

THE  
FARJAM  
FOUNDATON



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RATI

CONCEPTS  
AND  
THE DIVINE  
ABSTRACT

MO  
DER

FROM THE  
FARJAM  
COLLECTION

N  
MASTERPIECES



# THE FARJAM FOUNDATON



The Farjam Foundations a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization. Engaging and fostering a cross-cultural dialogue, inspired through art and culture, is an integral part of the Foundation's purpose and mission. The Foundation's private art collection, The Farjam Collection, accentuates the core of the Foundation's work, featuring Islamic and pre-Islamic, Contemporary Middle Eastern, as well as Modern and Contemporary Art.

Embarking on a timeless journey through the history of art, The Farjam Collection embodies a fusion of cultures and traditions between East and West.

The Islamic section encompasses the entire history of Islam, assimilating an array of objects produced from Andalusia to Mughal Indian territories. The assortment of treasures includes: Islamic manuscripts, miniatures and illustrated books on science, mathematics and poetry, as well as finely decorated metalwork, lacquer, glasswork, tiles, glazed pottery, woodwork, textiles, coins, jewellery, and fine carpets.

The Modern and Contemporary Middle-Eastern section of the Collection is the foremost of its kind, comprised of iconic works by the modern masters of the region. From established to emerging to cutting edge, the artists featured mirror the rich, dynamic Middle-Eastern art scene.

The Foundation participates with local universities and international institutions to encourage and develop a cultural understanding through education and artistic dialogue. The Foundation hosts tours and specialized programmes for young scholars and universities. Its initiatives enhance a broader understanding of global differences through a curriculum of artistic programmes, promoting tolerance between nations.

Since its inception, the Foundation has collaborated in a variety of meaningful projects with renowned organizations, working alongside the United Nation's World Food Program, Dubai Cares, The Prince of Wales Charity Trust and other international charitable institutions.

The Farjam Foundation is a patron of The Prince's School of Traditional Arts and underwrites the post of Farjam Curator of Islamic Arts at the British Museum. Its principal objective is to connect the world through cultural, intellectual, and educational experiences.

All exhibitions and programmes are free, non-political and open to the public. The Farjam Foundation's flagship DIFC space houses a series of alternating thematic exhibitions to showcase The Collection and related educational programmes to the public.

**Curated by Marjan Farjam**

## INTRODUCTION

### BY REEM GHAITH FEDDA, DIRECTOR, CULTURAL FOUNDATION, DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND TOURISM, GOVERNMENT OF ABU DHABI, UAE

Under the patronage of the Farjam Foundation, 'Concepts and the Divine Abstract' brings together a striking dialogue between three generations of exceptional artists that have shaped the UAE's contemporary arts scene and continue to do so. These selected works from the Farjam Foundation collection offer us a means to investigate questions of materiality, existentialism, time, memory and space in a rapidly changing cultural landscape.

Since the UAE's independence in 1971, the country witnessed a rush of infrastructural development and drastic cultural transition. This was accompanied by a grassroots artistic movement in multiple circles. Less than a decade after independence, local artists, writers and poets deeply engaged with what it meant to be confronted with the language -and attitudes of "newness". This period embodied their emerging discourses surrounding the influx of material growth of the new modern nation.

Among the artists were Hassan Sharif, Hussain Sharif, Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, Mohamed Kazem, Abdul Rahim Salim and Abdul Qader Al Rais. While some were entirely self-taught, these artists met with a multitude of opportunities to further their artistic practice and were granted scholarships abroad to receive higher education in the visual arts, supported by the UAE government. Coming from varying educational backgrounds in their artistic fields, their artistic circles were filled with debates on the complexities between traditionalism and the avant-garde. As founding members of the Emirates Fine Arts Society, they were able to gain wider support to cultivate other younger emerging artists and showcase their work throughout international frameworks. How-

ever even outside institutional resources, they were active in creating and organizing public group shows. In 1983, Abdulrahim Salim, Hassan Sharif, Hussain Sharif and Abdul Latif Moudi, presented their works together for the first time in the Al Ahli Club, Dubai. The exhibition titled '-/+ (Minus/Plus)' was regarded as one of the earliest public shows of the first generation of Emirati artists and set the tone for the region's New Arts movement.

Such expressions were able to develop further, under Hassan Sharif's Mreijeh Art Atelier in Sharjah (1984), and later his Satwa house in the late 1980s which invited artists, and cultural intellectuals to gather and exchange. By the 1990s, Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim followed and opened his own teaching Atelier in Khorfakkan.

In the early 1990s, a sand dune located on the border between Ajman and Sharjah, became a frequent gathering spot for the closely-knit community of Emirati intellectuals, poets and artists. They called it "Sand Palace", which remained active until 1996. In this fleeting moment, an undefined space in the desert seemingly gave them more comfort than the growing urban landscape. In fact, many of the artists including Hassan Sharif, Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim and Mohamed Kazem, turned to natural landscapes to explore notions of existentialism and materiality. In the desert of Hatta, especially from 1982-84, Hassan Sharif performed everyday gestures into calculated, intentioned acts of ritual to de-code structures of logic and expression. Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim's work reflects his lifelong relationship with the landscapes of Khorfakkan. Using symbols that are responses to the mountains and winding roads that he is familiar with in his paintings and sculptures.

Mohammed Kazem is a lifelong friend of Hassan Sharif and in Kazem we see a continuation of his explorations into existentialism and materiality but also the opposition between nature and the rapid urbanization. Kazem's paintings are reflections of his study of various schools and traditions including impressionist and post-impressionist painters. He moved away from this into an exploration of minimalism and experimentation very much like his mentor Hassan Sharif resulting in his works scratches on paper. In comparison his explorations into nature were – similarly to Hassan Sharif and Mohamed Ahmed – a response to his interactions with them. As we see in the Directions series, which comes after a personal traumatic incident, where he was lost at sea for over half an hour before being located.

We can see parallels in the collective nature of working between the pioneering generation and the new generation of artists. With artists such as Hashel Lamki and Afra Al Dhaheri having worked collectively as part of BAIT15. Spaces like BAIT15 also allowed for an integration between generations, allowing the younger generations of artists to invite the likes of Moham-

med Al Mazrouie, Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim, Mohammed Kazem and Hassan Sharif to partake in exhibitions and dialogue between generations.

These artists who are considered the pioneers of conceptual art in the UAE mainly used photography to document their work and their everyday lives. This however evolved into a photography movement including works of leading artists such as Lamyah Gargash, Farah Al Qassimi, Hashel Al Lamki and Meera Huraiz. These artists document their realities through photography assessing various public and private spaces in the UAE.

The Farjam Foundation's collection focus on Emirati artists evident in 'Concepts and the Divine Abstract' maps that intricate history from the pioneers to the younger generation. It documents and exhibits this continuation of a legacy of criticality, self-assertion, and a search for natural poeticism. Ultimately, it foregrounds the deep roots of the artistic landscape with powerful works by avant-garde artists that tell a deep story of this time and place.

## EMIRATI CONTEMPORARY ART IN THE FARJAM COLLECTION

by Sara Safwan, Curator, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. Founder and Curator, Banat Collective.

The late 1980's were blossoming with artistic creation and movements in the Emirates. An older generation of artists including Abdulrahim Salem, Hassan Sharif, Hussein Sharif, Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim and Mohammed Kazem were the avant-garde creatives of their time, pioneering a new artistic and visual language through painting, performance, photography and land-art, the likes of which the Emirates had not witnessed before. Establishing critique and experimentation was at the forefront of their practices, meeting frequently with many other notable artists at the Satwa House in Dubai and regularly collaborating and exhibiting at The Flying House and Emirates Fine Art Society, both in Sharjah. Community and critique was, and continues to be, a catalyzing force in the UAE arts landscape. This generation along with other artists such as Abdul Qader Al Rais, laid the foundations for the current burgeoning artists who are now pushing the boundaries of contemporary art within the Emirates. Hassan Sharif, said to be the pioneer of conceptual art in the Emirates, taught and shared his knowledge and views, shaping the practices of his students and peers. His philosophical musings and mentorship are still echoed within the contemporary artistic landscape that we know and experience today.

Contemporary art in the UAE has grown and developed over the past decades much like its urban landscape. From the mountains of Khor Fakkan, the quaint neighborhoods of Sharjah and the humble yet affluent capital city of Abu Dhabi, reside artists who are in constant dialogue and exchange with their environments, as well as each other. Artists such as Afra Al Dhaheri, Alyazia Nahayan Al Nahyan, Hashel Al Lamki, Farah Al Qasimi, and Lamy Gargash, Meera Horaiz and Shaikha Al Mazrou represent the younger group of artists within The Farjam Collection. Their practices and

paradigms reflect on the contemporary identity of the UAE, supported by a growing number of art institutions, commercial galleries and grass-root initiatives, that continue to expand the country into an influential force across the global arts landscape. From Abdulrahim Salem's abstract figures, Afra Al Dhaheri's architectural investigations, Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim's esoteric forms to Farah Al Qasimi's inquisitive lens, these artists amongst many others, illustrate their unique perspectives to the world.

Many of the artists in the collection, such as Afra Al Dhaheri, Mohamed Kazem, Meera Horaiz, Farah Al Qasimi and Lamy Gargash, undertake an exploration of the rapid transformation of the UAE's natural spaces into urban ones. These artists offer an introspection of the internal and external, private and public, memory and the forgotten. Al Dhaheri's *Absent Yet Present* (2020), is an architectural investigation, in which she preserves an old door frame from her family home destined to be disposed of for a new, modern replacement. She alters it by removing and replacing its structures, now only supported by a counter-balance mechanism in the form of a solitary brick, a reminder of the fragility of the past and how its signifiers are easily gutted and forgotten. In Al Qasimi's *Winter Fog* (2016), Gargash's *Untitled* (2009) and Horaiz's *Behind Closed Doors* (2008), these photographic explorations capture both the physical inside and outside, blanketed in a ghostly haze that overshadows the compositions. The fuzzy and obscured photographs are a reminder of the uncertainty of memory and how places and things of significance can be quickly forgotten and lost. Within these voids and through these artworks, we are able to observe the effects of a particular time on place and culture. Ultimately, these work to varying degrees and measure, question the consequences of the UAE's approach to time and the impact on its society's ability to retain its culture, heritage and memory under the pressure of relentless transition.

The Farjam Collection also includes Hassan Sharif's Spoons and Copper Wire (2012) in which he created a sculptural installation consisting of bent spoons, strewn together with copper wire. The spoons used in the piece, mostly found in cheap home-ware stores, are ubiquitous and familiar to those who have walked the streets of the UAE's neighborhoods or in the homes of the country's residents. Within his Object series, they are often described by Sharif as 'illustrations of meaninglessness', through his laborious act of layering, twisting and interweaving a myriad spoons around the copper wire, the artist strips the object of its initial, functional identity and re-purposes them into an artwork. Indeed, the artist was heavily inspired by the Fluxus movement which sought to breakdown elitist attitudes of art society and encouraged accessible ways of seeing and creating art, his Object series is very much inscribed in this vein of thought. A multitude of these banal and common objects that are seemingly infinitely disposable and re-purchasable are now fused together through labor and time, creating a singular, unique object of meaning and history yet no longer of any functional purpose. Sharif's Objects and the Spoon series are his response to an age of hyper-consumerism and a reflection of our present culture of the insatiable desire to want more and the abandonment of meaning and value.

Throughout the collection, various works are focused on elements of abstraction such as Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim's primordial drawings, Abdul Qader Al Rais' colorful compositions and Hussein Sharif's repetitive gestures. Abstraction continues to be a visual language which many artists from the Emirates explore.

It is a mode of expression which emphasises color, shape and the reduction of form, evoking a connection to the spiritual or nature. For example, Abdulrahim Salem, both a painter and sculptor, engages in both the figurative and the abstract. In the early 1980's, Salem began using a mixture of ink, paint and charcoal for his paintings. The resulting works are an experimental foray into light and shadow, the medium of painting and its conceptual boundaries, nestled in the tensions between the abstract and figure. In Untitled (2013) a vague figure is seemingly caught within his brushstrokes as light is cast on to the floor, reflected through a window. The works are for the audience alone to decide what they represent or mean, if anything. Kazem also explores shadow and light in his paintings Even the Shade Does not Belong to Them (2018) however he makes its meaning clear. The painting depicts a dark construction site, revealing the unseen and isolated environment of the UAE's blue-collar workers. This work pointedly reminding us of the conditions these men must work in to create 'the new' while also reminding us of the lack of agency they have within the UAE's rapid development.

This selection of work from The Farjam Collection invites us to understand the progression and development of contemporary art within the Emirates, providing an insight into the historical, societal and cultural fabric of the country. With the patronage and support of Dr. Farjam and the Farjam Foundation, the exhibition: Concepts and the Divine Abstract, showcases a unique profile of contemporary art including a diverse, yet familial visual vocabulary that rose from the corners





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## ABDUL QADER AL RAIS

(b. 1951, UAE)

Abdul Qader Al Rais was self-taught, he initiated his artistic crossing by imitating the works of great masters.

Al Rais was particularly attracted to Rembrandt's exploration of light and shadow. He was also fascinated by Raphael's techniques and reflected these within his own works, ultimately helping him to sculpt his own 'vocabulary of heritage', recognized by his abstracted shapes and patterns and calligraphic letters that he has continued to experiment with in colour, line and perspective.

Al Rais draws inspiration from the UAE, he captures and demonstrates the nation's history through his captivating use of watercolour; delicate, intricate lines and temperate colours are a testament to both his technique and the nation's past.

With this effective use of water colour, Al Rais illustrates traditional houses, colossal wooden doors, placid fishing boats and vast pebbly landscapes. He effectively narrated the earlier society of the region, documenting precious moments and places that lead up to the nation's formation and swift development.

