

Sara Shamma (Syria, 1975)

Sara Shamma is a renowned painter whose works can be found in both public and private collections around the globe. Shamma was born in Damascus, Syria (1975) to a Syrian father and Lebanese mother. She graduated from the Painting Department of the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Damascus in 1998. She moved to London in 2016 under the auspices of an Exceptional Talent Visa where she currently lives and works.

Shamma's practice focuses on death and humanity expressed mainly through self-portraits and children painted in a life-like visceral way. The Syrian conflict has a distinct impact on the way that Shamma portrays her subjects. Working mainly from life and photographs, the artist uses oils to create a hyper realistic scene, using transparency lines and motion to portray a distant and deep void.

Shamma has previously taught at the Adham Ismail Fine Arts Institute in Damascus, and alongside her practice has always had a strong dedication to sharing her knowledge with the next generation of artists. She was a member of the jury for The Annual Exhibition for Syrian Artists held by the Ministry Of Culture, in Damascus, 2006.

Shamma believes in helping others and has been supporting the United Nations World Food Program since 2010, during which time she produced Fighting Hunger., sold by Christie's Dubai in 2012 with all proceeds going to the WFP. Shamma has participated in a number of solo and group exhibitions including: World Civil War Portraits, The Old Truman Brewery (London, 2015); Diaspora, Art Sawa Gallery (Dubai, 2014); Q, Royal College of Art (London, 2013); Birth, Art House (Damascus, 2011); Love, 360 MALL (Kuwait, 2009); The Royal Society of Portrait Painters Annual Exhibition, The Mall Galleries (London, 2013); Nord Art 2012 organized by KiC – Kunst in der Carlshütte (Büdelsdorf, 2012); UAE Through Arabian Eyes, (Dubai, 2008); Syrian Artists, Souq Wakef Art Center (Doha, 2008); Panorama of Syrian Arts, Catzen Arts Centre at The American University (Washington D.C, 2007); International Painting Prize of the Castellon County Council, (Castellon 2005), Castellon and the Municipal Arts Centre of Alcorcon, (Madrid, 2005-2006); Women and Arts, International Vision, Expo Sharjah (Sharjah, 2005).

Art Awards include 1st prize in Latakia Biennial, Syria (2001), 4th prize BP Portrait Award, National Portrait Gallery, London (2004), 1st prize The Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize, The South Australian Museum (2008), and a painting prize at the Florence Biennial (2013).

Education

- 1998 - Graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts (Painting Department), Damascus University, Damascus, Syria.
- 1995 - Graduated from Adham Ismaail Fine Arts Institute, Damascus, Syria.

Other activities

- 2006 Member of The Jury of The Annual Exhibition for Syrian Artists held by the Ministry of Culture, Damascus, Syria.
- 2004 Member of The Jury of graduation show, ESMOD Fashion Institute, Damascus, Syria.
- 1997-2000 Taught in Adham Ismaail Fine Arts Institute, Damascus, Syria.

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2017 "London" Art Sawa Gallery, Dubai, UAE
- 2015 "World Civil War Portraits" curated by Sacha Craddock at The Old Truman Brewery, London, UK
- 2014 "Diaspora" Art Sawa Gallery, Dubai, UAE.
- 2013 "Q" Royal College of Art, London, UK.
- 2011 "Birth" Art House, Damascus, Syria.
- 2009 "The Sema Ceremony from Turkey with Sara Shamma's Dervishes" event organized by the Turkish Embassy in Damascus and Art House, Art House, Damascus, Syria.
- "Love 2009" 360 MALL, Kuwait.
- 2008 "Sara Shamma 2008" 'Finishing Touch', Knowledge Village, Dubai, U.A.E.
"Sara 1978" Art House, Damascus, Syria.
- 2007 "Music 2007" Cornish Club Event Gallery, Kuwait.
"Sara Shamma 2007" Art House, Damascus, Syria.
- 2004 "Sara Shamma 2004" Kalemaat Art Gallery, Aleppo, Syria.
"Sara Shamma 2004" Karizma Art Gallery, Kuwait.

- 2002 “Sara Shamma 2002” Nassir Choura Art Gallery,
Damascus, Syria.
- 2001 “Sara Shamma 2001” Shell Cultural Club, Damascus, Syria.
- 2000 “Sara Shamma 2000” Nassir Choura Art Gallery, Damascus, Syria.
- 1999 “Sara Shamma 1999” French Cultural Center, Damascus, Syria.

