

Al-Jumhuriya

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Aftermath How Syrian Artists Captured Liberation, Memory and Return

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Departures

While it may still be early to trace full departures in artistic practices, we're beginning to feel the first winds of change. Take Nour Malas, for example: a young Syrian artist whose upbringing is deeply intertwined with the intellectual and visual histories of Syrian art. In her most recent work, there's a noticeable shift in palette: green, in various hues and intensities, begins to take center stage.

Malas, based in New York, is a master of abstraction, and creates large-scale canvases that oscillate between abstraction and figuration. Her works are dense, spiritual, and ever-unfolding, the kind you must spend time with. Faces, limbs, and spirit-like forms emerge from her richly layered surfaces, stacked and flowing, resisting legibility while inviting emotion. There's always structure – even in her most atmospheric passages – and in her earlier red and earthy compositions, it's hard not to think of Fateh al-Moudarres. I mentioned this during a recent studio visit to her, which she seemed to appreciate.

In her recent work with Sean Kelly Gallery, we see a bold green-dominant composition, unprecedented in her oeuvre. Titled *Lunatics* (2025), the painting, made of oils and pastels, marks a shift not only in color but possibly in tone.

Malas agreed to this in our recent studio visit, acknowledging that the green had arrived somewhat subconsciously, but unmistakably. The work evokes regeneration and maybe vulnerability, without ever surrendering complexity.