In his more recent work, Al Rais transitions into abstraction, laying geometric and calligraphic forms over realist imagery. Al Sakeena of his Serenity Series exemplifies the style of his latest works. His signature use of small floating squares, which also appear in his realist work, complements abstracted calligraphic forms hinted at under vibrant colours. The use of watercolour, his medium of choice, gives the work a fragile and mystical quality.

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**ABDUL  
QADER  
AL RAIS**

Provenance:  
Acquired directly from the artist

UNTITLED  
Oil on canvas, 200 x 300 cm, 2011

# ABDUL RAHIM SALEM

## ABDUL RAHIM SALEM

(b. 1955, UAE)

Abdulrahim Salem is a pioneering Emirati artist who played a pivotal role in shaping the arts scene in the UAE. One of the early pioneer painters and sculptors of the UAE, Abdul Raheem Salem is attributed as one of the founders of the Emirates Fine Art Society.

Born in Dubai, Salem moved to Bahrain following his father's death. Bahrain's art development was established earlier than the UAE, and Salem's artistic talent first attracted attention when, at the age of 14, he was invited to exhibit a series of sandstone sculptures at the Bahrain Annual Fine Arts Exhibition. He returned to the UAE and became a public school art teacher and followed to become the Chair of the Emirates Fine Arts Society.

Over the years, Salem has explored performance art as well as installation art with fellow artist and pioneer Hassan Sharif.

Salem has been widely exhibited regionally and internationally, including: the 56th Venice Biennale, UAE Pavilion (2015); the Asian Art Biennial (Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1995); and two editions of the Cairo Biennale (Egypt, 1988, 1992).

Furthermore, he has received many awards, including first prize at the Sharjah Biennial (1993); the Jury Prize of the Cairo Biennale (1993); the Bangladesh Silver Award (1994); the Sultan Bin Ali Al Owais Cultural Award (1995); and the Palme d'Or award for GCC artists in 1996.

His work is represented in the collections of the Sharjah Art Museum, ADMAF (Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation), ADNOC in Abu Dhabi, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and at the Jordan National Museum.

In 2018, the artist participated in Artists and the Cultural Foundation: The Early Years, Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation.

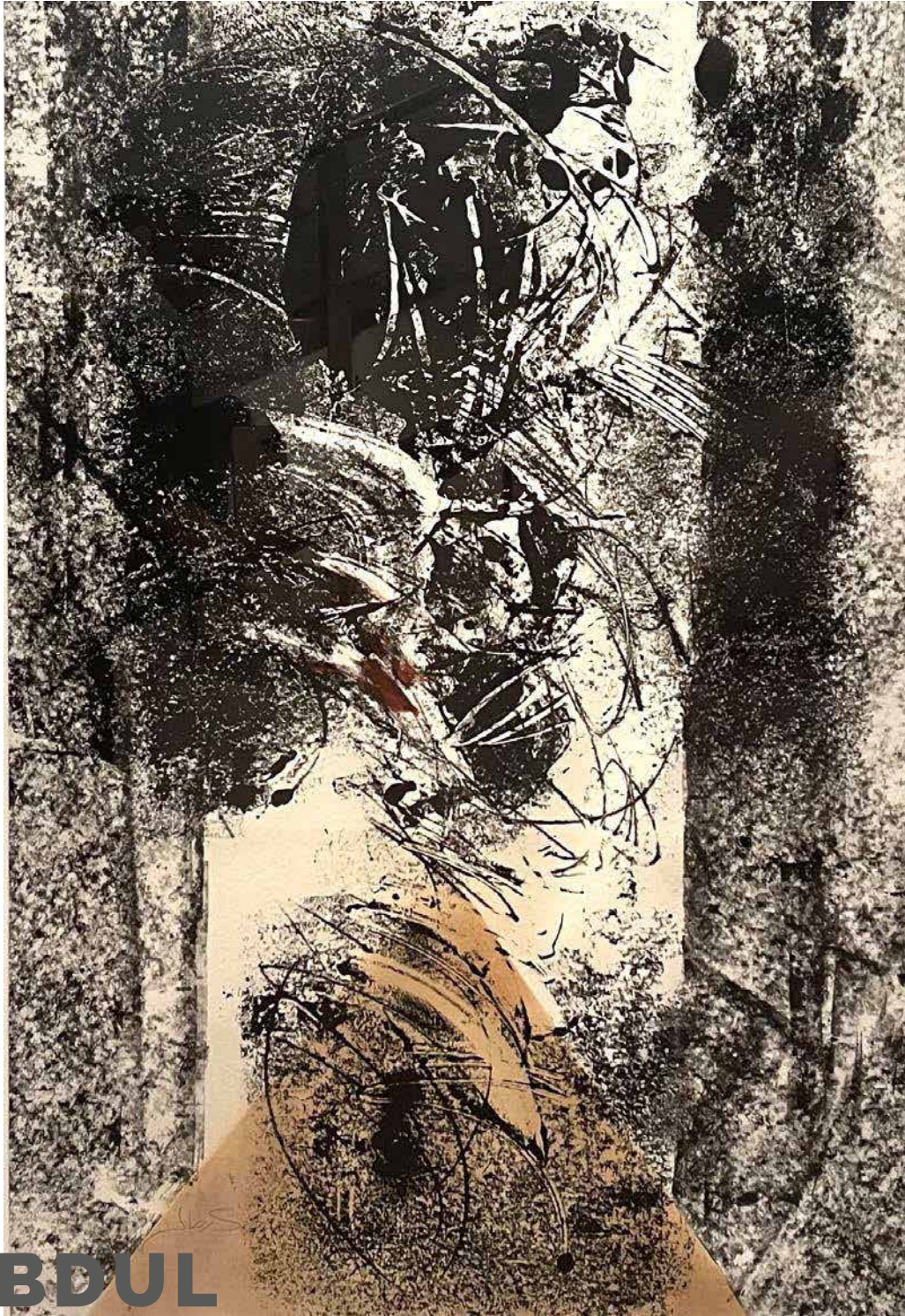


**ABDUL  
RAHIM  
SALEM**

PROVENANCE:  
Acquired directly from the artist

UNTITLED  
Ink on paper 142 x 111 cm | 2013





**ABDUL  
RAHIM  
SALEM**





PROVENANCE:  
Acquired directly from the artist

UNTITLED  
Ink on paper | 97 x 66.5 cm | 2015

## AFRA AL DHAHERI

(b. 1986, UAE)

Afra Al Dhaheri's work is rooted in her experiences growing up in Abu Dhabi and the wider UAE – a place of recent and rapid change. Working across various mediums including mixed media, sculpture, drawing, painting, installation, photography, and printmaking, Al Dhaheri draws out notions of time and adaptation, rigor and fragility. Al Dhaheri's art is both fixed on architectural intricacies and keen to tear them down.

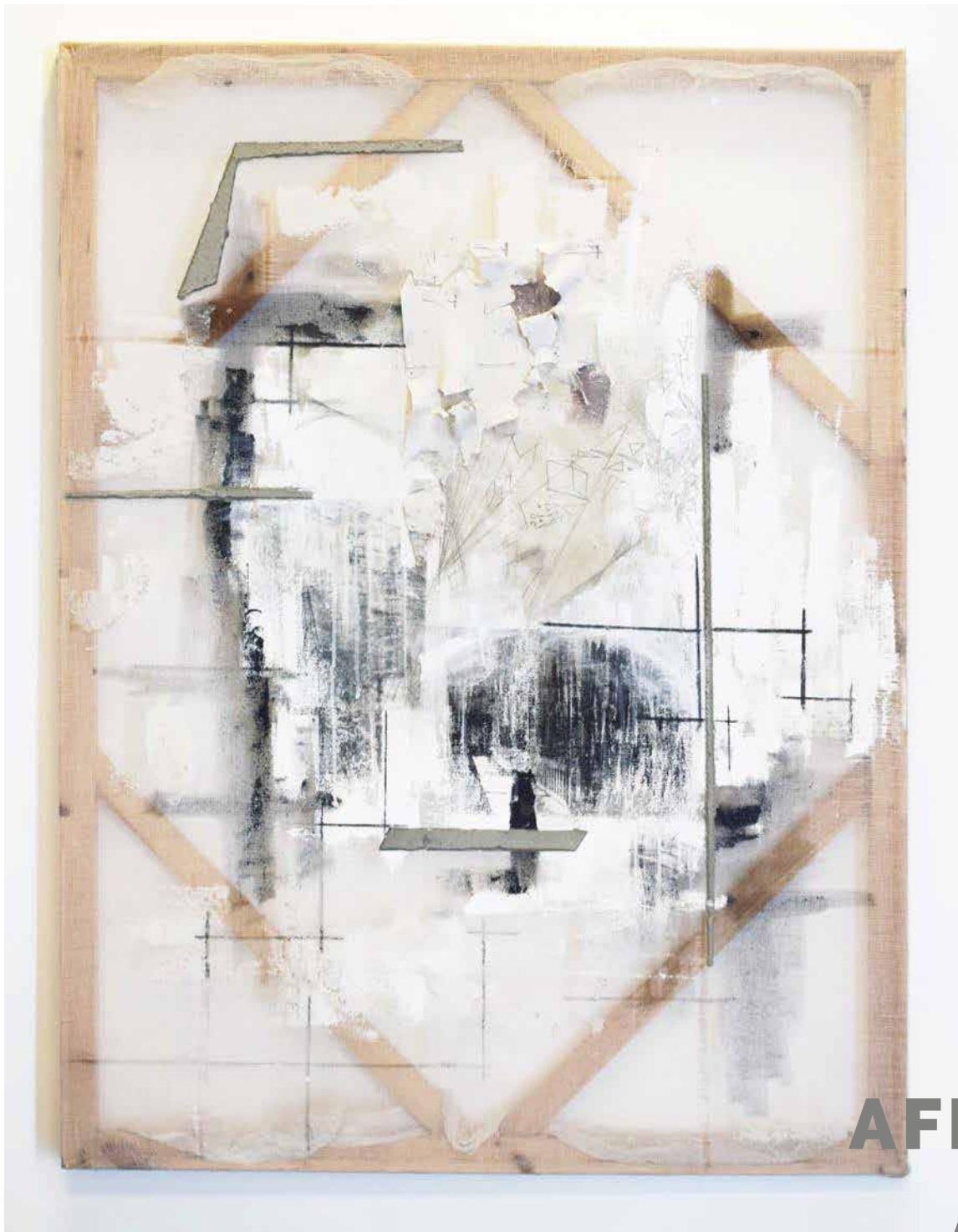
Al Dhaheri obtained her MFA from Rhode Island School of Design, USA in 2017 and received a fellowship from The Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship, in partnership with the Rhode Island School of Design in 2014 and completed a residency Porthmeor Studios, St. Ives, Cornwall, UK (2019).

*Absent yet Present* is a personal work, encasing personal references and memories. The work was first exhibited in Al Dhaheri's solo exhibition, *Split Ends*, Green Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE (2021).

The base semi-circle of the door is in fact an inverted window frame, which is normally paradoxically placed on top of doors. The window frame was from Al Dhaheri's family house in Al Ain. The home was initially built 20 years ago, however construction was halted for 16 years and all the new material intended for construction, including the window frame, weathered. She found that all the frames had to be replaced with new ones, despite never having been used.

When Al Dhaheri saw the old material it triggered questioning of what is old and what is new? How was it labeled old when it was never actually used, inhabited or 'placed into action'? Having experienced no life, 16 years later, the window frame was routinely set to be replaced.





**AFRA  
AL  
DHAHERI**

**PROVENANCE:**  
Green Art Gallery, Dubai

**THOUGHTS ON FABRIC**  
Acrylic, graphite, charcoal, cement and oil on Cheesecloth  
120 x 90 cm | 2016

# AFRA AL DHAHERI



”

I KNEW THAT I WANTED TO CREATE SOMETHING WITH THE FRAME, IT HELD THE MEMORY OF A HOUSE THAT WAS ABANDONED FOR 16 YEARS AND THEN REINSTATED. IT SAT IN MY STUDIO FOR A FURTHER 2 YEARS BEFORE A PIECE WAS CREATED, I KNEW I WANTED TO CREATE AN UPSIDE-DOWN DOOR. WHEN WORKING ON MY SOLO SHOW [SPLIT ENDS, GREEN ART GALLERY, 2021]—I SET UPON THE IDEA OF BOUNDARIES. HOW BOUNDARIES EXIST WITHIN SOCIETIES COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING BUT ARE ABSENT TO THE EYE. I WAS CREATING A DOOR THAT HAS A HANDLE, IT CAN CLEARLY N BE OPENED AND CLOSED, A LOCK THAT EXISTS, YET DESPITE ALL THESE RESTRICTIONS, YOU CAN CLEARLY AND EASILY SEE THROUGH THE DOOR. THERE IS A LOT TO DIGEST IN THE PIECE, WITH THE DOOR BEING UPSIDE DOWN, AS WELL AS ABSENT – LINKING STRONGLY TO REFERENCES OF CULTURALLY DEVELOPED BOUNDARIES THAT EXIST AND DON'T EXIST SIMULTANEOUSLY. “

AFRA AL DHAHERI, 2021

## ALYAZIA NAHAYAN AL NAHYAN

(b. 1988, UAE)

Alyazia Nahayan Al Nahyan has been exhibited across the region and internationally, including at Art Dubai, Abu Dhabi Art and as part of 'Emirati Expressions I' in 2009. Her debut solo exhibition 'Dialogue' was held at Artspace, Abu Dhabi in 2011.

A key theme that transitions through-out Al Nahyan's practice is juxtapositioning the antique and old, with the modern and current. For example in Weather Report (2021) and SMS (2011), we can see the effective use of relics and hieroglyphic replications entangled with the use of electronic and modern signage. The representation of two contrasting ideas and times is connected to a focal theme of 'mis-mashing' cultures and intentionally placing old with new.

