

بينما

*While the
Coffee the*

*Grounds
Settle*

تُعَدُّ

القهوة

STORIES FROM
WOMEN IN THE UAE

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
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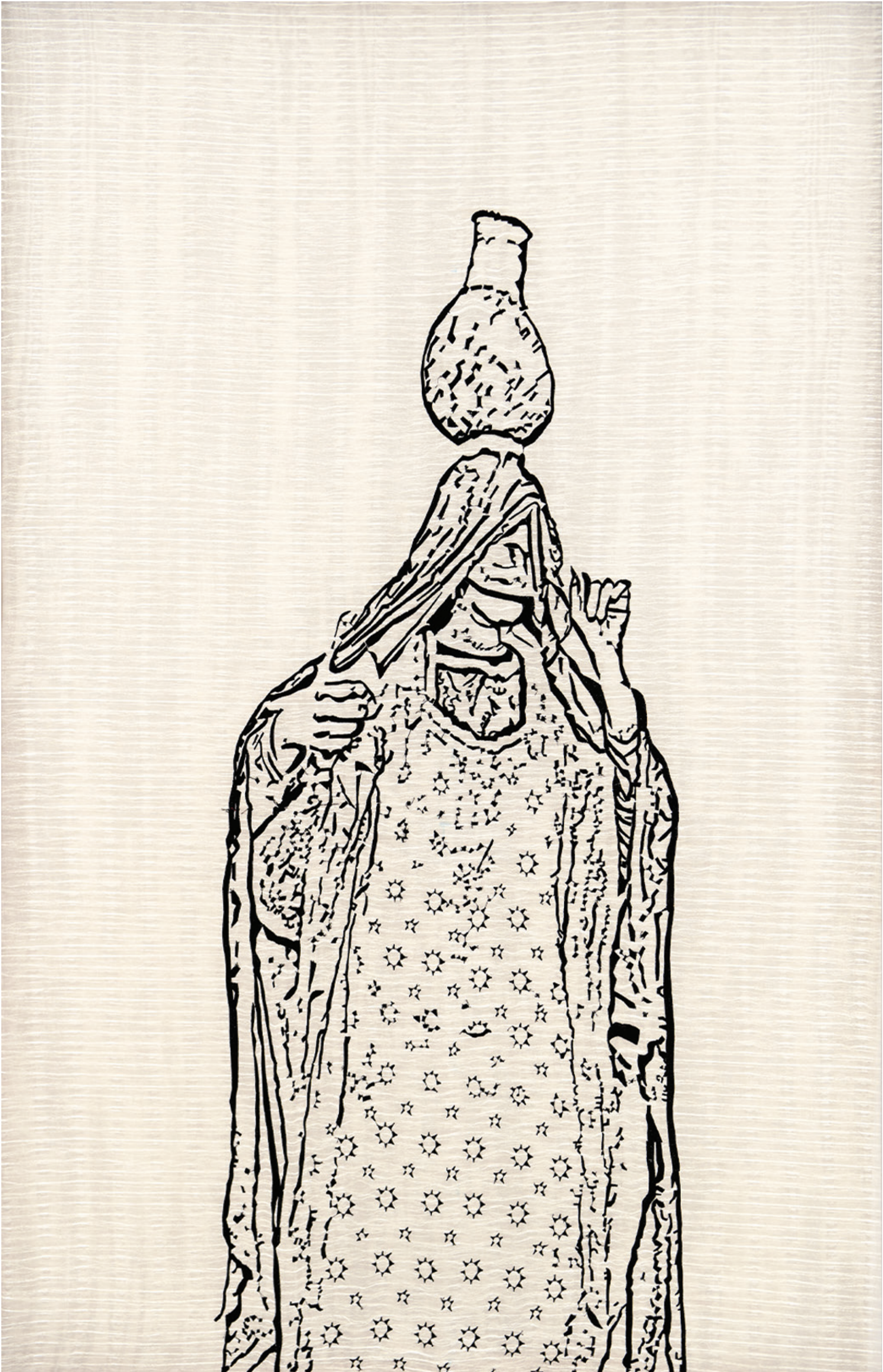
Explore the
featured artists and
their artworks:

Curated by Dirwaza
Curatorial Lab



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Ayesha Hahir
Labsat El Bsht, 2020
140 x 100 cm
Embroidery, fabric and
wood
Courtesy of artist

Foreword



It is my great pleasure to welcome you to *While the Coffee Grounds Settle: Stories from Women in the UAE*, an art exhibition in the heart of Georgetown in Washington, DC, that hosts and shares stories of the many creative strong women from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

All the artworks featured were created by diverse female artists from across the UAE, spanning nationalities and generations.

While the Coffee Grounds Settle, is at its core, a celebration of women of the Emirates and a reflection of the UAE's deeply held values of diversity and gender equality.

In the 50 years since the UAE's founding, women have contributed significantly to all aspects of Emirati society in STEM, creative industries, business, government, and many more. These significant contributions have been essential to the successful development of my country, the UAE. Women's advancement and leadership in our society will no doubt continue to expand and empower future generations.

Women are also at the vanguard of the UAE's burgeoning cultural scene, leading most of the country's art institutions.

While the Coffee Grounds Settle features but a small subset of the many female artists who are shaping the Emirates' vibrant, diverse creative ecosystems.

We are delighted to welcome you to share the stories of these women through their creative artworks.

I hope you enjoy the exhibition and learn more about these accomplished artists.

H.E. Yousef Al Otaiba
UAE Ambassador to the US



Dr. Najat Makki
Feminine Musings, 2011
224 x 224 cm
Acrylic and ink on canvas
Collection of HH Sheikh
Zayed bin Sultan bin
Khalifa Al Nahyan

Curatorial Statement

While the Coffee Grounds Settle: Stories by Women in the UAE is an exhibition celebrating the diversity of women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) through the lens of fluid, inclusive spaces that center cultures of femininity.

Featuring women artists spanning generations and backgrounds, the exhibition examines traditionally feminine spaces as venues for social exchange, as well as for women's leadership and togetherness. Such spaces foster a sense of community through the construction of common interests and shared values, and help document the evolution of women's power and narratives throughout time.

The living room as a vessel takes center stage throughout the exhibition. It is a space of liberation and exchange that organically preserves oral histories, passing on narratives of culture and society. The living room, the Majlis, and other spaces of this kind have their own nuanced cues, codes and hierarchies to maintain structure and clear communication, however, they are almost always colored with humor and allow space for curiosity, new ideas and fresh voices.

This exhibition highlights interior spaces that witness generational initiations directly impacting the authorship of women throughout history. These congregations become the classrooms that give license, authority and create change in the nation we know today.

In celebration of Emirati Women's Day, this exhibition highlights artists of the United Arab Emirates – both nationals and residents alike – who further explore these feminine social spaces as being vital to the human experience in their privacy, intimacy, and empowerment.

*Artists
and Works*

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Aisha Juma

Aisha Juma is an Emirati artist with a visual language that reflects her spiritual philosophy. Her vast expressions through various mediums explain her diversity in self exploration. Her latest automatic drawings and digital paintings showcase her approach to mindfulness, which connects the relationship between inner space and outer space.

The figure is obviously a female. This sculpture is meant to be monumental in size and to be installed outdoors, so people can enjoy walking around and underneath the arch of the figure's torso. Her face is supposed to meet the face of the spectator in a gesture of confrontation. She is in a position as if at the starting point of a marathon, a state of being ready and steady to take off at any moment. She is holding onto the ground with her strong giant palms, pressing hard downwards while her entire body is lifted upwards towards the sky, ready to jump up and take off.

“This sculpture is meant to express my state of being between searching for what I want and bouncing out to get it. Both states are juxtaposed against each other in the search of self discovery. Sometimes I am calm and staying inwards and other times, I am dynamic and moving outwards.”



Aisha Juma
The Mammoth, 2010
15 x 20 x 30 cm
Bronze
Courtesy of artist

Aliyah Alawadhi

Aliyah Alawadhi (b. 1996, UAE) is an artist and writer. Her work is influenced by the subtleties of growing up in the ever-developing cultural and industrial landscape of the UAE. She captures and comments on juxtapositions in contemporary Gulf culture and the mystical nature of regional traditions and their relations with perceptions of sexuality, subjugation, nostalgia and change.

Her piece explores notions of interiority, domesticity and the feminine form. The framing allows the viewer to absorb and ponder, from the small facets of information in the scene, the social role of the subject and her pensive but unshy expression, forcibly engaging the viewer in an act of voyeurism to derive meaning in what seems to be purposefully concealed.



Aliyah Alawadhi
Untitled, 2020
50 x 70 cm
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Yasmeen
Gailani

Areej Kaoud

Areej Kaoud is a Palestinian visual artist. Her practice draws on an interest in narratives and disastrous scenarios. Emergency provisions are a common subject, using writing, recording, performance art, data accumulation and installation, elaborating on realities and referring to the politics of the senses. Areej's projects articulate the distance between anxiety, preparedness and humor in preparing for non-immediate threats.

