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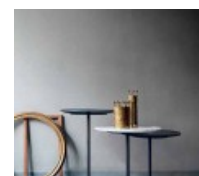
# Mystic Tales

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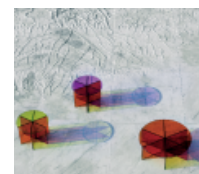
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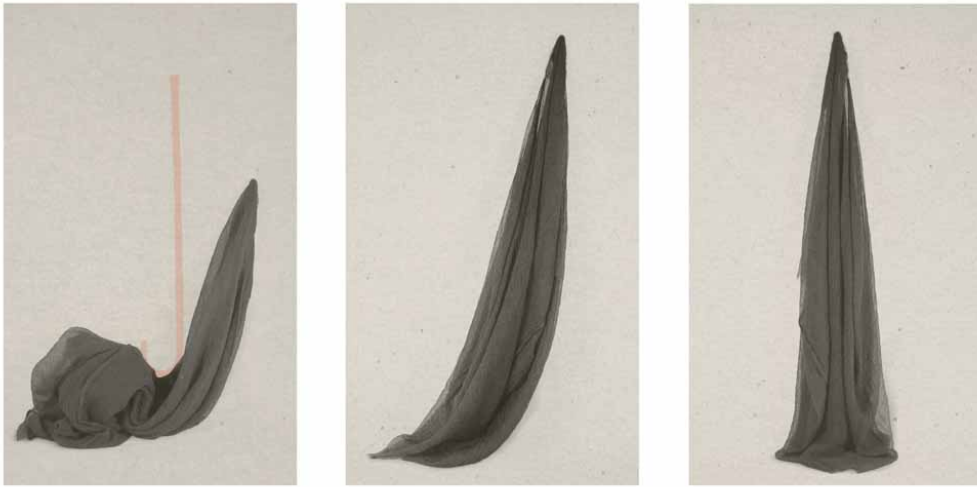
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Feature: Anas Al Horani. Photography: Courtesy of Karim Gallery

### Nazar Yahya’s masterly portraits of exile and mysticism arrive to Amman, Jordan

Nazar Yahya is an impressive character. He is an artist willing to travel beyond the confines of fine arts; an aficionado whose intense love for knowledge can overwhelm and enlighten; and an exile whose experiences are translated into some of the most visionary artworks the region has produced. But Nazar Yahya is, above all, an artist.

Frequently, Yahya is referred to as a conceptual artist. However, he dislikes that designation, believing that his work doesn’t belong to any one genre. “I move with the ideas I have,” he told me when I sat down with him in Karim Gallery. “I don’t have any specific style and I don’t adhere to any particular tradition. In fact, I don’t want style or tradition to be evident in my work. I think not adhering to style or tradition means you see the world around you more clearly.” Predictably then, Yahya’s oeuvre feels intellectually and materially unrestricted.