*"The unique works of Sheikha Alyazia capture elements of heritage and modernity, uniting them to create a harmonious interpretation of old meets new. It is perhaps fitting that, as a prominent Emirati, Sheikha Alyazia's work should continue to be at the forefront of the UAE art movement, challenging perceptions and inviting others to see art in their own way. Masterfully combining historic cultural influences with modern undertones, Sheikha Alyazia is a breath of fresh air for this generation and her ground-breaking work will continue to resonate for many generations to come."*

*Intersections, Sheikha Alyazia Al Nahyan, Motivate Publishing, 2014*



**ALYAZIA  
NAHAYAN  
AL  
NAHYAN**

**PROVENANCE:**  
Art Space Gallery, Dubai

**BLUETOOTH**  
Mixed Media 51 x 33 cm | 2011





**ALYAZIA  
NAHAYAN  
AL  
NAHYAN**



**PROVENANCE:**  
Art Space Gallery, Dubai

**SMS**  
Mixed Media 51 x 33 cm | 2011







**ALYAZIA  
NAHAYAN  
AL  
NAHYAN**

**PROVENANCE:**  
Art Space Gallery, Dubai

**WHOLE STORY**  
Oil on canvas 49 x 71 cm | 2011

## AL QASIMI, FARAH

(b. 1991, UAE)

Farah Al Qasimi primarily works with photography, video and performance, her practice examines and deconstructs postcolonial structures of power, gender and taste in the Gulf Arab states. Farah studied photography and music at Yale University in 2012 and received her MFA from the Yale School of Art in 2017.

Born in Abu Dhabi and currently based in New York, Farah Al Qasimi has spent much of her life between the UAE and the US. Her photography often depicts the intersection between two cultures, a juxtaposition of the scintillating Emirati aesthetic against the grey urban palette of New York's pavements.

Winter Fog was part of a 2019 solo exhibition at the Third Line Gallery in 2019, through-out this body of work Al Qasimi toys with the idea of jinn folklore across the UAE. Winter Fog, plays into the eery and unnerving narrative that this body of work plays on, adding to the element of emptiness, fear and mysticism.

In reference to Al Qasimi's practice, May Al Dabbagh (Assistant Professor of Social Research and Public Policy, New York University Abu Dhabi) commented:

*"I read it [Farah's work] as a clever reverse orientalism of sorts, one that makes you aware of the politics of representation without necessarily rendering it the subject of the work."*

- Arrival , Farah Al Qasimi Exhibition Catalogue, Third Line, Dubai, 2019, page 6

Al Qasimi has participated in residencies at the Delfina Foundation, London (2017); the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine (2017); and was awarded the New York NADA Artadia Prize and the Aaron Siskind Individual Photographer's Fellowship (2018). Her work is housed in public collections including MACBA, Barcelona, Spain; Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai, UAE; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Festival, Abu Dhabi, UAE; and Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE.



**FARAH  
AL  
QASIMI**

## HASHEL AL LAMKI

(b. 1986, UAE)

Born in the UAE, Hashel Al Lamki has experienced not only the rapid industrial and architectural growth of Dubai and the rest of the Emirates, but also the cultural complexities and dynamics that came as a result of the fleeting development boom across the UAE.

In 2007 Al Lamki joined a BFA program at Parsons the New School for Design in New York City. During the artists time in New York City, he nurtured his passions and enriched his practice through multidisciplinary collaborations. Currently, he infuses these vibrant perspectives to bring them into his practice, which focuses on social innovation, sustainability, environmental & philanthropic practices. After seven years in New York City, he spent another year between Amsterdam and Taos, New Mexico before returning to the Emirates. These cities had a lasting impact on Al Lamki as an artist.

Upon returning to Abu Dhabi, in 2017 he completed the Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship. Following the fellowship, he joined forces together with fellow artists and launched Bait 15, an artist-run gallery space that provides a home for local artists to engage in critical dialogue.

This Untitled photograph is part of Al Lamki's body of work titled "Love", which was a series initiated in 2016, whilst Al Lamki was carrying out his fellowship. During this time, Al Lamki formed a strong human connection with his surroundings and befriended Branden, a security guard at the facility:

*"Branden, formerly a Christian, converted to Islam after moving to the UAE, his wife in paradox was a Muslim who converted to Christianity after moving to UAE. During our conversations Branden often curiously asked me what the residency was all about - what did it mean to make art? I once asked him what his one wish in life was, to which he simply responded that he wished to wear Emirati clothes, to see, feel, and experience what it is like. Honouring this wish, we went shopping and I ended up photographing him."* – Hashel Al Lamki, 2021

Al Lamki has layered the work with further meaning, by subtly manipulating Branden's image digitally, so that it is no longer clearly him anymore, touching on ideas of identity and distortion.



**HASHEL  
AL  
LAMKI**

**PROVENANCE:**  
LTMH Gallery, Dubai

**UNTITLED**  
Inkjet print 106 x 75 cm | 2016

# HUSSAIN SHARIF

## HUSSAIN SHARIF

(b. 1961 UAE)

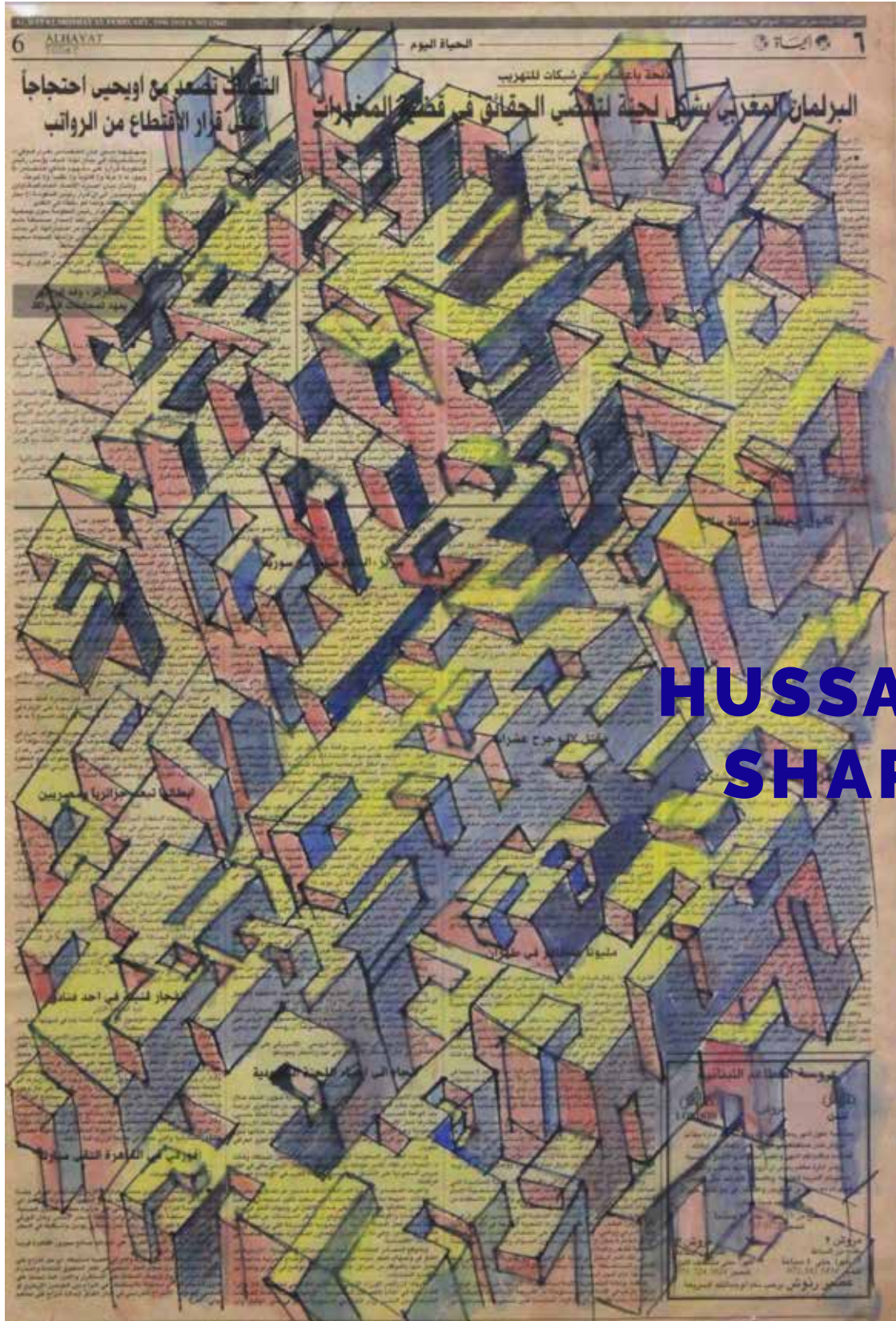
Hussain Sharif studied at the High Institute of Kuwait and graduated with a degree in theatre design in 1986. Throughout his notable practice Sharif has persistently encouraged experimentation and concept-based artwork in his creations.

Throughout the course of his prolific career, he took part in over 40 solo and collective shows and 7 international art fairs, including numerous exhibitions in the UAE, Russia, Holland, France, Egypt and Germany, among others.

Together with his brother Hassan Sharif and other artists, Sharif founded the Emirates Fine Arts Society in Sharjah. Sharif believes that the artist should not simply search for old materials used many years before, but that these materials can be appropriated as a means of identity formation. Sharif witnessed the seismic changes initiated in Emirati society in the mid-seventies, he believes these changes continue to take place today, at a rapid pace on all levels.

Using recycled materials, he attempts to reclaim the original and distinct meanings and representations of each object, something he perceives as having been lost in streets and urban environments that are densely overcrowded with materials, possessions and a constant commercialised need to renew and replace.

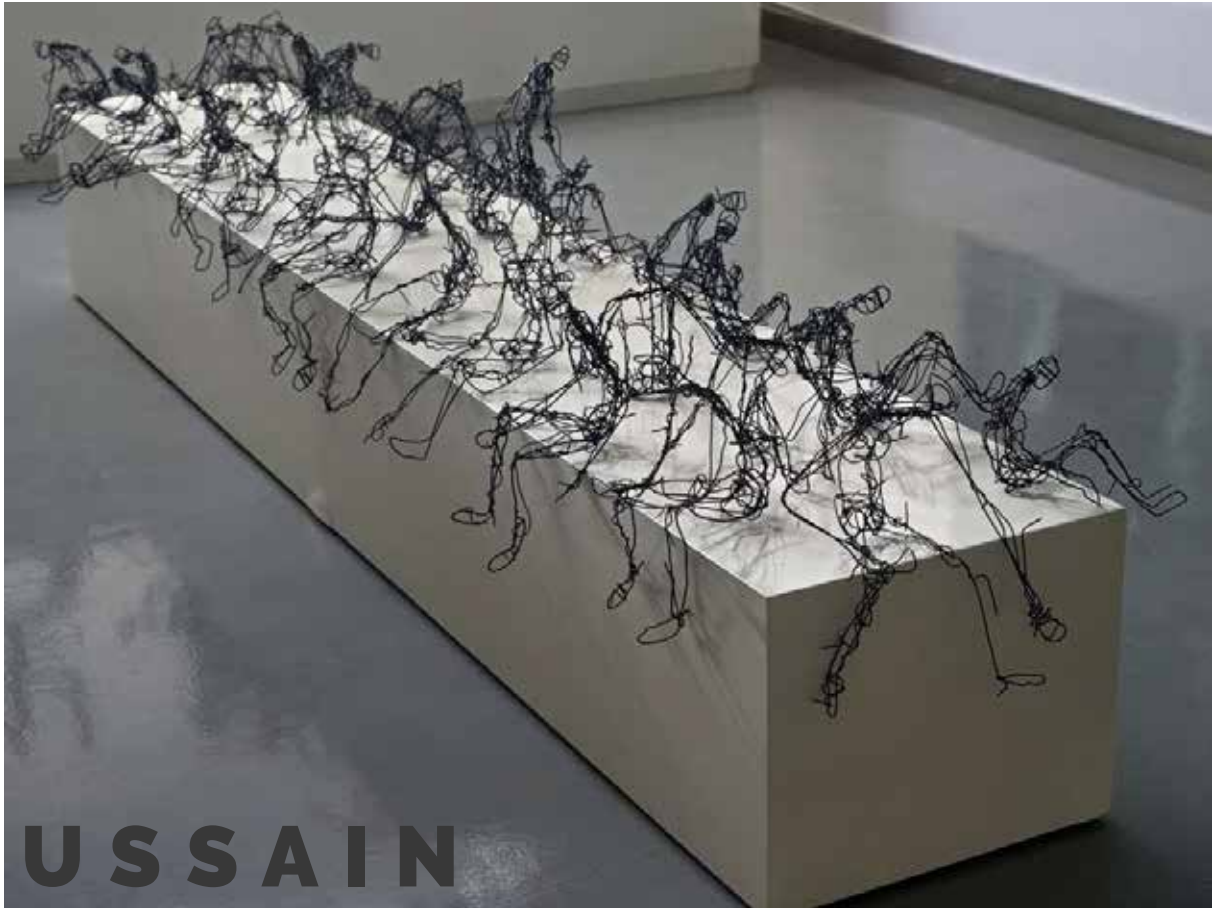




# HUSSAIN SHARIF

PROVENANCE:  
Salwa Zeidan Gallery, Abu Dhabi

UNTITLED  
Pen, Ink on Newspaper | 57 x 38 cm | 1996



# HUSSAIN SHARIF



In Seated Strike II we see an example of Sharif's use of older recycled material, re-purposed into a new identity – the crude figures are formed from manipulated and twisted iron wire. Sharif effectively uses the cypher and language of human form to demand a natural empathy from the viewer, the frail and vulnerable positioning that he has crafted each figure into, all sitting in unison yet all clearly remote, isolated and alone.

To gauge such a reaction from his viewer, Sharif skilfully powers the symbols shared by our collective consciousness – the human form. Through the skill and ability projected through Seated Strike II we can see comparisons to the likes of Alberto Giacometti and Louise Nevelson.

