



We The Nation of Letters

A Contemporary Calligraphic
Art exhibition

Curated by

Huda Smitshuijzen AbiFarès

28 March – 25 May 2024

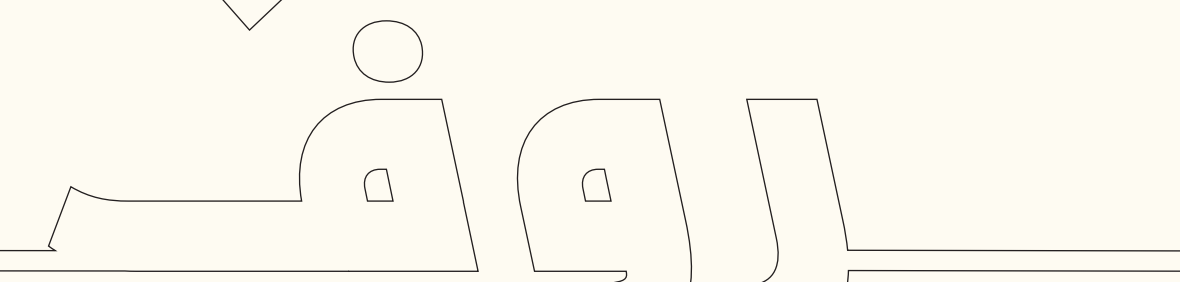
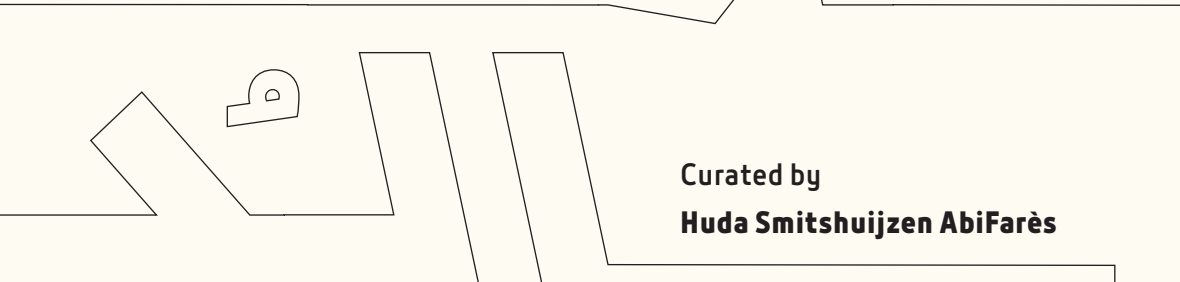
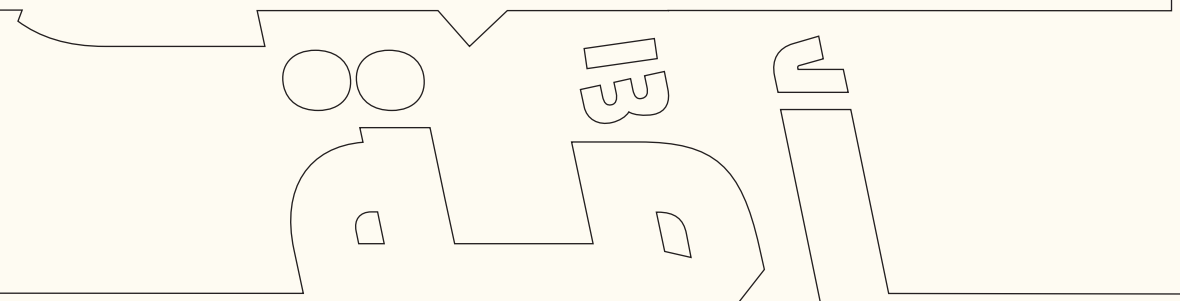
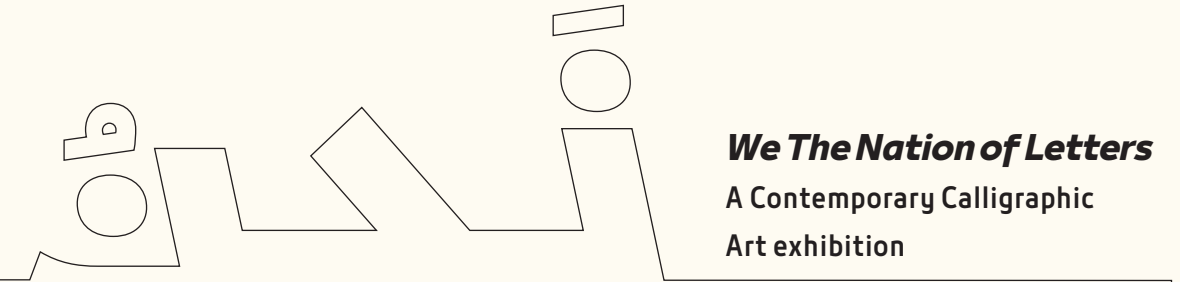
Wasl Art Space, Jeddah

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**“Letters in their number bear witness
They offer meanings and secrets
to those who look
Those who want to see their secrets
Will see them as pictures in the mind”**

Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi

We The Nation of Letters

The Arabic script is emblematic of a cultural or religious affiliation. It goes beyond its utilitarian function as a system of signs that denote sound and are aligned to form words, sentences, and texts. Its meaningful value lies in its aesthetic expression that represents the vibrant creative energy of a borderless nation that transcends nation-states and geographies. It is a unifying agent that highlights both the common traits that connect cultures and the unique voices that set them apart. In this duality lies the potency of the Arabic script in its wealth of diverse artistic manifestations.

The title *We The Nation of Letters* is borrowed from Ibn Arabi’s notion of letters as individuals that form “a nation among nations.”¹ Letters are diverse yet unified by a common system, each representing a unique sound and function. In this exhibition, Arabic letters are the tools of the individual artists that are diverse in their practice yet united by a common written script and their use of the emblematic Arabic alphabet in their work. The exhibition intends to celebrate diversity within unity, and individuality within the practice of contemporary Arab art. The exhibition presents a cacophony of personal voices, thought-provoking and unconventional calligraphic and writing-based works on paper and canvas. It combines people from various corners of the region, and various age groups and genders. It presents unique artistic explorations and approaches to working with the Arabic script, in a variety of media and techniques.

The exhibition is designed like a set of interchangeable lines of poetry, a Haiku-like manifesto that metaphorically frames the selected works, and provides each artist (or group of artists) their own unique and individual space within this group show. The poem is written as if narrated by this imaginary *nation of letters*, highlighting inherent qualities of letters and providing a structure to the exhibition layout. The juxtaposition of line of poetic text and a particular group of art pieces invites the audience to reflect upon the relation between the two, and to experience the works in a subjective and intuitive manner. Can the viewer then find themselves represented in this collective We, which artwork do they feel closest to, and which attributes do they identify with? This collective We and metaphorical nation represents our predicament as a culture in the face of the overwhelming dominance of cultural globalization.

1. Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, *Al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya* (“Meccan Illuminations”). A “vast compendium of metaphysics, cosmology, spiritual anthropology, psychology, and jurisprudence. Topics include [among others] the spiritual and ontological meaning of the letters of the Arabic alphabet [...]” Ibn Arabi’s “magnum opus, begun in Mecca in 1202 following a vision of the Youth, and completed in its first version of twenty manuscript volumes in December 1231 (629). A second version in thirty-seven volumes was completed in 1238 (636). It consists of 560 chapters in six sections, and was evidently intended as a kind of ‘spiritual resume’ of Islam, covering the whole 560-year period from the beginning of the Islamic era to his own birth.” Cf. Stephen Hirtstein, Appendix 1 of *The Unlimited Mercifier – The spiritual life and thought of Ibn ‘Arabi*. Oxford: Anqa Publishing, and Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1999. *The Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*. Online. Last consulted 11 March 2024. <https://ibnarabisociety.org/writings-by-ibn-arabi>.

قال ابن عربي: “إن الحروف أمة من الأمم، مخاطبون ومكلفون، وفيهم رُسل من جنسهم، وهم أسماء من حيث هم، [...] وعالم الحروف أفصح العالم لساناً وأوضحه بياناً.” كتاب “توجهات الحروف”، لمحي الدين ابن عربي. تحقيق: عبد الحميد بن السيد بن أحمد بن محمد الشيمي الشاذلي اللاخاوي الطائي الحاتمي. الناشر: مكتبة القاهرة. الطبعة: العاشرة 2004.

2. A Haiku is a Japanese poem of seventeen syllables, traditionally evoking images of the everyday and natural world. Haiku emphasizes simplicity, intensity, and directness of expression.

We are solid yet fluid

The dynamic and freestyle works of visual artist Samir Sayegh are brought into conversation with the works of calligrapher Abdulazziz Al-Rashidi. Their works emphasize the written gesture, creating works that should not be read literally but rather visually experienced. Like concrete poetry, the gesture symbolizes a concept or thought, at times celebrating the beauty of each letter's solidity and at other times elevating a sentence or verse that flows across the page in unruly energy.

In Al-Rashidi's work, the use of letterforms and vocalization marks creates spatial and free-flowing gestures, where contrast and harmony between forms emphasize the sense of movement. In Sayegh's works, the gesture is determined in conveying the inner structure and strength of the letterform, and it denies any imagery and focuses on the intangible and spiritual presence of the letter. Each piece evokes a different association that can only be formed in the mind of the viewer.

Through these works the spiritual act of calligraphy is brought to the foreground. We sense the hand and breath of the artists as they trace their letters or letter-like forms in ink on paper. Each uses unconventional tools and minimalist compositions that evoke abstract concepts of universal balance, spiritual beauty, serenity, and cosmic energy.

We are mysterious yet clear

The works of visual artist Pouran Jinchi are paired with the works of visual artist Hind Alghamdi and calligrapher Jassim Meraj. Each artist uses an Arabic calligraphic style that references their respective cultural affiliation and their unique handwriting. In their work, traditional forms of calligraphy or conventional styles of calligraphic composition are reconfigured in unconventional and contemporary works of art. The works are poetry in motion: mysterious concepts that can be read and concealed at the same time.

Pouran Jinchi uses gesture to create complex, layered, textured, and visual poetry that puts emotion before legibility. She paints words or letters, layering them and denying the viewer easy access to the hidden texts. Her letters swarm on the page, flow like water, climb over each other, and build up imagery so that only when looked at up close can we discern the shapes of letters or letter-parts. She explores the versatility, malleability, and emotional dimension of the Arabic letterforms. Her training as a calligrapher is evident in the fluid Nastaliq or freestyle calligraphy that she employs in her work. Her earliest works took Persian poetry as their point of departure to create calligraphic abstractions that straddle the boundaries between order and chaos, between word and image, between meaning and emotion. In 2001, Jinchi executed a number of calligraphic paintings she refers to as the *Dakht* (Tree) series. The Arabic letters are recognizable yet hardly legible, and are layered to form the silhouettes of trees, leaves, and branches. They are somber, in black acrylic paint on canvas, revealing a dark and barren landscape of charred trees. They offer a contrast to her colorful calligraphic poetry series with fluid curves and organic shapes, each conveying a unique mood and space for reflection. Her work

is about the interplay between the written word and its image. Jinchi states: “I use text, words, letters, literature and poetry in my art. For me the challenge is always this – how to get the viewer to experience the written words through a visual sensory. [...] I try to communicate between the space where words are seen and visuals are experienced.”

Hind Alghamdi's compositions of *mu'allaqat* (suspended odes) are so densely arranged to fit a circular form that they deny our ability to read the underlying poetry. In her series *Wuquf 'ala al-Atlal* (Standing by Ruins, 2024), she employs *jahiliya* (pre-Islamic) love poetry and odes in dense compositions in black and gold inks. Her compositions give the text no beginning or end, and by this, the artist denies the viewer access to the texts and leaves them hunting for a word here or a sentence there. Her works express the pure emotion behind the poems and allow the viewer to be carried away by the letters. Her compositions emphasize the unity of the swarming letters that turn together in eternal unison, referencing the continuity of time and the infinite relevance of these old Arabic poems to our cultural imaginary. Alghamdi's work display her interest in “*the eloquence of expression and the power of words in the Arabic language, whether read or heard in Quranic verses and poetic verses.*” Her interest in poetry leads her to the pre-Islamic poetic tradition of the *mu'allaqat* and the *Atlal*-style poetry of love and longing, where the poem begins with “standing on the ruins” or traces of the encampment of the departed tribe of loved ones. The lamentations of loss and longing often progress into a diversity of themes and narratives. In series, Alghamdi uses gold ink, a color she associates with the *mu'allaqat*, and black ink on natural colored cotton paper. Her color palette is designed to highlight the interaction between existence and absence, between light and darkness. These artworks seem close to the transparency of emotion expressed in the poems, allowing the viewer to immerse themselves in the poetic text.

Jassim Meraj's compositions entitled the *Nun of Existence* are reflections on the meanings of the letterforms derived from both Quranic verses and the spiritual geometry upon which they are constructed. Meraj describes his project in a poetic way: “[The letter] *Nun* has a circle with its center the point from which the lower arc appears and the higher arc is unseen! Yes, unseen and heavenly, and it is as if you hear its echo in God's creation, Glory be to Him ... through a pure heart and imagination that draws its light from its Creator ... it ignites the intuition and awakens the senses, so that the veil of the familiar is torn open and astonishment overtakes it like a child. It is an attempt to taste from the cup of *Nun* that pours its drink into the fields of the soul that blossomed in remembrance and thanks. The letter glowed with longing, connecting the unseen and the witnessed, in order to complete the effort to complete.” In his series of prints, Meraj uses his letters in expressive compositions, with telling titles like *Nur Ala Nur* (Light Upon Light), *Manazil al-Qalb* (Positions of the Heart), *Al-Nuqta wa-Bahruha* (A Dot and Its Sea), that play on calligraphic terminologies to ascribe spiritual and human attributes to his letters.

The works of the three artists allow the viewer to look beyond the literal meaning of the texts; they invite them to “experience” rather than read the works of art and the emotions they conjure.

We are old, new, and eternal

The pairing of visual artists Fathi Hasan and Mariem Abutaleb is a geographical coincidence. In both works, we sense the reference to their respective Egyptian informal, oral, and ancient culture—a culture that preceded the Arabic language and its written script. The visual hybridity and freestyle bold lettering in both artists' works are visceral and go beyond the fine and delicate control of classical calligraphy. The works represent each artist's own handwritten signature and artistic explorations. They are bold statements that attempt to preserve and celebrate intangible heritage and cultural identities.

Fathi Hassan's work often emphasizes power dynamics and the relationship between the oral and written word. Drawing on his Nubian heritage, he employs in his paintings bold and freeform writings that are deliberately hard to read and are intended to highlight oral history and the loss of languages. His calligraphic paintings are personal narratives where a word may be glimpsed but is stripped of meaning to reveal an abstract dimension. His works have the rough look of a primal language, they march in all direction, they refuse to be controlled and to abide by any rules. For Hassan, *"no artistic form can ever take flight if it does not have the spirit of a child or the wings of a butterfly."* His works are graphic and remind us of African art, reducing letters to ambiguous graphic signs that cannot be decoded, as if they exist for the sake of existing and not in the service of a structured and codified language. His paintings in earth tones and sandy colors flow like henna patterns on the hands of Nubian women. His works are like snipers of personal memories, like subtle allegories that capture the imagination and highlight intangible sensory experiences.

In Mariem Abutaleb's work, memories of oral history, traditional popular songs, and intangible heritage are captured in a plethora of organic letterforms and unruly compositions that flow to the rhythms of song we cannot hear. We may catch a word here or a sentence there, but the intention of the work lies in visually reading the rhythms and experiencing the mood through the formal elements of lettering style and composition. This series of works interpret in poetical yet strong black-and-white form the diversity and flexibility of the Arabic letterforms and their eloquent power to invoke emotions. Her monumental and modern *mu'allaqat* are "hanging odes" dedicated to the Arabic script. They present the viewer with the diversity and potential of handwritten forms, and explore the infinite styles that the Arabic script can embody. They take the viewer on a journey through the captivating and magical world of the Arabic script, with compositions and patterns that reference ancient manuscripts' design and other types of informal Arab/Islamic material culture.

Both artists use their letters to capture the cosmic energy, landscapes, ritual, and imagery of their respective ancient cultures. We experience through their work the old narratives that continue to be relevant today and well into the future.