When a difficult circumstance presents itself, Areej finds herself recalling basic words that her mother would use in a stern yet urgent manner to control a situation – sentiments that would enable her to prepare for and manage a forthcoming incident. Attempting to soothe a state of anxiety, *Silent Sirens 1.0* presents banal language as a safety provision (or reassurance). Rendered through inaudible emergency LED signage, Arabic words are projected onto the panels as a visual urgency. Through a triggered narrative, this work attempts to remind the viewer of their psychological preparation for an imagined emergency that might play a role in their physical reaction when one occurs.



Areej Kaoud
Silent Sirens, 2018
38 x 38 cm
Emergency LED signage
Courtesy of Tashkeel

ARUUA

ARUUA (b. 1995, Sharjah, UAE) makes paintings, drawings and mixed media artworks. Aruua has studied Fine Arts in the University of Sharjah, and currently lives and works in Abu Dhabi. She has previously exhibited in the Dubai Community Theatre and Arts Centre and City Walk, and was a part of Salama Emerging Artist fellowship provided by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and in collaboration with Rhode Island School of Design.

Bad Faith is a part of a series of colorful portraits that consolidates sentiments of alienation, existential dread and coping with social restraints. The title refers to a term in existentialist philosophy wherein a person acts in an inauthentic manner due to being pressured or acting against one's own individual freedom. The painting is about suppressing personal urges, thoughts or feelings in exchange for comfort and belonging.



ARUUA
Bad Faith, 2019
154 x 132 cm
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of artist

Ayesha Hadhir

Ayesha Hadhir (b. 1994, Abu Dhabi, UAE) studied visual art at the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises at Zayed University. Hadhir works predominantly in installations. Most of her work focuses on growth and change with time to bring materials back to their historical roots. Everything is connected, from the materials she chooses to the way she merges them together and with nature – and importantly, with the history of her family.

In her young career, she has exhibited with ‘Neither Visible Nor Concealed’, curated by Rokni, Ranim and Hesam at Abu Dhabi Art Fair, in 2019 and solo with ‘Al Doobah’, curated by Walter Willems, at Alserkal Avenue, Dubai, in 2018. The artist has also participated in many group exhibitions, including ‘Tashweesh’, commissioned by UAE Unlimited at Maraya Arts Centre, Sharjah, 2019; and ‘Do Art, Do it Now’ commissioned by the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi project, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, 2017.

Hadhir was selected as one of the Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship (SEAF) recipients, for the ‘Community and Critique: SEAF 2016/17 Cohort 4’ exhibition, and completed an art residency with the Cultural Foundation in 2019. She currently works as a product designer at Salama Hamdan Foundation Abu Dhabi.

Ayesha Hadhir

(continued from previous page)

Portable Installations

In *Portable Installations*, Hadhir explores various materials, including brass, carpets, acrylic, etc. She also explored collaborating with artists to recreate their symbolic artworks into a small portable installation. This speaks to the reality of women in the UAE back then and commemorates them for their contributions to the making of the country.

Labsat el Bsht Series

Labsat el Bsht is an installation that embodies the role of women throughout Abu Dhabi and the UAE's history. In this installation, the Bisht – a wool cape with golden embroidery, usually worn by men – is metaphorically worn by women, representing their responsibility in the building of the nation.

The artist was inspired by stories from her mother and grandmother about how women from the past worked while their husbands were away. This installation pays homage to those women, who crossed desert dunes on foot while carrying children on their back. Here you will find depictions of different women inspired by archival images that embody the strength, depth and personalities of women who built this nation – mothers and grandmothers, sisters and daughters.



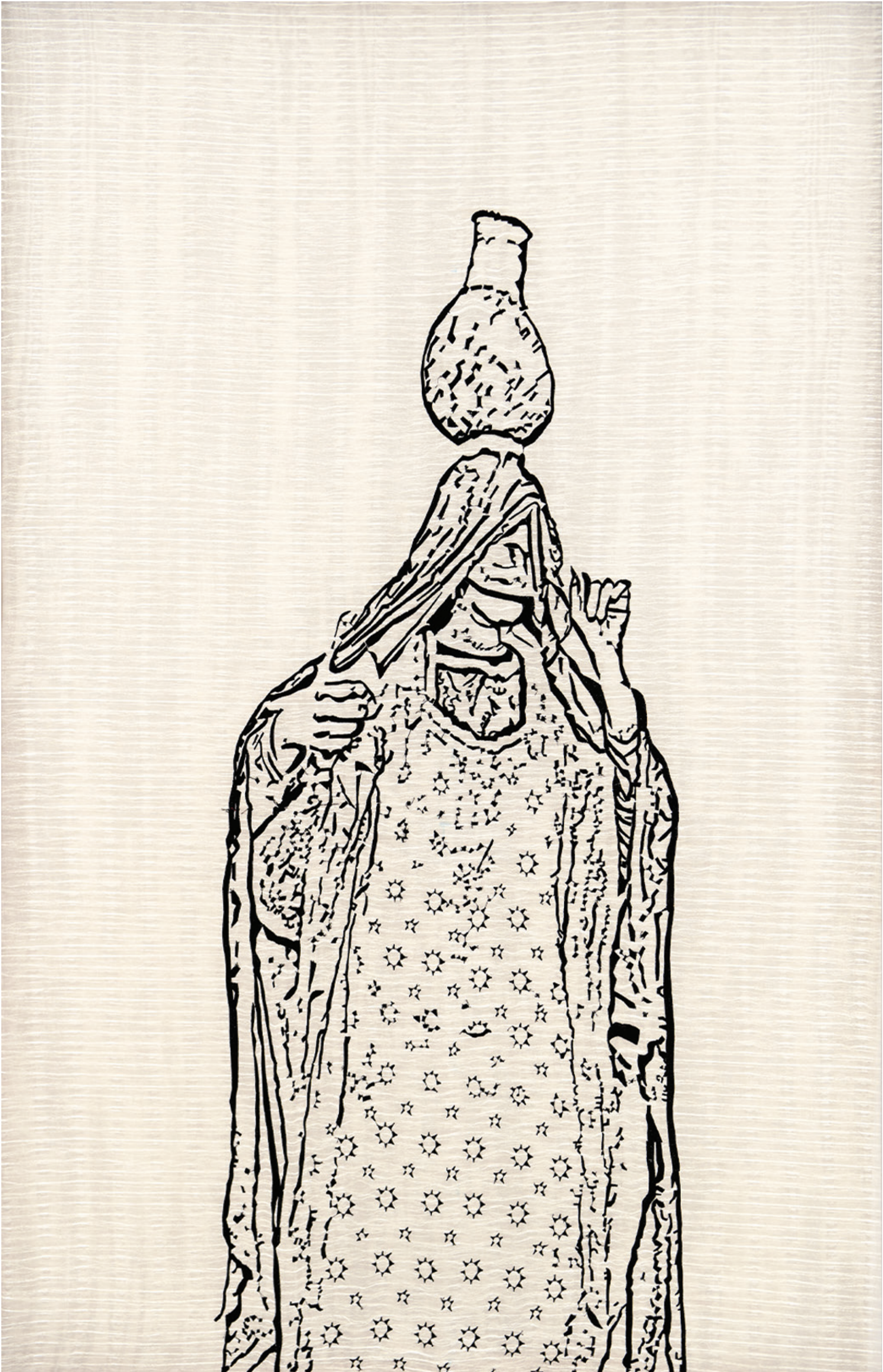
Ayesha Hadhir
The Palm Tree, 2019
30 x 15 cm
Brass and marble
Courtesy of artist



Ayesha Hadhir in
collaboration with
Sheikha Al Ketbi
Dirwaza, 2019
45 x 10 cm
Brass
Courtesy of artist



Ayesha Hadhir
Stone and Brass, 2022
35 x 20 cm
Stones and brass
Courtesy of artist



Ayesha Hahir
Labsat El Bsht, 2020
140 x 100 cm
Embroidery, fabric and
wood
Courtesy of artist

Azza Al Qubaisi

Azza Al Qubaisi is a self-represented multi-disciplinary artist living and working in Abu Dhabi, and enjoys exploration and experimenting with materials and techniques focusing on local and natural materials. She is most often referred to as the UAE's first Emirati jewelry artist.

Born in Abu Dhabi and educated in London, Al Qubaisi holds an MA in Cultural and creative industries from HCT-CERT and BA in Silversmithing, Jewellery design and allied crafts from London Guildhall.