Sharif, with his undeniable skill and permanent historical influence and role, remains one of the most important figures of Emirati art to date. A pioneer and initiator of the diverse cultural landscape we witness that is still deeply developing across the Emirates today.



# HUSSAIN SHARIF



# HUSSAIN SHARIF

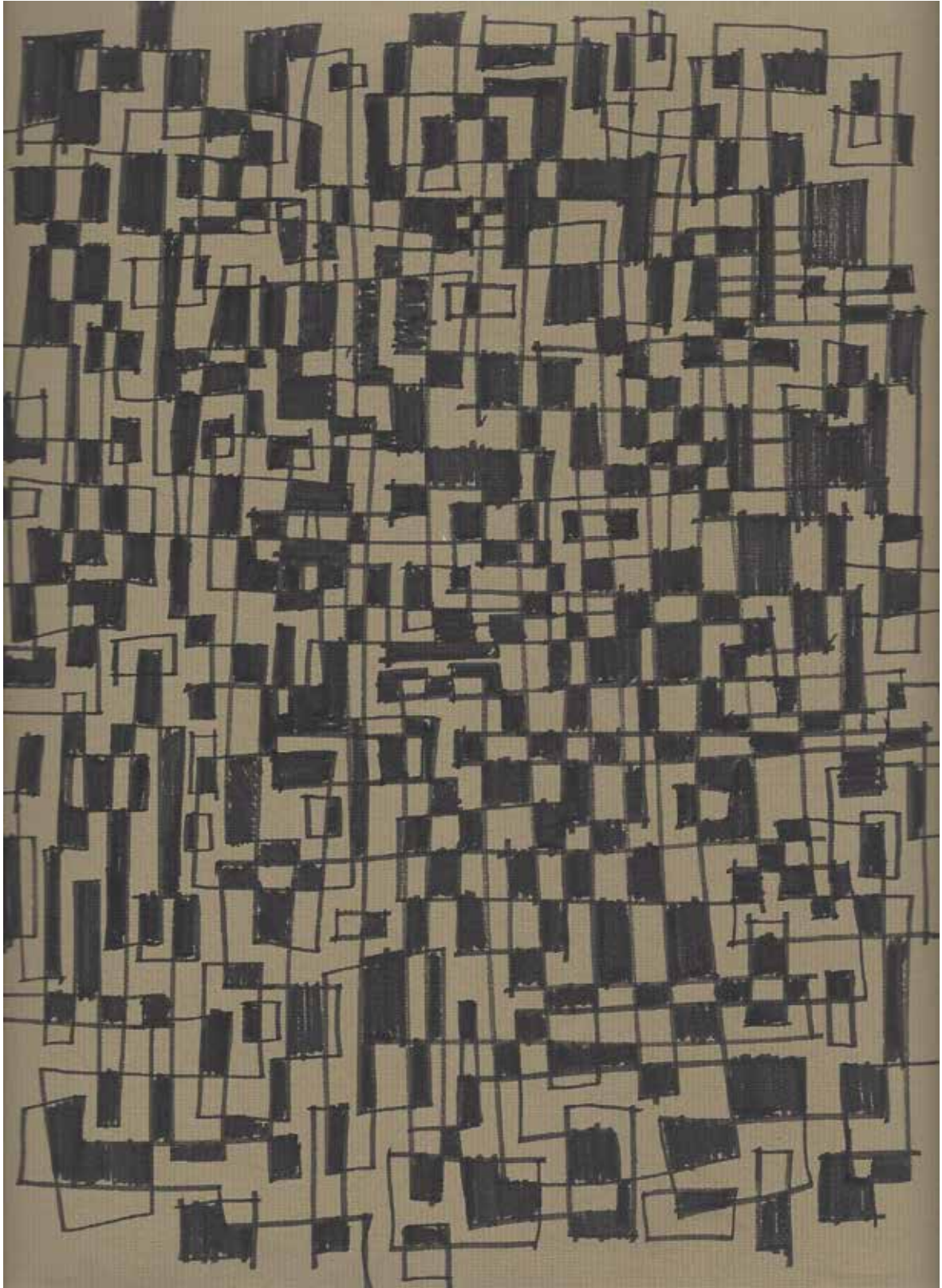
**PROVENANCE:**  
Salwa Zeidan Gallery, Abu Dhabi