We are boundless movement

The freestyle calligraphic paintings on traditional Chinese scrolls of Chinese calligraphers Haji Noor Deen and his wife Fatima Yiyong Cao push the boundaries of classical Arabic calligraphy. They mix various traditional artistic conventions, exploring different media and inventing a new calligraphic style all their own. They blend the traditions of the "Middle" with that of the "Far East." They present us with the infinite possibilities of the malleable Arabic letterforms. The artists' works require some familiarity with the forms, but once that is achieved, the texts (often Quranic verses) reveal themselves in total clarity, and in fluid strokes that unravel before the viewer's eyes. The ink flows at times like a serene river, and at other times like a powerful whirlwind across the delicate textile scrolls. These works represent this borderless and non-physical nation that consists of ideas that travel freely and transform along their journey across diverse historical cultures.

We are monumental yet intimate

This is a series of works on paper by Lara Assouad entitled *Huruf al-Khayr* (Letters of Goodwill). The work celebrates the beauty and minimalism of the early Hijazi and Abbasid scripts. The letters torn from various textured papers in the same shade of natural white are cropped and reduced from their original monumental design to small and intimate objects that can only be read up close. The mystery of these forgotten letterforms is presented to the viewer in half concealed, revealing their essence through their details. *Huruf al-Khayr* is a celebration of both the beauty and the spiritual power of Arabic letters. It is an Abjad of eighteen Arabic letters, each denoting one to three words of *khayr*—words that denote purity, peace, kindness, humaneness, decency, benevolence, honesty, hope, calm, goodness, warmth, generosity, and love *Huruf al-Khayr* represent attributes much needed for humanity to arm itself with in the face of the heartbreaking current political events in the region. They present the viewer with the wealth of the Arabic language and its intricate and nuanced potential for upholding and celebrating our common humanity and shared values. They invite the viewer to engage with them on an intimate level and to experience the positive energy and goodwill that the artist intends to spread through them.

We are intricate yet minimal

Nasser Al-Salem's *Kull Series* is a concept that has been evolving since 2002, taking different forms and meanings along the way. The works presented, produced in 2024 for the exhibition *We The Nation of Letters*, are among the most intricate and abstract to date. They further explore the philosophical and spiritual facets of this simple two-letter word, *Kull*, a word that in Arabic superficially translates to "everything" but is in fact much more complex and can denote several meanings from "all-encompassing" to "infinity." The work employs various elements to further highlight the nuanced meanings and spiritual concepts buried in *Kull*. The two letters are locked in an eternal dance and rotating movement, repeated in intricate

lines that draw the viewer into a centrally composed maze. The compositions are mathematically precise squares; within the main large square that defines the field, we can discern smaller squares of *Kull* that revolve around the composition like constellations and positions on an astrolabe. The works allude to the infinity of creations, representing worlds within worlds from the smallest atom to the infinite expansion of the universe, an infinity beyond human imagination and comprehension. These abstract concepts are translated into an abstract geometry of concentric reiterations within perfect yet limitless squares that allude to infinite space and expand beyond the confines of the physical frame of the works. Both elemental and geometrical shapes of square and circle carry within them spiritual references to places and rituals of worship. They underlay natural biological structures and planetary movements. They are the grid holding together the Arabic letters in perfect proportion and harmony with each other. They also allude to structures that retain the spiritual and the natural worlds in delicate balance. The echoes created by the lines and resulting shapes pulsate with an inner energy that is further explored through color. The works in the exhibition range from monochromatic pieces to pieces rendered in complementary colors or fluorescent inks.

We are eloquent in silence

The pairing of Hussein Al-Mohasen's series of poetic prints and artist's book entitled *Little Illusions* and Nedim Kufi's monumental paintings represents the poetic dimension of *We The Nation of Letters* and its power to communicate in loud or soft visual statements. Both artists use the mechanical type aesthetic where fragments of poetry and letterforms eloquently describe personal narratives.

Hussein Al-Mohasen's works take Arabic poetry and music as points of departure to produce a simple visual gesture. He uses fragments of texts in minimalist yet dramatic compositions that deliver thought-provoking statements. Al-Mohasen draws inspiration from the raw lettering of urban graffiti, employing mechanized typewriters' typefaces, stencils, and spray paints. His compositions are at times sparse, and at other times dense with layered textures and dripping inks. Like modern poetry, his works speak of freedom to embrace the accidental and spontaneous.

Nedim Kufi's works are personal narratives, fragments of thoughts and myths, that often stem from personal experiences of displacement, loss of identity, and the longing to be culturally grounded. Much of his work contains autobiographical elements and concrete poetry that explore themes such as war, political conflict, exile, loss, and historical memory. The works in the exhibition exemplify the conceptual dimension of Kufi's works and his obsession with the Arabic language. He encourages the viewer to challenge the general and specific meanings of words. He draws words as images, creating visual puns, exploring the symbolism of letters and shapes, and presenting the viewer with a meditative experience that invites a personal reading of the work. The large-scale canvases and paintings on textile exude a certain informal roughness that draws the viewer into the artist's world. The imperfection of the works seems to allude to the imperfection of life and gives the work a visceral human touch.

We exist outside time and place

Wissam Shawkat's recent work, showcased in this exhibition, presents his newly developed contemporary calligraphic artworks that he named 'Calligraforms.' In *Calligraforms*, Shawkat fuses abstract and calligraphic forms to produce unexpected effects and complex optical illusions. He states: "*When approaching the calligraphic letters, I simplify them to their basic abstract form by eliminating the calligraphic qualities such as the contrast of the strokes or altering the positive and negative space of the letter.*" In addition to calligraforms, the works in the exhibition include his series of *Callicubism* where the words are shattered as if seen simultaneously from different angles. The Cubist look when applied to classical calligraphic forms lends his compositions a kinetic and fiery effect. His works vibrate with energy and seem to waver in a perpetual movement between a flat surface and a dimensional space. They express the universal and timeless language of visual abstraction. His works seem to cut across artistic traditions, cultures, and time.

We are diversity within harmony

The pairing of visual artists Lulwah Al Homoud and Karim Farah highlights the notion of diversity within a unified structure or harmonious visual system. Lulwah Al Homoud's work, though employing words and letterforms, does not fit into the typical calligraphic arts. Trained as a designer, her fascination with geometry is evident in her word-based art. She experiments with the written word and the physical structure of sound, and uses words to construct and discover new rhythms. She strives to liberate the visual appearance of words and letters from their typical and expected shapes. Her works are diverse in style yet unified by the harmony of geometrical structures and shapes. Her compositions present the viewer with optical experiences that heighten their spatial awareness. She states: "*These layers of abstract forms can create endless perspectives, allowing new correlations to be defined, inspiring an inner dialogue between different dimensions and unfolding themselves as the viewer stands before them.*" Her work is carefully constructed with Arabic letterforms and texts along principles of spiritual Islamic geometry. She draws inspiration from religious scripture as well as poetry to develop layered and nuanced works of art. Silkscreen studies, picked up during her time at art school, play a prominent role in her artistic production.

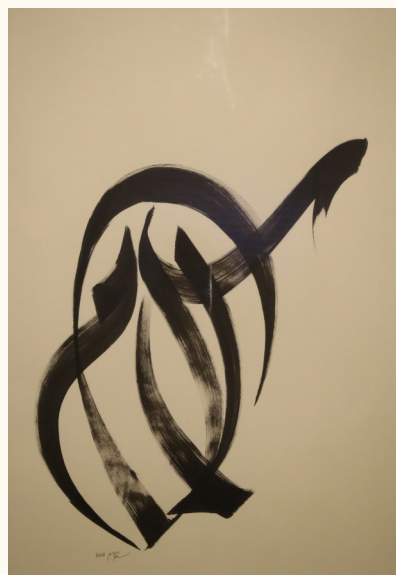
Similarly to Al Homoud, Karim Farah also hails from a graphic design background. His silkscreen prints hover between word-shapes and abstraction. His work explores the potential of Arabic lettering, and its power to negotiate a change in the landscape of the written. Through a process of abstraction and deconstruction, he seeks to proffer the perception of the visuals as part of a dynamic culture in process. He questions how the written expression of Arabic letters today, despite their inherited aesthetics, can be emptied of their constructed meaning and form, to make room for a new contemporary visual manifestation. His nonsense words, cut-up, layered, and blurring the boundaries between foreground and background, between positive and negative spaces, seem to repeat but each time in a new variation, varying

in tempo, rhythm, and pitch. They encapsulate the concept of diversity within a unified and harmonious visual system. His rich color palette further contributes to this seemingly endless series of iterations, presenting the viewer with a plethora of visual sensations and emotions.

We are the nation of letters

This collection of diverse voices and artistic methods employing the Arabic script as material and tool for the creation of contemporary works of art is only a small slice of this vast *nation of letters* that goes beyond geographical and national borders. The presented artists' collective *We* is a humble representation of humanity in all its complex and nuanced diversity and interconnectedness. The artists are unified by their passion for the Arabic letters, language, and script, embodying through their work facets of this elusive *nation of letters*.

Samir Sayegh (b. 1945, Beirut) is a Lebanese artist, critic and poet, living and working in Beirut. He is considered one of the pioneers of modernism in the Arab world. Driven by a deep interest in the formal power of letters, Sayegh sought to liberate calligraphy from language and meaning, focusing on the aesthetic properties to create a universal visual language. Combining Islamic geometry with calligraphic script, Sayegh abstracts Arabic letterforms reusing them to create gestural and geometric minimalism. As poet and prolific writer he has published numerous articles and essays on aesthetics, Arab contemporary art, Islamic art and Sufi poetry. His works have been exhibited internationally and are in the collections of art institutions such as the Barjeel Art Foundation, Dalloul Art Foundation and the British Museum.



Samir Sayegh
Words and Letters 1, 2013
Ink on Paper
70 x 100 cm



Samir Sayegh
Words and Letters 2, 2013
Ink on Paper
70 x 100 cm



Samir Sayegh
Words and Letters 3, 2013
Ink on Paper
70 x 100 cm

نحن صلب
ولكننا سائل

We are solid yet fluid

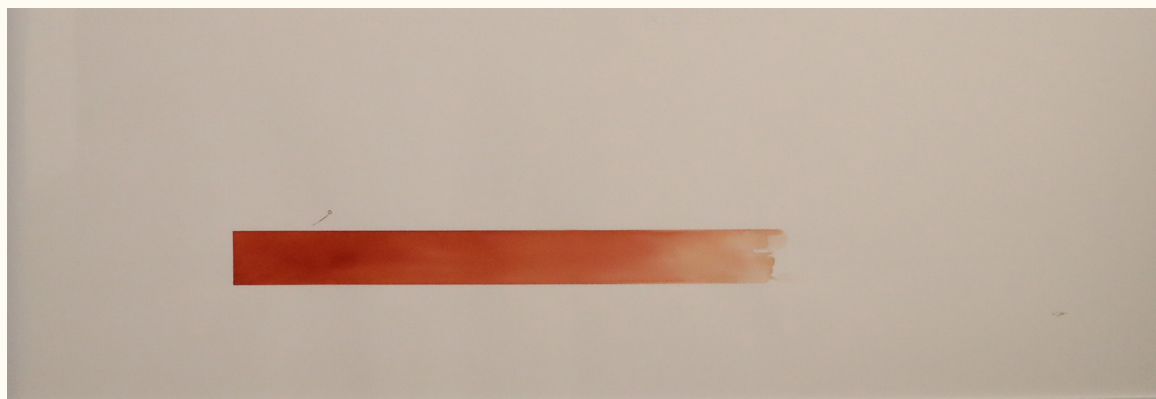
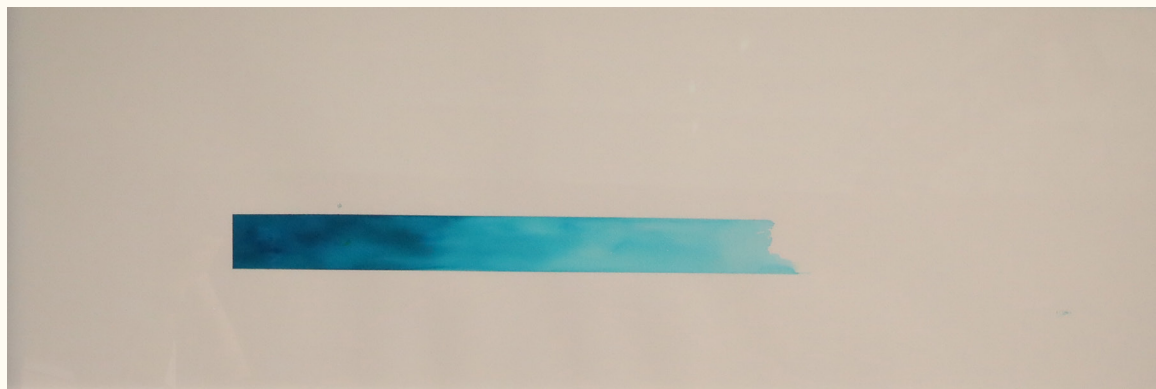


Samir Sayegh
Words and Letters 4, 2013
Ink on Paper
70 x 100 cm



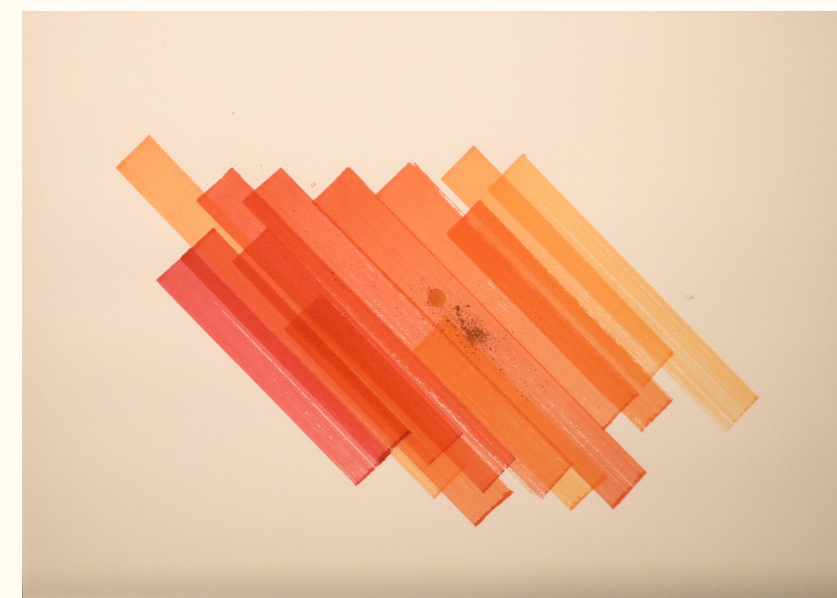
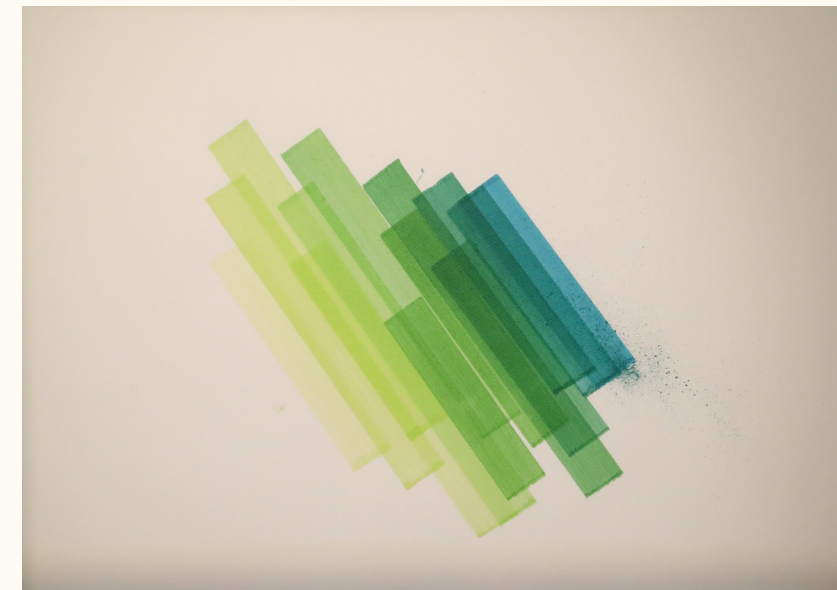
Samir Sayegh
Words and Letters 5, 2013
Ink on Paper
70 x 100 cm

Abdulaziz Al Rashidi (b. 1978, Medina) is an artist living and working in Medina. He holds a bachelors degree in art education and heads the Arabic Calligraphy Department of the Society of Culture and Arts in Medina. He first started studying calligraphy on his own in 1987, practising from the exercise book of renowned calligrapher Hashem Al-Baghdadi. He then trained with several Saudi calligraphers including, Adel Berry, Ahmed Diaa, Shafiq Zaman, Muhammad Bashir, and Dr. Abdel Aziz Mustafa Najat Al-Din. He came across the work of the Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudy who served as an inspiration to his work and encouraged him to find his personal voice in new forms of calligraphic abstractions and reductions and abstractions.

