

MAZEN RIFAI
AMOROUS COLORS

Silence

'In between a place and candy is a narrow foot-path that shows more mounting than anything'.

Gertrude Stein, Tender Buttons

In a poetic sense, there are many worlds, and as many ways to describe and demarcate them. Let us say there is a world of touch, of floors and walls, ankles and oranges, the apparently real, and then the myriad worlds that we also inhabit, move through, dream. I will not talk here of the connections between these worlds, as Stein wrote, 'between a place and candy is a narrow foot-path', but rather I am speaking to the distance, the way one world might not touch another, might attempt to remain resolutely itself.

A world in itself. This is the nature of space inhabited by Mazen al-Rifai.

Silence.

Lebanese artist Mazen al-Rifai is deeply indebted to a modernist landscape tradition, his work resting comfortably within this oeuvre. There is a treatment of a specific light, the place of Baalbek, and a crystallisation of that place into distinct, more or less abstracted forms. A rapt attention to the contrasting qualities of colour and shade, light and dark, soft and hard, provide depth and belie the complexity of the subtle shifts that he seeks to describe. One side of the canvas is warm, another cool, one line dissolves into a layer below, and another splays out at its edge while remaining just that, the edge. Layers of paint tempt the eye, yet remain mostly obscured, only a sense of depth and the glimpses caught at the edge of one form as it becomes another, show the careful accretion of paint over time.

In his maturity as a painter Rifai has entered new ground, bringing with him a firm understanding of where he came from, and a tantalising glimpse of where he might go next. His current work sees a move into form that can morph beyond landscape, yet gifted with that light, those colours that refer always back to the land of his heart, the Bekaa. Look closely and you will see that Rifai is reaching for the human, the soft and the hard, body and soul. The jewel like forms of one painting are a high contrast to the absolute softness and subtlety of another. At times, soft and hard play out in the same painting, and there is a reach towards a new dimension, the form in the world taking new and unexpected shape and meaning.

In these recent works there is a possibility of prescience, an indication of the ways in which one world advances towards another, in time and in space, sometimes overtaking, at times outside of our control. In the world of Rifai, one painting can remain distinct and yet display several aspects, enter several distinct worlds. Here, the hidden nature of the human soul is rendered gently visible. While Rifai may be an artist inhabiting fully his own world, in this particularity and deep attention, his work increasingly catches the light of many others, moving along those 'narrow foot-paths' between one reality and another.

Amy Todman

Amorous Colors

With an unquenchable thirst of colors –for the truth and beauty ever ancient, ever new- Mazen Al Rifai began painting the memory of a place, only to land in the memory of Time.

Hues of emotions with no boundaries on the outskirts of any color. Baalbek. In the sky’s silent spaces, sensation is but a moment in which time is rewired with mind numbing lust. Baalbek.

“You are the color, you are the form, and you are the meaning. Now, I dwell in you a hidden mirror under a blanket of colors to keep her dreams warm” almost whispers Al Rifai.

It’s a place in the shadows rarely seen but deeply felt, where Al-Rifai unkeeps every color of noise; his paintings, a rhythm that amplifies in silence. In nothing but quiet retractions, they’re a harmony that shapes you clear as the lines of a tale that was chaos just moments ago.

Had the king of brutality, Gauguin, witnessed what Al-Rifai did with his howling vision of women, he would have discovered the Gauguinian woman’s soul;

As Mazen draws out his sentiments word for word, he finds the movements of the female heart as it sails through. Every moment of waking life begins to beg for a negotiation with colors ... and this is where the yearning begins.

On every day that comes forth, her moon squares the sun feeding back that which feeds you. For at night, when the lonely day has closed, her colors get entirely the sway. Don’t you know how to stay?

If every artist owned his own color palette, Al-Rifai taught color what color does not know; something to remember for longer than it needs to forget. As you draw closer to the emotion that saturates the room, you’re left Sufi whirling around grand statements for a fleeting moment, only to set off on colorful tangents destined to return to Self.

I am a Baalbekia too; and this is what I call the duality of desire: People look around uncertainly. They look around uncertainly for an urge for a timeless time where even when you try to imagine its absence, you feel woven into its ever moving color, and experience life coming together and apart.

I hug my eyes to think,

How long till the world he’s begging for?

God; silence.