**FACES 2**  
Mixed Media | Variable dimensions, 455pcs | 2017



**HUSSAIN  
SHARIF**





PROVENANCE:  
Salwa Zeidan Gallery, Abu Dhabi

UNTITLED  
Pen and Ink on Paper | 31 x 26 cm | 1990



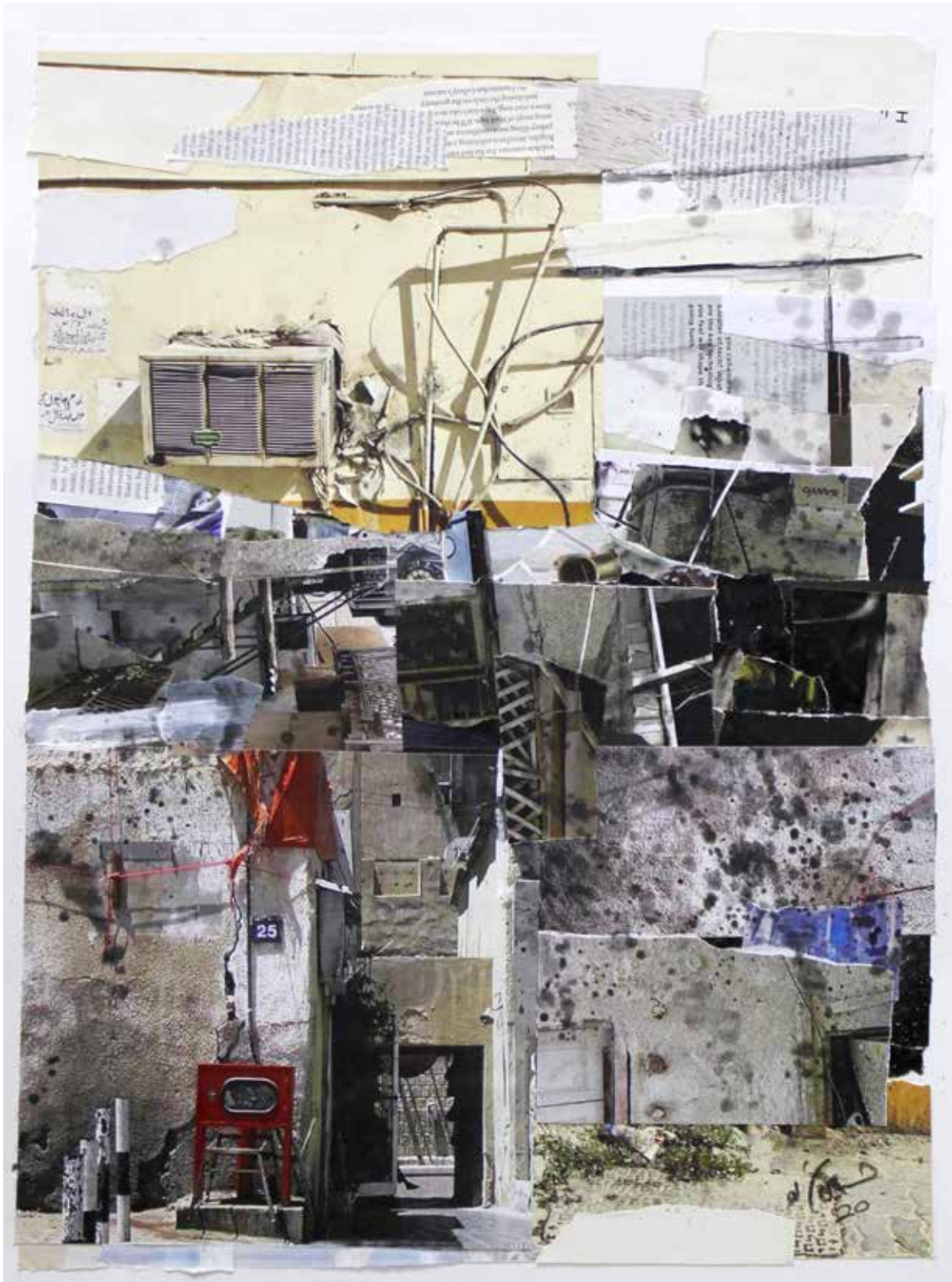




# HUSSAIN SHARIF

PROVENANCE:  
Salwa Zeidan Gallery, Abu Dhabi

UNTITLED  
Oil on canvas | 100 x 100 cm | 2019



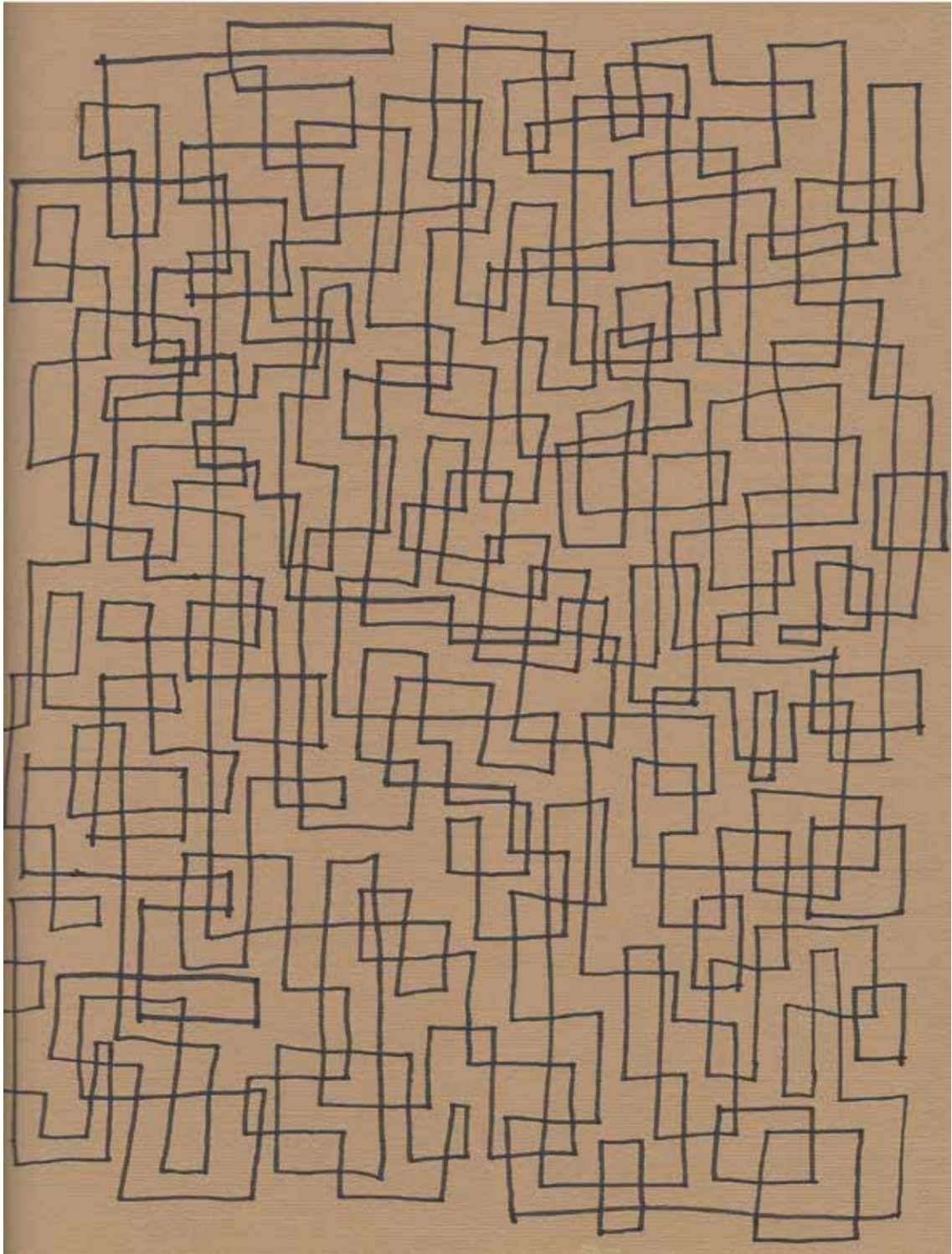




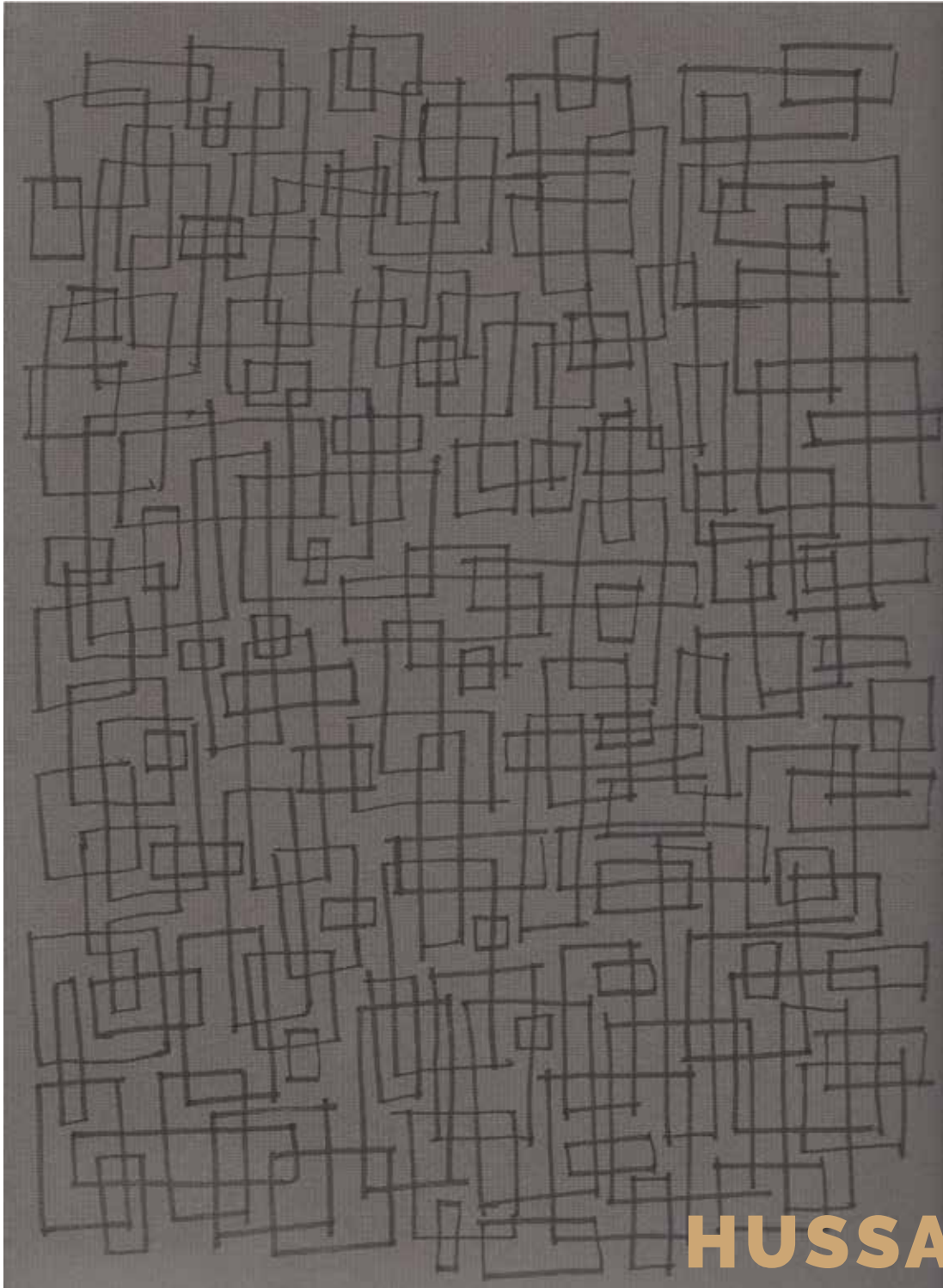
**HUSSAIN  
SHARIF**

PROVENANCE:  
Salwa Zeidan Gallery, Abu Dhabi

UNTITLED  
Pen/ink on paper | 31 x 26 cm | 2015



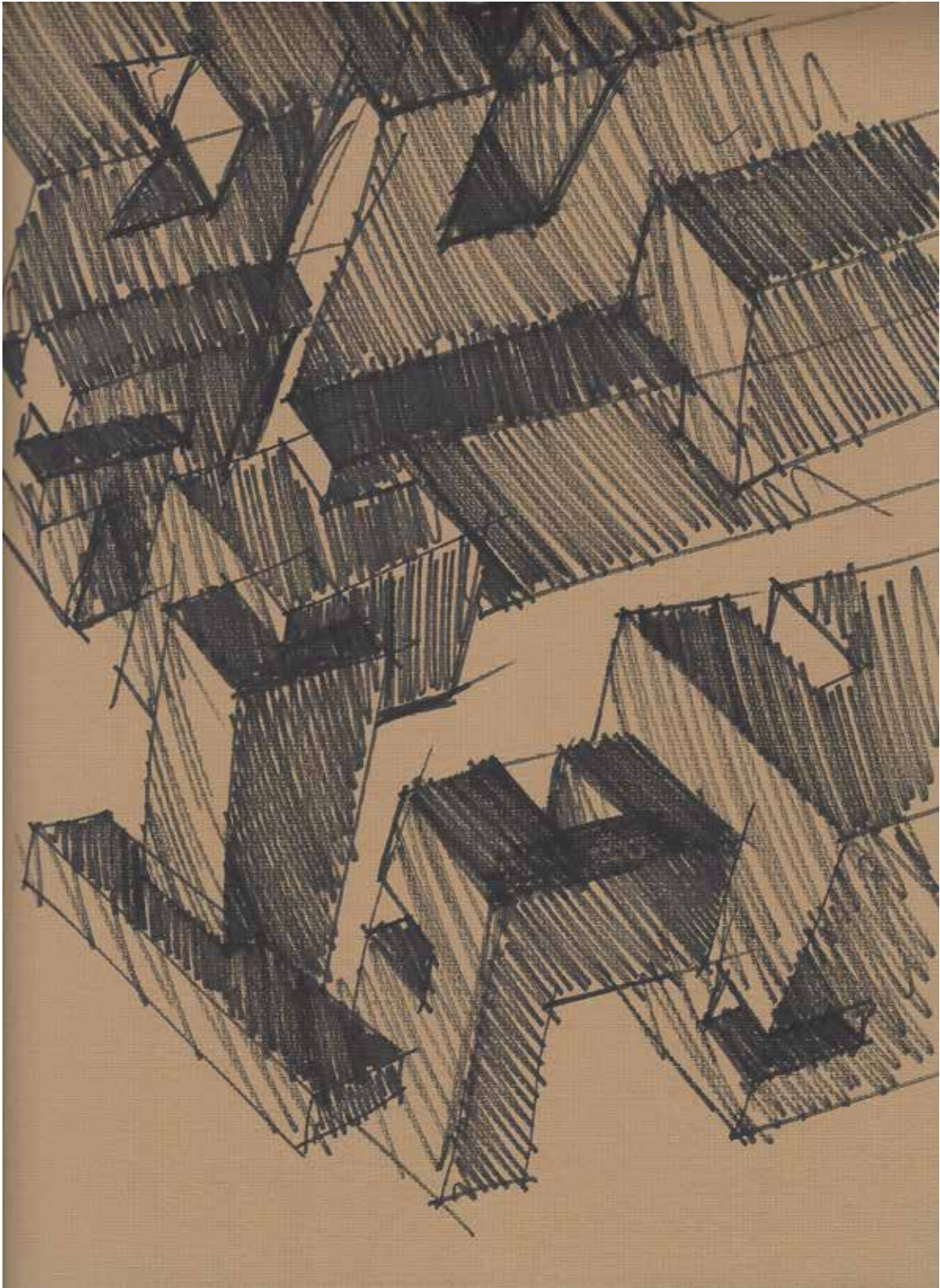




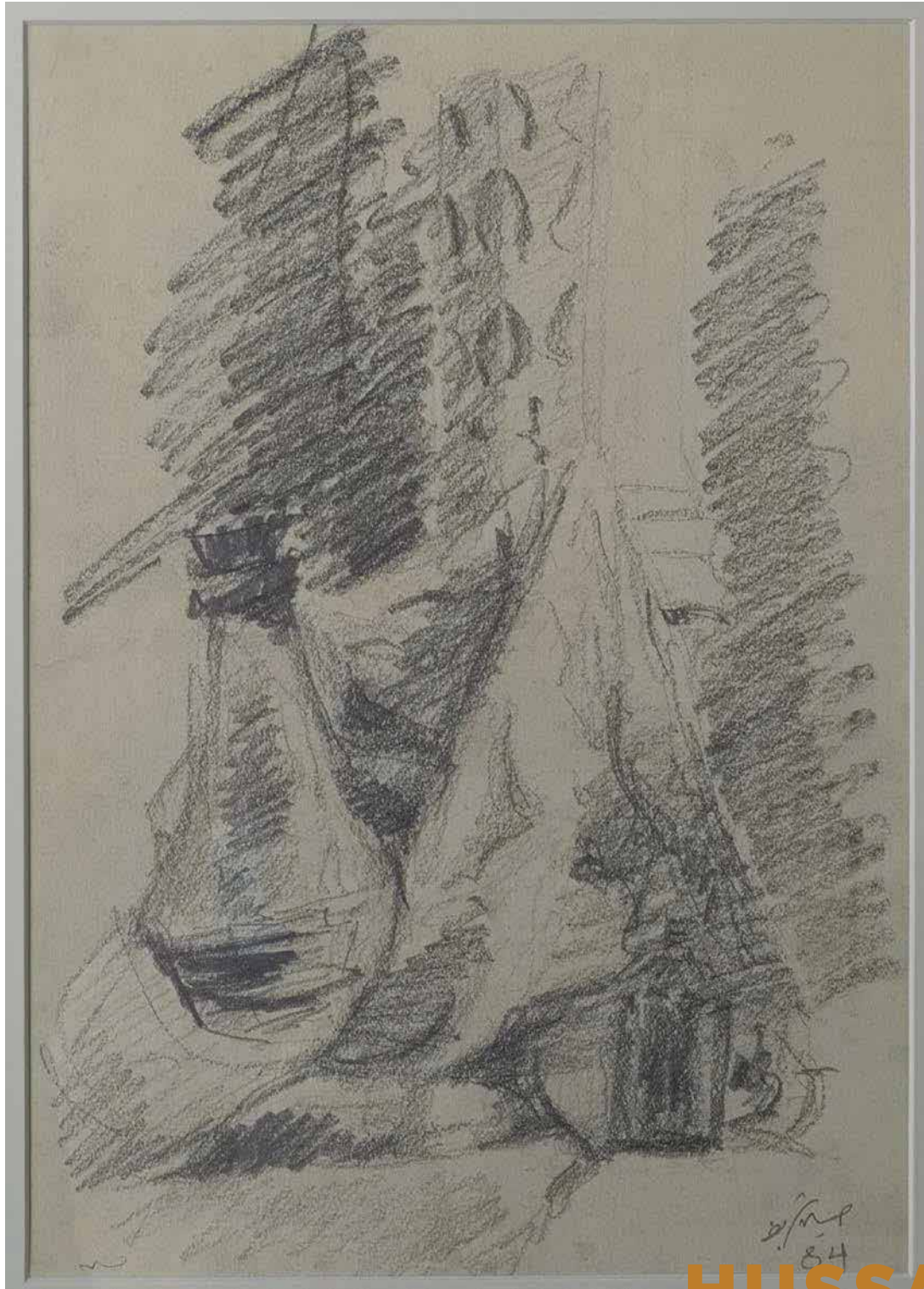
**HUSSAIN  
SHARIF**

**PROVENANCE:**  
Salwa Zeidan Gallery, Abu Dhabi

**UNTITLED**  
Pen/ink on paper | 31 x 26 cm | 1990







# HUSSAIN SHARIF

**PROVENANCE:**  
Salwa Zeidan Gallery, Abu Dhabi

**UNTITLED**  
Pen on paper | 43 x 32 cm | 1984







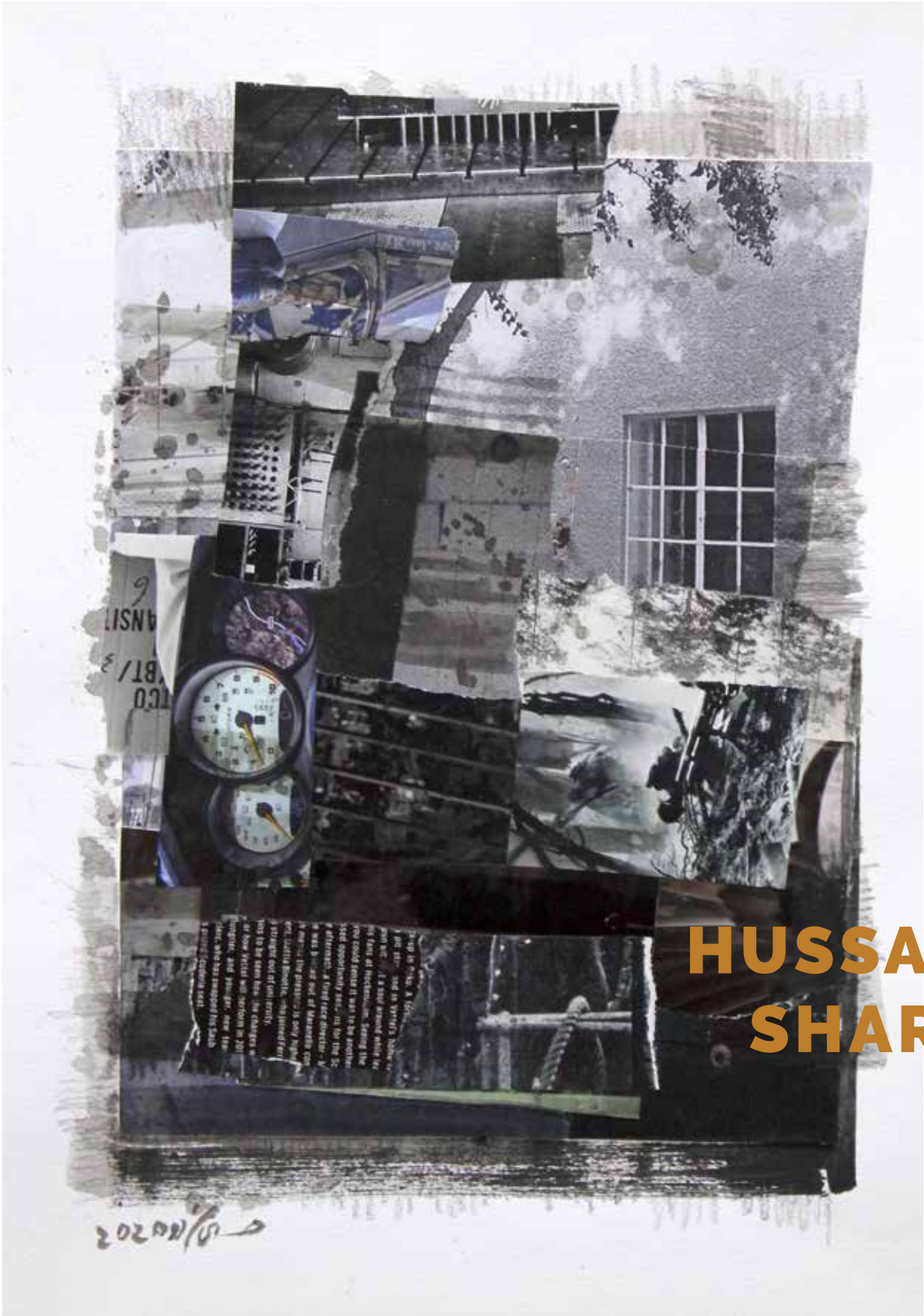
**HUSSAIN  
SHARIF**

**PROVENANCE:**  
Salwa Zeidan Gallery, Abu Dhabi

**UNTITLED**  
Pen/ink on paper | 31 x 26 cm | 2015







# HUSSAIN SHARIF

PROVENANCE:  
Salwa Zeidan Gallery, Abu Dhabi

UNTITLED  
Collage/ink on paper | 42 x 32 cm | 2020

## HASSAN SHARIF

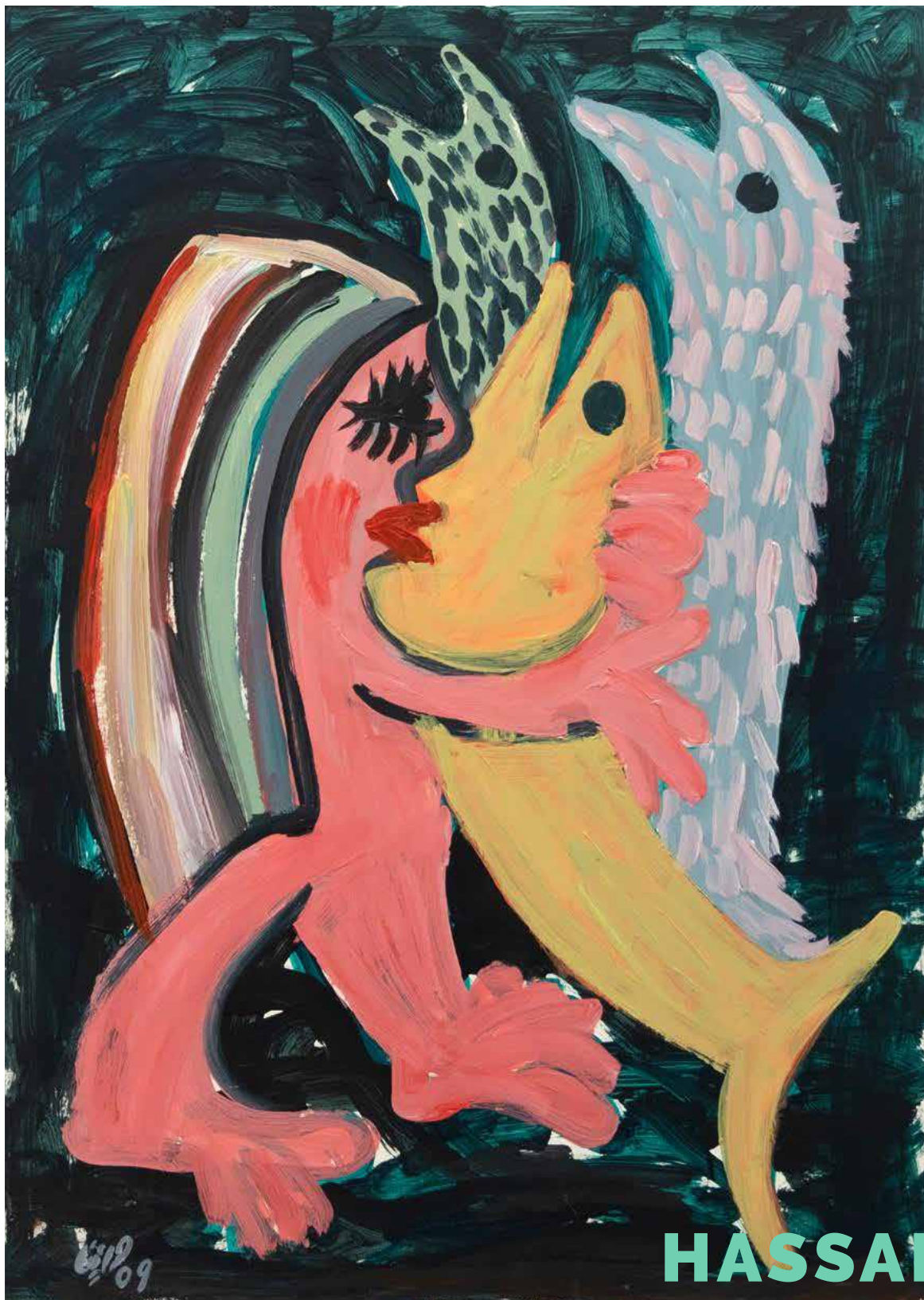
(1951-2016)

The late Hassan Sharif is widely acknowledged as a pioneer and one of the most significant Emirati artists of the twentieth century. Sharif broke against the safe and conformist approaches to artistic practice in the region, persistently challenging conventional understandings of time, space, form, and social interface.

As one of the first conceptual artists from the UAE and greater Gulf region, Sharif made a vital contribution to conceptual art and experimental practice in the region through 40 years of performance, installation, drawing, painting and assemblage.

Sharif, who lived and worked in Dubai, left his mark throughout several cultural summits, including roles as artist, educator, critic and writer. He was one of the first artists in the region to break with the classical conventions of art production in the Arab world; reinventing the standard approach to art with an innovative and experimental appreciation that continues to resonate among subsequent generations. Rejecting calligraphic abstraction, which was the dominant art discourse in the Middle East at that time, Sharif explored the accessibility and perception of art through performances, objects, 'semi-systems' and experiments which devised his revolutionary practice.

Most importantly, Sharif sought to dismantle the notion of an elitist and predominantly 'high class' definition and accessibility of art. Intentionally detached from local art production narratives, Sharif articulated a non-elitist artistic dialogue of his own, which was inspired by Fluxus, curtailed and process-based. In the early 1980s, Sharif began work on what he referred to as experiments, through which we explored elements of repetition, landscape and by which he tackled underlying notions of politics, globalisation and commercialisation. These consisted of formal exercises, such as counting cars on a street in Dubai or tracing every instance of the letter 't' on a newspaper page. These absurdist and purposely boring practices were initially performed, in part, as an ironic response to the functionality of socio-economic global set ups – a notion of uselessness. Sharif coined this critical viewpoint, as 'positive irony'.



# HASSAN SHARIF

PROVENANCE:  
Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde, Dubai

VENUS AND FISH NO. 3  
Acrylic on paper | 84.1 x 59.5 cm | 2009



