

Terra (Un)firma



Samah Shihadi and Michael Halak Dual Exhibition

**Tabari Artspace, DIFC, Dubai
February 16 - March 16 2021**

A Dual exhibition of Haifa-based, Palestinian hyperrealists Samah Shihadi and Michael Halak at our Dubai gallery.

Terra Un(firma) was originally intended to be the solo exhibition of Samah Shihadi, scheduled to take place at Cromwell Place in London, October 2020. As with many events and expectations over the previous year we were forced to adapt as London moved into lockdown. As such the exhibition has evolved in unexpected ways, first with a digital showcase and now with a physical exhibition in Dubai which now encompasses a body of work by fellow Haifa-based hyperrealist, Michael Halak.

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Samah Shihadi

The body of work produced by Shihadi for Terra Un(firma) is divided into two segments, **The Living and The Land**, which take the artist's personal narratives and feminist outlook as a starting point from which to explore issues faced by women, across cultures, in the contemporary moment. The Living is a reflection upon the artist's complex and conflicting internal (psychological) and external (social) worlds. As a dual marginal existing within a liminal space Shihadi navigates the clashes between individuality and responsibility that comprise contemporary womanhood in her society and extend towards women, globally, who face discrimination, marginalisation, identity crisis and other multi-faceted gendered issues. The selected works for The Land turn towards the physical space and natural environment as a site of connection, displacement and contestation, which the artist conflates with notions of the home, family and collective identity. Each large-scale work selected for the exhibition has been painstakingly produced over several months. Shihadi's work oscillates between classical-figurative realism, which dutifully captures and records that which surrounds her and fantastical surrealism that draws from the artist's preoccupations with mysticism. Shihadi employs a dramatic approach to hyperrealism sketching using chiaroscuro to form a magical reality which blends both fiction and fantasy. Symbolism - religious, ritualistic, political, and cultural - is interwoven into much of Shihadi's work, forming complex layers that the viewer must unpack in order to absorb deeper meanings.

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Samah Shihadi
Terra Studies 1 x 20, 2020