Hayat ElHusseini

- التجلي -

كانت رائحة الطين تعبق في لوحات الفنان مازن الرفاعي وهو في البدايات يللمم ذاكرة بعلمك من بيوتاتها التي ذهبت مع الزمن الذهبي فالزمن عندما يرحل يتأبط المكان فيذهبان معاً في وداع أخير،

من كان يتخيل حتى هو الفنان ذاته في حرقه للمراحل أن يصل إلى عشق اللون أو اللون العاشق ويقول له انتهى دورك في أن تكون رداءً للشكل لانني أجعلك الآن سيداً في الفن التشكيلي فأنت اللون وأنت الشكل وأنت المعنى أو لقد اسكنت فيك المرأة الخفية النائمة تحت دثار من الالوان تدفء أحلامها،

بس تحلمي منامات تكشفها الهوا

بيفرد جناحو اللون ع نومك بيغطبك

في محترف الفنان الرفاعي في شارع المقدسي كنت انتقل من دهشة الرائي إلى دهشة ألا معقول الى دهشة المذهل التي اعتدت عليها عندما كنت أستفيق منها لأبدأ القصيدة، لو أن غوغان ملك (الوحشية) شاهد ما فعل مازن الرفاعي برؤيته العجيبة للمرأة لاكتشف عجيبة الروح اللونية التي تضاهي عجيبة الجسد الهاييتي الغوغاني، فاذا كان لكل فنان تشكيلي عالم لوحي خاص به فان الفنان الرفاعي علّم اللون ما لا يعلم علمه ان باستطاعته أن يكون كثيراً الواناً ساحرة لم تخطر على بال النوم، هكذا اصبحت المرأة عند الفنان البعلبكي وهو السيد ابن السيد لم ترتدي شكل جسدها بل أردت أنوثتها.

رائحة الانثى تعبق من تزاوج الالوان العجيبة التي ولدت الانثى التي تراك ولا تراها الا إذا كنت من المتصوفة ومن مريدي الحلاج الذي دخل في غيبوبة الروح حتى رأى ما لا يرى.

كان اللون عند الرفاعي روح المكان فأصبح هو جسد الروح التي لا جسد لها يشع من ألوانه احتفال صوفي تدور فيه الالوان الراقصة كال دراويش، وتدعوك ان تكمل معها بالعين فرحة الرقص اللوني الصوفي كما أدخل المخرج العالمي (كوراساوى) رجلا ينتقل في فضاء لوحة (فان غوغ) كأن اللوحة بستان الروح.

أنا البعلبكي أيضا، أرى ان هذا الفنان مازن الرفاعي جعلني أشعر أن قصائده كامنة في رؤيته لفضاء اللون الذي أسميه اللون المازني، أن مازن انتقل من المكان إلى الزمان، انتقل من بعلمك الى الزمن الآتي الذي لا يحده مكان ليكتب قصائده الصوفية بأحرف أبجديتها اللون ويقول لأعماله الابداعية التشكيلية (خذوني معكم).

كان يرسم ذاكرة المكان فاصبح يرسم ذاكرة الزمان.

طلال حيدر

PAINTINGS



Acrylic on canvas | 120x100 cm | 2023



Acrylic on canvas | 90x120 cm | 2023



Acrylic on canvas | 90x120 cm | 2023



Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2024



Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2024



Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2023



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Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2024



Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2023



Acrylic on canvas | 120x90 cm | 2024



Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2024



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Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2024



Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2024

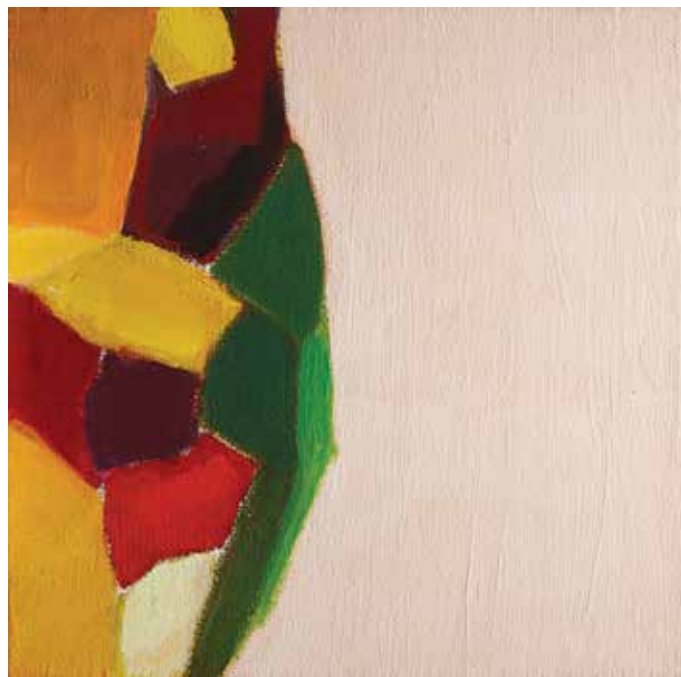


Acrylic on canvas | 80x100 cm | 2024



Acrylic on canvas | 90x90 cm each | 2024

Acrylic on canvas | 90x90 cm - each | 2023



Acrylic on canvas | 50x50 cm - each | 2023



Acrylic on canvas | 50x50 cm - each | 2023

TAPESTRY



Tapestry | 100x90 cm | 2023



Tapestry | 100x90 cm | 2023



Tapestry | 100x90 cm | 2023



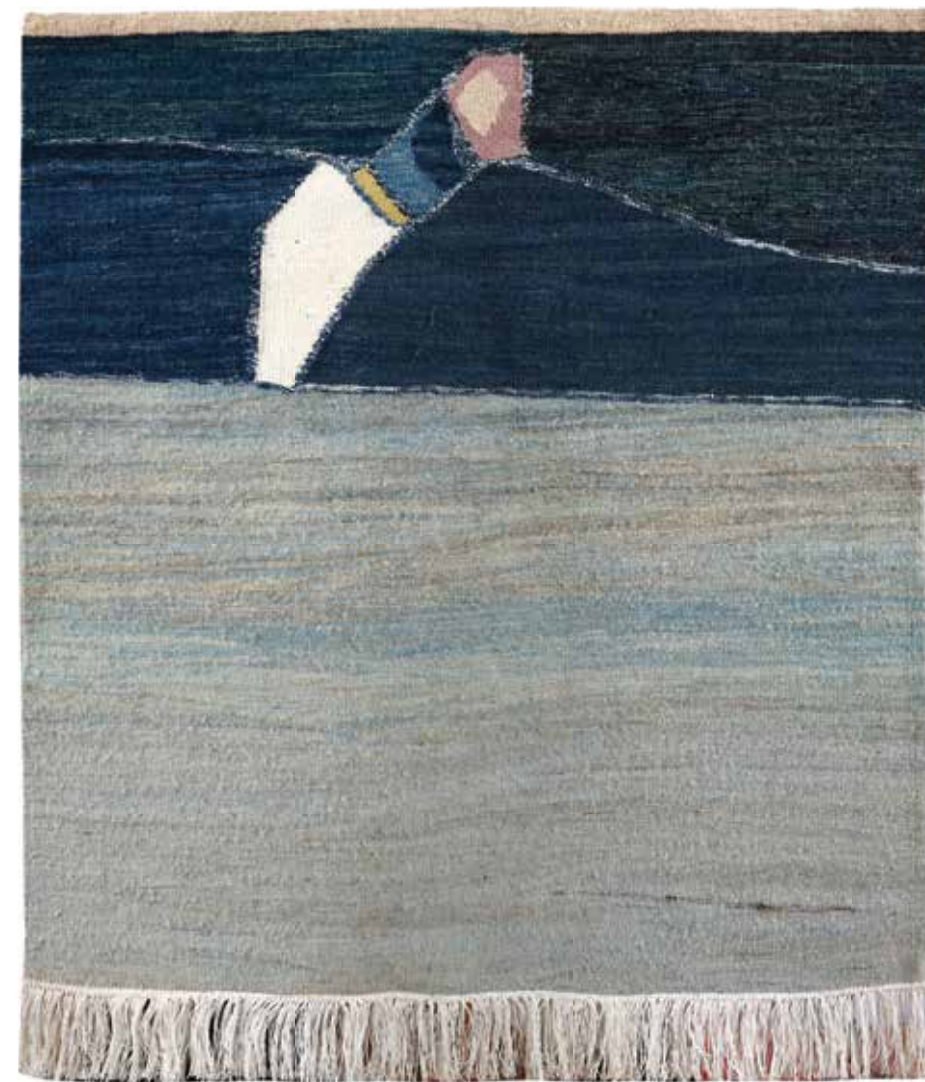
Tapestry | 100x90 cm | 2023



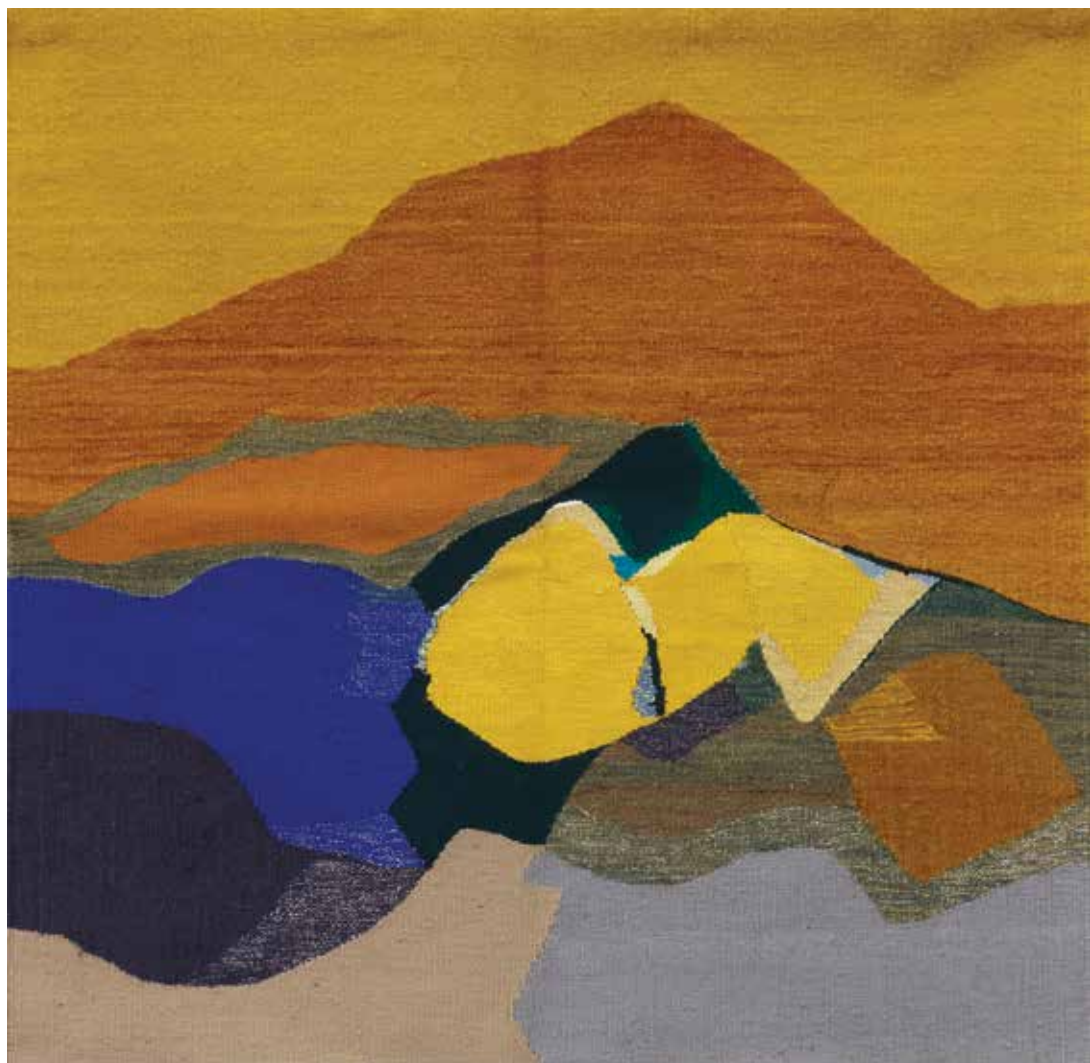
Tapestry | 100x90 cm | 2023



Tapestry | 100x90 cm | 2023



Tapestry | 100x90 cm | 2023



Tapestry | 90x100 cm | 2024