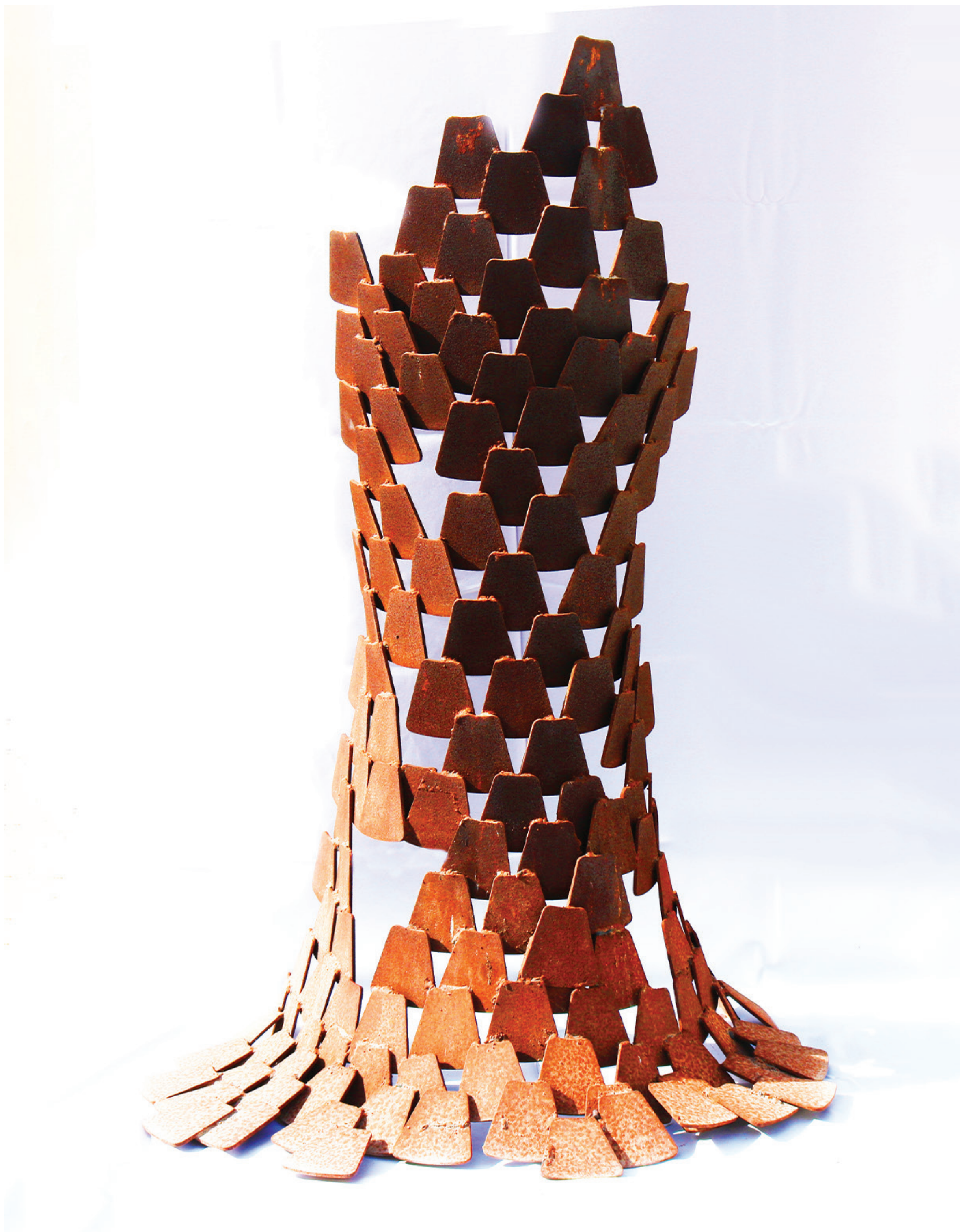
Exhibited locally and internationally in group and solo shows, she represented the UAE in "A 1001 steps Festival" in Helsinki, Finland in 2004 and was the first artist to exhibit in DIFC in 2005. Al Qubaisi exhibited in "Language of the Desert" in Abu Dhabi, "Three Generations" by ADMAF at Sotheby's London and UAE national day exhibition at Expo Milan 2015 and "Portrait of Nation" by ADMAF in Abu Dhabi 2016 and Berlin 2017.

Al Qubaisi's art has been published in several books and publications. Her wearable art from Life series and Bareeq Al Oudh series are published in "500 Earrings: New Directions in Contemporary Jewellery: 2007" by Lark Books.

Awarded locally and internationally, she is a winner of the British council YCE Award, Emirates Women Award in Business and Social Contributions categories.

Al Qubaisi's creations travel the world as an ambassador of Emirati design for many events and competitions such as: HH Sh Mansoor Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Festival, FBM Ladies Sports Academy and Camel Racing Association, Al Dhafra Festival and Million Poet.

The date palm tree was part of the fabric of life in the UAE. This piece is made of kurab (the wide part of the palm branch) which are cut from mild steel and welded together to capture the community and its growth.



Azza Al Qubaisi
*Seeking identity series –
Foundation 2, 2011*
90 x 60 x 135 cm
Mild steel
Collection of the UAE
Embassy in Washington, DC

Bénédicte Gimonnet

Bénédicte Gimonnet (b. Clermont-Ferrand, France, 1969) has lived, worked and been part of the arts ecosystem in the UAE for over 13 years. Bénédicte's painting practice comprises a deliberate explosion of bold colors and technical innovation, mixing supposedly unmixable painting materials together, and creating immersive, intricate and visually seductive environments. Through a recent exploration of personal issues with identity loss and recovery, the artist reconciled with her repressed Peruvian roots, creating new paintings that depict lush and exuberant rainforest environments whose extravagant vegetation acts as an allegory for the mind, mapping a journey of self-discovery and reconnecting with its roots. The strong color palette references Peruvian folklore, while the compositions mimic the Amazonian rainforest that is deliberately not botanically, geographically, or seasonally correct to reflect the diversity of colorful experiences that shape one's individuality and identity.

In the UAE, Bénédicte held several solo exhibitions, including *Confluence* (a collaborative exhibition with Dr. Najat Makki), La Galerie, Alliance Française, Dubai (2021); *Between Macro and Micro*, La Galerie, Alliance Française, Dubai (2019); *Organicus Mundus*, Khalidiya Palace, Abu Dhabi (2011); and *Infinity Small, Infinity Large*, Alliance Française, Abu Dhabi (2009).

Bénédicte's works are in a number of collections around the world, including Goldman Sachs and Women's Museum in Dubai, The Art Circle Collection and Khalidiya Palace in Abu Dhabi, Champagne PG P&F Epernay, France, and Clerical Medical London, UK, in addition to private collections in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, USA, Russia, Australia, Japan and Europe.

Bénédicte Gimonnet

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Brissago I, II, III, IV, V, VI & VII is a polyptych of seven bold and colorful aluminum panels of 160 by 40 cm each, achieved in 2021. Both reminiscent of the UAE landscapes and Peruvian folklore of her childhood, Bénédicte Gimonnet transforms aluminum into fantastical forests of unique elongated patterned palm trees, with supposedly unmixable painting materials – water-based acrylics and solvent-based smooth enamel, ceramic and vitrail paints. Named after the two Swiss islands in Lake Maggiore, *Brissago* polyptych acts as an allegory of the mind and is an ode to the resilience of palm trees. They are staring back at us as we gaze up at them in awe.