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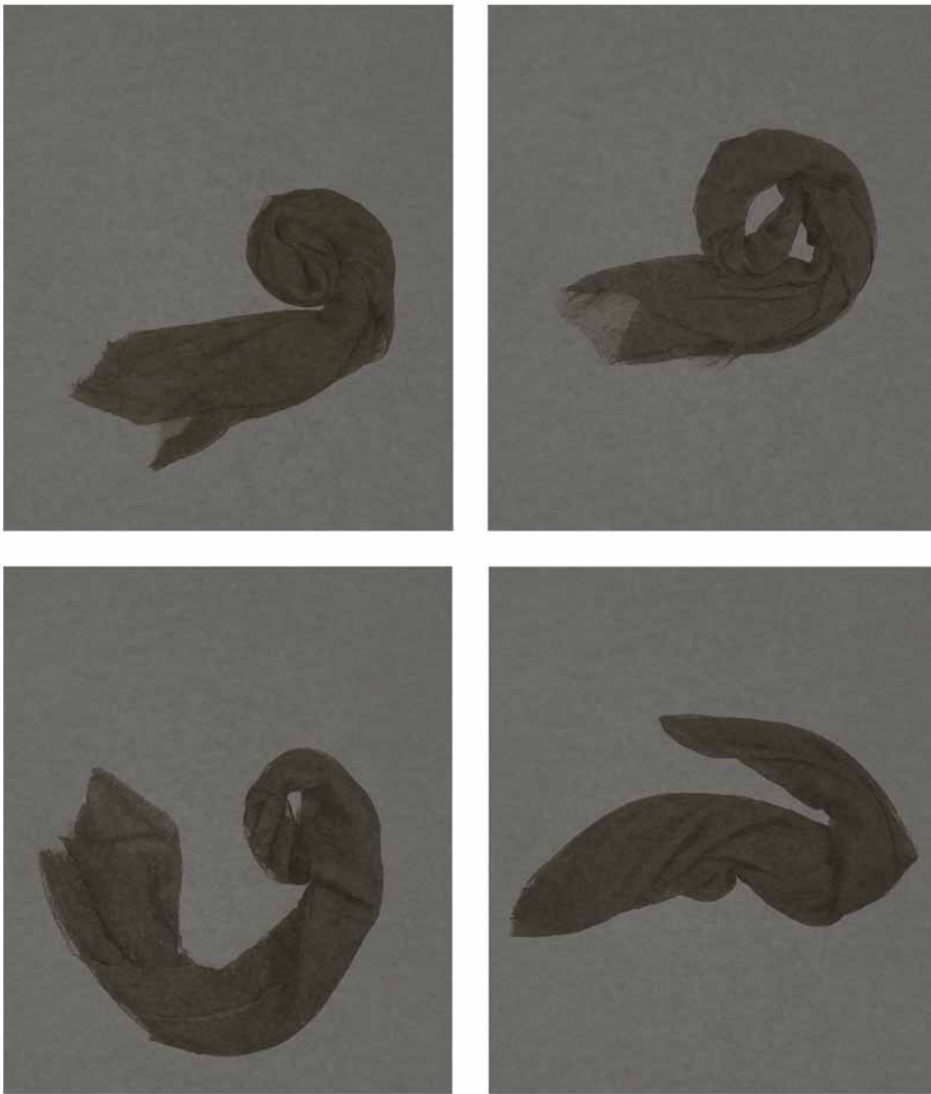
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El Maghraby

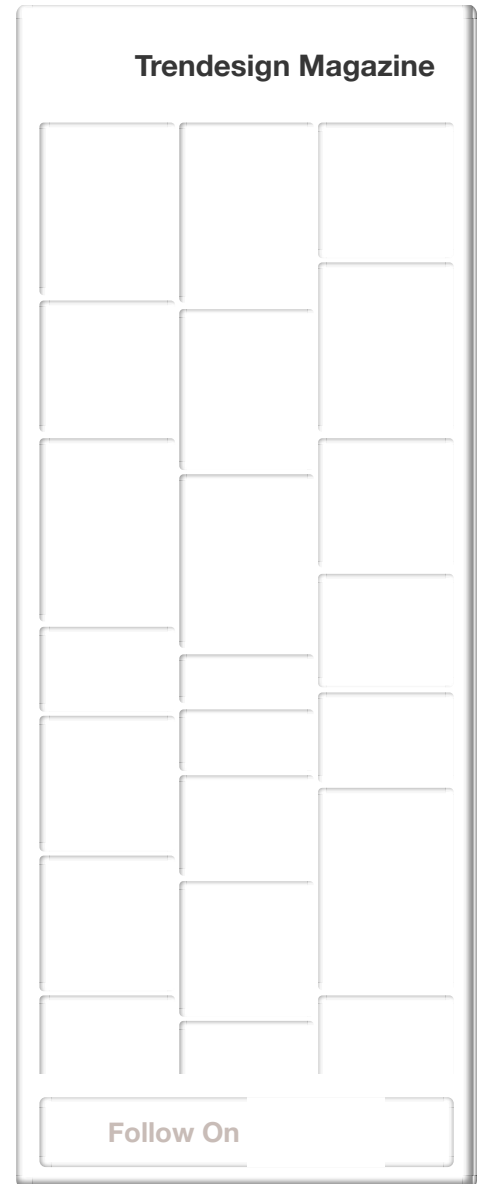
AUGUST 21, 2016

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He Is The Truth, 2013

Born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1963, Yahya began his career illustrating children’s books while still in high school in the 1980s. His career in illustration influenced his first exhibition in 1994, which consisted of printed artworks. At the time, the printed work held surprises for Yahya, and he delighted in them. However, the usage of technology has always been secondary to Yahya’s work. Concepts and ideas, which guide his works, decide the necessary materials for their own realisation. “Art isn’t necessarily aesthetic. Art is situational. I can’t go to the studio if I don’t have a well-defined idea. I work on projects, not artworks. Each exhibition is a project.”





