



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aisha Alabbar Gallery at Art Dubai 2026

Soft Lines, Strong Currents

Dubai, UAE

Aisha Alabbar Gallery is delighted to present *Soft Lines, Strong Currents*, a multi-generational presentation for Art Dubai 2026 bringing together Sara Al Haddad, Layla Juma, Najat Makki, Alia Hussain Lootah, and Armin Najib.

Unfolding as a nuanced dialogue between material, emotion, and form, the exhibition explores how softness and strength coexist not as opposites, but as interdependent forces shaping human experience. Through painting, textile, sculpture, and kinetic form, the presentation invites viewers into a contemplative space where intimacy becomes structure, and gesture becomes language.

At the heart of the presentation is a sensitivity to material transformation. Each artist employs their medium not merely as form, but as a vessel holding memory, tension, and quiet resonance.

Sara Al Haddad's like *the fairytale (2026)*, a delicately hand-crocheted structure composed of tissue paper, suspends fragility in space. Its translucent, lace-like surface evokes something both tender and ephemeral object; that feels as though it could dissolve at any moment, yet holds itself together through labor, repetition, and care. The work becomes a poetic meditation on vulnerability, where softness carries an unexpected resilience.

In contrast, **Layla Juma's** *Clustered Houses I & II (2026)* translates her architectural sensibility into rhythmic painted compositions. Built through layers of acrylic, her forms suggest quiet accumulations of structures that echo memory, habitation, and invisible systems of connection. The repetition of shapes creates a sense of stillness and balance, while subtly alluding to the emotional architectures we inhabit.

Najat Makki's new series of paintings anchored by works such as *Untitled 228 (2026)* radiates with chromatic intensity. Expansive fields of acrylic unfold across the canvas, where color becomes both atmosphere and energy. Her luminous palette recalls the shifting light of desert landscapes, transforming the surface into a meditative field that oscillates between the physical and the spiritual. The painting is less an image than an experience, immersive, rhythmic, and deeply sensory.

Alia Hussain Lootah's practice unfolds as an ongoing exploration of the emotional and psychological dimensions of motherhood in contemporary life. Across a new selection of sculptures and drawings, she transforms personal reflection into something more universal, tracing themes of connection, dependency, and love. Working with tactile materials such as clay, wire, resin, and mixed media, Lootah develops minimal, organic forms that carry a quiet physical presence. Her sculptural works, including *What lives between walls (2026)*, suggest both structure and openness spaces that hold and reveal at once. This sensibility extends into her works on paper, where line and form echo the same delicate balance between strength and vulnerability through repetition. Together, the series reads as a set of poetic meditations on care, intimacy, and continuity, where what is felt is often as important as what is seen.

Armin Najib's *SILISUM series* adding a kinetic dimension that explores the invisible forces that shape movement and interaction. Through steel, magnets, glass, and wood, his vertically oriented sculptures create subtle, shifting relationships between balance and instability. The works respond to unseen magnetic forces, embodying motion that feels both engineered and organic. In their precision and unpredictability, they mirror the invisible systems - emotional, physical, and relational - that govern our environment.

Together, these works form a cohesive yet deeply layered presentation. Threads of tactility, rhythm, and transformation move across the exhibition, linking each practice through a shared sensitivity to process and perception. What emerges is not a singular narrative, but a field of quiet intensities, where viewers are invited to slow down, to notice, and to feel.

Soft Lines, Strong Currents ultimately reflects Aisha Alabbar Gallery's commitment to artists who navigate the intersection of conceptual depth and material exploration. The presentation offers a poetic meditation on how

art can render the intangible visible, tracing the currents of memory, emotion, and connection that shape our lived experience.