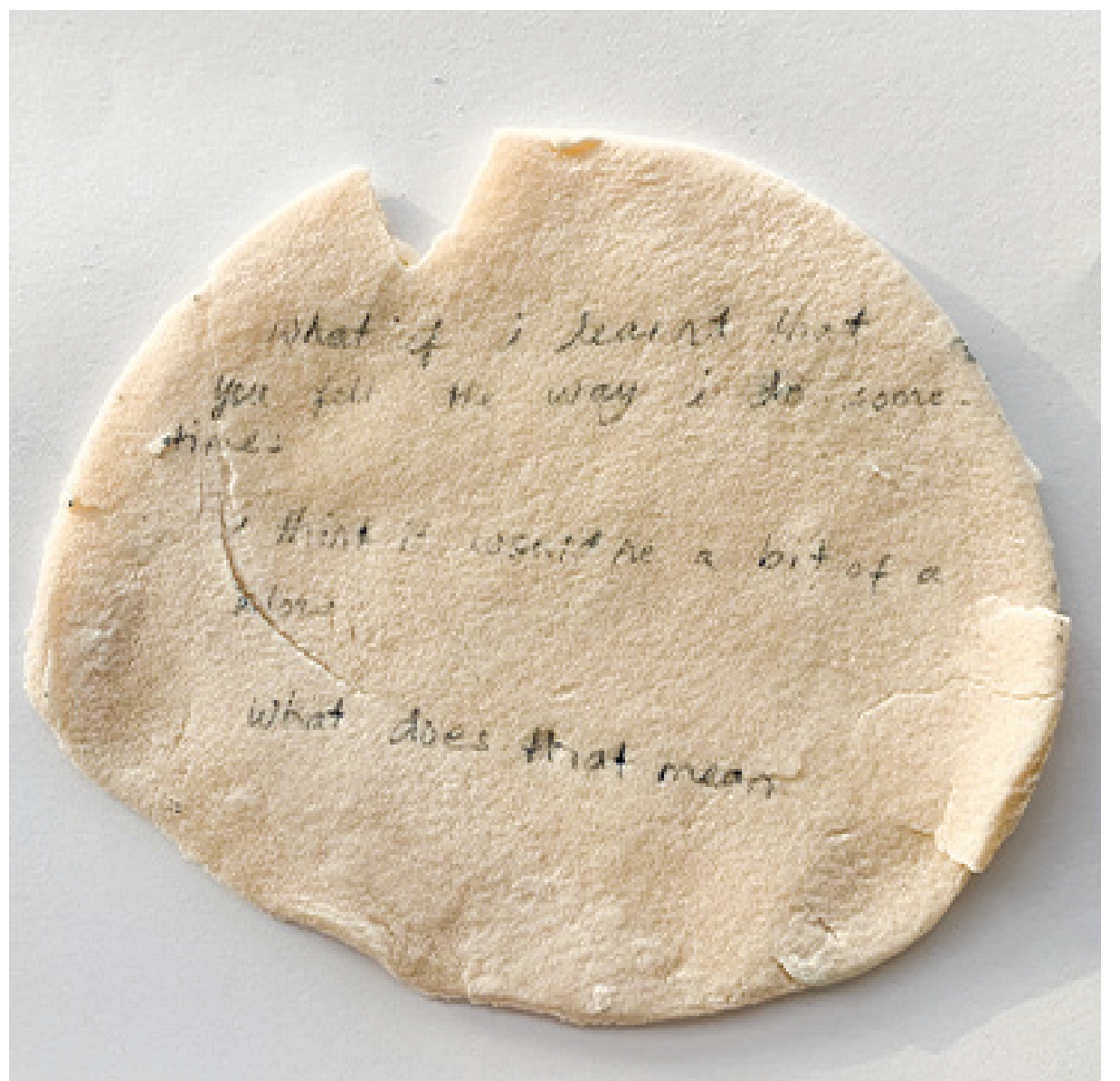
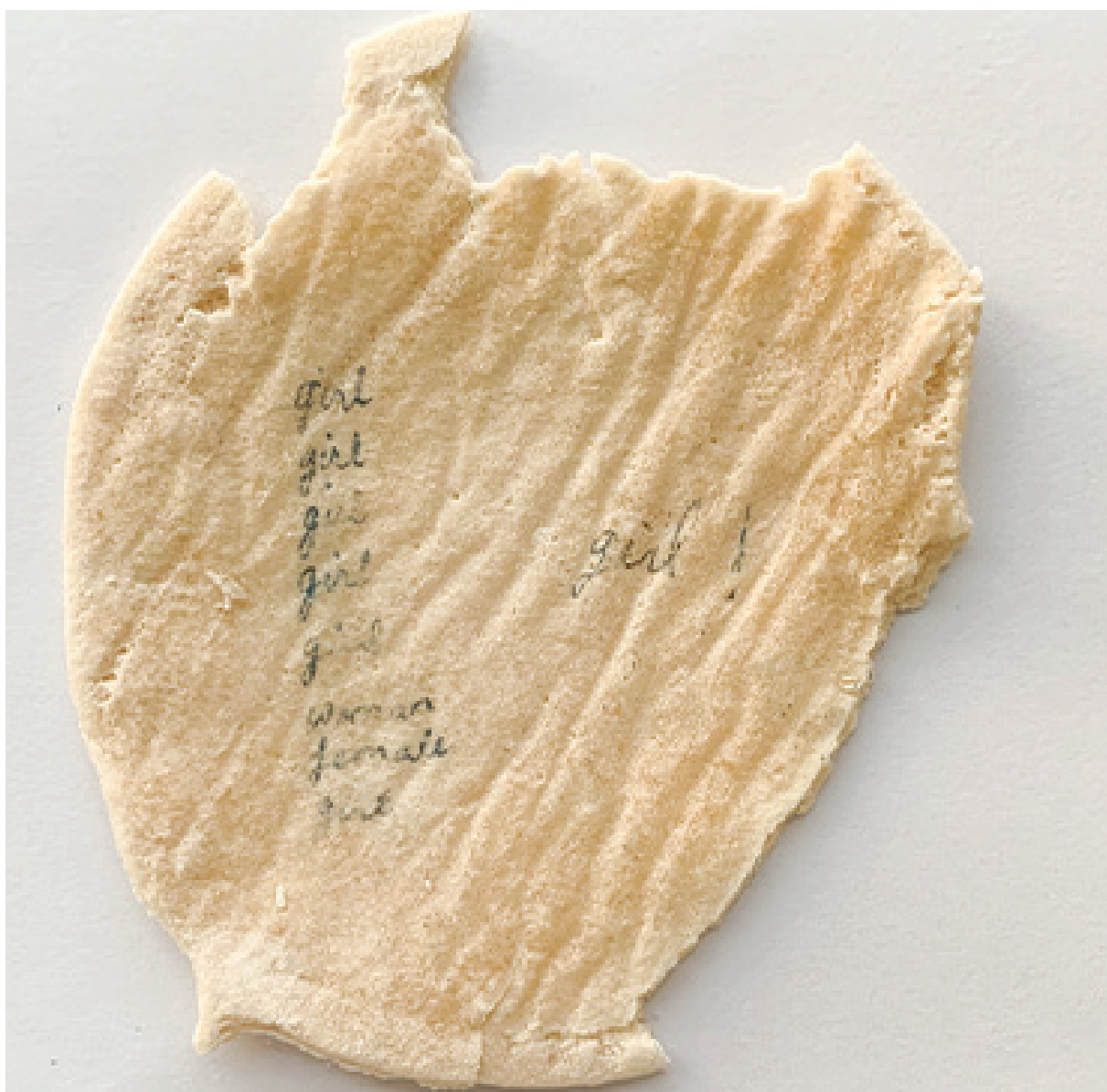
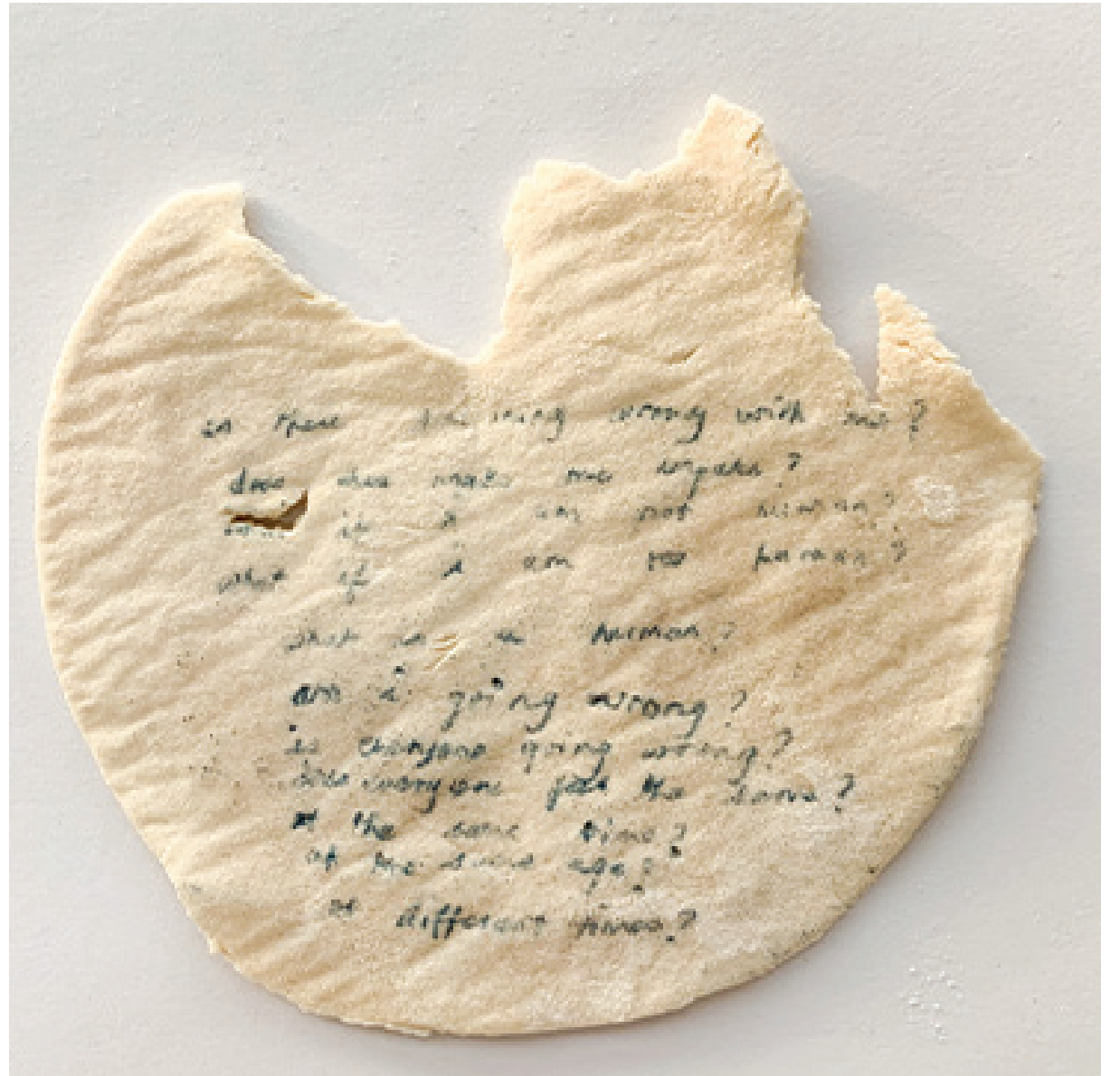
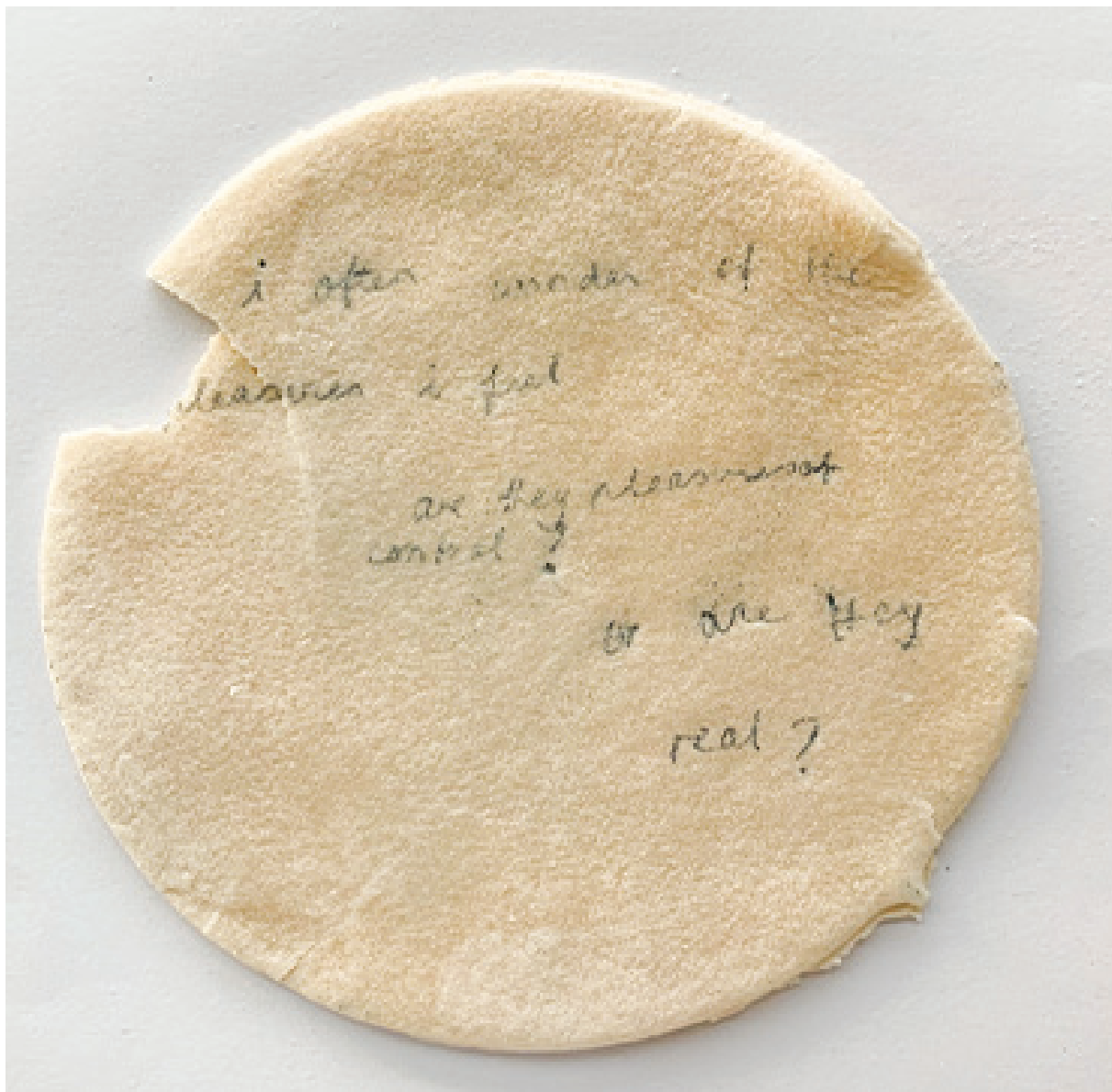
Bénédicte Gimonnet
*Brissago I, II, III, IV, V, VI
& VII, 2021*
120 x 280 cm
Acrylic, enamel and
mixed media on
aluminum panel
Courtesy of artist