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2015 Guest artist at the 33rd Emirates Fine Arts Society Annual Exhibition, Sharjah Art Museum.
- 2013 Florence Biennial, Florence, Italy.
The Royal Society of Portrait Painters Annual Exhibition, The Mall Galleries, London.
- 2012 “Nord Art 2012” Annual International Exhibition, organized by KiC – Kunst in der Carlshütte, Büdelsdorf, Germany.
- 2011 The Samawi Collection, Ayyam Art gallery, Dubai, UAE.
Syrian Cultural days in Turkey organized by The Ministry of Culture, Istanbul, Turkey.
- 2010 Art Prize 2010, Kendall College of Art and Design, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.
“Nord Art 2010” Annual International Exhibition, Curated by KiC – Kunst in der Carlshütte, Büdelsdorf, Germany.
Contemporary art from the Middle East, Ayyam Gallery, Dubai, UAE.
- 2009 “Contemporary Istanbul” International Art Fair, Istanbul, Turkey.
“Jableh Cultural Festival, 5th Edition” Jableh, Syria.
“Let it be Jewelry” an Exhibition of unique jewelry designed by artists from the Arab World, organized by Sayegh Jewelry at Art House, Damascus, Syria.
Sana’a international forum for plastic arts, Sana’a, Yemen
- 2008/09 “Damas- Paris, Regards Croisés” The Arab World Institute, Paris, France and at the National Museum, Damascus, Syria.
- 2008 “UAE Through Arabian Eyes” the International Financial Centre, Dubai, UAE.
“Syrian Artists” Souq Wakef Art Center, Doha, Qatar.
“The Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize” South Australian Museum, Adelaide, South Australia and the National Archives of Australia in Canberra, Australia.
Retrospective of fine arts in Syria, National museum of Damascus, Syria.
- 2007 “Panorama of Syrian Arts” Catzen Arts Centre The American University Washington, D.C. USA.
- 2006 “Syrian Artists” Syrian Cultural Centre, Paris, France.

- 2005/06 “International Painting Prize of the Castellon County Council” ESPAI (the Contemporary Art Centre), Castellon and the Municipal Arts Centre of Alcorcon, Madrid, Spain.
- 2005 “Women and Arts, International Vision” Expo Sharjah, Sharjah, UAE.
- 2004 - 2005 “BP Portrait Award” National Portrait Gallery, London, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen, Royal West of England Academy, Bristol and Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth, UK.
- 2004 “Syrian Artists” National Library, Madrid, Spain.
“Syrian Artists” Kalemaat art Gallery, Aleppo, Syria.
- 2003 “FMA - Festival du Monde Arabe de Montréal” Montreal, Canada.
“International Women Arts” Organised by Le Pont Art Gallery, Aleppo, Syria.
- 2002 “Syrian Artists” Gallery Amber, Leiden and Enschede, The Netherlands.
“International Artists” Gallery M-Art, Vienna, Austria.
“Mediterranean Biennial” (representing Syria) Kheir El Din Palace, Tunis, Tunisia.
“Arab Artists” Dar AL Anda Art Gallery, Amman, Jordan.
- 2001 “ARTUEL” International Art Fair, Beirut, Lebanon.
“Two Syrian Artists” Coventry Museum Coventry, UK.
“Lattakia Biennial” Lattakia, Syria.
“Sharjah Biennial” Sharjah, UAE.
“Cairo Biennial” Cairo, Egypt.
“Women and War Art Exhibition” The Red Cross International Committee of Syria, Jordan and Switzerland.
Absolument Femme, Imar gallery, Latakia, Syria
- 2000 Monte Roza Symposium for Syrian and Lebanese artists, Damascus, Syria.
- 1994 to 2005 Participated in all Ministry of Culture's Exhibitions in Syria and abroad.
- 1994 to 2005 Participated in different exhibitions in Damascus: National Museum of Damascus, Al Assad National Library, Damascus International Fair, Al Shaab Art Gallery, Al Riwaq Art Gallery, Arabic Cultural Center, Spanish Cultural Center, British Council, Albal Art Gallery, Al Sayed Art Gallery, Ashtar Art Gallery, Jabri Art Gallery, Occasions + art, Croquis Art Gallery, Holly Cross Halls, and Kozah Art Gallery.

Awards and Recognitions

- 2013 Fourth prize in painting, and Special Mention, Florence Biennial, Florence, Italy.

- 2011 Nominated as the Celebrity Partner of The United Nations World Food Programme.
The revealing of Shamma's painting: "Fighting Hunger" at Damascus Opera House during the premiere of Syrian film director, Nabil Al-Maleh's movie: "Story of a Painting".
"Fighting Hunger" was then exhibited at The National Museum of Damascus.
5 paintings were exhibited during WFP Regional Meeting in Mövenpick Hotel in Dead Sea, Jordan.
- 2010 Shortlisted for the Nord Art Prize, Annual International Exhibition, organised by KiC (Kunst in der Carlshütte), Büdelsdorf, Germany.
- 2008 First Prize in Painting, Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize, The South Australian Museum, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia.
- 2006 Fine Arts Syndicate Award, Damascus, Syria.
- 2005 Shortlisted for the International Painting Prize of the Castellon County Council, Castellon, Spain.
- 2004 Fourth Prize, BP Portrait Award. The National Portrait Gallery, London, UK.
- 2001 First Prize (The Golden Medal), Latakia Biennial (Painting), Latakia, Syria.
- 2000 Second prize in the Spanish Cultural Center Art Competition, Damascus, Syria.
- 2000 Second prize, British Council Art Competition, Damascus, Syria.
- 1998 Second prize, Youth Exhibition organized by the Fine Arts Syndicate, Damascus, Syria.
- 1998 Ranked First among graduates (First Prize) in the Faculty of Fine Arts of Damascus University, Syria.

Collections

Shamma's works can be found in public Collections: Presidential Palace, Ministry of Culture, National Museum, British Council, Spanish Cultural Center, Damascus, Syria.
Private Collections in: Austria, Canada, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Netherland, Qatar, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.