

Exhibition of the Month

By Tayseer Barakat

# SHORELESS SEA

Zawyeh Gallery, Ramallah

Open daily, except on Fridays, until April 2

**T**his exhibition displays new artworks by Tayseer Barakat that serve as an account of refugees' desperate journeys across the Mediterranean Sea as they are trying to reach Europe in search of a normal life. The Mediterranean used to be part of Barakat's life, as he is a refugee himself who grew up near Gaza's shores and lived in Alexandria as an undergraduate student. But the Sea has become colder since then, merciless, and with a stronger appetite. It hides its beaches, leaving people afloat in a desperate search for ways to escape.

In Barakat's paintings, a boat throws those on board into the sea; souls fly in the skies or float in the waves; a mother holds her children tightly; a bride waits by the shore, holding her bouquet while looking out over the waves; a helicopter flies over the heads – a rescue mission? Heroic journeys culminate in a line of detained refugees walking to an unknown destination. In one series of artworks, the artist explores separation through paintings that are dominated by a few figures, scattered in large areas painted in white, reflecting the coldness of the sea and the world's indifference to the refugees' plight.

Barakat considers this exhibition a contemplation of what that Arab people have become, as large numbers have been transformed into refugees who are facing an uncertain future. At the same time, these paintings constitute a journey into the artist's self, as a refugee, and explore the meaning of separation (from the homeland and the loved ones). They form a meditation on the enormous waves that in recent years have transformed the lives and living conditions in the region.



Lovers #1 (2016),  
acrylic on canvas,  
80 x 120 cm.

Detachment (2016),  
acrylic on canvas,  
120 x 154 cm



Born in Gaza's Jabaliya refugee camp in 1959, Tayseer Barakat completed his art education in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1983. He has held numerous solo exhibitions and participated in many group exhibitions with his contemporaries in Japan, the United States, Brazil, Europe, and across the Arab world. His solo exhibitions have been shown in places that include Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden (1993); the São Paulo Biennale,

Brazil, (1996, "The Number that Became a Name"); and Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France (1996, "Spring in Palestine"). Barakat is a founding member of Al-Wasti Art Center, Jerusalem, and of the International Art Academy–Palestine.

For further information, please visit the gallery's website at [www.zawyeh.net](http://www.zawyeh.net) or contact the gallery's director, Ziad Anani, via [zanani@zawyeh.net](mailto:zanani@zawyeh.net) or 059 799 4997.

Survival #2 (2017), acrylic on canvas, 126 x 165 cm.