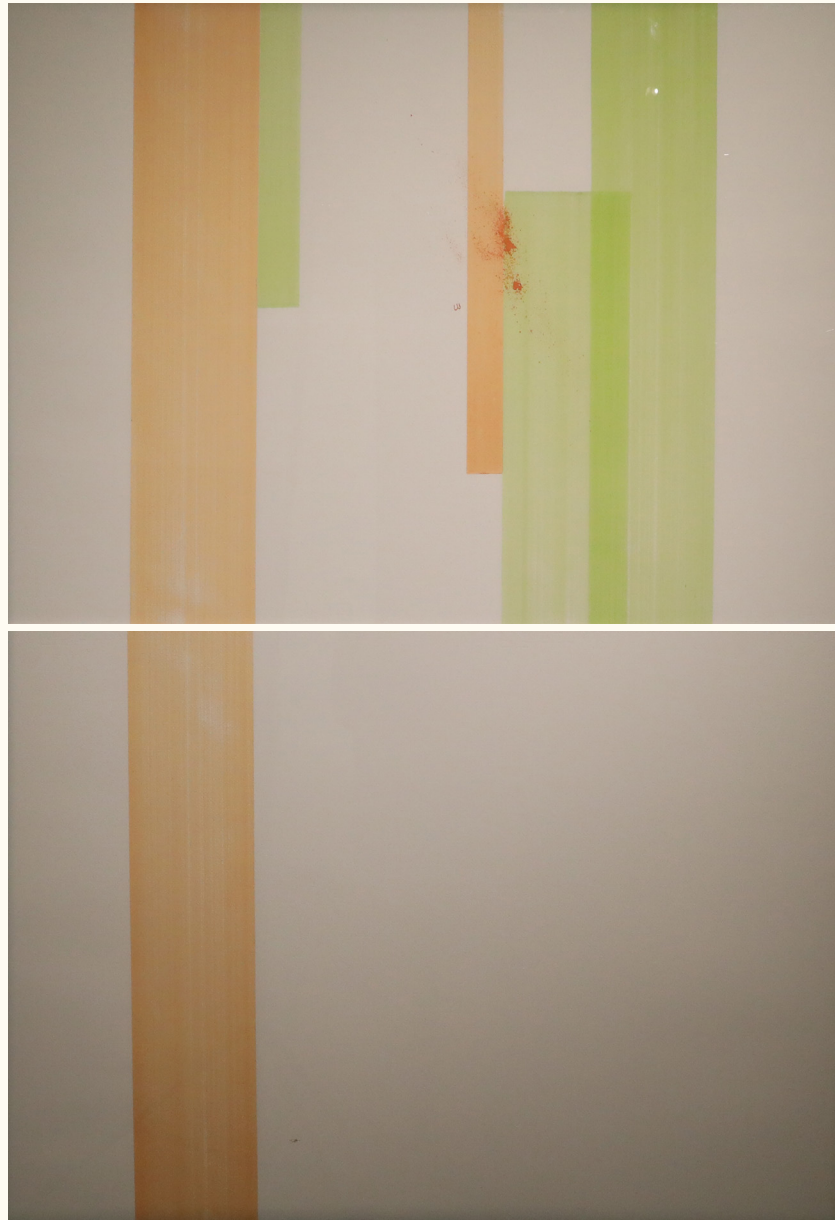


Abdulaziz Al Rashidi
Ikhtizal, 2024
 2 pieces.
 Ink on paper
 100 x 35 cm each

نحن متينون
 ولكننا نسيب
 We are solid yet fluid



Abdulaziz Al Rashidi
Ikhtizal Muntazhim, 2024
 2 pieces.
 Ink on paper
 70 x 50 cm each



Abdulaziz Al Rashidi
Takween Sifir, 2024
2 pieces.
Ink on paper
100 x 70 cm each

We are solid yet fluid
قَبِيضَاتٌ نَحْوُ قَبِيضَاتٍ



Abdulaziz Al Rashidi
Ikhtizal Hurr, 2024
2 pieces.
Ink on paper
50 x 70 cm each



Abdulaziz Al Rashidi
Alif, Ra, Khatt Point 3, Thawb 34, Jasad
Mutawassit, 2024
Ink on paper
100 x 70 cm each

We are solid yet fluid
قَبِيضَاتٌ نَحْوُ قَبِيضَاتٍ



Abdulaziz Al Rashidi
Alif, Ra, Khatt Point 3, Thawb 34, Jasad
Mutawassit, 2024
Ink on paper
70 x 100 cm each

Pouran Jinchi (b. 1965, Mashhad) is a visual artist living and working in New York. She holds a bachelors degree in Civil Engineering from the Georgetown University, and degrees in art from University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) and the Art Student League in New York. Her artistic approach combines a mathematical methodology with the rigid control of traditional Islamic calligraphy and the spontaneity of abstract painting. Her work has been widely exhibited internationally, and is part of museum collections such as the Smithsonian, the Brooklyn Museum, Art Jameel, Zayed national Museum among several others. She is represented by The Third Line Gallery in Dubai.



Pouran Jinchi
Derakht 6 (Tree), 2021
Ink and acrylic on canvas
121.92 x 121.92 cm

قیتارخیتا: نیا جتفخا: نیا
We are mysterious yet clear



Pouran Jinchi
Untitled #8, Poetry series, 1994
Ink and acrylic on canvas
121.92 x 86.36 cm



Pouran Jinchi
Untitled #1, Poetry series, 1994
Ink and acrylic on canvas
121.92 x 86.36 cm

Hind Alghamdi (b. 1992, Dharan) is a visual artist living and working in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. She received a bachelor's from King Faisal University. She has trained in traditional and contemporary Arabic calligraphy. She founded in Dammam, Ha'a, a studio that offers calligraphy workshops and develops artistic calligraphic projects. Her artwork has been featured in multiple exhibitions throughout the Gulf region. Next to her art practice she is programs educator at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) in Dhahran. Her work explores the calligraphic art in its free-form and urban context, creating monumental works that use unconventional writing tools and techniques.



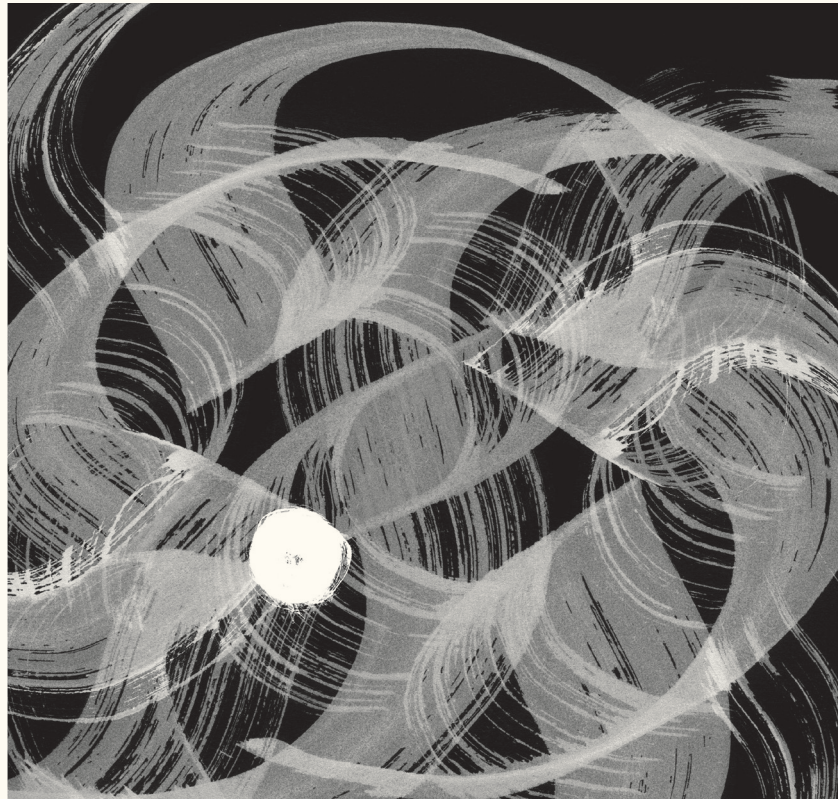
Hind Alghamdi
Stopping by the Ruins 1 – Imru' al-Qays, 2024
 Silkscreen print (with natural black ink) on archival paper
 100 x 60 cm

We are mysterious yet clear
 قَتِيرًا خَائِفًا نَجْمًا خَائِفًا نَجْمًا



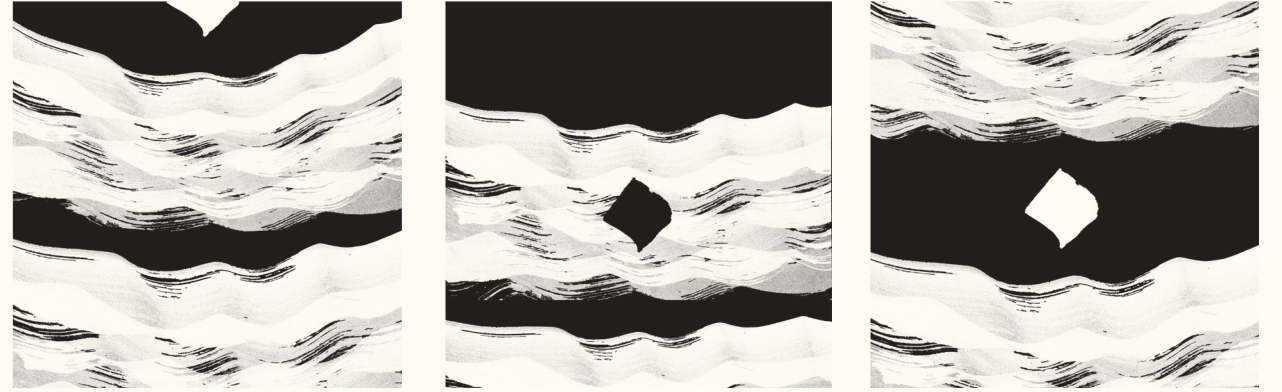
Hind Alghamdi
Stopping by the Ruins 2 – Amr ibn Kulthum, 2024
 Silkscreen print (with natural black ink) on archival paper
 100 x 60 cm

Jassim Meraj (b. 1982, Kuwait) is a calligrapher and visual artist living and working in Kuwait. He holds a bachelors degree in chemical engineering from the University of Kuwait, and masters degree in Islamic Art socialising in Arabic calligraphy from Academy of Art and Architecture in Amman, Jordan. He studied calligraphy under the supervision of master calligraphers Walid Al-Farhoud, Ustaz Salman Dawood Al-Sabbah, Dawood Bektash, and Hasan Çelebi, receiving an ijaz in Naskh and Thuluth from Bektash and Çelebi. Hd is a founding member of the Center for Islamic Arts in Kuwait. He has received numerous awards and he has participated in various regional and international calligraphy and art exhibitions. As highly skilled classical calligrapher, Meraj is also a multidisciplinary artist who explores contemporary forms of free-style calligraphic works based on through research and explorations of media from ink, to digital print, and three-dimensional sculpture in various materials. In his work he explores the spiritual and symbolic dimension of Arabic letters and how this is manifested in the art of Arabic calligraphy.

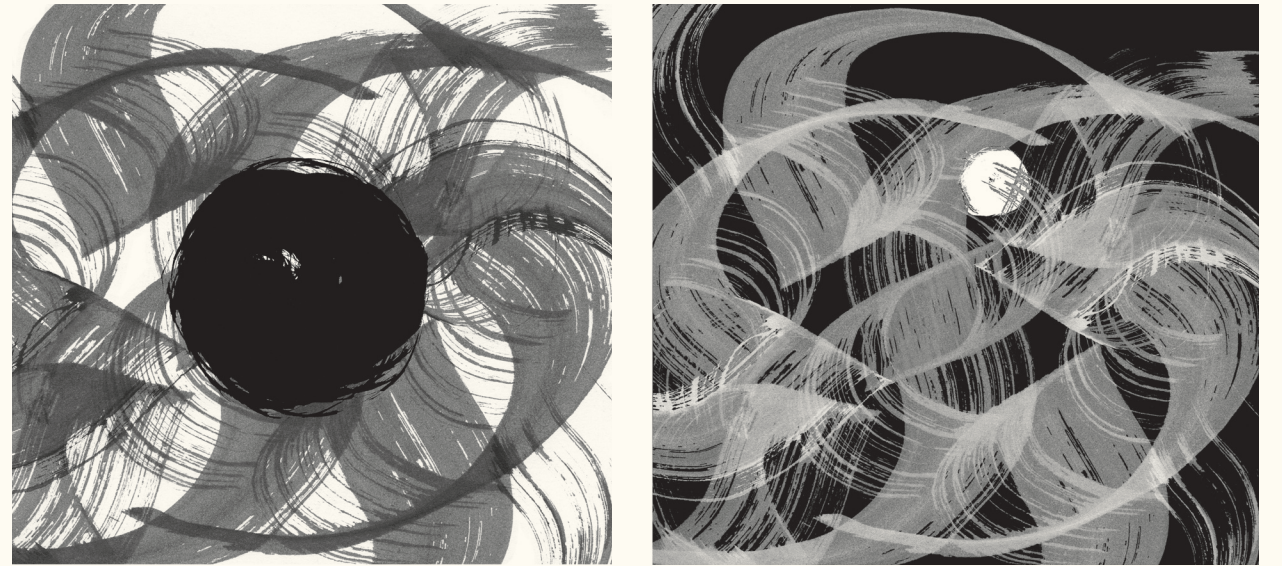


تَجَرُّبًا نَجْمًا
مَجْرَبًا نَجْمًا

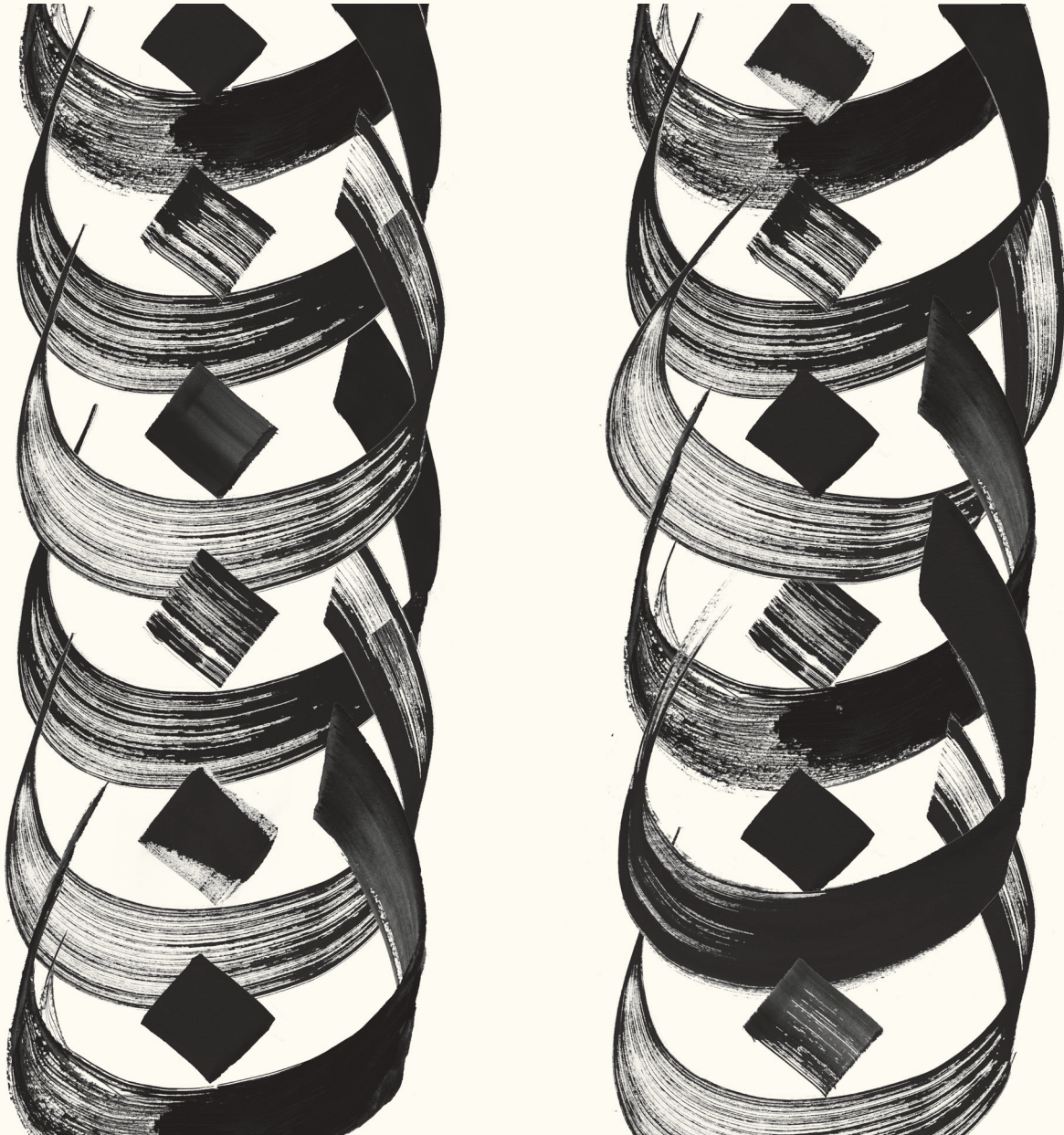
We are mysterious yet clear



Jassim Meraj
Al-Nuqtah wa-Bahruha, 2024
Triptych
Digital print on archival paper
60 x 60 cm



