

## Spotlight

### Essam Marouf

Following a superb opening show; Artsawa, Al Quoz's latest addition, focuses in on one of the more exciting artists to appear in that inaugural lineup. Egyptian artist Essam Marouf has a cold, isolate style of painting. His figures appear lost – waiting in the wings of abstracted Cairo scenes, or wandering together in a mass of block-colour bodies.

A very precise style of portraiture, his figures stare out from their canvases. They are fervently two dimensional, like stained glass windows or religious icons, and there's an air of solemnity to each. Many of his characters seem to stare imploringly up to the sky, wandering to some unseen and ungraspable end.

If you've yet to check out Artsawa, this is a good introduction – demonstrating the gallery's interest in work from around North Africa, particularly Algeria and Egypt. Marouf is part of a new wave of artists from that region who are steadily finding exposure internationally, and his works received a good reception at ArtParis-Abu Dhabi earlier this week.

At one turn pop-like and at another possessing a tormented and afflicted emptiness. Go see more of Marouf's work and get a look round one of the more impressive new spaces to hit the art scene.

*Artsawa (04 340 8660), exit 43, Sheikh Zayed Road, Al Quoz. Until December 31*

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