



Press Release

Squaring the Circle

Layla Juma

28 September – 6 November 2021

Aisha Alabbar Gallery is pleased to present *Squaring the Circle* by Emirati artist Layla Juma. In her first solo exhibition at the gallery, Juma explores the complexities of subtle states, finding balance by merging physical forms with abstract ideas. The artist sees shapes not as we see them but as dynamic beings with the potential to align despite their unique properties. Squaring the circle becomes a challenging process that looks for overlapping points in disconnected areas and blurs the divide between rational perception and experimental methods.

An architectural engineer trained to imagine and reimagine possibilities, Juma studies compositions of seemingly simple experiences. Drawing lines between points – visible and invisible – often resulting in irregular forms, shapes and sequences, which she traces to the links between elements of being.

Aware that there are infinite variations, combinations, and ways of seeing connections throughout the universe, Juma visualizes slices of how beings are connected. Whether the being is a feeling, a microscopic organism, a colour, a shape, a house or a city, it is a part of nature that constantly attracts new connections even when it seems detached. Juma's work addresses 'connecting' as a boundless idea.

Untitled Houses (2005 – 2011) is a series of urban landscapes and houses painted from memory. The artist contemplates her childhood home and what it has become. She meticulously highlights multiple perspectives by repeating lines and accents of vivid colours, outlining the feeling of being connected to the same place at different stages.

In *Humans 2* (2015), a pair of black and white digital prints, Juma visualizes connections, intersections, and circles of communication between human beings. Speaking on the work, she explains, 'We think we are connected because of what we know about each other, but sometimes there are shared experiences that connect us unknowingly.'

Lonely Creatures (2010) is a playful painting series where the artist speaks to the intersection between internal and external connectedness. In solitude, the cartoon-inspired figures experience cycles of reflection and deflection, eventually morphing, or in some cases multiplying, into the same beings with slight variations. Another time-based process is explored in *Water Sculpture (Splash)* (2010). Embodied in layers of



curvy stainless steel, an architecturally balanced structure emphasizes those unplanned connections made in states of random change, such as the physical act of splashing water.

These intuitive and reflective processes rely on imagination, in which Juma's paintings, sculptures, and digital works expand beyond the confines of the physical object. But, like the geometry challenge of *squaring the circle*, it cannot be resolved rationally in a finite number of steps.

About Layla Juma

Layla Juma (Sharjah, 1977) is a multidisciplinary artist from the Emirates. An artist as well as architectural engineer, Juma 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, Juma is among the third-generation of Emirati artists and takes inspiration from prolific UAE conceptual pioneers – including Hassan Sharif and Mohammed Kazem.

She participated in exhibitions in the UAE and internationally, including '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/Body,' DUCTAC's Gallery of Light, Dubai, UAE; Singapore Biennial (2008); and Cairo Biennial (2006).

Her works are in several collections in the UAE, including ADMAF, Environment Agency, and Al Dar Hotel & Hospitality in Abu Dhabi; Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah; JP Morgan Chase Bank in Dubai; and internationally in Art Towada Center, in Aomori, Japan.



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About Aisha Alabbar Gallery

Aisha Alabbar Gallery is one of the first Emirati-led gallery in Dubai focused on contemporary and modern art by Emirati, local, and regional pioneering artists. Founded in November 2018 and located in Al Quoz, the gallery seeks to further the practices of emerging and established artists, who are the inspiration for the gallery's diverse range of programming.

Dedicated to locally-based artists and producing five innovative exhibitions per year, Aisha Alabbar Gallery has built a reputation not only for rigorous exhibition presentation but also for collaborations with renowned curators, investing considerable resources in bringing the practices of pioneering artists to the contemporary stage.

A commitment to education and community strengthens the gallery's exhibition programme. Each show is accompanied by workshops and seminars with the purpose of engaging diverse audiences. The gallery seeks to contribute to a lasting, evolving UAE arts ecosystem through its exhibitions, accompanying programming and commissioned, in-depth publications.

Notes to Editor

Exhibition: Squaring the Circle

Artist: Layla Juma

Exhibition Duration: 28 September - 6 November 2021

Private Viewing Booking: email to info@aishaalabbar.art or call +971 (0) 4 344 7747

Press Enquiries

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