

**Opening Reception: 15 May 2016 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

## **Criterion**

**Under the Patronage of H.E. Shaikh Rashid bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Albareh** is pleased to announce the opening of **Criterion** a solo exhibition of the latest works of Iraqi artist, **Nazar Yahya**, at its **Adliya** premises.

In his artist statement, **Nazar Yahya** traces the impetus behind the creation of the body of work that comprises his exhibition to the almost 500 tubes of paint given to him by a friend during a visit to Beirut. His friend had fallen in love with colours and purchased the paint during a visit to Paris. Subsequently, his love affair ended and the tubes languished until he offered them to **Yahya**.

The night before **Yahya's** return to Houston, he packed the tubes into boxes. Laying them side by side, they reminded him of little bodies in what he describes as 'sepulchral' boxes, an act that inspired a vivid dream that night. **Yahya's** excitement over his treasure trove of paint tubes manifested in the form of a dream in which he saw himself squeeze brightly coloured paint into coloured strips on unprimed canvases. Thus the concept for **Criterion** was born.

Once back in his Houston studio, Yahya began to search for meaning in the brightly coloured strips and discovered it in the myriad meaning packed into military ribbons. The military ribbons led to his exploration of the history of his native Iraq from the early twentieth century onwards in an attempt to understand its, and consequently his own, present, an exercise that he has indulged in in his previous exhibition Reconquista.

The result is a brightly coloured, tightly cohesive body of work that engages the viewer aesthetically at first, and then plunges him into a poignant re-examination of Iraq's recent past in a very personal way.

**Nazar Yahya** was born in Iraq in 1963. He began his artistic career illustrating children's books while still in high school in the 1980s. In 1987, he graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad. In 2008, he moved to Houston, Texas with his family, where he continues to reside.

**Yahya's** artwork has been exhibited extensively in the Middle East in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. He has also exhibited in Bangladesh, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. His art was included the book **Art in Iraq** published by Skira and Meem Editions, and his work is in the collections of the British Museum in London, UK; the Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, Qatar; and the Station Museum in Houston Texas.

**Criterion** continues at **Albareh Art Gallery** till the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, 2016

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