

Ahmad MOUALLA (Syria, 1958)

Although he had first studied classical calligraphy, Ahmad Moualla's early works have consisted of figurative and mostly socially-critical themes. In the last few years, Ahmad has returned to integrate calligraphy in his works, thereby illustrating how both themes can be united artistically, whilst avoiding the decorative limitations of the Arabic Script. His works push the boundaries between script and painting by playing around with the legibility of the words.

Ahmad Moualla's early works consisted of figurative and mostly socially critical themes, depicting people engaged in vague ceremonies and events, grouped together whispering. Now the people are all but gone and all that is left is a cloud of verse and literary dialogue, letters overlapping letters like a densely layered Jackson Pollock painting. In some works the texts become like a pattern, in others they become a color-speckled mass of lush greenery. The tools of color, tone and brushstroke appeal to the viewer's sensory perception, creating a rich visual experience. The work's key strength lies in Moualla's ability to make that which is meticulously designed seem effortlessly executed and spontaneous.

Ahmad Moualla obtained his diploma in visual communications from the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Damascus before continuing his studies in France where he obtained the Diploma of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs - Paris. Moualla is currently a professor in the University of Damascus, and a well-established graphic artist, stage designer, and painter. His signature can be found on hundreds of posters, book covers, and murals. In 2002 he was art director for the French-Syrian film *Sungug Al Dunya*. Moualla has won the prize of the best foreign poster at the Munich Exposition, and the first award of the International Poster Competition held in 1988 in Kiel, Germany. His first solo exhibition was in 1981, since then he has exhibited in Syria and many countries and cities worldwide, including Dubai, Cairo, Paris, Istanbul, Bahrain, Kuwait, Austria and Germany. Moualla is known also for his many achievements as a graphic designer and calligrapher, and has created innumerable movie posters, book covers and advertising campaigns. He has been the designer for many productions of the Syrian National Theatre, as well as a number of films and several television drama series. He writes in Arab on literary and cultural issues. In 1999 Moualla was awarded top prize in periodicals at the Lattakia Biennale. He has served as a jury member for many plastic arts, graphic and photographic festivals.