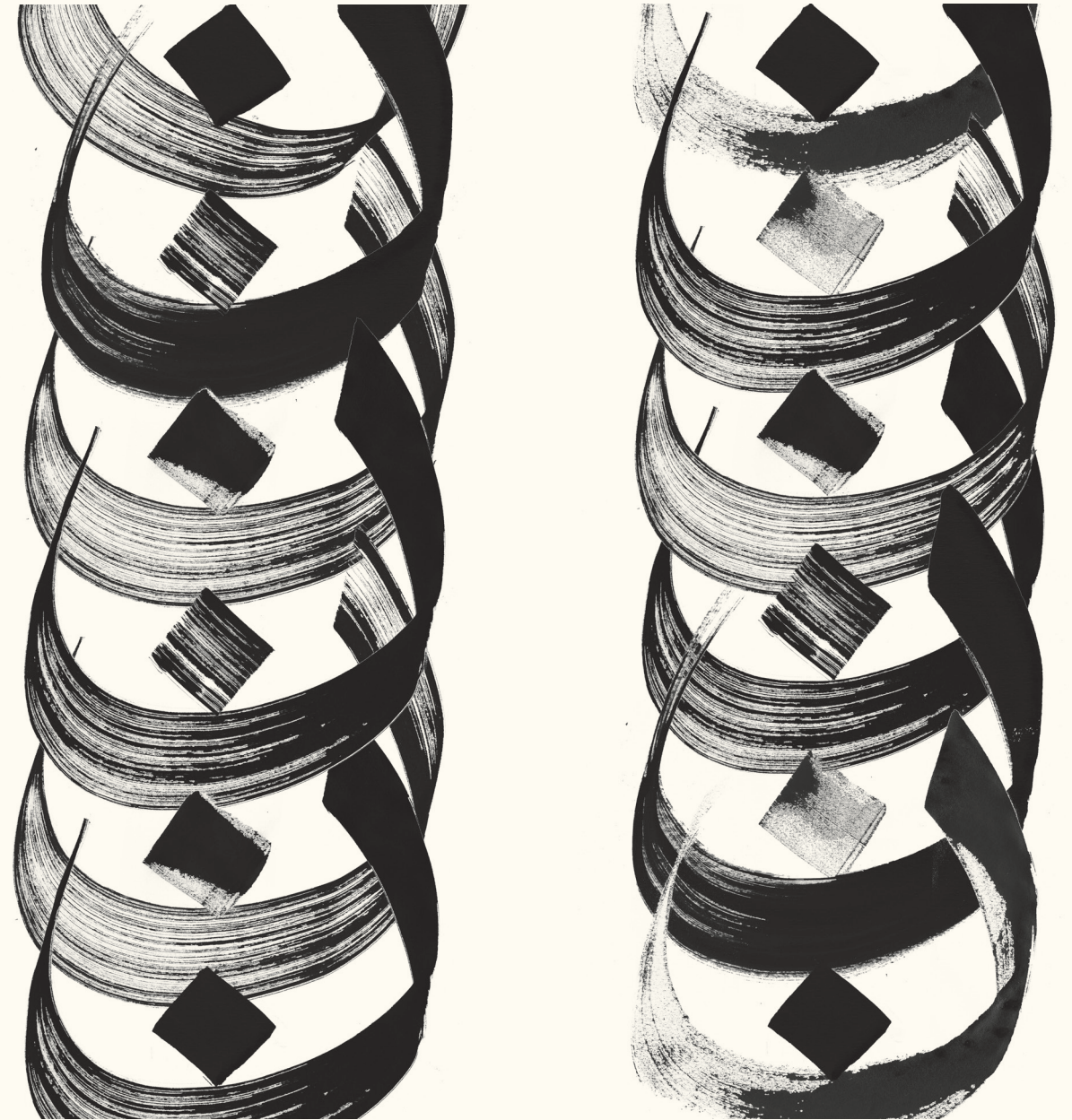
Jassim Meraj
Manazil al-Qalb, 2024
Triptych
Digital print on archival paper
60 x 60 cm



Jassim Meraj
Nour 'ala Nour, 2024
Four pieces
Digital print on archival paper
100 x 55 cm

قِيَامُ الْيَوْمِ
مَسْرُومٌ وَجَمِيلٌ
مَعْرُومٌ وَبِخَيْرٍ
مَعْرُومٌ وَبِخَيْرٍ

We are mysterious yet clear



Fathi Hassan (b. 1957, Cairo) is a visual artist living and working in Edinburgh.

Born to Egyptian and Sudanese parents of Nubian lineage, who were displaced by the planned flooding of their homeland in order to build the Aswan Dam. He studied fine arts in Cairo and then moved to Italy after receiving a grant from the Italian Cultural Institute in Cairo. He holds degrees in fine arts from the Naples Art Academy. While studying and after graduation, he worked as an actor and set designer at RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana) in Naples and Rome. Hassan has lived and worked in Italy until his move to Edingburgh in 2018. In 1989 Hassan was the first artist of African heritage to be invited to the “Aperto” section of the 43rd Venice Biennale. He has exhibited internationally in group and solo shows, and his work has been acquired by a number of international museums and collectors.

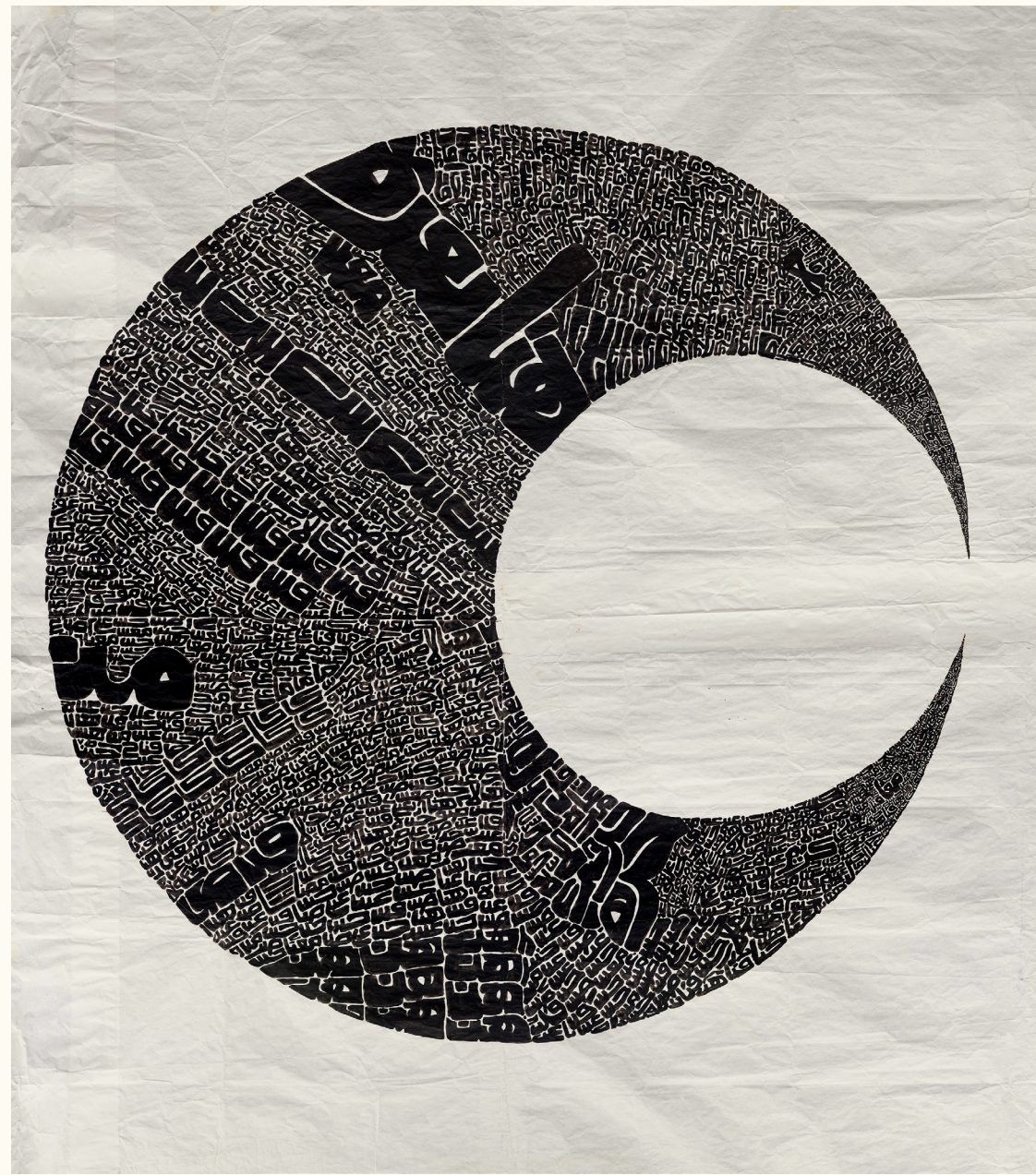


Fathi Hassan
Burhan, 2020
Mixed media on paper
74 x 98 cm



Fathi Hassan
Ayub, 2020
Mixed media on paper
99 x 147 cm

We are old, new, and eternal
 نحن قدامنا، قدامنا، قدامنا



Fathi Hassan
Believing Moon, 2016
Acrylic on paper
184 x 167 cm

Mariem Abutaleb (b. 1997, Cairo) is a designer and visual artist living and working in Cairo, Egypt. She holds a bachelor's degree in graphic design from The American University in Cairo (2020). Her work has been exhibited locally and internationally at venues regionally and internationally. Mariem believes in the power of Arabic letters as a visual language. Her main motivation is to experiment with the Arabic script creating harmonious lettering and compositions. In her series *Kitabat* (writings, 2024), Abutaleb explores a freeform style of writing and compositions that oscillate between the aesthetics of West and North African manuscript, and something more grounded in the popular street art and textile painting in Egypt. She explores new lettering and handwritten Arabic texts.



Mariem Abutaleb
Writings, 2024
 Series of five. Installation shot.
 Ink on cotton textile
 1000 x 5000 cm

نحن قديمون، جدد، وأبدون
 We are old, new, and eternal



Mariem Abutaleb
Writings, 2024
 Series of five (2 of 5, details).
 Ink on cotton textile
 1000 x 5000 cm

Haji Noor Deen Mi Guang Jiang (b. 1963, Shangdong province, China) is a renowned master of Arabic calligraphy, and an expert in the Sini style which originated from the Chinese Muslim tradition. He is a lecturer at the Islamic College at Zhengzhou in the province of Henan, and is also a researcher of Islamic culture at the Henan Academy of Sciences. In 1997, Noor Deen was the first Chinese Muslim to be awarded the Egyptian Certificate of Arabic Calligraphy and to be admitted as a member of the Association of Egyptian Calligraphy. His calligraphy is known for its beauty and complexity and for his mixing the Middle Eastern with the Chinese calligraphic traditions, this creating a new calligraphic style all his own. He has lectured on Islam in China and participated in a number of workshops and talks on Arabic Calligraphy worldwide, including at Harvard University, the University of Cambridge, and the Globe Theatre in London. He has exhibited internationally and his works are held in art and cultural institutions around the world.

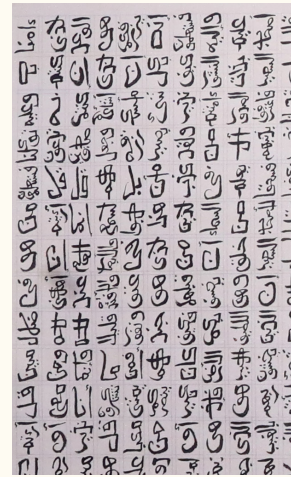
Fatima Yiyng Cao (b. 1965) is a calligrapher living and working in Zhengzhou in Henan province in China. She studied Islamic studies under Mai Rongxi, one of the most respected Chinese Imams, as well as Arabic at the Language and Culture University of Beijing. She is married to the world-renowned Chinese master calligrapher Haji Noor Deen. She renowned as being one of a few female calligraphers and imams in China. She studied in Cairo at Al-Azhar University, majoring in Islamic Studies. She has lectured on Islamic culture, the relationship between Arabic calligraphy and Chinese Muslim women at venues around the world. In February 2014, together with her husband, she held a large Arabic Calligraphy Exhibition and gave several lectures in Mauritius, Malaysia, Ireland, UK, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia.

Haji Noor Deen
Surat al-Mulk, 2023.
China ink on paper and ornamentation in silk
around the artwork (detail),
63 x 169 cm

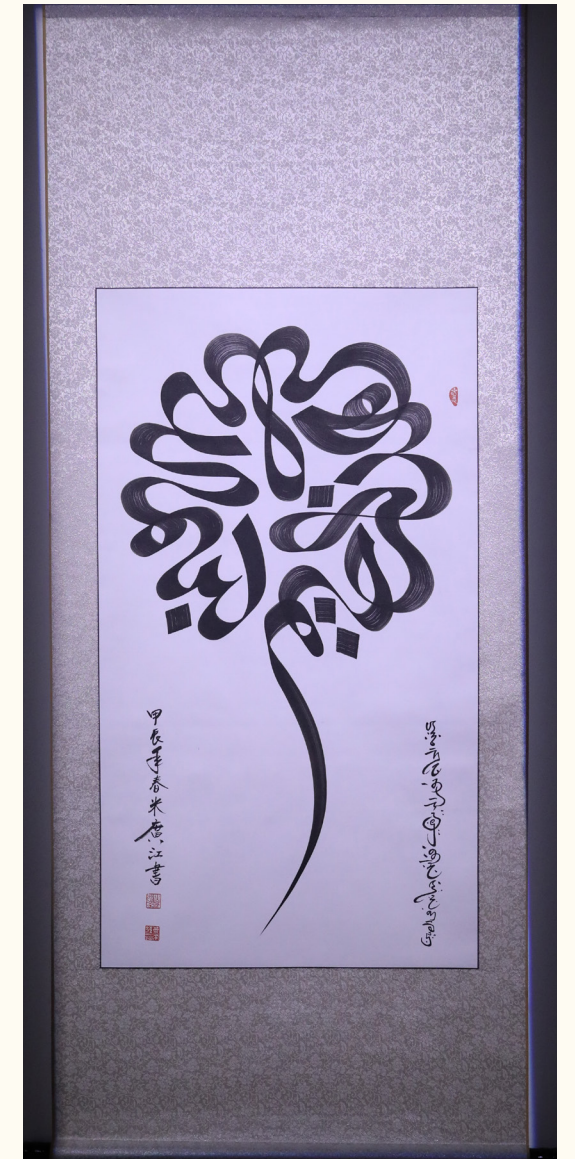
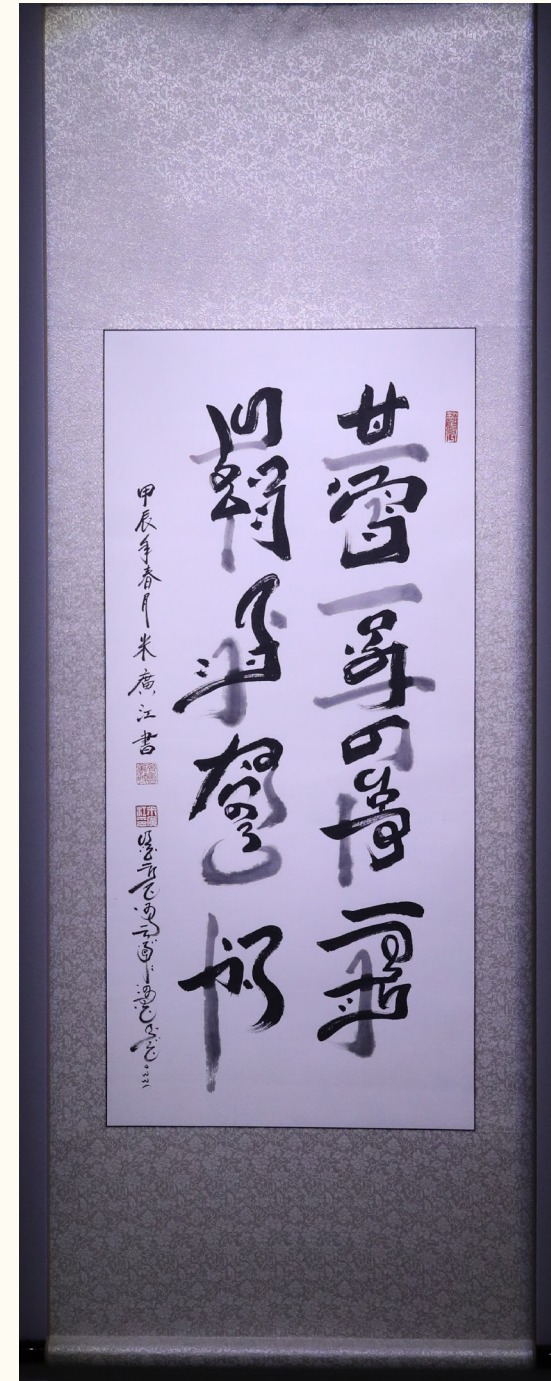
Fatima Yiyng Cao
Ya Rahman, 2014
China ink on paper and ornamentation in silk
around the artwork
55 x 153 cm