Dima Abou Zannad

Dima Abou Zannad (b. 1999, Beirut) makes sentences. She works with documenting, recording and extracting, driven by the need to confess and a compulsion to make a mark. She is drawn to frail and delicate media and the interactions between them. Abou Zannad graduated with a BFA from the University of Sharjah, 2021.

To consume a space, to take up volume, to exist. *Between One and Twenty* was born out of an interest in playfully showing the act of intimately questioning oneself and leaving the questions to be read by another. There is a quality to investigating one's own being and allowing it to be seen in half-coherent, puzzle-like pieces.

“The dough – made of salt, flour, oil and water – is soft, malleable, impressionable, absorptive and even fragile. This homemade salty playdough is mine. The making, kneading, adjusting and coloring of the playdough is all mine. Attachment, the absence of transitional space, and the departure of childhood lead me to understand the term existential – often used in psychoanalytic theories – as a way of proving qualities that provide safety, a way of exerting control, and a metaphor for coping with absence. I get caught in a loop reminiscent of the loop inside of my head. Yet, these thoughts are released and justified in my salty playdough. I repeat the act, sound and mark over and over again, just for the sake of acknowledging its reality. The carbon blue is confined to the particles at the surface of the dry, salty playdough. Apparently permanent but not entirely embedded, revisited but not resolved nor answered, repeated, satiated.”



Dima Abou Zannad
Between One and Twenty,
2020
9.5 cm diameter each
Words transferred in
carbon on salt dough
Courtesy of artist

Fatema Al Fardan

Fatema Al Fardan is an artist committed to seeing the world with curiosity and care. Her art practice is driven by inquiries facilitated through the vessel of research. She holds a dual BA from New York University Abu Dhabi in Economics and in Art and Art History: Art Practice (2020).

Al Fardan is currently an artist in residence at the Cultural Foundation Abu Dhabi (2022-23) and was granted the Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship (2021-22). Her work has been exhibited in Congress Center Basel (2022), Warehouse421 (2021) and Middle East Institute's Art and Culture Center (2020). She won the collaborative Zachary Doss Friends in Letters Memorial Fellowship (2020) and "Best Photo Associated with Sustainability" at the Abu Dhabi Ports Photography Competition (2017). Al Fardan likes to hear stories more than she likes to tell them.

My Turn (2019) is part of a series on her family. It shows the tradition of burning bukhour or oud, usually reserved for special occasions due to its extraction from Aquilaria trees yielding a high monetary value.



Fatema Al Fardan
My Turn, 2019
25.4 x 38.1 cm
Photography
Courtesy of artist

Fatima Uzdenova

Fatima Uzdenova is a Dubai-based artist. She was born in the Karachay-Cherkess Republic in USSR and migrated to the UAE in 1995.

Uzdenova's practice is moored in the idea of a garden as a place of conquest, a spiritual terrain, a source of nourishment, and 'fictive' as a methodology of art production. Her practice ranges from sculpture to performance and walkatives to writing. Fatima holds a MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art, London, United Kingdom. She is an alumna of the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Emerging Artists Fellowship (SEAF) in partnership with Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, United States of America.

The work presented here is part of "All About My Mother," a five-part mixed-media installation commissioned by Art Jameel for the "Staple: What's on Your Plate?" exhibition at Hayy Jameel. In this work, Uzdenova looked at Jeddah (Grandmother) and Mecca (Mother of all Cities) through archetypes of Mother and Wise Woman to explore tangible and intangible heritage and the world(s) we inherit from mothers and grandmothers.

Pilgrimage from the Russian Empire to Makkah via Jeddah brought not only the faithful but also their cultures and culinary traditions. *All About My Mother* distills and reimagines these journeys of Hajj through a range of sculptural objects that carry the stories of their various owners. Historical, theoretical, and personal histories unfold through the ancient bacteria of Ayran, tea-holding Samovars, Hajj Passports and a pair of earrings, all telling stories of journeys from North Caucasus, Central Asia, Istanbul and Damascus.

This work is dedicated to the memory of Uzdenova's grandmothers, Kochkarova Ashura and Dudova Djulduz.



Fatima Uzdenova
All About My Mother, 2021
8.5 cm X 6.5 cm (with velvet
pillow)
14K gold plated handmade
earrings; gouache and gold on
gesso on freshwater baroque
pearl
Painted by Hasnat Mehmood
Commissioned by Art Jameel
Courtesy of artist

Fatma Lootah

Fatma Lootah was born in Dubai and studied art at the Baghdad Art Academy and the American University in Washington, D.C. Fatma lives and works between Verona, Italy, and Dubai, UAE. She first began creating art in 1984 with performance art. She has exhibited her artworks in many countries, including the United States, Italy, France, India, Austria, Germany, Spain, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, Kuwait and the UAE.

Almost all of Fatma's work talks about women, specifically women of her country; this painting focuses on their strength that made them what they are now.



Fatma Lootah
The Conversation, 2019
88 x 169 cm
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of Aisha Alabbar
Gallery

Ghada Al Sayegh

Ghada Al Sayegh is an Emirati artist and designer based in Abu Dhabi. She studied Fine Arts at the Art Institute of Chicago and completed her degree in Interdisciplinary Design at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Through her interdisciplinary practice, Al Sayegh explores various mediums such as digital art and functional art. Her process is anchored in extensive visual research and hands-on material exploration. Al Sayegh experiments with textures, forms and color inspired from her immediate environment and surroundings. Al Sayegh participated in the Zemanna Exhibition at Manarat Al Saadiyat, among other exhibitions.

