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ELIAS ZAYAT: *AFTER THE DELUGE*

Exhibition Dates: 14 Sept – 04 Nov 2015

Opening Reception: Monday, 14 Sept 2015, 5 – 9 pm

Elias Zayat in conversation with Salwa Mikdadi: Wednesday 16 Sept 2015 7 – 9 pm

Green Art Gallery presents *After the Deluge*, a solo show of new works from Syrian artist Elias Zayat.

Elias Zayat is one of the most significant Syrian artists of the 20th century, and a key founder of the country's contemporary art movement. Although he studied in Sofia, Cairo, and Budapest, his oeuvre remains intimately concerned with the history, terrain, and psyche of his homeland. Zayat's parallel life as an art restorer and historian is evident in his rich vocabulary drawn from Byzantine, early Christian, Sufist, and popular iconography.

In *After The Deluge*, Zayat returns to the ancient city of Palmyra, remembered for being one of the few places in the region that managed to exist alongside the Romans without becoming Romanised. Fittingly, it is also known as Tadmor, or 'the town that resisted.' In this, the city parallels Zayat who, despite emerging at the height of Pan-Arabist fervour that culminated in the Naksa of 1967, managed to resist this sweeping aesthetic hegemony to develop his own inimitable visual language.

Here, Zayat draws from the Mesopotamian, Babylonian, and later Biblical account of the flood, which he understands as a metaphor for rebuilding a decaying world after its total devastation, resiting the event in the historical city of Palmyra. The titular triptych, *After the Deluge* is presented as plea for peace, heralded in the epic by a dove bearing an olive branch. Yet in the central panel, Zayat's doves find themselves locked into a suffocating circular dance high above the remains of a decimated town; a struggle from which it is seemingly impossible to escape.

The only answer seems to be to flee the humanitarian chaos to arrive at a better world, as seen in the young men of the side panels, who are poised as if to take flight. The triptych is anchored by a selection from his works on paper, which form a crucial backbone of Zayat's practice. These studies depict the movements of birds, to present both theoretical and literalised new lines of flight.

Born in Damascus in 1935, Elias Zayat studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia between 1956 and 1960 and the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo. He also majored in art restoration at the Academy of Fine Arts and Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest, and is one of the founders of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Damascus, where he taught until his retirement. As a painter and icon restorer, his art is influenced by religious—particularly Christian—and popular iconography. He has published several studies in the history of art, iconography and art criticism. Zayat lives and works in Damascus.

On Wednesday **16 Sept** at **7 pm**, Green Art Gallery will host an artist talk, featuring Elias Zayat in conversation with art historian Salwa Mikdadi, who is currently working on his forthcoming monograph.

For more information, please contact the gallery at info@gagallery.com or +9714 346 9305