Haji Noor Deen
Surat al-Kahf: 107, 2024.
China ink on paper and ornamentation in silk
around the artwork
57.5 x 161 cm

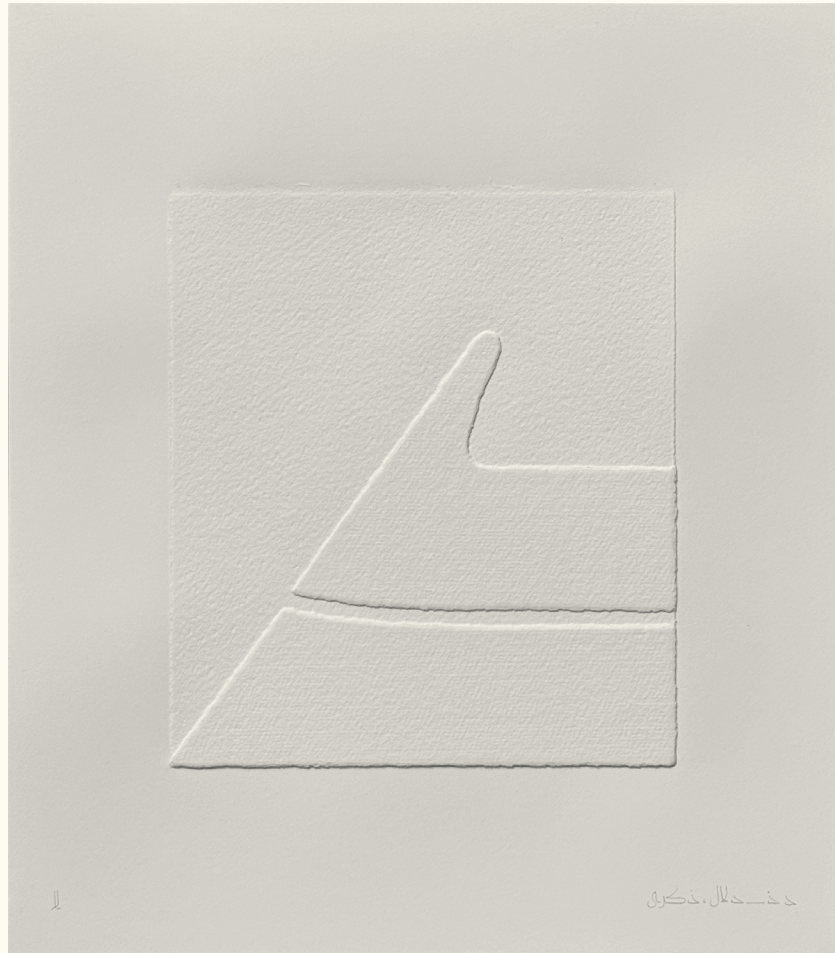
Haji Noor Deen
Basmalah, 2024
China ink on paper and ornamentation in silk
around the artwork
67.5 x 165 cm



We are boundless movement
 نحن حركة بلا حدود

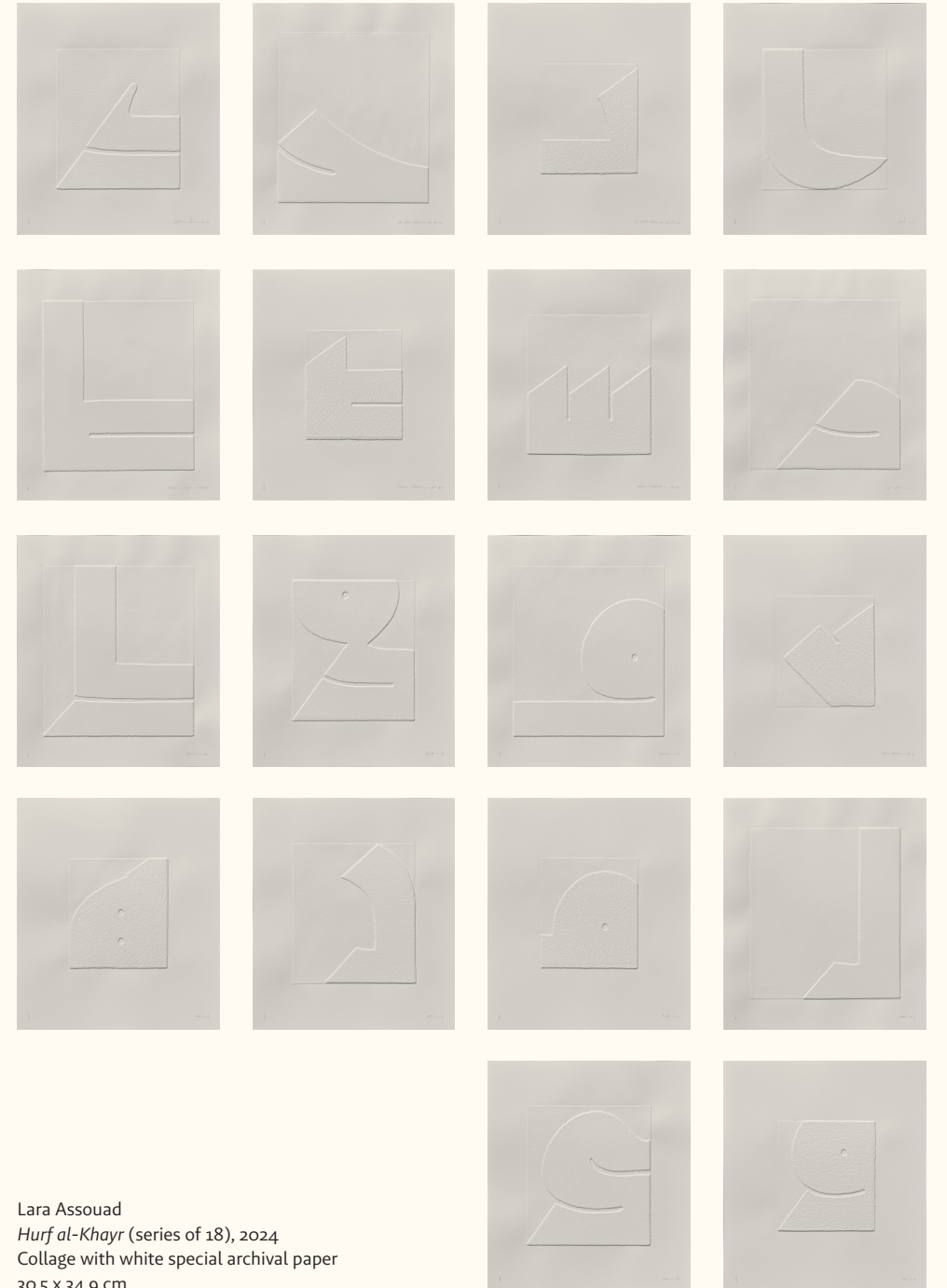


Lara Assouad (b. 1976, Montréal) is a designer and visual artist living and working in Dubai. She has a particular interest in abstraction, the relation between Arabic and Latin writing systems, and multicultural identities. She has degrees in graphic design from the American University of Beirut and in Arabic scripts and type design from the Atelier National de Recherche Typographique (ANRT) in Nancy, France. She has received numerous awards for her design work and has exhibited her work regionally and internationally. Lara was one of the shortlisted artists for the Jameel Prize in 2016 for her Modular Alphabet project which has inspired several series of projects since. In her works she draws inspiration for the older and out of use Hijazi and Abassid scripts and explores their graphic plasticity into conceptual and contemporary works of art.



Lara Assouad
Hurf al-Khayr: Dal-Dhal (1 of 18), 2024
 Collage with white special archival paper
 30.5 x 34.9 cm

We are monumental yet intimate
 نحن ايقنتا: نحن قياكلنا: نحن



Lara Assouad
Hurf al-Khayr (series of 18), 2024
 Collage with white special archival paper
 30.5 x 34.9 cm



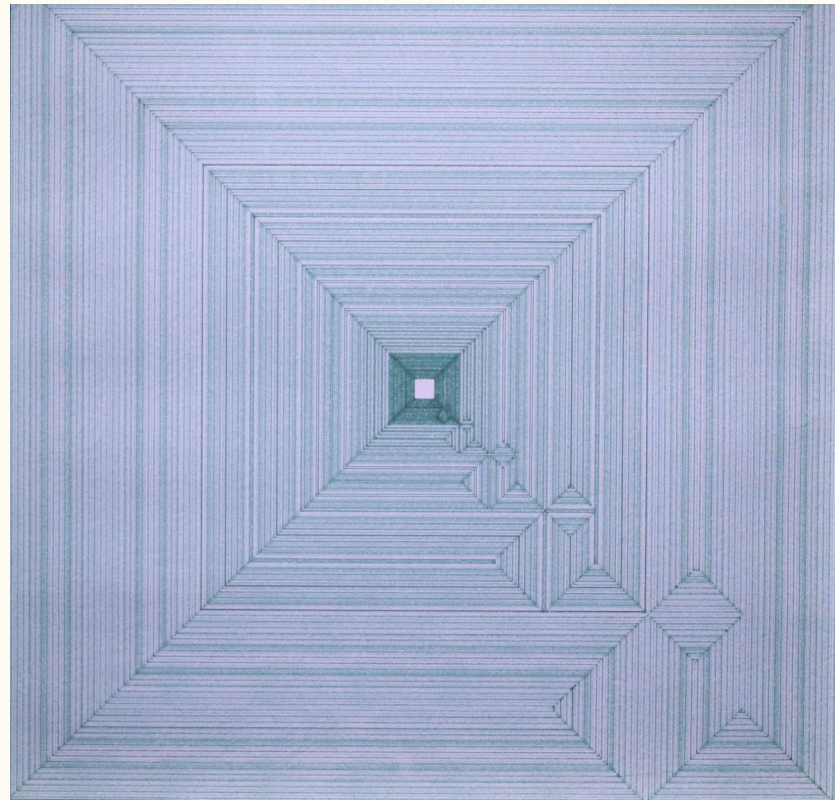
Lara Assouad
Hurf al-Khayr: Qaf (1 of 18), 2024
 Collage with white special archival paper
 30.5 x 34.9 cm

We are monumental yet intimate
 جاريتنا: نجمة قنعة: نجمة



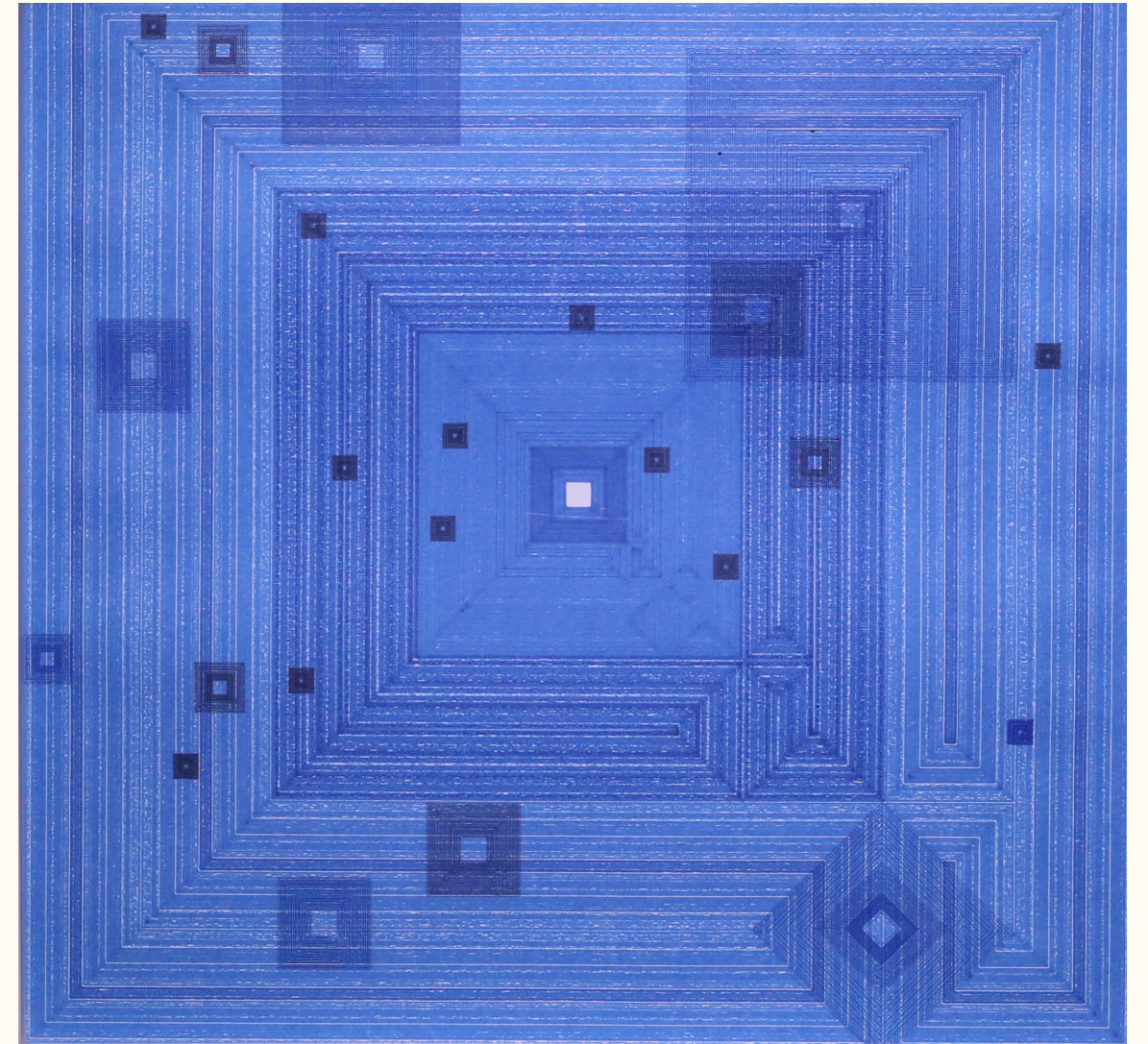
Lara Assouad
Hurf al-Khayr: Ya' (1 of 18), 2024
 Collage with white special archival paper
 30.5 x 34.9 cm

Nasser Al Salem (b. 1984, Mecca), is a visual artists living and working between Jeddah and Riyadh. He holds degrees in Architecture and an ijaza certificate in classical calligraphy. His work has been exhibited internationally and acquired by a number of international museums and collectors. Al Salem's work in the contemporary art field blends these multiple practices with a unique conceptual that takes Islamic scripture as point of departure. The subjects that he treats are often philosophical in nature, such as man's place in the world, the concept of time, and means of devotion.

