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Visiting Artists | Ahmed Alsoudani

By *JOHNNY MISHEFF*



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Looking at Ahmed Alsoudani's vivid, abstract charcoal and oil-based dreamscapes, you get the sense that a thousand stories are being told simultaneously. His large canvases are densely packed with twisted faces, tumultuous images that conjure a world you desperately hope finds its origins in fiction and not reality. You find yourself inevitably lured in for a closer look only to recoil in the discovery of elements that are organic, alien, gory and disturbingly recognizable.

In person, Alsoudani is surprisingly charming and pleasant. He came to the United States from Baghdad in the late 1990s and enrolled in the Maine College of Art and eventually got an M.F.A. from Yale.

Iraq has not participated in the Venice Biennale for 35 years, and Alsoudani has been tapped to represent his country in its highly anticipated pavilion. “When I made this body of work knowing they would be going to the Iraqi pavilion, I was emotionally more attached to the paintings,” Alsoudani said. “It is a great thing for any artist to represent their country, and it means so much to me to represent Iraq, especially now with the difficult circumstances it faces — it shows people that there is more to Iraq than just war.” **Name:** Ahmed Alsoudani **Place of origin:** Baghdad, Iraq **Current location:** New York City **Preferred medium:** Acrylic and charcoal on canvas **Current project:** Preparing paintings for the Venice Biennale, and for my coming show at [Haunch of Venison](#) in London. **Motto:** A great painter is a great decision maker. **Best thing you’ve seen lately — not your own:** Picasso show at Gagosian. **Any hidden talents?** I can cook one dish.