

EYE ON ART

ISSAM TANTAWI AT THE ORIENT GALLERY

"It is difficult for me to talk about this new journey that will be unveiled in March; I am still immersed in it and have not yet emerged. The paintings that I have been working on for nearly a year fill my studio, but when they are unveiled in March, I will feel the same surprise as the viewer.

This time I have let myself go, in full spontaneity, without following a pre-set program. I have completely surrendered myself to the moment, to the child in me. My hands moved freely and the colors poured onto the canvas instinctively. The lines are rough and deliberate, not elegant; the colors move on surfaces resembling antiquated walls, as if this child in me is playing or messing with the mud walls of the houses in the first humble city I grew up in, Zarqa, which continues to haunt my imagination and my memory. These memories blend with my second city, Amman, the city that I chose to live in 25 years ago. I have always loved and contemplated Amman tirelessly. It is my muse and is featured in all my paintings, directly or indirectly.

I chose paper this time, and have used usual and unusual colors on this paper, putting everything I know and everything I have experienced to achieve a surface that is different from previous work. It is unfortunate that these tempting surfaces cannot be touched because they are protected by glass, but I know that the audience will touch them with their eyes.

I toyed with the colors, running my fingers through the paint and onto the canvas. The only difference was my level of awareness and my control over the potential chaos. In 2005, I said that art is a form of organized playfulness; six years later, I am very happy to present my own experience, and to say that the more we mature in art, the more we need our childhood for the wonderful innocence it offers."

Issam Tantawi

Orient Gallery will be exhibiting Issam Tantawi's latest work throughout the month of March. **LI**