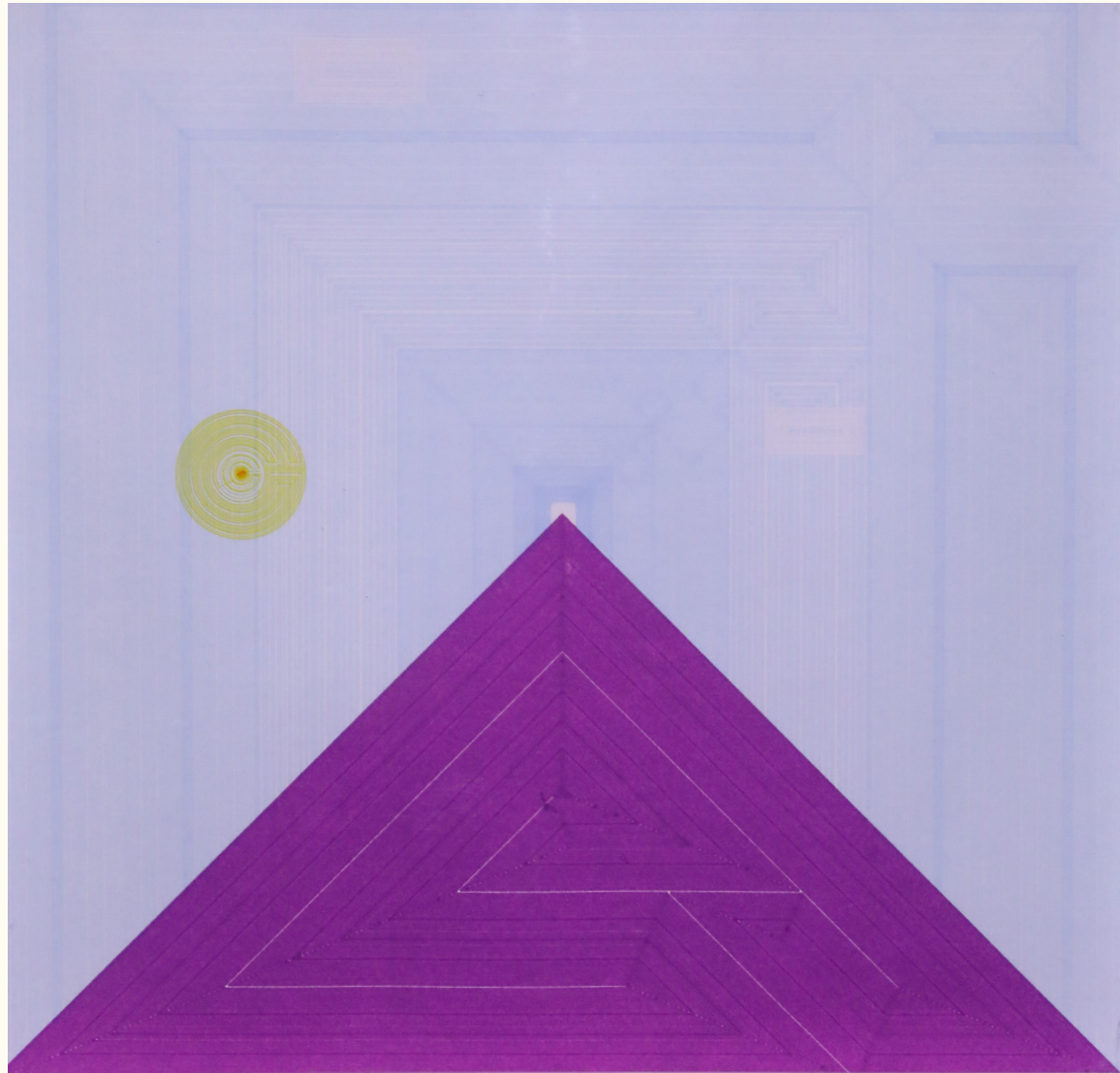


Nasser Al Salem
Forest, Kull Nature Series, 2023
Ink on paper
50 x 50 cm

We are intricate yet minimal
نحن جليلون
وإننا جليلون

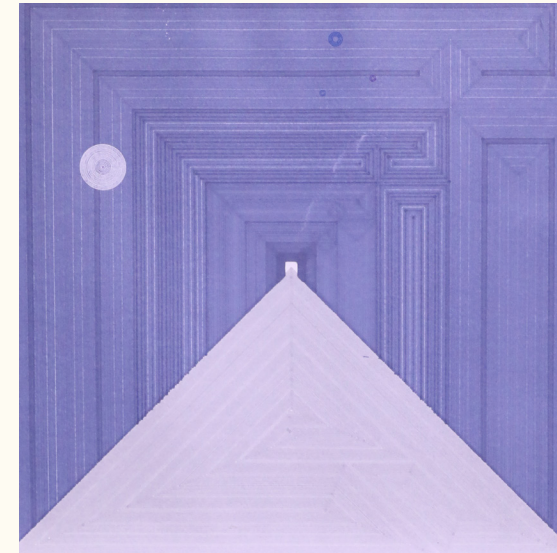


Nasser Al Salem
Ocean, Kull Nature Series, 2023
Ink on paper
50 x 50 cm

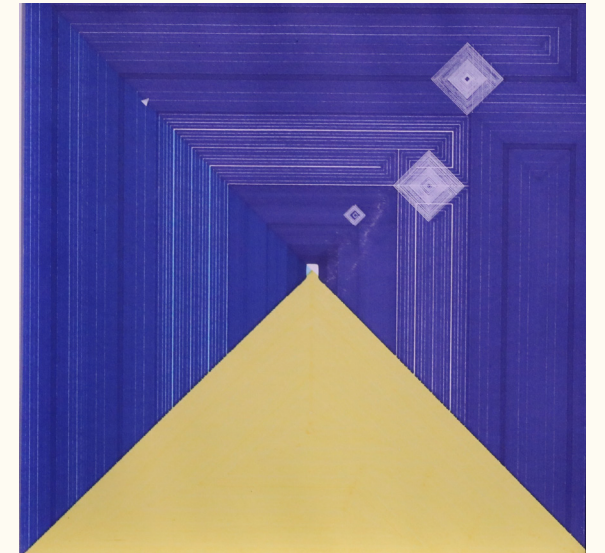


Nasser Al Salem
Day, Kull Nature Series, 2023
 Ink on paper
 50 x 50 cm

We are intricate yet minimal
 نحن جازمين



Nasser Al Salem
Night, Kull Nature Series, 2023
 Ink on paper
 50 x 50 cm



Nasser Al Salem
Ocean and Land, Kull Nature Series, 2023
 Ink on paper
 50 x 50 cm



Nasser Al Salem
Logic, Kull Nature Series, 2023
 Ink on paper
 50 x 50 cm

Hussein Al Mohasen (b. 1971, Al-Qatif) is a visual artist living and working in Dhahran. His work is deeply informed by Arabic poetry and music. Its conceptual use of fragments of texts combines with his minimalist yet dramatic compositions to deliver thought-provoking statements. He draws inspiration from the raw lettering of urban graffiti and creates works that employ mechanized typewriters typefaces, stencils, and spray paints. His compositions are at times sparse, and at others dense with layered textures and dripping inks. Like modern poetry, his works speak of freedom to embrace the accidental and spontaneous. His work has been exhibited regionally and internationally.

Little Illusions, is a series of works that are inspired from a poetry book bearing the same title by poet Ghassan Alkhunaizi. It consists of several unique artist books and paintings (stencils on paper) with individual statements and fragments of poetic texts.



We are eloquent in silence
 نحن صامتون في كلامنا

Hussein Al Mohasen
Little Illusions or What Haunts the Delusional in Fever, 2011
 Mixed media on paper
 Installation, 400 x 240 cm

Hussein Al Mohasen
Al-Birwaz bil-Akhdar / The Frame in Green, 2024
 Stencil on Fabriano paper
 70 x 100 cm



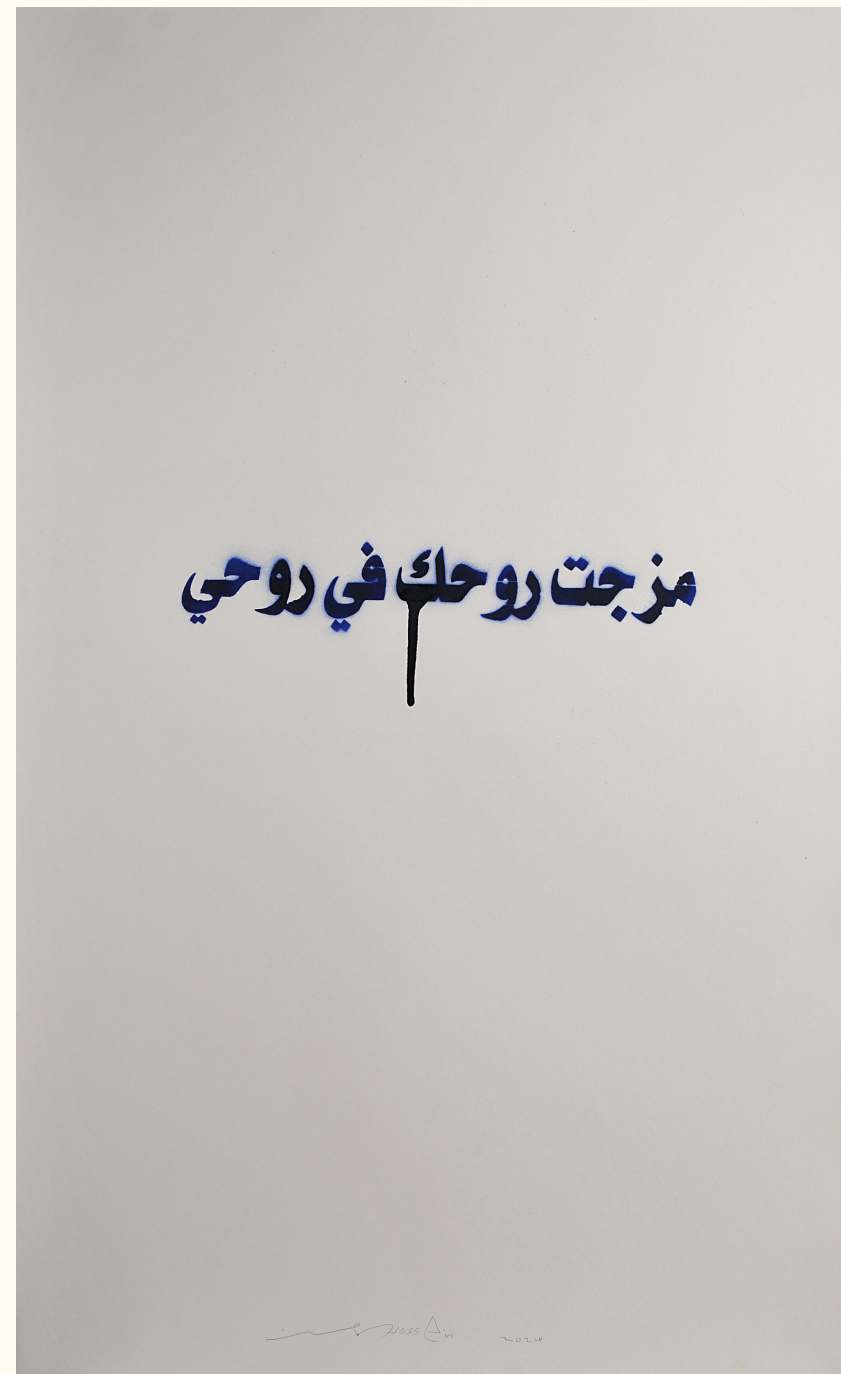


Hussein Al Mohasen
Unshudat al-Matar / Rain Song series, 2024
Poem by Badr Shakir al-Sayyab
Stencil on Fabriano paper
70 x 100 cm



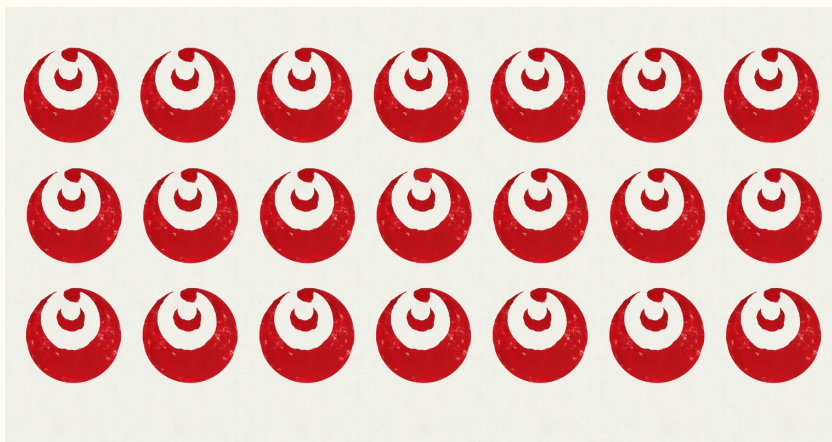
Hussein Al Mohasen
Hubb / From the Love Series
Stencil on Fabriano paper
70 x 100 cm

We are eloquent in silence
نحن بليغون في صمتنا



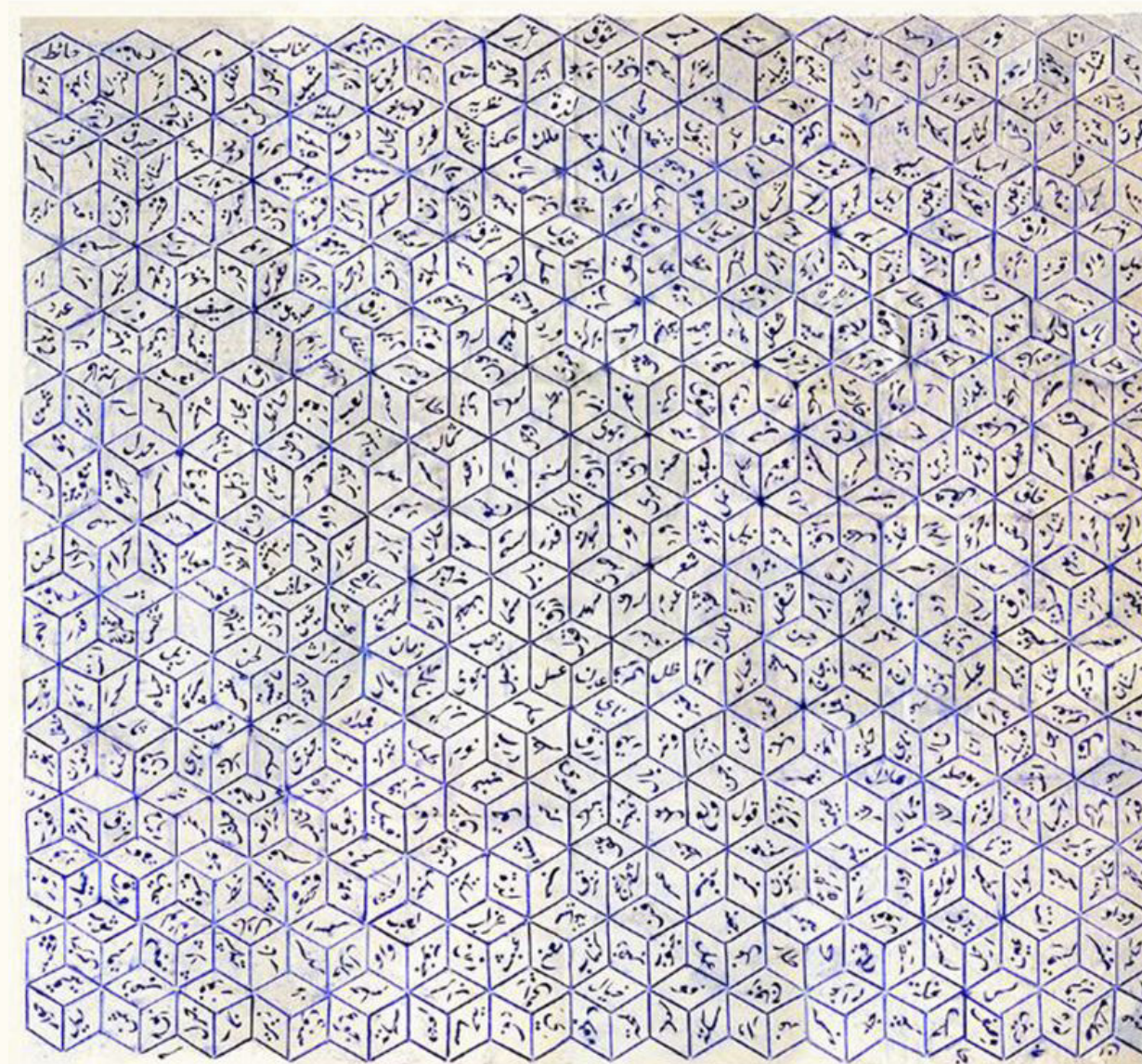
Hussein Al Mohasen
Muzijat Ruhuka fi Ruhi / Yer Soul Combined with my Soul
Poem by Al-Hallaj
Stencil on Fabriano paper
70 x 100 cm

Nedim Kufi (b. 1962, Baghdad) is a multi-disciplinary artist and designer living and working in Amersfoort, The Netherlands. He has a degree in print-making and sculpture from Baghdad Institute of Fine Arts, and a degree in graphic design from the Hilversum Academy of Art, The Netherlands. His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions internationally, and collected by various institutions and private collectors. He is primarily known for conceptual art that explores themes such as war, political conflict, exile, loss, and historical memory. Much of his work contains autobiographical elements and concrete poetry. He explores various media from painting, to printmaking, artists books (*dafatir*), video, photography and installations. In his work he encourages the viewers to challenge the general and specific meanings of words. He draws words as images, creating visual puns, exploring the symbolism of letters and shapes, and presenting the viewer with a meditative experience that invites a personal reading of the work.