Tapestry | 90x100 cm | 2024



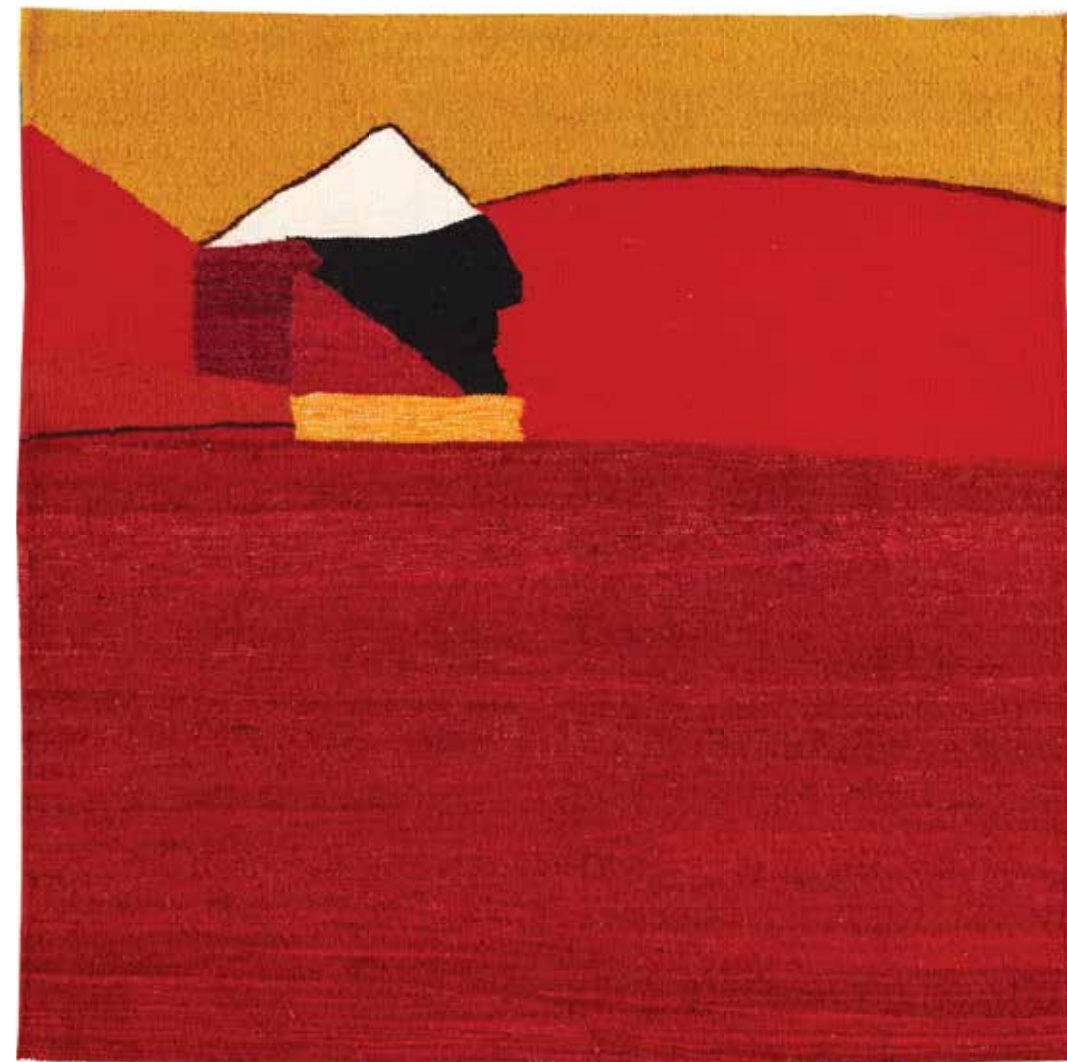
Tapestry | 90x100 cm | 2024



Tapestry | 90x100 cm | 2024



Tapestry | 90x100 cm | 2024



Tapestry | 90x100 cm | 2024



About the Artist

Mazen Rifai is a Beirut-based painter and architect born in Baalbeck, 1957. He holds a degree in interior architecture from the Lebanese University, Beirut and a degree in Fine Arts from the Academia de Macerta, Italy. He was a professor of fine arts and the head of its department at the Lebanese University from 1987 till 1993. Rifai is an art director at "Engineers, Consulting & Contracting", an engineering and architecture firm that has been open since 1990.

He has participated in numerous editions of Sursock Museum's Salon d'Automne starting in 1974. Since 1981, he has held several solo exhibitions in Beirut and Paris. These shows were displayed at Epreuve d'artiste, Galerie Rochane, Galerie Aida Cherfan, Gallery 6, and Agial Art Gallery, Galerie 34 Bonaparte, and Galerie Alex Menem.

In 1984, he contributed to the Beirut Central District Reconstruction Plan with Oger Liban. He is a member of the Baalbeck International Festival Committee.

Rifai has published two books: Baalbeck in Black and White with Dar Al-Nahar in 2007, Baalbeck 1981-2011 with Fine Arts Publishing in 2011.