# HASSAN SHARIF

In 1984, Sharif graduated from The Byam Shaw School of Art (presently part of Central Saint Martins). Upon completing his studies, Sharif consciously decided to return to the UAE to support the local art scene with his newly attained knowledge and experiences. Sharif set about staging interventions and the first exhibitions of contemporary art in Sharjah, as well as translating art historical texts and manifestos into Arabic to provoke a local audience to engage with contemporary art discourse. In the Emirates during the early 1980s there was an evident break between the audience's awareness and knowledge in arts, versus the conceptual art ideas Sharif was exploring. Recognising this, Sharif started translating art historical books from English into Arabic, and he held persistently to the importance of exposing these materials and books to the local audience.

Sharif would publish weekly columns in magazines critiquing the art scene, and helped establish the Emirates Fine Arts Society in 1981. He was very aware, that in order to be a part of a successful art ecosystem, you could not be limited to artists and institutions – but a well-informed audience, open to critique and engagement, was equally as important.

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# HASSAN SHARIF

PROVENANCE:  
Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde, Dubai

UNTITLED  
Spoons and copper wire 280 x 120 x 60 cm | 2012

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A tireless experimenter who pushed the limits of his own exploration, Sharif deployed a strategy with inspiration and stimulus. Sharif maintains a compelling and important balance in his practice between rigour and randomness. He deployed a double-barrelled strategy with colour—both subverting and elevating it. Shifting, morphing, sabotaged or framed for the viewer to ponder, colour is a “red thread” weaving across four decades of work.

Sharif was not only a pioneer in terms of art practice, but also set the tone as a community builder and situated the base for which many practicing artists in the UAE continue to build on today.



# HASSAN SHARIF

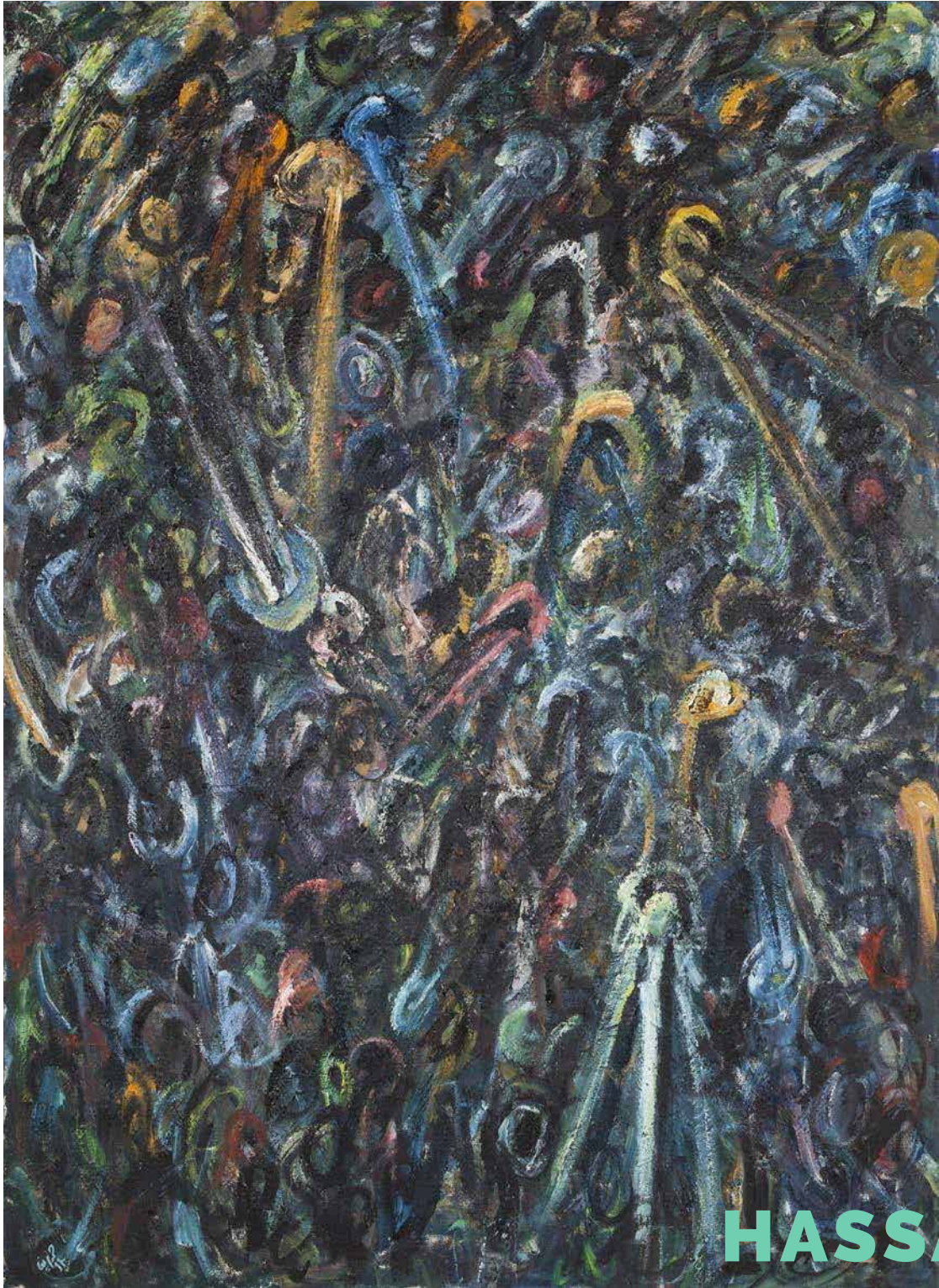
**PROVENANCE:**  
Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde, Dubai

**HAIR PENS & CLOTH NO. 1**  
Cardboard, cloth, glue, hair pins, cotton rope, paper and marker  
21.5 x 18.5 x 56.5 cm (open) 22 x 18.5 x 36.5 cm (closed) | 2006









**HASSAN  
SHARIF**

**PROVENANCE:**  
Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde, Dubai

**UNTITLED**  
Spoons and copper wire 280 x 120 x 60 cm | 2012

## LAMYA GARGASH

(b. 1982, UAE)

Lamya Gargash received her Master's of Arts in Communication Design from Central Saint Martin's in the UK in 2007 after graduating from the American University of Sharjah in 2004. Gargash was the first Emirati artist to represent the UAE at the country's first national participation at the 53rd Venice Biennial in 2009 where she exhibited Familial Series.

Concerned with the relics of an ever self-renewing architecture, Gargash documents the forgotten spaces in public and private realms in Emirati society. Her practice focusses on the concept of cultural change and celebrating physical spaces. Initially inspired by her own home, which Gargash has described as her muse, she was triggered on a journey to provide insight into more intimate spaces in relation to the Emirates rather than the commercial globalised image that the media consistently presented.

Through her thesis study called Presence, Gargash focussed on documenting Emirati family homes, specifically in the Emirates of Ajman, Sharjah and Dubai. She absorbed these spaces through different stages of abandonment – initial stages of a family moving, and then the complete abandonment after the move has been made. Gargash scrutinises these changes as a mode of cultural annihilation and shift, as a new identity forms through-out a fast changing and developing nation. A modernisation trend is evident, as older infrastructure is rapidly replaced with concepts catering to a modern and globalised life: beach resorts, commercial malls or rental compounds.

