

Thin Skin: Six Artists from Beirut
Curated by Saleh Barakat

3 June – 2 July 2014
Opening: Tuesday, 3 June 2014, 6 – 8 PM

"It suffices that we dissipate ourselves a little, that we be able to be at the surface, that we stretch our skin like a drum." – Gilles Deleuze

To document, tame and confront a ghostly space is to define a surface that carries within it abyss and utopia. Presented by Taymour Grahne Gallery, this exhibition examines the relationship of a generation of artists within the living, breathing city of Beirut. Following years of civil war and the evolving reality of contemporary Lebanon, the skin of the city is becoming increasingly porous, intricate and fragmented, as echoed by its physical landscape – pock-marked and at times interrupted by cavernous holes gouged into the urban fabric.



This is the central subject of *Thin Skin*. Curated by Saleh Barakat, the show samples paintings from the oeuvres of six artists who live and work in Beirut: **Ayman Baalbaki, Mohamad-Said Baalbaki, Oussama Baalbaki, Tagreed Darghouth, Omar Fakhoury, and Nadia Safieddine**. In individual and at times very intimate ways, the artists consider their living environment as the subject of their paintings, representing the textured surface of daily life. Their works together reflect a state of stasis. Stasis, a term used in Ancient Greece to designate a political, moral or social crisis resulting from an internal conflict within a state or city, can also be translated into terms of discord, decadence, civil war and revolt. It does not recognize any law, nor any limit.

Renowned curator Saleh Barakat is an expert in contemporary and modern Arab art. Through Agial Art Gallery, which he opened in Beirut in 1991, he has been a pioneering force behind the growing global understanding of and appreciation for Arab artists. In 2007, Barakat co-curated the first Lebanese Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, which included Taymour Grahne Gallery artist Lamia Joreige, among others. Barakat has also curated several groundbreaking shows at the Beirut Exhibition Center, including retrospectives for Lebanese modern masters Shafic Abboud in 2012 and Saloua Raouda Choucair in 2011.

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About the Artists

Ayman Baalbaki was born in 1975 at the start of the Lebanese Civil War, a brutal conflict that has both affected and inspired his work. He studied Fine Arts in Beirut at the *Institut des Beaux Arts* and at the *Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Art Decoratifs* in Paris. Baalbaki is well-known for both his paintings and his installations.

Mohamad-Said Baalbaki was born in South Lebanon in 1974, however during the Lebanese Civil War, Baalbaki was forced to relocate with his family to Beirut. In 1994, the artist pursued his fine arts education at the Institut des Beaux-Arts in Beirut. In 2002, after moving to Berlin, Said graduated from the Berlin

University of Fine Arts with a Master of Arts from the Institut für Kunst im Kontext.

Oussama Baalbaki, born in 1978, graduated from the Lebanese University's School of Fine Arts in 2002. In 1997, Baalbaki began drawing illustrations for several Lebanese newspapers. From 2003 to 2009, the artist was featured in consecutive exhibitions at the Sursock Museum in Beirut, Lebanon.

Taghreed Darghouth, born in 1979, earned her Diploma in Painting and Sculpture from the Lebanese Institute of Fine Arts in Beirut in 2000. In 2000 and 2001, Darghouth participated in the *Ayloul Summer Academy* at Jordan's Darat Al Funoun, under the supervision of the renowned Syrian-German artist Marwan Kassab Bashi.

Omar Fakhoury was born in Beit Chabab, Lebanon in 1979 and received his Master of Fine Arts from Paris I in 2004.

Lebanese artist **Nadia Safieddine** was born in Dakar, Senegal in 1973, and currently lives between Beirut and Berlin. Safieddine received her diploma in painting from the University of Fine Arts, Beirut, Lebanon in 1997.

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About Taymour Grahne Gallery

Taymour Grahne Gallery seeks to foster a diverse, international program of groundbreaking contemporary art, with a special foundation in contemporary art from the Middle East region. Working collaboratively with curators and critics, the gallery is committed to cultivating emerging talent and supporting established artists from around the world.

Taymour Grahne Gallery is situated in the heart of Tribeca in a landmarked 4,000 square foot space designed to accommodate a dynamic public events program organized in conjunction with the gallery's exhibitions and related publications. Widely recognized for creating the most comprehensive and widely read blog dedicated to contemporary art from the Middle East, gallery founder Taymour Grahne brings a special foundation and specialization in Middle Eastern and North African art. Exhibiting artists include: Tarek Al-Ghoussein, Faycal Baghriche, Hassan Hajjaj, Lamia Joreige, Mohammed Kazem, Sanaz Mazinani, Ciarán Murphy, and Nicky Nodjoumi.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 6pm.

(Image: Ayman Baalbaki, Cedar 3, 2014, acrylic on printed fabric laid on canvas, 205 x 236 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Agial Gallery, Beirut, and Taymour Grahne Gallery, New York.)

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Join the conversation on social media platforms by linking to @TaymourGrahne and using the hashtag #thinskin