

April 12, 2019

## A Retrospective Exhibition Honouring Artist Nazir Ismail

Starting today until June 1, 2019, Art on 56th is showing the retrospective exhibition celebrating the career and oeuvre of the late contemporary artist Nazir Ismail. In honour of the third anniversary of his passing, the gallery will showcase a collection of works from the defining moments of the artist's career.



Ismail has risen to the forefront of the Middle Eastern art market; he has taken part in many exhibitions since 1966 both locally and internationally. His oeuvre has been featured in the Barjeel Art Foundation, the Sharjah Biennale, as well as the Royal Museum of Amman, the Museum of Qatar, and has also been sold by reputable auction houses, including Christie's.

The exhibition will showcase very rare and early works from the artist's career, which focus on his homeland, the oldest Christian village of Maaloulah, he also referred to the incidents in Tal El Zaatar in Lebanon. The exhibition will feature in addition his works with landscape and still lives, which then paved the way to his concentration on portraiture.



Nazir Ismail's paintings and works on paper represent explorations of human emotions. His works primarily portray elongated faces, set in flat, compressed spaces. The artist used colour to produce detail and to express a range of feelings. He created clusters in his compositions, drawing the viewer to examine the surface as a whole and absorb the plethora of sensibilities.



The artist experimented with the theme of man's place on this earth. He evoked emotion and delved into human psychology through the use of an ochre and earthy palette. His portrayals are embedded with silent honesty, allowing the amalgam of colour and lines to speak for itself. The use of chromatic expressionism reveals the secrets and invisible forces behind a face. The prolonged faces he paints are still and mute: they do not have mouths to communicate or voices to speak.

Ismail set his iconography in traditional Arabian themes, but also rooted his imagery in the modern world, and more specifically, his home, Syria. The faces he depicted are elongated, recalling the Ancient Egyptian methods of portraiture. However, the artist blended the old with the modern, using abstraction to conceive these empty stares, which are simultaneously charged with a powerful, indescribable energy. He blurred the line between the visible and the invisible and skilfully orchestrated the balance between static and kinetic compositions.