2015



Flying Dutchman
Ink and acrylic on carton
100 x 70 cm
2015



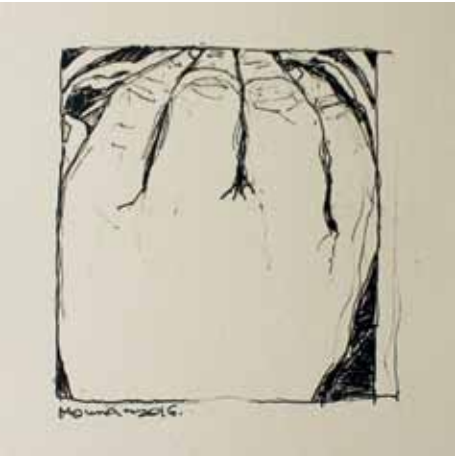
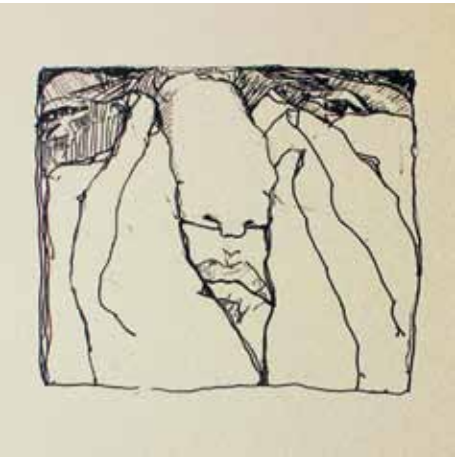
Alert
Ink and acrylic on carton
100 x 70 cm
2015



Moses
Ink and acrylic on carton
100 x 70 cm
2015



Drawings
Ink on paper
20 x 20 cm
2015



Houmam Al Sayed

Born in Mesyaf, Syria in 1981, Houmam Al Sayed is a contemporary Syrian artist. His artworks are playful renderings and recreations of memories and specific moments from his past. After studying sculpture, Al Sayed orients his work to large-scale figurative paintings.

Houmam Al Sayed graduated from the Sculpture Department of the Institute of Applied Arts in Damascus in 2003. Although relatively new to the regional art scene, he began exhibiting his work at a surprisingly young age.

In 1998 he participated in an exhibition of painting at Teshrin University in Lattakia while just seventeen years old. Since then he has exhibited throughout Syria and has participated in group shows and symposiums in the Arab world and Europe.



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Page 10&11: Barrel Bomb, oil on canvas, 210x280cm, 2015