Charcoal on paper
30 x 30 cm EACH
11 3/4 x 11 3/4 in

\$ 850,00

Samah Shihadi
The Good Shepherd, 2020



Charcoal on paper
70 x 70 cm
27 1/2 x 27 1/2 in

\$ 6,500.00

Samah Shihadi
Home, 2019



Charcoal on paper
200 x 150 cm
78 3/4 x 59 1/8 in

\$ 12,000.00

Samah Shihadi
Harvest, 2020



Charcoal on paper
100 x 70 cm
39 3/8 x 27 1/2 in
\$ 6,500.00

Samah Shihadi
Under the Threat, 2016



Pencil on paper
50 x 35 cm
19 3/4 x 13 3/4 in

\$ 2,750.00

Samah Shihadi
Patience (Sabre Series), 2019



Charcoal on paper
100 x 70 cm
39 3/8 x 27 1/2 in

\$ 6,500.00

Samah Shihadi
Resilience (Sabre Series), 2020



Charcoal on paper
100 x 70 cm
39 3/8 x 27 1/2 in

\$ 6,500.00

Samah Shihadi
Sticks and Stones, 2018



Charcoal on paper
140 x 190 cm
55 1/8 x 74 3/4 in

\$ 14,000.00

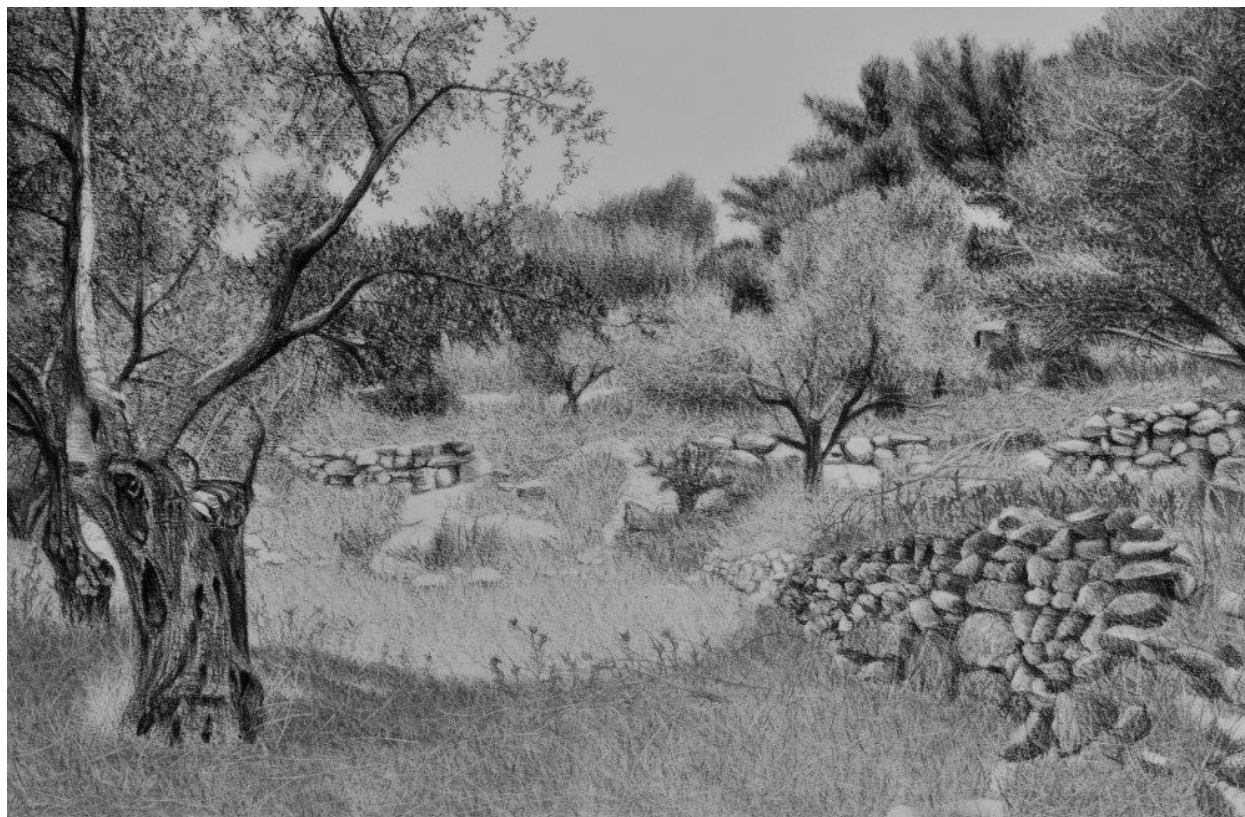
Samah Shihadi
Hiding, 2018



Charcoal on paper
140 x 135 cm
55 1/8 x 53 1/8 in

\$ 12,000.00

Samah Shihadi
Landscape, Olive Trees , 2018



Charcoal on paper
65 x 50 cm
25 5/8 x 19 3/4 in

\$ 5,500.00

Michael Halak
The Lost Horizon, 2017



Oil on Plywood
70×50 (9 panels)
\$ 24,000

Michael Halak

While Shihadi's art is often rooted in the past or observe the present through the lens of fantastical-realism Halak's photo-real paintings are fixed firmly upon the current moment. Halak's art follows western traditions of realist, illusory painting, but diverges in content which conflates local and global realities. This combination opens up the opportunity for multiple readings of his work and urges the viewer to consider more closely the contents with which they are presented.

For Terra (Un) Firma the seven selected paintings by Halak capture the faces, social scenes and landscapes which immediately surround him. In these works flora and herbs such as olives and thyme prevail as a symbol of Palestinian identity but also speak to the universal viewer. The artist understands thyme as an emblem of origin and freedom, but as soon as it becomes confined to flowerpot, it loses its freedom; pulled up from its original soil to become a marginal decoration. His landscapes are charged with the central tension that shapes both his life and his work – the question of the connection between man and place, and related concerns regarding presence and absence, identification and disidentification, visibility and invisibility. His scenes bespeak a process of bifurcation that gives rise to two separate yet inseparable worlds. At first glance his paintings may appear as harmless depictions of rural landscapes or social settings such as the Haifa marketplace however, in a similar manner to Shihadi, his works are loaded with symbolism and multifaceted meanings. Works depicting the old streets of Jerusalem, for example, appear to relay routine daily life, however, upon closer inspection symbols of conflict and contradiction such as soldiers and flags rise to the fore.

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Michael Halak
Collision, 2021



