

Sarah Awad

Rainbow Clearance and Other Paintings

10th November – 16th December, 2022

The Third Line is pleased to announce *Rainbow Clearance and Other Paintings*, our first solo exhibition with Los Angeles based artist Sarah Awad. Occupying both gallery spaces, Awad presents a series of new paintings that traverse notions of space, colour and the act of looking.



Sarah Awad, *Phantom Web*, 2022, Oil and Vinyl on Canvas, 152.4 x 167.64 cm

Rainbow Clearance and Other Paintings marks Awad's first solo presentation outside of her home state of California. With paintings rendered in large-scale – a preference on the artist's part to allow an interpretation of colour and form – the collection is dense with colour and takes on the theme of isolation. It isn't isolation in the sense of remoteness or seclusion per se, but rather in the function of looking outward and inward, or as Awad puts it: *"The way the paint can allow you to see through something to see something else that is coming from the form of the work."* Awad maintains, however, that the paintings are void of narratives, *"but hold gesture, body and colour"* and are intended to be *"open-ended"* in their interpretation. *"They are figurations, not illustrations,"* she asserts.

There is a vigour in Awad's charged and obvious layering, and a dynamism to her grouping of colours – on a palette, they may seem disharmonious, but on her canvases, they are utterly captivating. Colours excite her, especially those that one assumes do not go together. *"One fundamental aspect about colour is its relation to other colours. I am aware of colour relationships and the spatial relationships that happen,"* she says.

Time and again, Awad refers to these 'relationships' as collisions, largely because she intends on colours and materials to make impact. The painting begins life flat on the ground at first and Awad then constructs it with transparent washes. The emerging shapes and colour relationships dictate the painting's aesthetic direction,

“allowing the materials to bleed and develop different edges” and it is then hung on the wall where the figuration, or rather, “the collision” is imposed. “The forms that are happening will inform the figures,” explains Awad. “I don’t know what it will be, nor do I know who the figures are.”

The energy is electric, and yet, however systematic the configuration appears, it is guided by Awad’s instinct and that is solely led by trial and error. What looks like a vibrant arrangement is the artist’s continuous attempt at solving textural and colour riddles on her canvases. Thankfully, those have endless possibilities, meaning Awad’s journey is a life-long exploration in colour and materiality. “If I understand it, then it loses its power,” she says. “The same palette can yield different colour combinations and that is limitless.”

Another impact is the figure, which she discovered during a life-changing trip to Florence in 2001 that cemented Awad’s commitment to art and exposed her to classical art in a manner that continues to influence her painting today. It is from the seat of the Italian Renaissance and modernism where Awad’s female figure stems and which initially appeared as a singular subject, “coming from the male relationship to the female body as a muse.” Over the years, that has evolved into multiple figures and bodies in conversation with each other through colour.

- Words by Myrna Ayad

About Sarah Awad

Sarah Awad (b. 1981, Pasadena, CA) has had solo exhibitions at Night Gallery, Los Angeles; Blossom Market, Los Angeles; and Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles. She has been included in group shows at Night Gallery, Los Angeles; LA Louver, Venice; V1 Gallery, Copenhagen; Long Beach City College Art Gallery, CA; and Galerie Ernst Hilger, Vienna. Awad is the 2011 recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation MFA Grant and her work has been reviewed in *Artillery*, *Modern Painters*, *Art in America*, *Artsy Editorial*, *ArtScene*, and *New American Paintings*, among others. Her work is in the permanent collections of Dallas Museum of Art, TX; The Britely, West Hollywood; and Hotel Figueroa, Los Angeles. In 2022, she will be featured in group shows at PRJCTLA, Los Angeles, and Chan Gallery, Pomona. Awad currently teaches on the faculty of the Claire Trevor School of the Arts at UC Irvine and is based in Los Angeles.

About Myrna Ayad

Myrna Ayad established her namesake consultancy in 2018, focusing on art advisory, cultural strategy and book publishing and is recognised as one of the Middle East’s leading cultural commentators. From 2016–2018, she was Director of Art Dubai, the region’s foremost international art fair. Preceding this, she wrote on regional art for *The New York Times*, *CNN Online*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Artforum*, *Artsy*, *Artnet*, *Wallpaper** and *The National*, among others, and contributed to artist monographs and exhibition catalogues. Ayad was Editor of *Canvas*, the premier magazine for visual art from the Middle East from 2007–2015, where she oversaw the production of the title’s affiliate newspapers, catalogues, and luxury art books. Over the years, she has served as a panellist and moderator and sits on the committees of cultural organisations in the region. Based in the UAE for four decades, Ayad graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration in 2001 from the American University in Dubai. She lives in Dubai with her husband and two children.

About The Third Line

Founded in 2005, The Third Line is a Dubai-based gallery that represents contemporary Middle Eastern artists locally, regionally, and internationally. A pioneering platform for established talent and emerging voices from the region and its diaspora, The Third Line has built a dynamic program that explores the diversity of practice in the region.

In addition to its exhibitions, The Third Line engages in the production of art publications in English and Arabic and hosts numerous non-profit, alternative programs that add to the discourse on art, film, music and literature in the region.

Represented artists include: Abbas Akhavan, Ala Ebtekar, Amir H. Fallah, Farah Al Qasimi, Farhad Moshiri, Fouad Elkoury, Hassan Hajjaj, Hayv Kahraman, Huda Lutfi, Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Jordan Nassar, Laleh Khorramian, Lamy Gargash, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Nima Nabavi, Poursan Jinch, Rana Begum, Sahand Hesamiyan, Sara Naim, Shirin Aliabadi, Slavs and Tatars, Sophia Al-Maria, Tarek Al-Ghoussein, Yasiin bey, Youssef Nabil, and Zineb Sedira.

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