Ascension, 2013

Yahya's latest project/exhibition, *The Truth*, is the outcome of almost four years of extensive creative work. It deals, in highly symbolic and condensed fashion, with notions of divinity and personal history. "The Truth," in Sufi literature, refers both to God and justice, the latter both divine and earthly. Yahya has always been fascinated with Sufism. Among his earlier exhibitions were *Bird's Land*, based on Fariduddin Attar's *The Conference of Birds*, and *Yusuf*, based on the well-known Koranic tale, as well as *Rose Water*, which included excerpts from Jalaluddin Rumi's poetry. *The Truth*, largely concerned with, and inspired by the (in)famous figure of Al Hallaj, seems like a fitting logical conclusion.

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@TrendesignMag meets Sahel Al Hiyari and Dina Haddadin, the curators of two of #ADW2016's exhibitions [goo.gl/RTI1pu](http://goo.gl/RTI1pu)  
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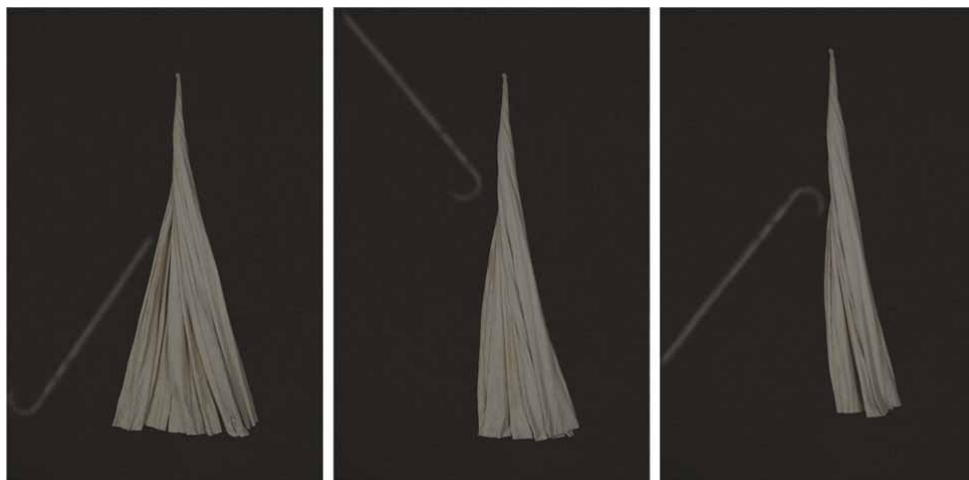
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Magical Cane, 2013

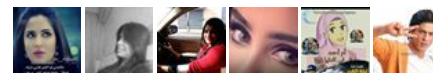
Looking at the pieces that constitute *The Truth*, the audience will quickly notice the persistence of certain images and symbols. There is Yahya's mother's abaya, which is juxtaposed with Al Hallaj's. (One time Al Hallaj was walking in the market, wearing his abaya, when a man asked him what he was hiding in it, and Al Hallaj answered, "There is nothing inside this cloak but God." Historians claim that this was the *shath*, or ecstatic utterance, responsible for his imprisonment and execution). The point of the juxtaposition is ambiguous and remains for the audience to decode. A series of plexiglass-made *Postures* reveal the outline of a person in different positions. The insides of the outline consist of 24 layers of vibrant colours. The *Postures* – like the *Seats* – seem to provide different interpretations or conceptions of Al Hallaj. "I wanted to create a new anatomy for Al Hallaj," Yahya said of those pieces. "They are, in their incompleteness, like Greek statues, which no matter how many parts they miss, remain beautiful..." He seemed distracted for a moment then said, "You know, what I do relies heavily on methodology."

Asked about the function of art, Yahya said, "My philosophy in art is: Don't go straight to the point. The function of art is not to report. An artwork is not a newspaper. An artwork's function is to ask the right questions. And art's longevity lies in its mystery."

Nazar Yahya's exhibition *The Truth* will be on show at Karim Gallery from 29 October to 29 November 2016.



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January 14

Ai Weiwei Exhibits Fondation ar  
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