Lamya's works have been included in solo and group shows around the world. She has participated in several film festivals such as Locarno Film Festival, Switzerland; Osaka Film Festival, Japan; Amsterdam Arab Film Festival, Netherlands; Paris Arab Film Festival, France and Dubai International Film Festival, UAE. Throughout her career Lamya has won a number of awards for her work in film and photography. In 2004, Lamya received first prize in the Emirates Film Festival, as well as Ibdaa Special Jury Award for her movie titled, Wet Tiles. Her work is part of the permanent collection of the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE and Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE.





# LAMYA GARGASH

**PROVENANCE:**  
JAMM Contemporary Art Auction, February  
2010, Kuwait

**UNTITLED**  
Photograph mounted on aluminum  
100 x 100 cm | 2009

## MEERA HURAIZ

(b. 1989, UAE)

Meera Huraiz is a highly successful Emirati artist, who affectively works around her personal explorations through-out her practice. Huraiz has had her work exhibited across the UAE, Italy and New York.

Through-out her creative practice, Huraiz broaches a range of questions concerning historical translations and the contemporary mapping of such junctions.

Using heritage as her raw material, Huraiz examines objects that she considers routine, mundane and a part of a young Emirati's everyday life.

Similar to Behind Closed Doors Huraiz's work often realms into the far more covert and unknown private sphere of an Emirati's everyday life. Her intent is to document the present evolution of Dubai's identity: in the physical, cultural and psychological realms.

Huraiz's body of work visually documents the reconciliation of two historic binarized discourses by combining the past and present along both Eastern and Western narratives in order to create a new language and mode of identification.

Huraiz firmly presents herself as an Arab with a strong sense of patriotism, whom also embraces today's globalized world influenced by Western culture. Her work is not centred towards an international audience at its conception, rather it is born out of a genuine necessity to explore homogenization of culture and an impending loss of identity.





# MEERA HURAIZ

PROVENANCE:  
XVA Gallery, Dubai

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS  
Digital photograph printed on canvas  
115 x 150 cm | 2008

## MOHAMED AHMED IBRAHIM

(b. 1962, UAE)

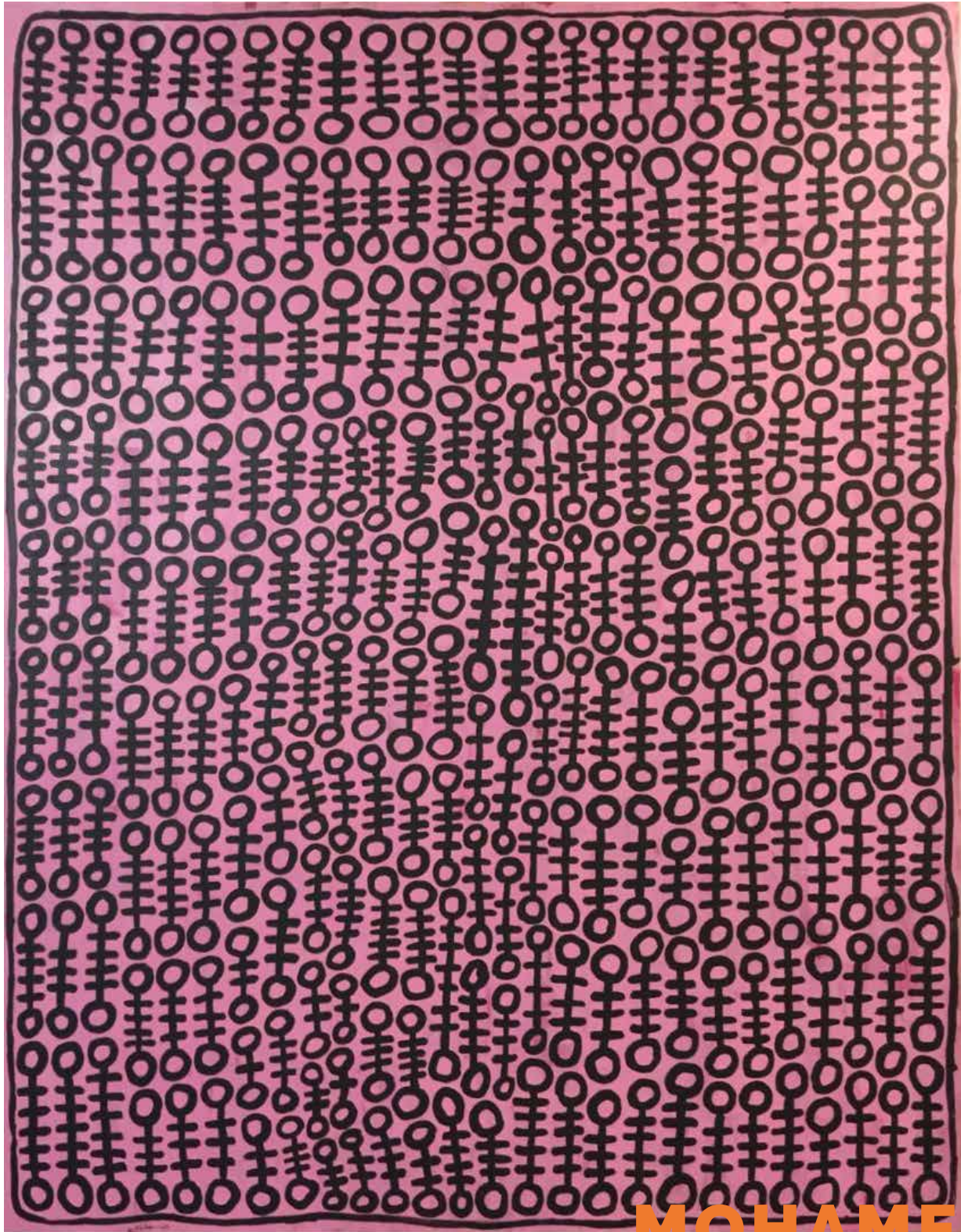
Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim is recognised as one of the UAE's earliest experimental artists, he was an influential member of the nation's first-generation avant-garde art community, which formed in the early 1980's. Ibrahim continues to innovate, experiment and inspire a new generation of artists across the Emirates today.

A self-taught artist, Ibrahim's ever-evolving practice is continuously inspired by a deeply embedded relationship with his birth-town Khorfakkan. The fishing town, located on the east coast of the UAE, is placidly situated between the rippling coast of the Gulf of Oman and the rock-strewn Hajar mountains. Ibrahim's deep connection towards his local environment echoes throughout his form-led practice, and traces of Khorfakkan translate through his evocations of rock art and recreation of primitive tools, bones or parts of trees.

Ibrahim responds to his environment with keen affinity and connection, evident in his abstract-yet-organic creations. He masters an unquestionable balance through-out his practice, his works are layered in meaning and purpose veiled behind playful colours and primitive motifs.

Ibrahim is undoubtedly one of the most established and influential contemporary artists in the UAE today, with an inexhaustible daily practice and thriving bodies of work. His works have been acquired by several major institutions including the The British Museum, London, Centre Pompidou, Paris and Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE. Ibrahim will be representing the UAE at the 2022 Venice Biennale.





**MOHAMED  
AHMED  
IBRAHIM**

PROVENANCE:  
Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai

UNTITLED  
Acrylic on canvas 200 x 157 cm | 2019





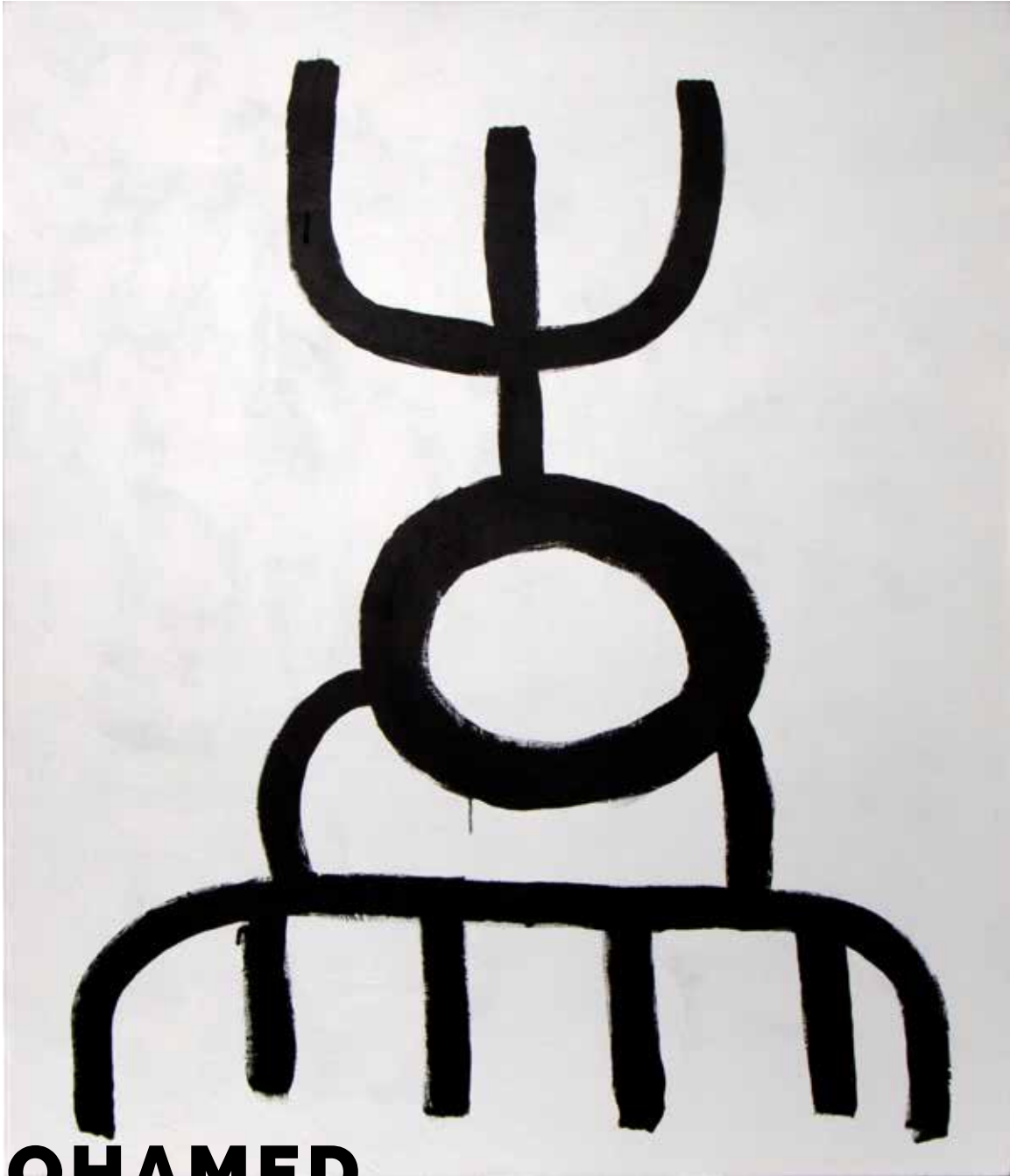




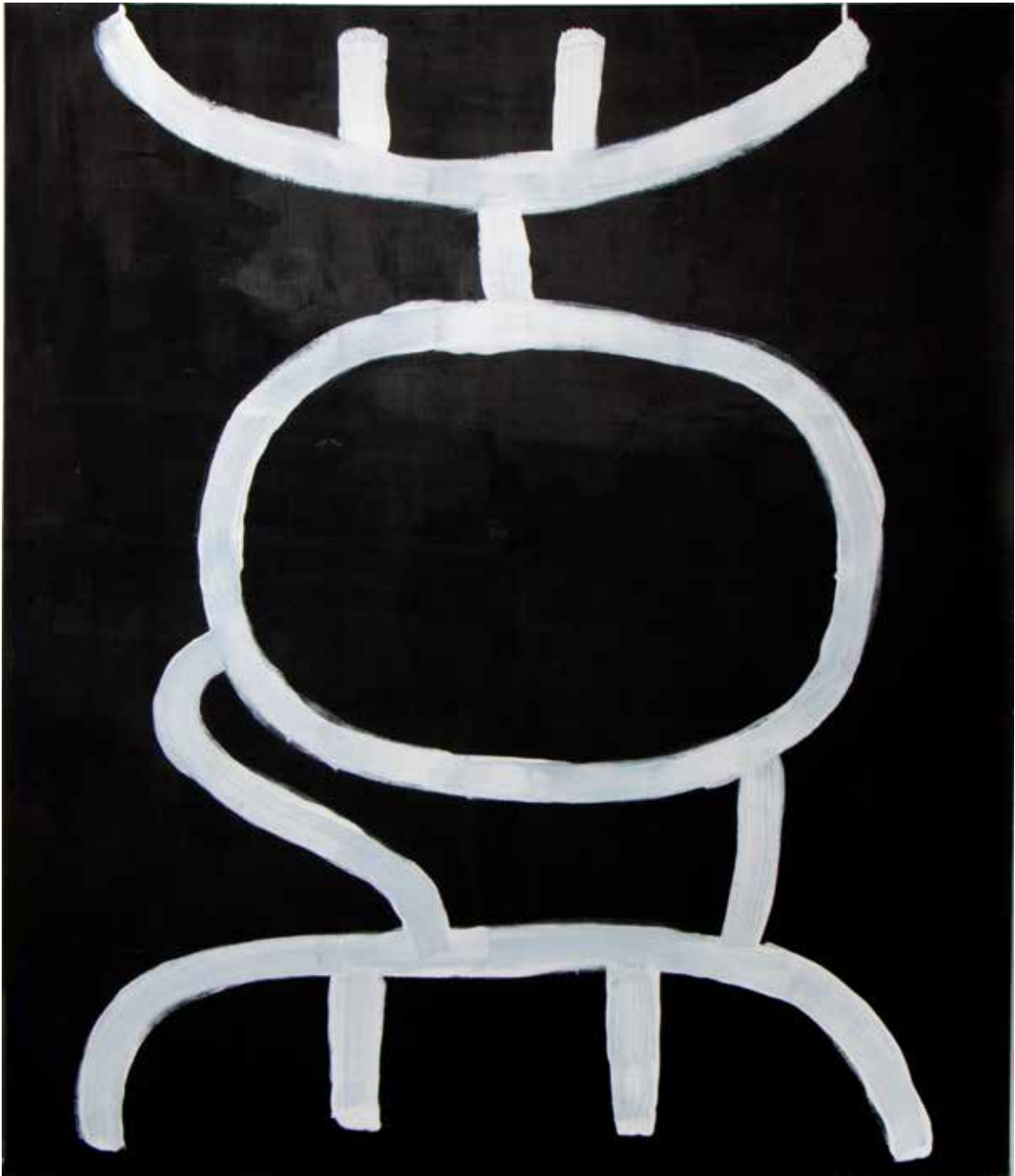
**MOHAMED  
AHMED  
IBRAHIM**

PROVENANCE:  
Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai

UNTITLED  
Acrylic on canvas 200 x 157 cm | 2019



**MOHAMED  
AHMED  
IBRAHIM**



**PROVENANCE:**  
Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai

**WHITE FORM ON BLACK**  
Acrylic on canvas 145 x 120 cm | 2016



**MOHAMED  
AHMED  
IBRAHIM**





**PROVENANCE:**  
Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai

**UNTITLED**  
Oil on canvas | 122 x 91.2 cm | 2017

# MOHAMMED KAZEM

## MOHAMMED KAZEM

(b. 1969, UAE)

Mohammed Kazem is an experimental and groundbreaking artist, (who lives and works in Dubai. His artistic practice encompasses video, photography and performance as a means to find new ways of apprehending his environment and experiences. Kazem was a member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society early in his career and is acknowledged as one of the 'Five', an informal group of Emirati artists – including Hassan Sharif, Abdullah Al Saadi, Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim and Hussain Sharif – at the vanguard of conceptual and interdisciplinary art practice.

