



Press Release

NO | Mohamed Al Mazrouei

2 March – 29 May 2022

[1 March 2022, Dubai, UAE] Aisha Alabbar Gallery is pleased to present *NO*, a solo exhibition by prominent Emirati artist and poet Mohamed Al Mazrouei. Comprised new and existing works that date back to the 1980s, *NO* becomes a gesture to follow a thread in his practice and shows his interest in language's dynamism.

The concept behind Al Mazrouei's first exhibition at the gallery comes from a textile remnant found along the street in Cairo. The artist noticed how this fragment with the English word "NO" reflected his current intention and orientation, feeling alienated, not geographically, but as a personal feeling of estrangement or expression of nostalgia.

Having spent the first part of his life in Egypt before moving to the UAE nearly four decades ago, Al Mazrouei's work is perhaps best described as autobiographical. The works in the exhibition play on memory by taking moments from childhood and indirectly to speak to how our understanding of language is shaped during this time. When concepts are cemented, the image fades. Influenced by the exploration of identity and inspired by African masks, his work draws on sources from around the world. One cannot look at his female figures without recalling the portraits created by Schiele or Basquiat, nor Mahmoud Said's seductive canvases, which feature exaggerated colours and forms, 'adopted' by the Egyptian surrealist movement in the early 1940s.

Known for bold expressions, especially in his paintings of figures, portraits and visual experiments, Al Mazrouei uses colour independently, free from restrictions or rules. He is often labelled a 'neo-expressionist', although his practice cannot be classified into a one-dimensional category. Strong lines and dark eyes delineate his figures. The faces and bodies are intentionally distorted to emphasise desire, petulance, and rage, at times in a provocative and horrifying manner. In *Untitled 64* (1998), Al Mazrouei applies vibrant colours juxtaposed with black lines on a colour block background. He balances primitive instincts with mastered awareness to create his unique visual language. Or in *Untitled 4* (2013) and *Untitled 10* (2012), the faces lack distinct features, and are suggestive of the fading memory of his youth.



Portraiture also comprises a large part of his practice. Whether in paintings or in works on paper, he continually reinterprets a subject using the technique of mixed abstraction figuration. Although created 13 years apart, *Untitled 120* (2007) and *Untitled 123* (1994) show variations in the use of eccentric gestures and facial expressions, through which Al Mazrouei conveys urgency by relentlessly interrogating the body and suggests self-reflection in blending corporeality and sensuality that poses existential questions.

Al Mazrouei's "NO" finds recurrence essential: elements are determinedly repeated within the same piece, a subject is repeated in several pieces, or a theme is repeated through psychological manifestation. The artist develops a unique visual language through repetition, where elements are experienced as pure forms, balanced between primitive instincts and learned awareness.

About the artist

Mohamed Al Mazrouei (Tanta, 1962) is an Emirati artist, poet, and writer. He studied ancient languages at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at Al Azhar University in Cairo. He moved to Abu Dhabi in the early Eighty's to eventually become instrumental to the Cultural Foundation and establish himself as a prominent artist, writer, photographer as well as manager of the Emirates Writer's Union. He has written and published nine books of short stories and poems. His art practice – mainly painting in a signature Neo-Expressionist style – allows viewers to enter the world of his vast imagination. His artworks are rich with figurative iconography and include many humanoid forms. Mohamed's paintings depict a feeling of fervour and urgency that invites the viewer to follow every brushstroke. The human face and figure are often his preferred subjects to paint. However, with a rich, non-linear training, Mazrouei's approach to the abstract incorporates black and white in absolute purity. Like letters or musical notes, lines and colours fuse to create a composition that strives for a sense of equilibrium. His delineation of a particular object challenges traditional shapes, begging the eye to decipher elements of his compositions.

In the past four decades spanning his career, Mohamed held several solo exhibitions in the UAE and abroad, including *Raw Cooked* (2017), AB43 Contemporary, Zurich, Switzerland; *Prototype* (2016), Mojo Gallery, Dubai, UAE; *Maidens of Fair* (2012), Abu Dhabi Theatre, Abu Dhabi, UAE; and *The Smell* (1990), Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE. Additionally, he participated in several important exhibitions, including *Portrait of a Nation I and II* (2022 and 2017), Manarat Al Saadiyat,



Press Release

Abu Dhabi, UAE; *Artists and the Cultural Foundation: The Early Years* (2018), Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE; *(Alibadah): Hashel Al Lakmi and Mohamed Al Mazrouei* (2018), NYUAD Art Gallery – Project Space, Abu Dhabi, UAE; *Noah's Ark: the 34th Emirates Fine Art Society's Annual Exhibition* (2016), Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah, UAE; *There Are Too Many Walls but Not Enough Bridges* (2015), Kunstzeughaus, Rapperswil/Zurich, Switzerland; *Sky Over the East* (2014), Emirates Palace, Abu Dhabi, UAE; *3rd Emirati Expressions: Realised* (2013), Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, UAE; *MinD/Body: Body Art and Performance in the Gulf* (2013), Ductac's Gallery of Light, Dubai, UAE; the *3rd Al Kharafi Biennial* (2010), Kuwait City, Kuwait; and the *1st Sharjah Biennial* (1993), Sharjah, UAE. Mohamed is the recipient of many prestigious awards, including the Jury Prize (2012) at the *30th Emirates Fine Arts Society Exhibition*, Sharjah, UAE and the *1st Award in Photography* from Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE. Furthermore, his works can be found in prominent public and private collections in the UAE, such as ADMAF, Cultural Foundation, and UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Abu Dhabi; Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah; and the Qatari Ministry of Culture in Doha; in addition to several private collections around the world.

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.



Press Release

Notes to Editor

Exhibition: NO

Artist: Mohamed Al Mazrouei

Exhibition Duration: 2 March – 29 May 2022

Exhibition opening: 2 March, 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm

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

Press Enquiries

For more information, please contact:

Ms. Maha Alsharif, Gallery Manager

E: maha@aishaalabbar.art

M: +971 55 610 7595

T: +971 4 344 7747

Ms. Hassana Arif, Gallery Coordinator

E: hassana@aishaalabbar.art

M: +971 50 2419501

T: +971 4 344 7747