

LEILA HELLER.



Sumayyah Samaha, *My 2nd Voyage*, 2020, 48 x 108, Oil and mixed media on canvas

New York, NY – Leila Heller is pleased to announce “Long Voyage” by Sumayyah Samaha, on view in New York from July 25th to August 31st. In recent paintings and works on paper, Sumayyah Samaha uses oil, charcoal, and watercolor to tell her visual story. With each image, her goal is always to find harmony between these different media and the varied abstract forms that emerge from her playful, gestural approach.

Larger works, like “My 2nd Voyage, 2020”, may hang in Samaha’s live/work studio for months before they are complete. While sweeping, gestural lines in charcoal arc across canvases, Samaha paints, scrapes, erases and repaints the remaining surface with close attention as she develops an interplay between defined and undefined forms. Swaths of flat gradients are beside and behind free-form shapes, all floating upon a white background. Color, which abounds in Samaha’s work, is determined by the type of light she seeks to realize.

Samaha moves back and forth freely across her surfaces, using a vocabulary informed by an artistic career spanning 40+ years and a range of mediums—oil painting, charcoal, watercolor, paper making, ceramics, sculpture, pastels, and installation. She describes this body of work as “free, stream of consciousness painting.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sumayyah Samaha (b.1939. Shweir, Lebanon) is a Lebanese painter and mixed media artist who has lived and exhibited work in New York since the early 1980’s.

In addition to numerous solo exhibitions at 22 Wooster Gallery, Wilmer Jennings Gallery at Kenkeleba House, Denise Bibro Fine Art, and Skoto Gallery, Samaha also has an extensive group exhibition history at venues throughout the United States, Europe, and the Middle East.

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Highlights include American Abstraction: A New Decade at the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, PA; New York Chronicles at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, Qatar VCUQ Gallery, Doha, Qatar (2010); Art in Embassies, US Embassy, Kuwait City, Kuwait (2008-09); In/Visible: Contemporary Art by Arab American Artists — the opening exhibition of the Arab American National Museum and Cultural Center in Dearborn, Michigan (2005); and New York Collections 2002 at the Albright Knox Museum Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2002.)

Samaha's work can be found in public collections that include the Arab American National Museum and Cultural Center in Dearborn, Michigan; Centrum Sztuki in Warsaw, Poland; Kenkeleba House in New York, NY; Pfizer Pharmaceutical in New York, NY; and Bank Audi in Beirut, Lebanon.

Publications include *At the Edge of the City: Reinhabiting Public Space Toward the Recovery of Beirut's Horsh Al-Sanawar*, edited by Fadi Shayya; *Encyclopedia of Arab American Artists* by Faye Oweis; and *The Women Artists in Lebanon*, by Helen Khal, prepared for the Institute of Women's Studies in the Arab World.

Samaha was a Co-Founder of 22 Wooster Gallery in New York (1978-1988), has participated in panels, including *Turning Writing into Art: Artists Talk on Art* at New York University's Department of Middle Eastern Studies, and was a juror of painting for the New York Foundation of the Art's 1998 grant season. Awards include grants from the Pollock Krasner Foundation (2016) and the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation (2015). Samaha is a two time resident at the Emily Harvey Foundation Residency in Venice, Italy.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment over three decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting a creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 14,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East for the first time, the gallery is dedicated to supporting the evolving practice of established artists.

Press Inquiries: For more information, images and prices, please contact ella@leilaheller.com