Oil on canvas
140 x 100 cm
55 1/8 x 39 3/8 in

\$ 12,000.00

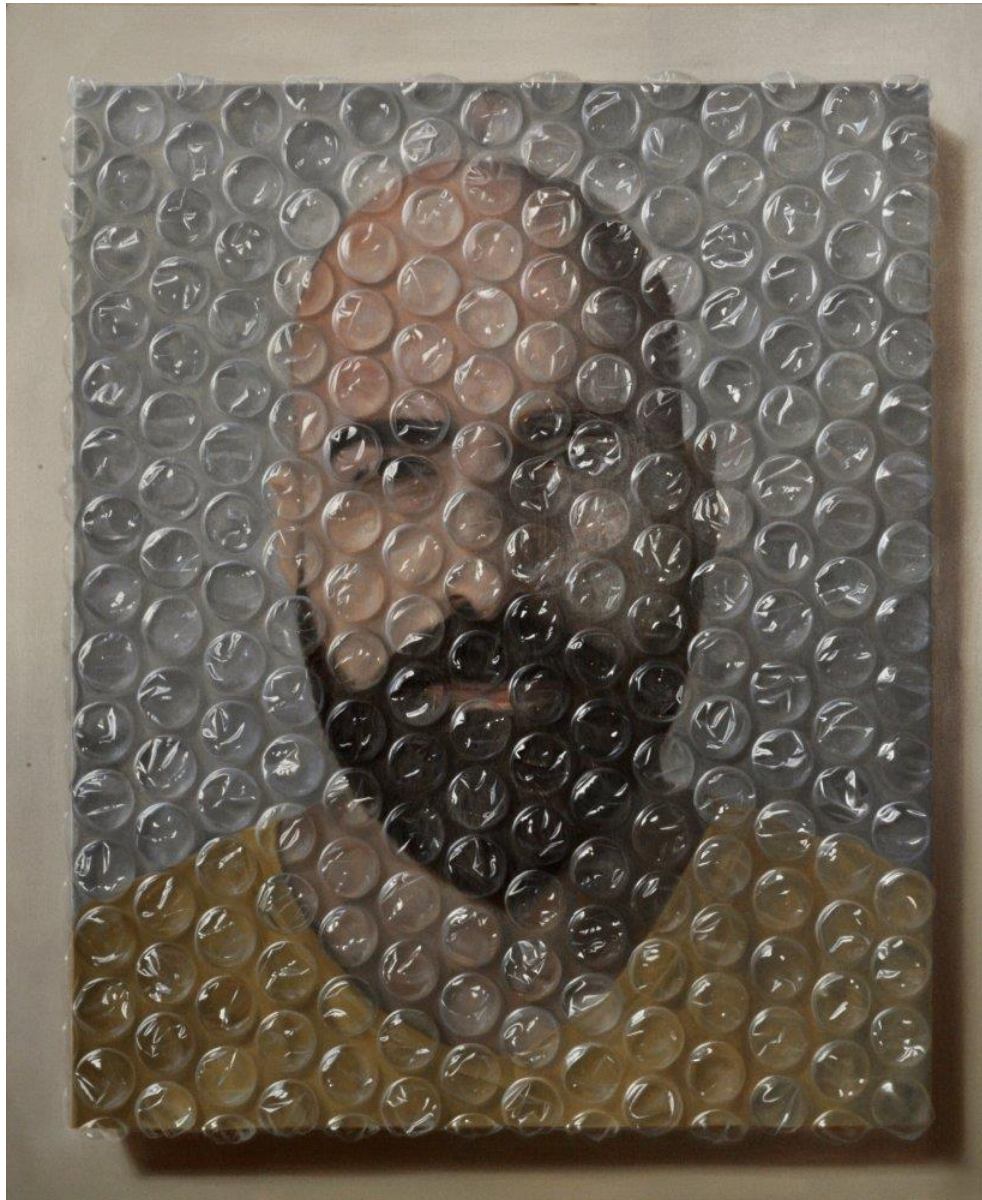
Michael Halak
Cracked Olives, 2018



Oil on canvas
140 x 100 cm
55 1/8 x 39 3/8 in

\$ 12,000.00

Michael Halak
Life in Bubble, 2018



Oil on canvas
120 x 100 cm
47 1/4 x 39 3/8 in

\$ 10,000.00

Michael Halak
Olives and Thyme, 2019



Oil on canvas
40 x 40 cm
15 3/4 x 15 3/4 in

\$ 4,000.00

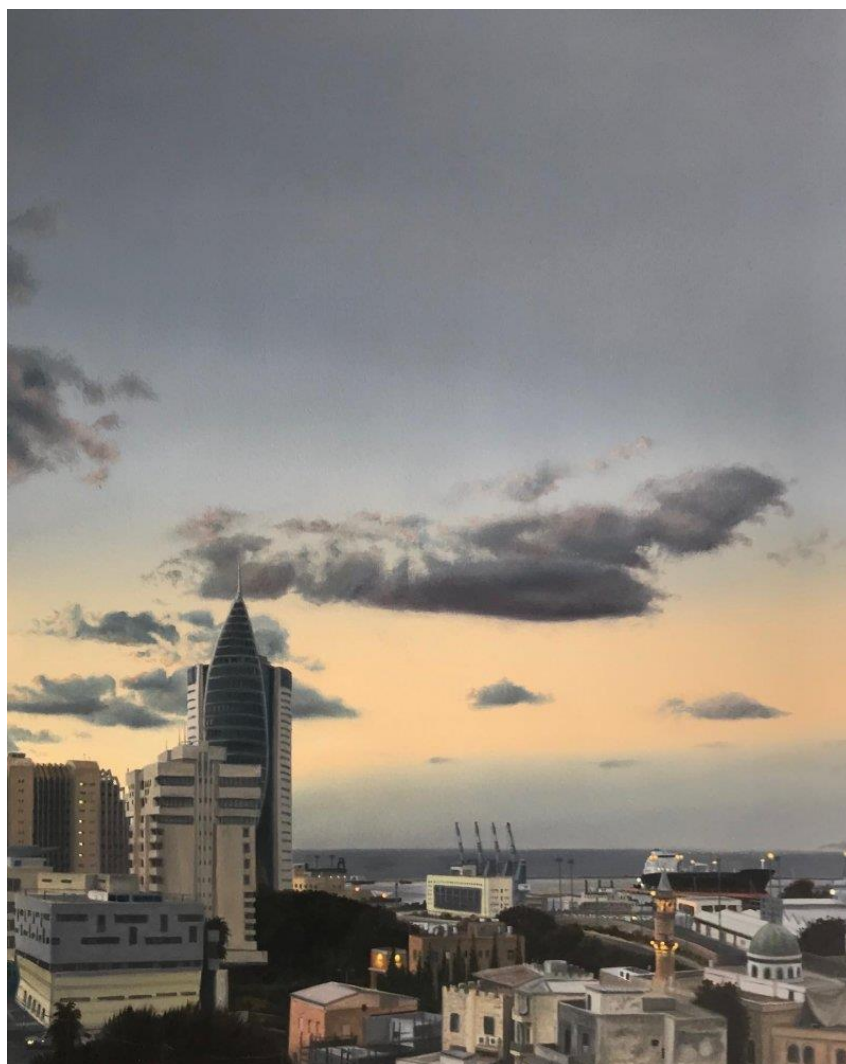
Michael Halak
Thyme, 2020



Oil on canvas
85 x 60 cm
33 1/2 x 23 5/8 in

\$ 7,000.00

Michael Halak
Haifa (Wadi El Salib), 2020



Oil on canvas
80 x 60 cm
31 1/2 x 23 5/8 in

\$ 8,000.00

Michael Halak
Jerusalem, 2020



Oil on canvas
70 x 50 cm
27 1/2 x 19 3/4 in

\$ 7,000.00

Michael Halak
The Bread Seller, 2020



Oil on canvas
190 x 150 cm
74 3/4 x 59 1/8 in

\$ 22,000.00

ABOUT SAMAH SHIHADI

b. 1987

Samah Shihadi, recipient of the 2018 Haim Shiff Prize for Figurative-Realistic Art, is among the modern generation of young female Palestinian artists and one of the unique voices in the local field of art. Through her chosen media, hyperrealism, she scrutinises issues pertaining to identity, her native traditional society and her political reality. In her work, Shihadi offers realistic insight and a feminist stance which address female identity in both Arab culture and the world at large. Her delicate drawings, made with great precision touch on topics central to contemporary art, and offer a pronouncement and visual report that fluctuates between the internal, personal, social and cultural. Her drawings, created in a slow, meticulous, and prolonged work process, also evoke a sense of urgency and immediacy regarding subjects in the here and now: the status of women in society, tradition and religious belief versus social and political reality, and local landscapes charged with history.

Shihadi has an M.F.A. from the University of Haifa, and a B.ED. in art from Oranim Academic College of Education. A multiple award winner, Shihadi has exhibited extensively internationally and her work has been collected by several institutions including LACMA.

ABOUT MICHAEL HALAK

b. 1975

Michael Halak's art moves along the frontier between hyperrealism and conceptualism. The illusion of reality represented on canvas may be seductively beautiful and perfect, but equally conveys feelings of disruption and disintegration. The perfectly constructed and executed works depict landscapes, feeling, often impermanence, hybridity, entrapment or categorisation. Halak plays with our perception to make us feel what he feels, to experience his reality: a life in transition, in a place that is not really his.

After studying Fine Arts at Haifa University, Halak won a residence scholarship to attend the Florence Academy of Art, Italy in 2005. He graduated with an MFA from Haifa University in 2009. Halak has exhibited extensively internationally across the Middle East, Europe, and the USA. Halak has received several awards including the Ministry of Culture and Sports for contemporary artists (twice) and the Rappaport prize for a young painter amongst other accolades. Halak's art can be found in several public and private collections.

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