Bait Alkhalidiya is a self-portrait. The study of the architecture presented in these twin homes is a reflection reminiscent of Al Sayegh's childhood. The architecture of the houses depicted is that of the mass-produced homes of Abu Dhabi in the 1990s. The pastel hues presented are all muted and light but slightly blurred, which signifies faint memories of simpler times, bliss and togetherness.

“As I was creating this piece, I was drawing on sensory memory. Memories of play, along the sidewalks with my cousins; memories of the aroma of the jasmine tree as I enter the gates of the house; memories of togetherness, seeing all of my cousins gather in this small home. This digital painting is a representation of a sacred place and an entrance to the realms of my boundless childhood imagination.”



Ghada Al Sayegh
Bait Alkhalidiya, 2022
22.6 x 42 cm
Digital art on canvas
Courtesy of private collection

Hala Al-Ani

Hala Al-Ani was born in Iraq in 1986. She received her BSc in Visual Communication from the American University of Sharjah, going on to postgraduate studies in Graphic Design and Iconic Research from the University of Illinois, Chicago, and the Basel School of Design, Switzerland.

Her work has been shown in several exhibitions, including the Sharjah Biennial, Istanbul Design Biennial and Amman Design Week. Her work has been recognized by regional and international competitions such as 100 Best Arabic Posters and Type Director's Club. Al-Ani is the co-founder of Möbius Design Studio and is currently an Assistant Professor in Visual Communication at the American University of Sharjah.

The built environment has always been a direct indicator of the economic and cultural aspects of a society. Due to the accelerated development of certain social conditions, Dubai has given rise to an architectural and stylistic imitation that is a reaction to the level of anonymity associated with modernity and industrialization. Referencing recognizable, historical architecture styles is thought to be an appropriate strategy for portraying these social circumstances. Ascertaining this approach marks an emerging identity for the city as a whole and individuals in specific.



Hala Al-Ani
Typology of Houses, 2019
75 x 130 cm
Photography
Courtesy of artist

Hala El Abara

Hala El Abara is interested in the act and process of archiving, the act of making forms concrete and negotiating deterioration. El Abara sees the archive as both medium and subject, a carrier of history and memory, that resists forgetfulness. Through uniting contrasting elements in her work – intimate and decorative embroidery against rigid and enduring mediums such as resin, plastic, and metal – she embodies experiences of yearning that cannot otherwise be made physical. Often these seep into the collective experience of displacement that comes of the Palestinian diaspora. She reconstructs a collective historical photograph into preserved pieces that contain a fabricated imaginary longing for a previously loved and cherished memory. El Abara received her BA in Fine Arts from the University of Sharjah.

Doilies, laces, colorful stitches and embroidery are decorative elements that adorn every Palestinian household. Naturally, El Abara is drawn to the aesthetics of these homely patterns found on the walls and corners of Palestinian homes.

Concerned by the need to preserve and archive memories, El Abara remakes historical and archival photographs into vivid and colorful embroidered images. Patches of pigmented fabrics, screen-printed with archival documents and stitched on top of the familiar and protective clear plastic sheet that adorns household tables, and a translucent sheer fabric.

“The overly decorative element and translucency of the plastic sheet and fabric prevent the reconstructed image from registering as a concrete visual memory, thus preserving it as the object of an archive of longing. The irony of reconstructing previously black and white archival photographs into ‘pretty’ embroideries fabricates the imaginary longing for the previously loved and cherished memory that I and other displaced Palestinians often project.”



Hala El Abora
Archives in Thread—pretty ironic,
2021
60 x 45 cm each
Embroidery on fabric and plastic
Courtesy of artist

Khawla Almarzooqi

Khawla Almarzooqi is a visual artist who works primarily with digital media and paintings. Her work is about gender, femininity and philosophy. Khawla takes her everyday experiences as a woman and translates them into artworks, mixing humor and bright colors with her often grim topics. Khawla's work has been exhibited in Sikka Art Fair, Alhabtoor Palace, Tashkeel, Alserkal Foundation, and Art Jameel. She also published a comic as part of the comic digest "Corniche" organized by Sharjah Art Foundation.

Henna (2022) depicts a scene of a lady waiting for the henna to dry on her feet. Before celebrations, many Emirati women would gather and wear henna and chat as they wait for it to dry, making the evening before the celebration a party on its own. Henna is about gossip and conversation just as much as it is about beauty and adornment.



Khawla Almarzooqi
Henna, 2022
15 x 24 cm
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of artist

Maitha Hamdan

Maitha Hamdan is a multidisciplinary artist who explores her art through different mediums such as performances and art installation. Maitha has found that dealing with fabric and textiles is the common foundation of her artworks and performances in relation to her ideas, thoughts and issues of social boundaries, understanding religion and narrative stories.

Maitha is also a filmmaker. She performs her art in creative directing and her writing expressed in the Arabic language.

Maitha is a graduate fellow artist from Sheikha Salama Bint Hamdan Foundation program “Salama Emerging Artists Fellowship Program Cohort 7”, part of Azyami Program by Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council 2019 and a resident artist at the Cultural Foundation Art Residency Program 2021.

In *Precautions*, Maitha explores the parody of the mundane through the melting of morality and the male gaze. She spotlights a simple act – eating ice cream – through time-based media. The video is still frame, single shot, shaping the upper margins of the artist’s body as she repeatedly devours an ice-cream cone through a veil. The ice cream acts as means of restating gendered norms, repeated, reinforced and remediated as a radical, satirical and pictorial performance.



Maitha Hamdan
Precautions, 2021
03:37
Video
Commissioned by Banat
Collective
Courtesy of artist

Malda Smadi

Malda Smadi (b. Damascus, Syria) is pursuing an MFA in Painting at the Rhode Island School of Design (2023). She completed a BFA in Visual Communication at the American University in Dubai in 2008, and in 2017 was granted a year-long fellowship in Abu Dhabi, UAE with the Salama Foundation Emerging Artist Fellowship. She is the recipient of the 2016 Sheikha Manal Young Artist Award, winning 1st place in the Fine Arts category. Smadi has showcased her work in a number of exhibitions including Sol Koffler (RI, USA), Sotheby's (Dubai, UAE), Alserkal Avenue (Dubai, UAE), Warehouse 421 (Abu Dhabi, UAE) and more.

The monstrous explores anxieties about gender and socio-politics, reflecting on Malda's own experiences and surroundings of being a woman living through a generation of displacement and instability brought on by the social and political climate of the region comprising Southwest Asia. Thinking about the human condition and the duality of good and evil in human nature, the monstrous double references Freudian psychoanalysis of the super-ego and the id in the struggle within a person's ego. The monster is not really a monster – it is a human being with basic desires and needs. It expresses the idea of the uncanny, or that which arouses dread and a creeping horror, what is meant to remain hidden comes to light. Children grow up with stories of boogeymen that in actuality represent death and reflect in one aspect intergenerational fears and the link between ogres and fathers, parents and children, authority figures and subordinates. *Congregation of Monsters* incorporates dark humor, the interesting dichotomy of satire and tragedy, reflecting an outlook on gendered social structures influenced by events from Malda's personal upbringing. The artist is journeying to the underworld to return to her wild, instinctual self where more will be revealed.



Malda Smadi
Congregation of Monsters, 2020
70 x 50 cm
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of artist

Nahla Tabbaa

Nahla Tabbaa is an artist whose practice explores tensions between the urban and the organic, the beautiful and the grotesque. Sensitive to the self-organizing agency of materials, she ventures into the world of immateriality and the intangible through experiments in alchemy and combining elements from the organic and inorganic. Her methods are intentionally slow-paced, meditative and labor intensive and permeate strands of her everyday life to heal and harmonize her otherwise fast-paced life. Nahla works with different mediums such as urban research, the culinary arts, ceramics and drawing.

She earned her MA in Curatorial Practice from the Bath School of Art and Design (2012), and her BFA in Sculpture from Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design (2009). She is the co-founder of The Alchemy of Dyeing (2020), Forsa School (2020) and Daftar Asfar (2017). She is the curator of Rewilding the Kitchen (2021), and Sufra (2018). Her work has been presented at Art Dubai (2022, 2021), East East (2021) Seaf Cohort 8 (2021), Beyn (2021) and 1971- Design Space (2018).

“My ceramic practice stems from this desire to explore symbiotic relationships between myself and the urban and natural worlds. I do this by almost conversing with these environments and coming to collaborative conclusions together. Hand building biomorphic forms felt liberating both for myself and the clay itself and we did this dance where either one of us applied control but also loosened our grip. This series of sculptures I call *Beloved Monsters* stem from this genuine affection for the ugly, the grotesque, the imperfect, the unearthly, and yet beautiful and I see these ‘monsters’ as reflections of that juxtaposed portrait.”