Written by Raymund Salinel

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Sara Al Haddad (b. Dubai, 1988), is an artist based in the United Arab Emirates whose practice is centered around yarn and fiber, utilizing techniques such as crocheting and stitching to craft objects that are versatile in their ability to be hung, wrapped, piled, arranged, and stretched within a space. Sara's artistic philosophy encompasses not only the creation of tangible pieces but also a reflective approach to her craft. She views her art as a means to explore and interpret various situations, events, and the emotions associated with them. At the core of her creative process lies a profound need to approach these elements with curiosity, allowing for analysis, commemoration, and eventual materialization through her work. Sara Al Haddad, a Fulbright Scholar at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, earned her MFA in Sculpture in 2016 following her graduation from The American University in Dubai in 2011. She recently participated in *The Rhythm of Existence* at Art Dubai, Dubai, UAE (2025); *From Fragments to Coherence* at Sevil Dolmaci, Dubai, UAE (2025); solo show *forget (,) to remember* at Cuadro Gallery, Dubai (2018); and participation in group exhibitions like *Women Defining Women In Contemporary Art of the Middle East and Beyond* at the Resnick Pavilion, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), USA (2023); *The Magical Number 7 +/- Two* at Meem Gallery, Dubai (2019); and *Rock, Paper, Scissors: Positions in Play* at the United Arab Emirates National Pavilion during the 57th Venice Biennale (2017).

Layla Juma (b. Sharjah, 1977) is a multidisciplinary artist from the Emirates. An artist as well as architectural engineer, Layla is interested in compositions of visible and felt connections. Experimenting with abstract concepts and physical forms, she explores links between elements of being. Her work is often open ended yet balanced, where each composition presents a layer of traced links. A member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society since the early 2000s, Layla is among the third-generation of Emirati artists and takes inspiration from prolific UAE conceptual pioneers including Hassan Sharif and Mohammed Kazem. In 2021, Juma had a solo exhibition titled *Squaring the Circle* at Aisha Alabbar Gallery, Dubai, UAE. She participated in exhibitions in the UAE and internationally, including *Layla Juma & Carolin Kropff*, STUDIOSPACE Lange Strasse 31, Frankfurt, Germany (2023); *From Barcelona to Abu Dhabi: Works from the MACBA Art Collection in dialogue with the Emirates*, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi (2018); *Portrait of a Nation*, Me Collectors Room, Berlin, Germany (2017); *There Are Too Many Walls But Not Enough Bridges*, Kunst (Zeug) Haus, Rapperswil-Jona, Switzerland (2015); *Emirati Expressions III: Realised*, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2014); *Mind - Dubai Contemporary*, DUCTAC's Gallery of Light, Dubai, UAE (2012); *Singapore Biennial* (2008); and *Cairo Biennial* (2006). Her works are in several collections in the UAE, including ADMAF, Environment Agency, Al Dar Hotel & Hospitality, and the Ministry of Presidential Affairs in Abu Dhabi; Barjeel Art Foundation, and Sharjah Child Friendly Office in Sharjah; JP Morgan Chase Bank in Dubai; and internationally in Art Towada Center, in Aomori, Japan.

Najat Makki (b. Dubai, 1956) is a pioneering Emirati artist renowned for her vibrant use of color and abstract, dreamlike interpretations of the UAE's natural landscape. She studied relief sculpture and metal at the College of Fine Arts in Cairo, earning her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in 1982 and 1998, before later completing a PhD in the philosophy of art in 2001 becoming the first Emirati woman to do so. Upon returning to the UAE, Makki began experimenting with fluorescent paints through her work in children's scenography at the Ministry of Education, introducing a distinctive abstract style defined by bold fields of color and immersive visual experiences, often enhanced by UV-A lighting. This marked a turning point in her career, beginning with her 1987 solo exhibition at Al Wasl Club in Dubai. Makki has exhibited extensively across the UAE and internationally, with recent highlights including *Sotheby's London* (2025) and major exhibitions such as *Luminescence* (2019) at the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi. Her works are held in prominent collections, including the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Sharjah Art Museum. A recipient of numerous awards, she was honored with the Order of Arts and Letters by the French government (2023) and the Emirates Appreciation Award (2015). Makki represented the UAE at the 56th Venice Biennale (2015) and is currently represented by Aisha Alabbar Gallery.