Nedim Kufi
Crescent of Love, 2023
 Oil on canvas
 Dyptich
 140 x 130 cm each

We are eloquent in silence
 نحن بليغون في الصمت

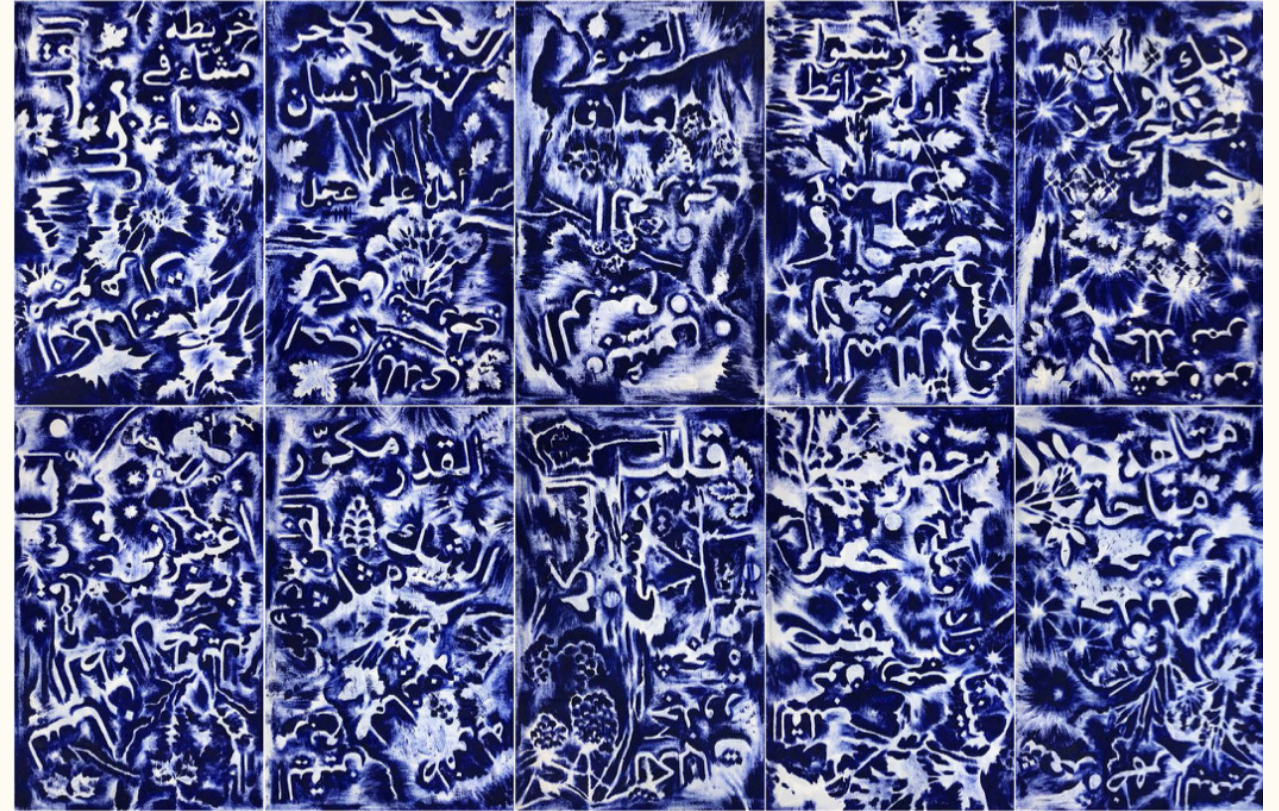


Nedim Kufi
Grid of Wisdom, 2020
 Oil on canvas
 200 x 200 cm



Nedim Kufi
The Wandering of Letters, 2023
 Oil on canvas
 Dyptich, 130 x 180 cm each

We are eloquent in silence
 نحن قديراً في صمتنا

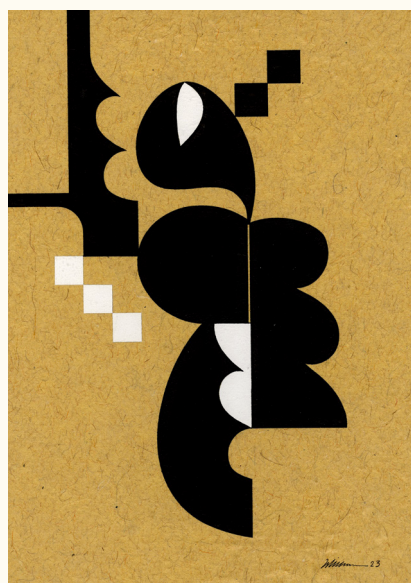


Nedim Kufi
The Blue Mule Maze, 2021
 Oil on canvas
 430 x 276 cm

Wissam Shawkat (b. 1976, Basra), is an award-winning calligraphy artist and designer living and working in Dubai. He is often referred to as the self-taught master calligrapher. He has degrees in civil engineering from the University of Basra, but has been practicing calligraphy since his teenage school days. His work is found in private collections around the world, and is regularly featured in books on Arabic calligraphy and typography. He has participated as both an artist and committee member in numerous editions of local and International calligraphy exhibitions. Shawkat is also known for developing a new calligraphic style, Al Wissam, which references several traditional scripts bringing them together with modern design. In recent work he developed a new method of creating contemporary calligraphic art that he name Calligraforms where he fuses abstract and calligraphic forms to create works that challenge our expectations.



Wissam Shawkat
BW 28, 2023
Pigment inks on treated handmade paper
20 x 28 cm

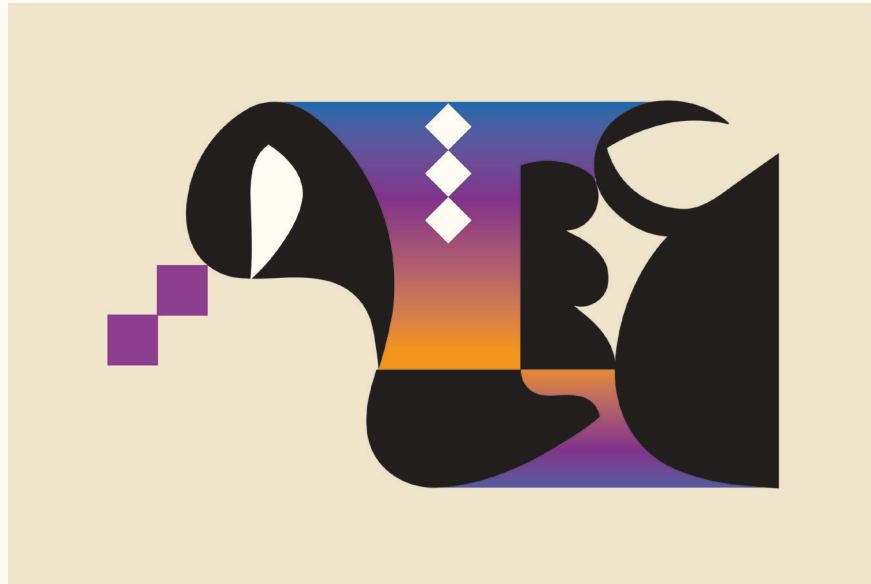


Wissam Shawkat
BW 30, 2023
Pigment inks on treated handmade paper
20 x 28 cm

نحن نعيش خارج الزمان والمكان
We exist outside time and place



Wissam Shawkat
Quad Love 3, 2019
Pigment inks and acrylic on treated handmade paper
Squares: 33 x 33 cm
Circles: 28 x 28 cm



Wissam Shawkat
Passion 3, 2022
 Pigment inks and acrylic on treated
 handmade paper
 50 x 33 cm



Wissam Shawkat
Passion 4, 2019
 Pigment inks and acrylic on treated
 handmade paper
 50 x 33 cm

نحن نعيش خارج الزمان والمكان
 We exist outside time and place



Wissam Shawkat
Calligraphicubism 3, 2022
 Pigment inks and acrylic on treated
 handmade paper
 70 x 50 cm



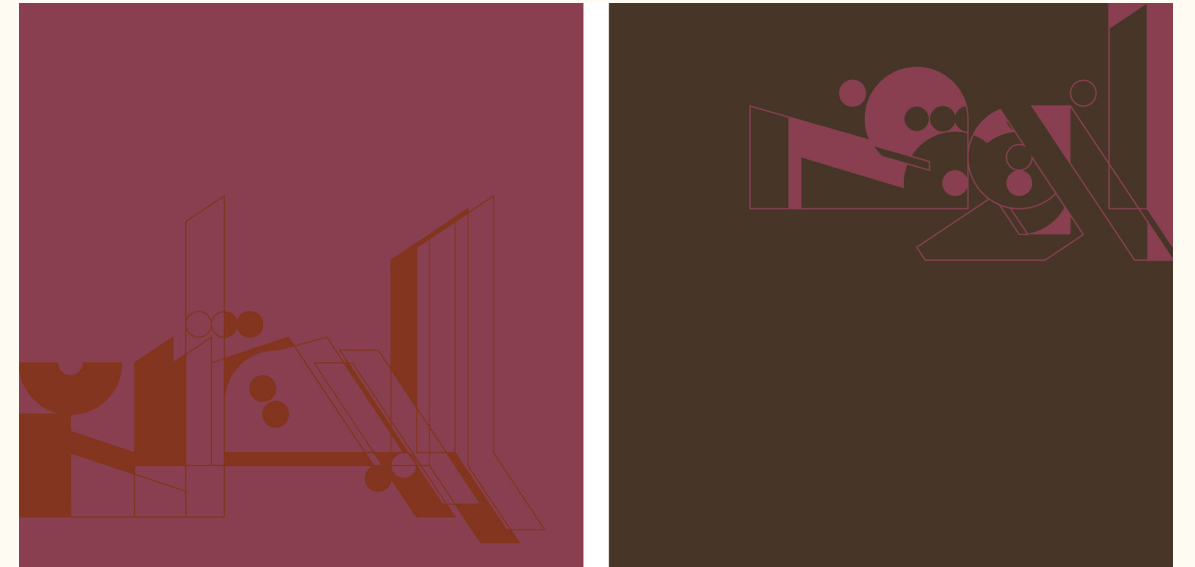
Wissam Shawkat
Dance of Love 2, 2023
 Pigment inks on treated handmade
 paper
 50 x 50 cm

Karim Farah (b. 1988, Beirut) is a graphic designer and visual artist based in Beirut. He holds degrees in graphic design from the American University of Beirut. He currently teaches at the Department of Architecture and Design at the American University of Beirut. His work explores the potential of Arabic lettering, and its power to negotiate a change in the landscape of the written. Through a process of abstraction and deconstruction, he seeks to proffer the perception of the visuals as part of a dynamic culture in process. In his recent work he questions how to rethink the written expression of Arabic letters today given their inherited aesthetics; to what extent can these letters or words be emptied of their constructed meaning and form; and could the meaning simply be the visual expression of these letters and words unfolding through their compositions?



Karim Farah
2-Compositions 03, 2022
Silkscreen print on 100% cotton paper
46 x 25 cm

We are diversity within harmony
 نحن نختلاف في انسجام



Karim Farah
2-Compositions 02, 2023
Silkscreen print on 100% cotton paper
46 x 25 cm



Karim Farah
2-Compositions 02, 2023
Silkscreen print on 100% cotton paper
46 x 25 cm



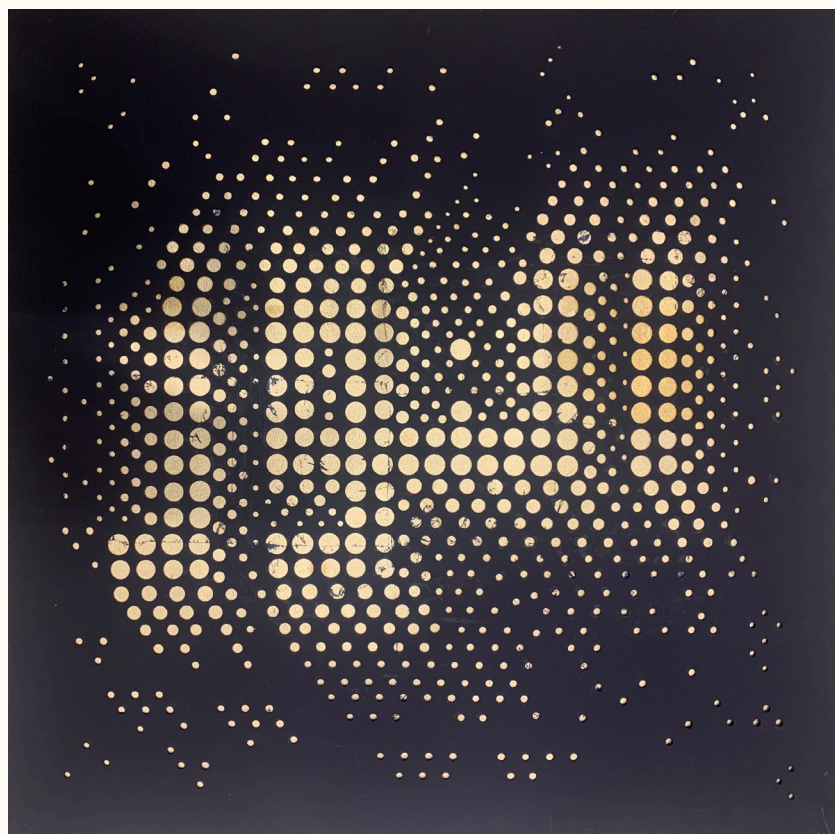
Karim Farah
Composition 01 – 03, 2018
Composition 04 – 05, 2021
Silkscreen print on 100% cotton paper
46 x 25 cm

We are diversity within harmony
نحن نختلج في انسجامنا



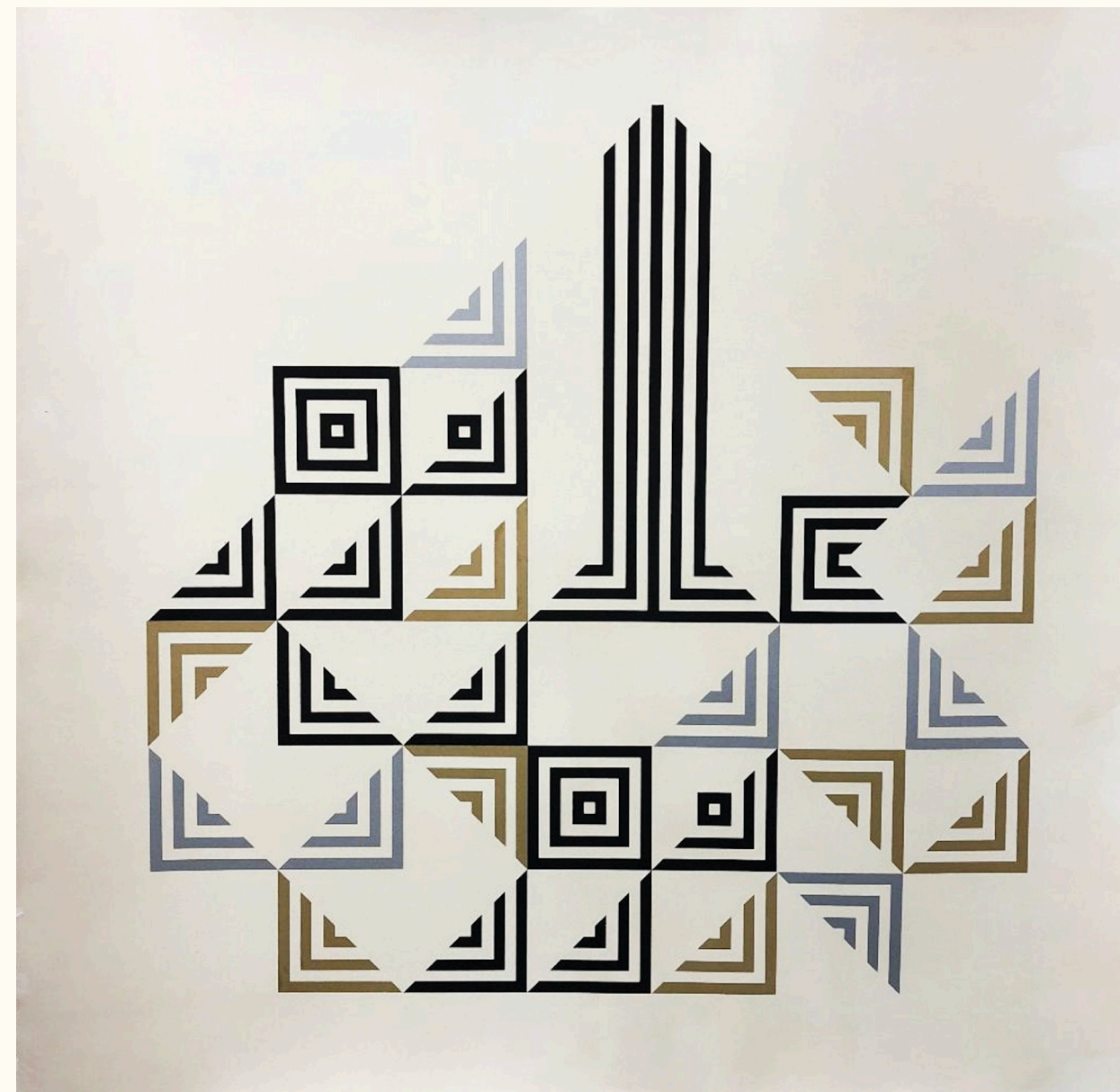
Karim Farah
Composition 06, 2022
Composition 07 – 11, 2023
Silkscreen print on 100% cotton paper
46 x 25 cm

Lulwah Al Homoud (b. 1967, Riyadh), is a contemporary visual artist living and working between Riyadh and London. She holds a masters degree in art and design from Central Saint Martins School of Design in London. Her work has been exhibited internationally and acquired by a number of cultural institutions such as LACMA in Los Angeles, The British Museum in London, the Islamic Arts Museum in Malaysia, and Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah, among several others. She is the founder of LAHAF Art Foundation in Riyadh. Silkscreen which she picked up during her art school studies plays a prominent role in her artistic production. Her work is carefully constructed with Arabic letterforms and texts along principles of spiritual Islamic geometry. She draws inspiration from religious scripture as well as poetry to develop layered and nuanced works of art.

