

Art on 56th

Art on 56th gallery - Beirut

Opening: Exhibition "Escapism"

Artist: **Layla Dagher**

Exhibition Date: Friday November 18, 2022

Immediate Release



Art on 56th is proud to announce the representation of Lebanese artist Layla Dagher. In honour of her joining the program, the gallery will showcase Escapism, a solo exhibition of her most recent body of work. Produced during the period of lockdown, the paintings reveal the conflict between human beings' inner and outer worlds, triggered by intense and prolonged feelings of loneliness, isolation, and fear.

Layla Dagher's works are complex and layered, much like the human psyche. With a stark interplay of verticality and horizontality, her use of lines creates flat compositions that border on abstraction, reducing forms to their essence. The organic palette hints at the monotony of quarantine, merging techniques of transparency and opacity. The artist's canvases are crowded with pictorial symbols and a rich array of visual elements. Each item tells a story on its own, but when observed as a whole, the painting becomes a diary of kaleidoscopic emotions.

Escapism documents the experience of humans being confronted to themselves. When unable to go outside, they are forced to explore the world that lies within. Dagher reflects on this phenomenon, and in her compositions, she blurs the line between real scenes and imaginary landscapes. The conflict she depicts between the natural world and the realm of fantasy results in a tension between individuals and their environment, a constant state of fluctuation between existence and dissociation.

Biography

Layla Dagher was born in Beirut, Lebanon. She studied Fine Arts at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (Alba), and received her Master's Degree in Visual Art with honors.

She has taken part in various group and solo exhibitions in Beirut, and her work has been featured in international shows in Tokyo, Seoul and Paris.

Her paintings are included in both private and public collections, notably at the Lebanese Ministry of Culture

Layla is a member of the Syndicate of Lebanese Artists, a professor in Fine Arts at the Notre Dame University (N.D.U), and currently lives and works in Beirut.

Artist Statement

I create a purely imaginary realm, where I portray nature through tree trunks, branches and vegetation as symbols of life, hope, and renewal.

Nature opens itself to us, and invites us into a world filled with hope, where one can escape and free his/her emotions. Human beings are at the centre of my artworks, depicted alone and isolated, confronted to their fears, worries and doubts. They are imprisoned in their emotional cages, and do not appear to be interacting with their surrounding environments.

It is through the imagination that we create a passage from our inner world to our outer world, a path that each of us can follow in these difficult and sombre times we are experiencing. Colour plays an essential role in my paintings. It creates a contrast that highlights the feelings of estrangement and isolation, which emanate from my artworks.

My goal is not to relay a specific message, but to transcend a sensation, to allow viewers to integrate their experiences into my paintings and reflect upon their ways of living with(in) themselves.

Layla Dagher

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Images drenched in fantasy and dreams

In her recent works, Layla Dagher showcases free and arbitrary compositions. Their audacity consciously breaks traditional form and structure. This freedom is not a simple task; it is a choice made with awareness, a constant meditation on the creative potential required to produce such a work of art.

In these paintings, she experiments with her imagination, leading us in her visionary labyrinth. She is cognisant of the fact that images can express an entire realm that goes beyond appearances, and forms and colours speak their own language. Her paintings are all about the personal sensations that arise from the intuition of transfiguring a subject.

Her work bears the marker of an expressionistic form of expression. Simultaneously, it symbolises a paradoxical synthesis of pictorial elements (characters, landscapes, places, natural elements, etc.) and diverse ideas and feelings that characterise the modern artist. The space she illustrates is embedded with visual meanings, expressed both by graphics and pigments.

In her paintings, she creates rhythmic harmonies to reveal the unexpected nuances between tenderness and sharpness. The clash between cold and warm colours, soft and intense tones, further underlines the subliminal power of these images, drenched in fantasy and in dreams, lyrically communicating the freshness of the artist's poetic vision.

The themes are recreated through her unique sense of imagination and expressive narrative, which contemporary artists tap into spontaneously.

Each work is a realisation that strikes the balance between reason and instinct. The artist includes spontaneity in the majority of her oeuvre, which adds the effect of improvisation to the composition, but this improvisation is not just an effect, it is a choice.

Each painting is the result of the meticulous elaboration on the time required to organise the visual elements and manifest ideas via her unique visual language. It is as though after much conception, everything appears on the canvas at the same time. And thus, the artwork is brought to life. Layla Dagher's talent manifests itself through a perfect mastery of technique, an authentic artistry, and a remarkable creative dexterity.

Nicole Malhamé Harfouche