Nahla Tabbaa
Beloved Monsters 1, 2020
10 x 10 x 23 cm
Fire glazed clay sculptures
Courtesy of artist



Nahla Tabbaa
Beloved Monsters 10, 2020
15 x 15 x 20 cm
Fire glazed clay sculptures
Courtesy of artist

Dr. Najat Makki

Najat Makki (b. Dubai, 1956) is a pioneering Emirati artist best known for her curiosity for color and dreamlike, abstracted depictions of the natural landscape in the UAE. What started as childlike wonder led her to Cairo, where she graduated with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in relief sculpture and metal from the College of Fine Arts (1982 and 1998, respectively).

Upon returning to the UAE, the colorist and painter started exploring fluorescent paints through her work in scenography for children at the Ministry of Education, introducing the Gulf to a style of abstract painting that is characterized primarily by large fields of flat, solid color, spread across, creating areas of unbroken surface and a flat picture plane. Her use of this material in contemporary art contexts created an unconventional viewing experience, often accompanied by UV-A lights that elevate matter from canvas in lurid dimensionality. This experimentation was first debuted in her solo exhibition at Al Wasl Club in Dubai in 1987, marking a turning point in her career and gaining her regional recognition.

Makki later returned to the Egyptian capital to pursue a doctorate degree, making her the first Emirati woman to formally specialize in the philosophy of art (2001), adding a theoretical dimension to her practical aptitude and visual flair. Makki has exhibited widely in her home country, but also internationally.

Dr. Najat Makki

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“Women remain my permanent, old and continuous search for feminist figures. It also means the feminist presence and narratives associated with women which appear as repercussions of previous forms in my artwork. In this painting, I dealt with it in a different manner with embedded dimensions through its symbols, shapes and colors that are generally related to the outlines representing the overall structure. The details of this artwork appear far more distinguished than any other artwork when approached from a near distance. I sometimes feel as if there is a voice emerging from these characters speaking and narrating to us some stories – I hope you can imagine with me this voice or this rhythm which we all used to hear when we were young. The symbols’ connotations and implications in each work have their own peculiarity, as well as the colors which materialize in another form and shades.”



Dr. Najat Makki
Feminine Musings, 2011
224 x 224 cm
Acrylic and ink on canvas
Collection of HH Sheikh Zayed
bin Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan

Noura Al Neyadi

Noura enjoys viewing life differently. She finds inspiration in the UAE's modern architecture as well as the nature and culture that she grew up loving. Noura started taking photos using her dad's film camera when she was just 11 years old and has been in love with photography ever since. She has taken on photography assignments locally and internationally. Noura roams the planet exploring different cultures, telling stories and spending her free time in nature.

The series was part of the 50th National Day celebration that took place in Hatta, UAE. Noura took a set of photographs reflecting different aspects of the city, including women.

Faces from Hatta: Khasiba bint Shail

A portrait taken on a calm morning in Hatta under a Prosopis tree. Noura was struck by her golden burqa, almost as much as her descriptions of life in Hatta.

Faces from Hatta: Right to left, Shaikha bint Subaih, Amina Sanquor and Khasiba bint Shail enjoying a morning coffee in Hatta. When Noura first spotted them, she was captivated by the details that took her to her childhood where women would sit outside to chat and catch up. Fans, embroidered cushions, bright henna on Shaikha's feet, and Amina's voice calling Noura to stop taking photos and come over to have some coffee. For Noura, this photograph has indescribable feelings of warmth, motherly love and safety.



Noura Al Neyadi
Faces From Hatta, 2021
25.4 x 38.1 cm each
Photography
Courtesy of artist

Rand Abdul Jabbar

Rand Abdul Jabbar (b. Baghdad, 1990) borrows from and reconstructs the ephemera of place, history and memory, employing design, sculpture and installation as primary mediums of operation. Examining and engaging with historic, cultural and archaeological narratives, she interrogates the fragility of tangible heritage to create and compose forms that draw on artifacts, architecture and mythology. Simultaneously, she explores and contests with individual and collective memory to produce fragmentary reconstructions of historic events and past experiences.

Her work has been exhibited at the Shubbak Festival (UK), SAVVY Contemporary (Germany), Rabat Biennale (Morocco), Biennale d'Architecture d'Orléans (France), Warehouse 421, NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery, and Jameel Arts Centre (UAE). She has also conducted art residencies with the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art (Singapore), Warehouse 421, the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation and the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation (UAE). Abdul Jabbar received a Master of Architecture from Columbia University in 2014.

Earthly Wonders, Celestial Beings (2019- ongoing) approaches archaeological remains and relics as the medium through which knowledge of material culture can be preserved and sustained. Part of an extensive research endeavor engaging ancient Mesopotamian archaeology, architecture and mythology, the work emerges from a study of the formal and material attributes of artifacts encountered in museum collections, archives and across archaeological sites, drawing on and capturing the tales and myths they convey. Setting up a conversation across the past and present in the language of reverberating forms, the work composes a field of discoveries – each object embodying a nascent history, while collectively in dialogue.



Rand Abdul Jabbar
*Earthly Wonders, Celestial
Beings, 2019*
5 x 40 x 10 cm
Glazed stoneware
Courtesy of artist



Rand Abdul Jabbar
*Earthly Wonders, Celestial
Beings, 2019*
11 x 12 x 10 cm
Glazed stoneware
Courtesy of artist



Rand Abdul Jabbar
*Earthly Wonders, Celestial
Beings, 2020*
5 x 7 x 4 cm
Glazed stoneware
Courtesy of artist



Rand Abdul Jabbar
*Earthly Wonders, Celestial
Beings, 2019*
12 x 12 x 10 cm
Glazed stoneware
Courtesy of artist

Sara Ahli

Sara Ahli (b. 1993) is a visual artist based in Dubai, UAE. Having led personal projects in fashion, Ahli has incorporated sculpture as a new branch of her practice. Her sculptural work explores themes of body, memory and discomfort while incorporating a sense of play. Sara examines both skin and body as impressionable vessels. Through staging situations of tension, she tests and exposes the vulnerability and limitations of the human body in the physical world. Exercises of exhaustion and pressure reveal each material body's threshold, excavating the concealed interiors into revealed exteriors.

Ahli held her first solo exhibition, *A Placeless Place*, in 2021 at The Foundry, Dubai, UAE. Additionally, her work has been exhibited at the Sikka Art & Design Festival, Dubai (2022), Aisha AlAbbar Gallery, Dubai (2022) *Made in the Emirates*, Sotheby's, Dubai (2021), and *Community & Critique*, Warehouse 421, Abu Dhabi (2020). In 2020, she completed the Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship (SEAF) as part of Cohort 7, in partnership with the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Sara holds a BFA in Fashion Design from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco. She is currently pursuing her MFA in Glass at Rhode Island School of Design.

Clenched Figures is an ongoing series of exploration in which foreign objects are forced onto a body. The artwork exhibits the body made vulnerable and adaptable under pressure with an imposed object. Exposing the body's vulnerability confronts us with our fragility as human beings and our existential issues about who we are as physical beings in the world. Uniting contrasting objects, the clamp and organic-shaped form create tension and stress while instilling balance, fluidity and a visceral life-like presence.

Sara Ahli
Clenched Figures 4, 2021
10 x 10 x 14 cm
Painted plaster, resin, clamp
Collection of Tareq Al Otaiba



Sara Ahli
Clenched Figures 2, 2021
11 x 9 x 14 cm
Painted plaster, resin, clamp
Collection of Tareq Al Otaiba



Shaikha Al Ketbi

Shaikha Fahad Al Ketbi (b. 1995, Al Ain, UAE) is a visual artist whose multi-media practice spans across photography, drawing and installation art. Her work explores themes of self-awareness and blurs the line between fiction and reality. Her artistic practice involves documenting site-specific rituals within isolated landscapes, which are then contextualized through her vivid dream-like imagery. Al Ketbi graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts, at the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises at Zayed University. She is currently pursuing her Masters of Fine Arts in Global Art Practice at the Tokyo University of the Arts.

Maryool is a painting depicting a hollow Emirati girls' high school uniform. In this work, Al Ketbi looks to interrogate the nature of the human mind and human memory, and in particular she seeks to examine "imposter syndrome," in which individuals doubt their accomplishments and worry that they are a "fraud." This painting was part of a larger installation, *Al Rabia*, that was exhibited in Warehouse421, Abu Dhabi in 2019. Al Ketbi covered walls with paintings, added furniture pieces and undertook ritualistic performances. While audiences viewed her complete work displayed on the walls, Al Ketbi was at the same time producing new pieces in the space during installation. The space featured walls, lined with static and moving paintings depicting scenes from the artist's subconsciousness and dreams, as she seeks to display fabricated recollections of her past, evoking times from her girlhood and her artistic life.



Shaikha Al Ketbi
Maryool, 2019
179 x 89 cm
Acrylic and charcoal on wood
Collection of Rashed Alfalasi

Shamma Al Amri

Shamma Al Amri is an artist from the UAE. She holds two MA degrees, one in Culture and Creative Industries from Abu Dhabi HCT and the second in Contemporary Art Practice from the Royal College of Art in London.