In 2012, he completed his Masters in Fine Art at the University of the Arts, Philadelphia. The foundations of Kazem's work are informed by his training as a musician, and he is deeply engaged with developing processes that can render transient phenomena, such as sound and light, in tangible terms.

Kazem's works are held in the collections of the British Museum, London; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Guggenheim New York; Mathaf, Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; Vehbi Koç Foundation, Istanbul; Jameel Art Centre, Dubai; King Abdulaziz Centre for World Culture, Dhahran among others.



# MOHAMMED KAZEM

PROVENANCE:  
Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde, Dubai

GUITAR  
Collage on paper | 80 x 55 cm | 1986





**MOHAMMED  
KAZEM**

Kazem's Studio series depict the studio of his dear friend and mentor Hassan Sharif (1951-2016).

There is a certain sentimental and personal quality presented in these works, for Kazem how-ever, the strength of the series lies in the universal portrayal of the archetype of the 'artist studio' as a solemn haven of birth, free-thought, and creativity. Kazem's loose and lyrical gestures of colour throughout the work only further accentuate this notion where pigment and free-flowing emotion collide and prosper in the resulting imagery.



# MOHAMMED KAZEM

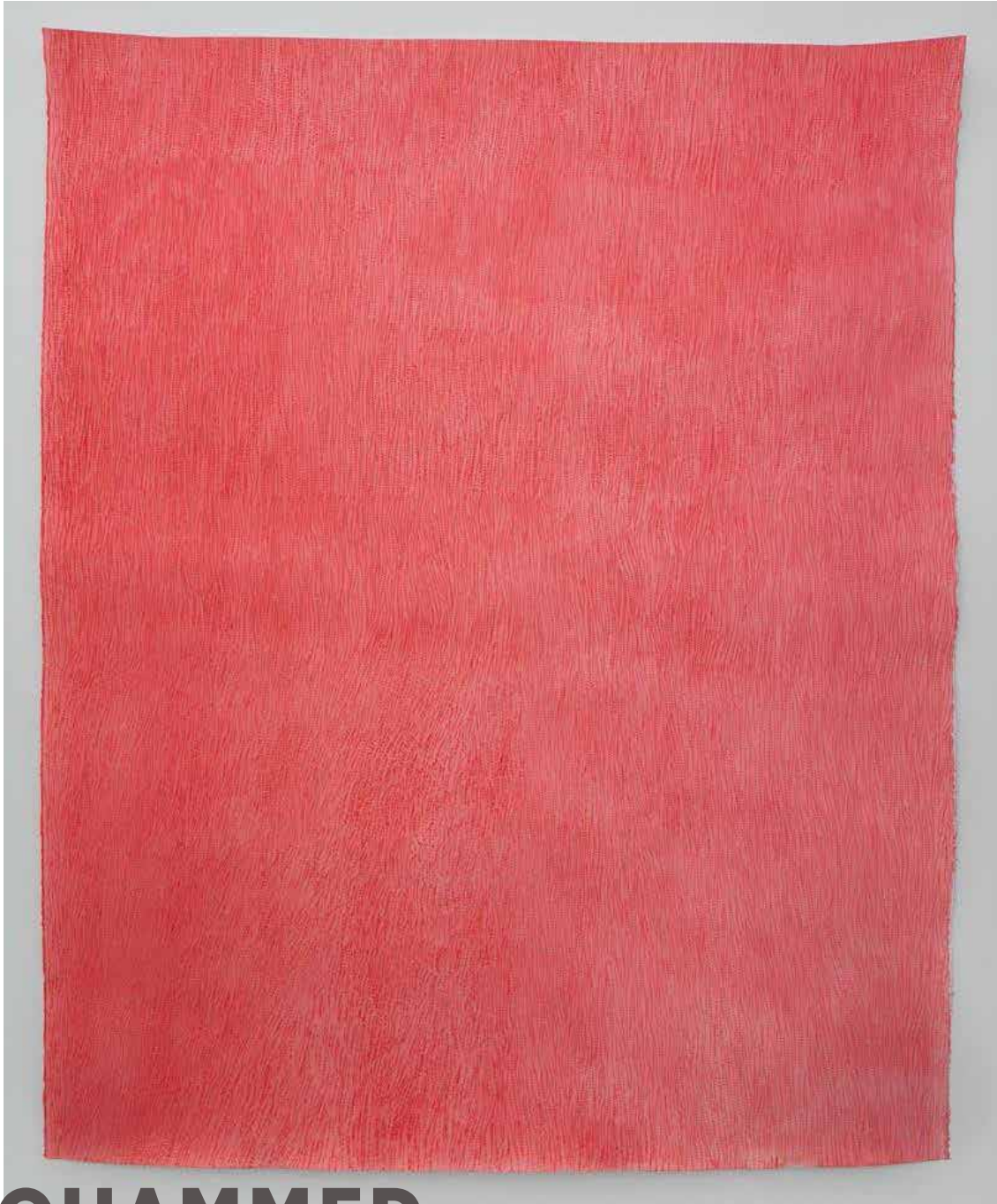


In his series *Even the Shade Does not Belong to Them* (2018), Kazem draws inspiration from his photographs of street scenes across the UAE. The canvases portraying blue-collar workers in Dubai are executed with swashes of dark-coloured acrylic and ink in multiple layers, creating distance and a stark detachment between the scene and spectator, revealing only part of the composition through a veil of smoke.

The elusive figures represent the labourers and the dark hues their concrete environment; the colour palette is quiet and contemplative, yet speaks volumes in revealing the layered lives of the marginalized, whose stories are often left silent and untold.

The two *Acrylic on Scratched Paper* 2020 works are a continuation of Kazem's hallmark scratching technique, which he initiated and began exploring in the 1990s. For these intricate works, Kazem used a pair of scissors to form miniature bulges, depressions and throughout the paper.

He persistently scratches onto the surface of cotton paper in braille-like marks, suggesting a delicate poeticism - the pair of scissors pushes and pulls against the paper in a repetitive and meditative make-up. Tearing and scratching, tearing and scratching. The material is intended to extract sound visually, linking back to Kazem's deeply rooted engagement with sound and visualisation alike.



# MOHAMMED KAZEM





**PROVENANCE:**  
Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde, Dubai

**ACRYLIC ON SCRATCHED PAPER**  
Acrylic on scratched paper | 76.2 x 55.8 cm | 2020



# SHAIKHA AL MAZROU





**PROVENANCE:**  
Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai

**CAST DOCUMENTS**  
Brass, Copper, Iron and Aluminium  
21 x 29.7 x 10 cm | 2018

## SHAIKHA AL MAZROU

(b. 1988, UAE)

Shaikha Al Mazrou is a ground-breaking artist, who borrows works from minimalism and conceptual art alike, her work can be best described as precise, geometric and experimental. Al Mazrou's practice demonstrates boldness and experimentation; she challenges the limitations of materiality, content and geometry with her invigorating approach to her practice.

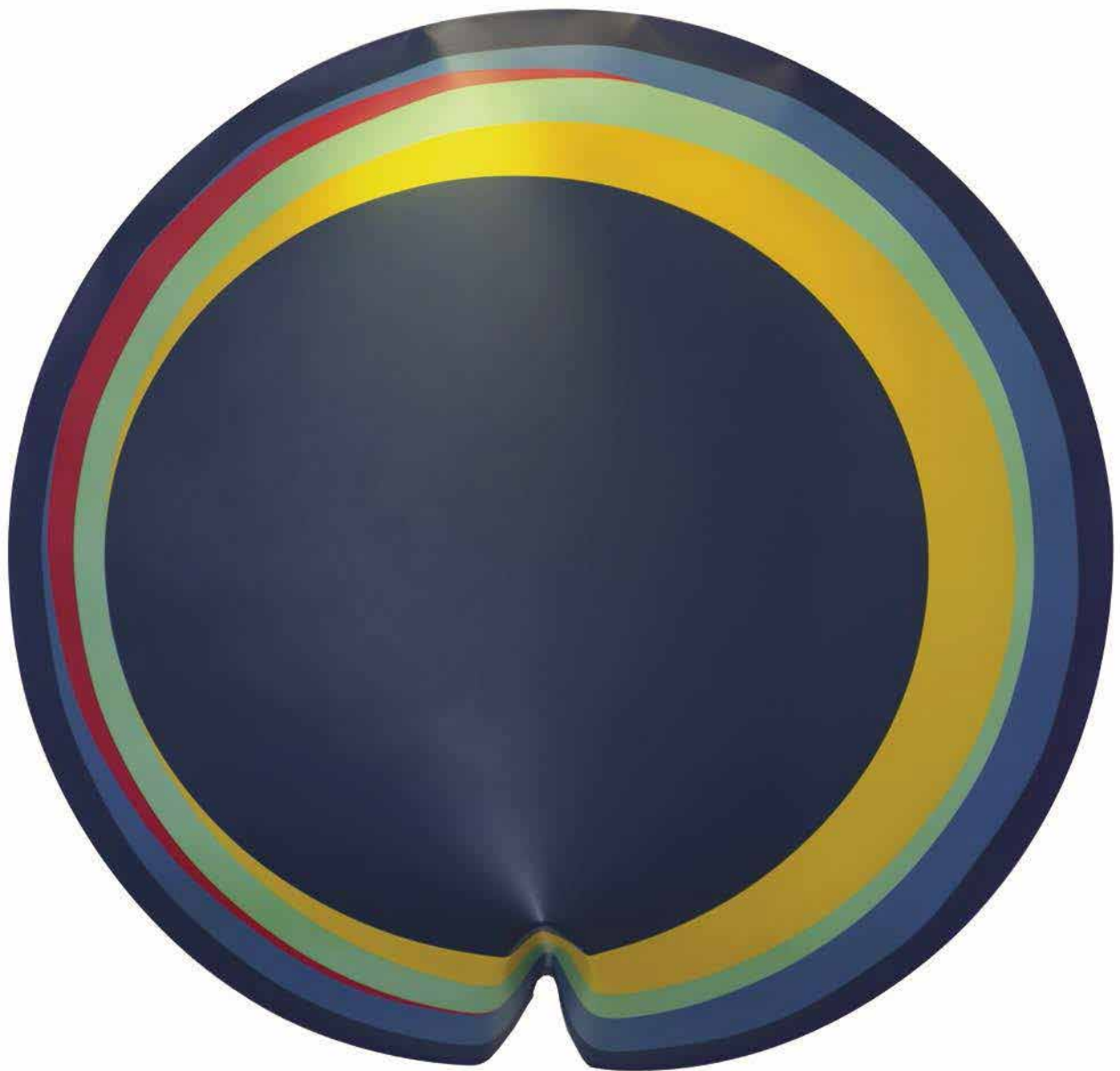
Influenced by the modernist and Bauhaus movements, Al Mazrou's experiments engage with deep fascinations of materiality in art. She effectively plays upon articulations of tension and geometric abstraction, deconstructing our understanding of materials and their physical properties.

In this Untitled 2019 work by Al Mazrou we can see how she challenges our impression of steel – a hard and robust material, which she has craftily represented as malleable and persuadable. Her ability to experiment with material and create methodical illusions through her cunning manipulation of material generates a sculptural language of its own. The interplay between form and content is ever present and intuitive through-out her work.

Al Mazrou effectively continues to challenge and contest the way we are limited in our understanding and acceptance of materiality. Her exploration of physical space, materialises across her practice and with the simple gestures of material manipulation, she extenuates and exaggerates representation of the basic physics of tension, weight and space.

Al Mazrou was awarded the first Artist's Garden commission by the Jameel Arts Centre for her public piece Green house: Interior yet Exterior, Manmade yet Natural (2018). Al Mazrou has been commissioned by Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (AD-MAF), Abu Dhabi Art & Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority and The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC). Her works can be found in the Pizzuti Collection, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio and the Alserkal Cultural Foundation, Dubai.





**SHAIKHA  
AL  
MAZROU**

PROVENANCE:  
Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai

UNTITLED  
Wet coated steel Diameter: 116 cm | 2019

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