Alia Hussain Lootah (b. Dubai, 1987) is an Emirati artist, a mother of four, and the co-founder of Medaf Studio in Dubai. Alia's current work focuses on bodies of art with the theme of understanding the interpersonal relationship between mother and child in today's modern world. Uncertainty stems from both external and internal factors of unrest. Alia recently had a solo presentation at Abu Dhabi Art, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2022). She has participated in several exhibitions including *The Quest*, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, Dubai, UAE (2022); *Sikka Art Fair*, Dubai, UAE (2011, 2012, and 2013); *Mawtini*, Tashkeel, Dubai, UAE (2013); *Metamorphosis*, Tashkeel, Dubai, UAE (2013); and *40 Poems from the Desert*, The Ara Gallery, Dubai, UAE (2011). Alia participated as one of the first artists in the *Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artist*

Fellowship Program (SEAF), graduating in 2014. Her SEAF thesis focused on exploring motherhood through different forms of sculptures. In 2017, Alia co-founded the Medaf Studio in Dubai, an art centre aimed at introducing children and adults to art as a form of self-expression and creativity.

Armin Najib (b. Tehran, 1989) is a multidisciplinary artist working across painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and art jewelry. With a background in Mechanical Engineering from Azad University, his practice explores kinetic systems, magnetism, and environmental interaction, often through self-developed tools and mechanisms. Initially trained as an art jeweler, Najib carries a sensitivity to materiality and the notion of the “precious” into his broader practice, highlighting overlooked elements within contemporary discourse. His process is rooted in improvisation, where making becomes a way of thinking and discovery. He has presented solo exhibitions including -continuum at Aisha Alabbar Gallery (Dubai, 2024) and The Wall at The Sima Collective (Dubai, 2023), alongside participation in international group exhibitions. Najib is also the founder of Najib Studio (est. 2012) and has mentored emerging artists, many of whom have gone on to receive international recognition.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Established in 2018, Aisha Alabbar Gallery is a leading platform for contemporary and modern art in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Rooted in a strong curatorial vision, the gallery is dedicated to presenting a diverse roster of emerging and established artists from the UAE, the wider MENA region, and the international art world. With a particular focus on fostering dialogue between local artistic practices and global contemporary discourse, the gallery aims to contribute meaningfully to the evolving narrative of art in the region.

As one of the first women-led Emirati galleries, Aisha Alabbar Gallery has played a pioneering role in championing the voices and practices of artists who are redefining the cultural landscape. We take pride in our commitment to nurturing talent through thoughtfully curated exhibitions, artist-led initiatives, and strategic collaborations with leading curators, institutions, and cultural organizations both regionally and internationally.

The gallery places a strong emphasis on research, education, and public engagement. In addition to its dynamic exhibition program, it produces bespoke publications, hosts panel discussions, and develops educational outreach initiatives that enrich the wider community and encourage critical dialogue. Our programming reflects a dedication to presenting bold, innovative practices that speak to contemporary concerns while honoring the unique cultural heritage of the region.

Aisha Alabbar Gallery is proud to serve as a cultural catalyst, supporting artists in building sustainable careers and ensuring their work resonates on a global stage. Through our ongoing efforts, we continue to contribute to the UAE’s vibrant and rapidly growing art ecosystem, leaving an enduring mark on the contemporary art scene.

EXHIBITION DETAILS

Title: Soft Lines, Strong Currents

Artists: Sara Al Haddad, Layla Juma, Najat Makki, Alia Hussain Lootah, Armin Najib

Presented by: Aisha Alabbar Gallery

Event: Art Dubai 2026

Location: Booth #A3 Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, UAE

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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