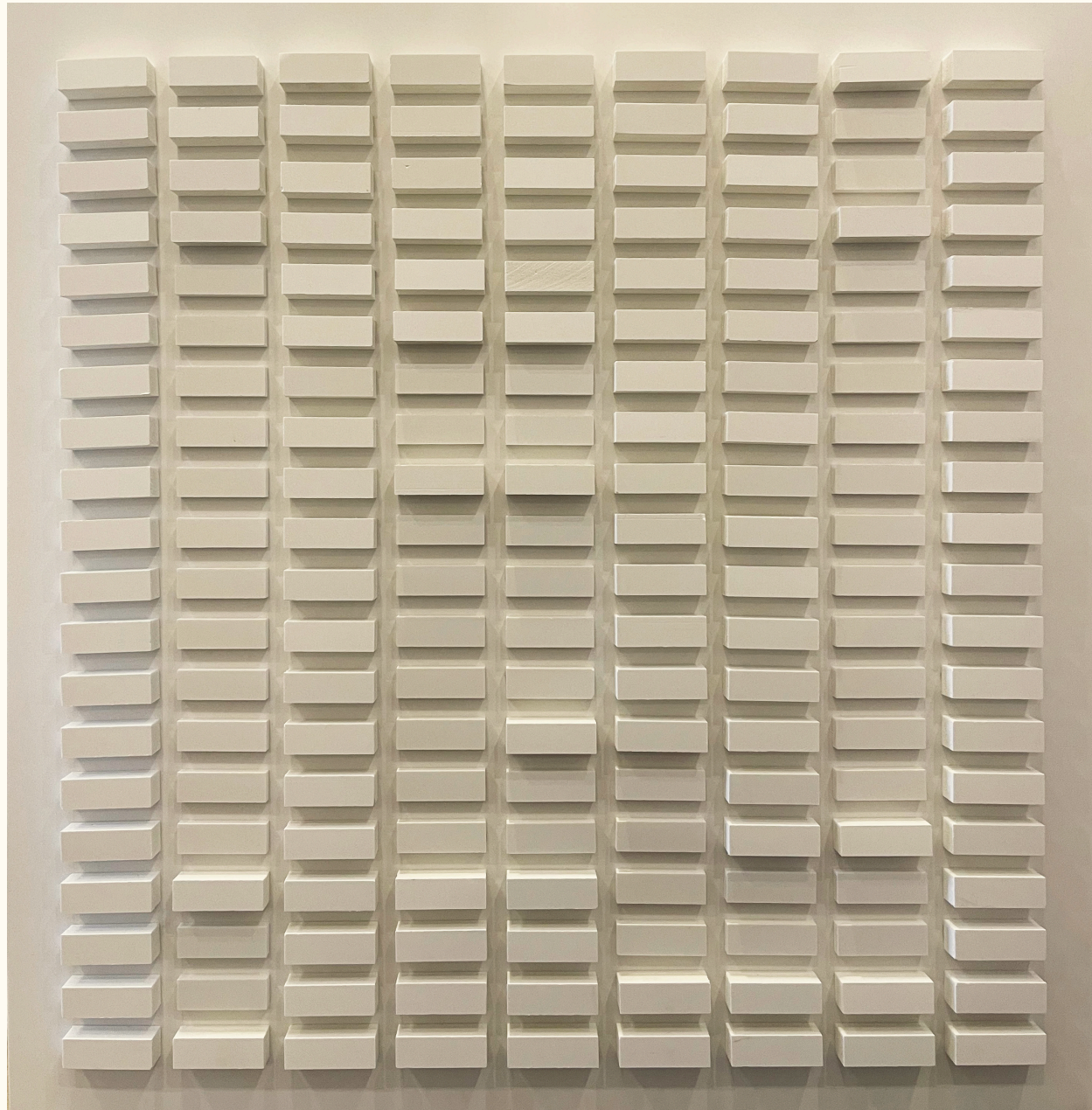


Lulwah Al Homoud
Al-Nur / Light, 2020
Ink and gold leaf on archival paper
100 x 100 cm

We are diversity within harmony
 نحن نختلف في انسجام



Lulwah Al Homoud
Nur 'ala Nur / Light Upon Light, 2019
Mixed media on archival paper
100 x 100 cm

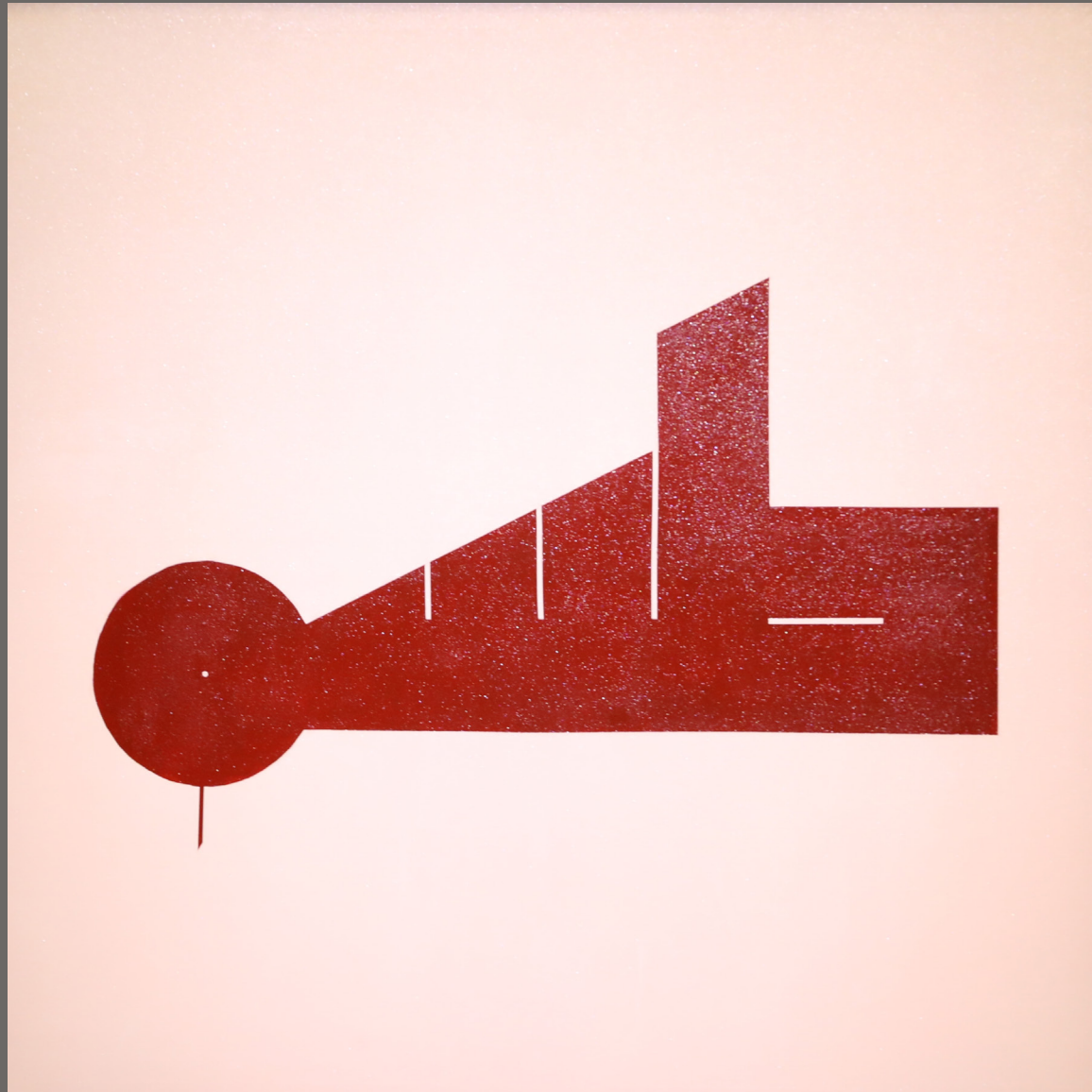


Lulwah Al Homoud
Iqra' (reversed), 2023
 Mixed media
 100 x 200 cm

We are diversity within harmony
 نحن نختلج في انسجام

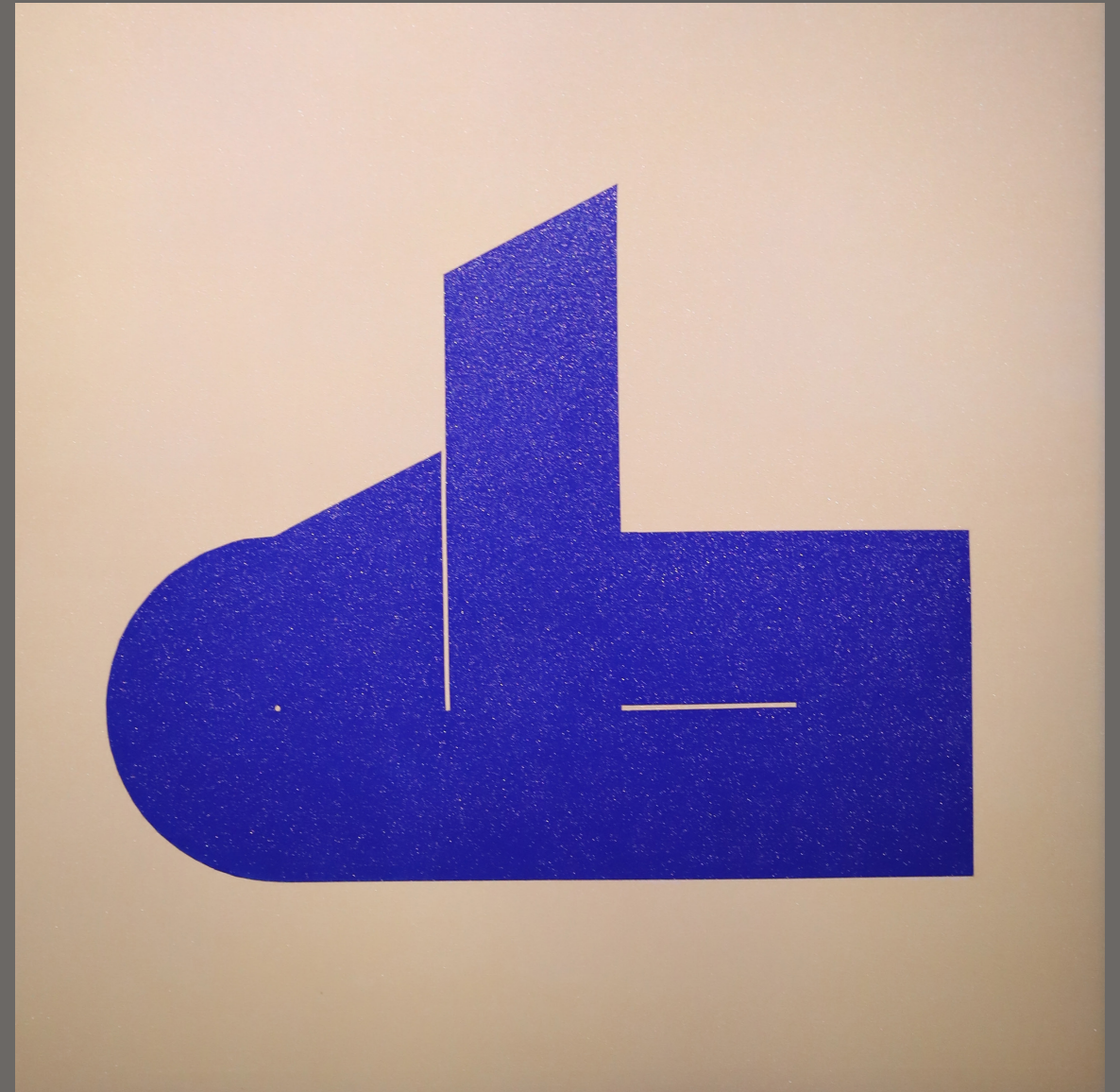


Lulwah Al Homoud
Iqra', 2023
 Mixed media
 100 x 200 cm



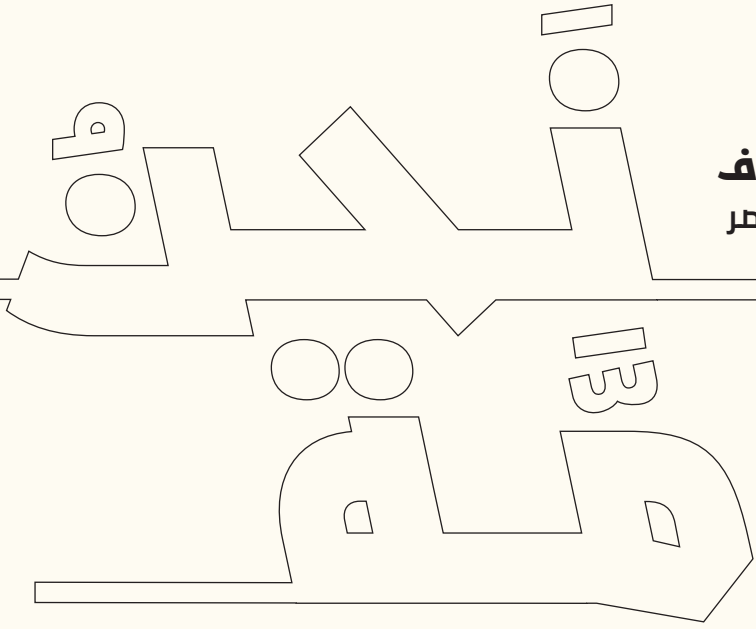
Samir Sayegh
Hurouf Al Fawateh, 2013
Gold leaf and acrylic on cloth
100 x 100 cm

We are the nation of letters
אנחנו אומת האותיות

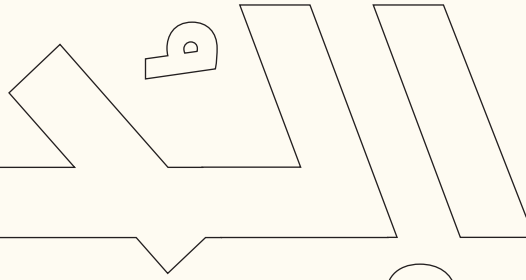


Samir Sayegh
Hurouf Al Fawateh, 2013
Gold leaf and acrylic on cloth
100 x 100 cm

نحن أمة الجروف
معرض فن الخط المعاصر



من تقييم
هدى سميتسهوزن أبي فارس



٢٨ مارس – ٢٥ مايو، ٢٠٢٤
مساحة وحل للفنية، جدة

نحن أمة الحروف
معرض فن الخط المعاصر

من تقييم
هدى سميتسهوزن أبي فارس

٢٨ مارس – ٢٥ مايو، ٢٠٢٤
مساحة وحل للفنية، جدة