Shamma is an active member of the UAE and regional cultural scene and has founded a number of cultural projects, such as The Nomad Box, Majhool and bleep. She was also a co-founder and member of The Arab Art Saloon in London. Shamma has participated in a number of exhibitions both locally and internationally, including the touring exhibition Past Forward with the Meridian International Center in Washington, DC, Equal Voices in the Room in London, Becoming, Subject Matter Gallery in London, MACBA, From Barcelona to AD, Abu Dhabi Power of Dreams, UAE Pavilion at Expo 2020, Shanghai and United Nations office in China. Her latest solo exhibition was Everything You Can Think of Is True, Al Serkal Avenue, 2019.

Shamma has also completed a SEAF fellowship with the Rhode Island School of Design, a residency with the Delfina Foundation and a residency in Domaine Du Boibuchet, France. Shamma is a recipient of the Cultural Foundation Art Residency 2020 and the Critical Practice Program in Tashkeel 2022.

Shamma Al Amri

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This piece deals with language as the pinnacle of self-expression and internal dialogue versus that of external communication. The two words: one revolving around the other إحساسك meaning “your emotion / your sense / your feeling” and مشكلتك meaning “your issue/your problem ” exposes the nuance of rhetoric. The word “your emotion” revolves around the word “your problem” and creates a continuous shifting of meaning and narrative. The piece also exposes the subtleties of context within languages and across translation.

إحساسك / مشكلتك

“mushkiltak” / “e’hsasak”

(English translation)

“e’hsasak”

your emotion / your feeling / your sense

“mushkiltak”

your problem / your issue

إحساسك مشكلتك

“e’hsasak mushkiltak”

your emotion is your problem

مشكلتك إحساسك

“mushkiltak e’hsasak”

your problem is your emotion



Shamma Al Amri
Your Emotions, Your Problem,
2019
16 x 48 x 17 cm
Stainless steel, glass, DC motor,
LED spot light
Courtesy of artist

Taqwa Alnaqbi

Taqwa Alnaqbi was born in 1994 in Khorfakkan, UAE. She lives in the city of Khorfakkan. Alnaqbi completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the College of Fine Arts and Design at the University of Sharjah in 2016. She finished the Salama Emerging Artists Fellowship in 2018. She works mostly with projects that incorporate handmade papers and mixed media. Her works are inspired by personal experiences that come from her surroundings, which she savors and celebrates through her art.

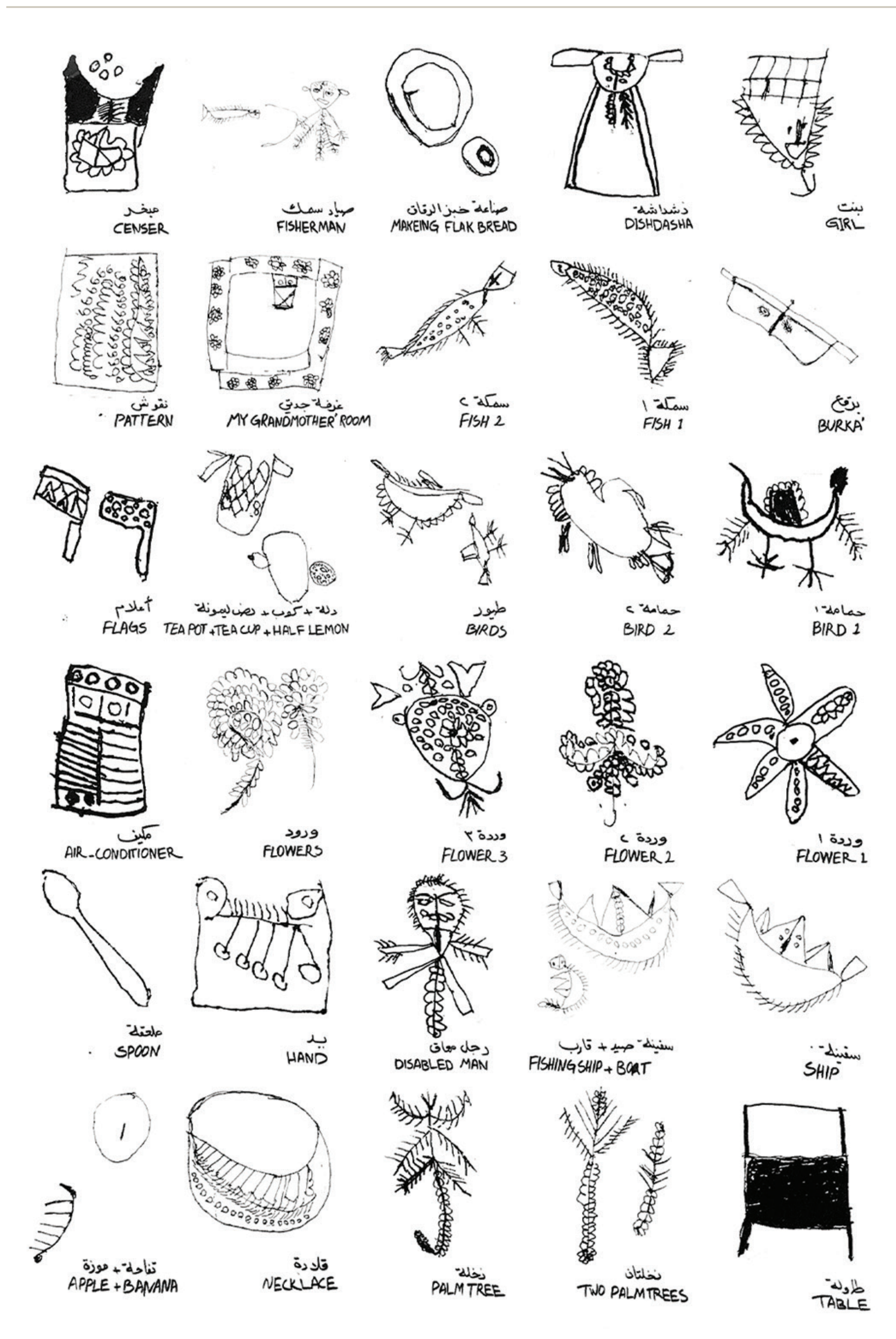
Exhibitions: Sikka Art & Design Festival, Sikka Art Fair, Alfahidi Area, Dubai, UAE, 2022; 37th Annual Exhibition, Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah, UAE, 2021; Beyond: Emerging Artists, Art Abu Dhabi, Manarat Alsaadiyat, Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2018; Community and Critique: SEAF, Warehouse 421, Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2018; 35th Annual Exhibition, Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah, UAE, 2018; Transition, Reconnecting Art, Menior Gallery, London, UK, 2017. Is Old Gold? Exhibition, DUCTAC, Dubai, UAE, 2017; Art Nomad - Made in the Emirates Exhibition, Berlin, Germany, 2016; Visions Of The Future, Etihad Modern Art Gallery, Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2016; Sheikha Manal Young Artist Award, City Walk Dubai, Dubai, UAE, 2016; Exit 11, College of Fine Arts and Design, Sharjah, UAE, 2016; Budapest Art Market in Hungary, 2015.

Taqwa Alnaqbi

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“My work is inspired by personal experiences that come from my surroundings – it savors these experiences and celebrates them. This project celebrates the teachings of my elders. My Grandmother’s Drawings Key is inspired by my grandmother and her illustrations, emphasizing her hand gestures while drawing. Her drawing is executed on handmade paper that I made for her. The drawings are meant to represent the identity of an old Emirati woman born and raised in the Khorfakkan environment.

In this case, my grandmother uses her hands to expose her memories through drawing. The project also shows that in her elderly state, her sensibility has become more childlike demonstrated by her drawings. These drawings represent the life of an elder Emirati woman.”



Taqwa Alnaqbi
 My Grandmother's Drawings Key,
 2015
 89 x 59 cm
 Silk screen print and handwriting
 Courtesy of artist

Zainab Imad Eddin

Zainab Imad Eldin is a Sudanese artist and designer based in the UAE. She uses art to help make sense of her identity as a Sudanese woman while exploring the struggles encountered in Sudanese society. She uses materials that have significance in Sudanese culture and transforms them to create a specific dialogue surrounding these issues.

This work investigates internal racism amongst Sudanese people, more commonly termed colorism, through the lens of a black, Muslim and Sudanese woman. Racism in Sudan transcends skin color, its roots settled in one's ancestry, tribe, and religion. In Sudan, a spectrum of words is used to describe each shade of skin color, commonly used in a racial context. The primary ones are 'ahmar' (red), 'asfar' (yellow), 'asmar/bunni' (brown), 'akhdar' (green) and 'azrag' (blue). Over time, the spectrum expanded to include names of particular shades of a skin color. While they are referred to when describing someone, they are also used in a derogatory manner.

It is a much more difficult struggle for women, who have to deal with social pressure about looking a certain way. As a result, many find themselves using harmful chemicals to satisfy these impossible standards, erasing their color and subjecting themselves to potential harm.

The color blue is particularly notorious because it's used to describe South Sudanese. Blue refers to blue-black, the darkest shade before black. The artist chose the four primary colors on the scale and took them by face value to question the existing scale, and highlight the absurdity of discrimination.



Zainab Imad Eldin
Colored Black, 2020
24 pieces of A1 size paper
Medium ink on acetate,
reproduced on photo paper
Courtesy of artist

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