

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aisha Alabbar Gallery Presents *Whispers of the Past* in Collaboration with Sotheby's Middle East

September 11 – November 14, 2025 | Sotheby's Gallery, DIFC, Dubai

Dubai, UAE – Aisha Alabbar Gallery is pleased to announce its upcoming exhibition *Whispers of the Past*, presented in collaboration with Sotheby's Middle East. The exhibition will run from *September 11 to November 14, 2025*, at Sotheby's gallery space in DIFC, and will feature works by leading contemporary artists Dr. Najat Makki, Khalid Al Banna, Sara Al Haddad, Sara Aref Ahli, and Samar Hejazi.

Whispers of the Past brings together a multi-generational group of artists whose practices engage with the themes of memory, identity, and the cultural residues that shape our present. Spanning painting, sculpture, textile, and glass installation, the exhibition presents a quiet but powerful meditation on how histories, both personal and collective, are carried through materials, gestures, and forms.

Dr. Najat Makki (b. Dubai, 1956) is a pioneering Emirati artist best known for her curiosity for color and dreamlike, abstracted depictions of the natural landscape in the UAE. One of the most prominent figures in the history of Emirati art, she contributes new works that blend fluorescent colors and abstract compositions, transforming the Gulf's landscapes into dreamlike evocations of time, place, and emotion.

Khalid Al Banna (b. 1975, Sharjah) is a contemporary Emirati artist based in Sharjah, UAE. He explores cultural memory through layered textile and collage, deconstructing symbols of tradition and reassembling them into dynamic reflections on identity in transition.

Sara Al Haddad (b. Dubai, 1988), is an Emirati artist based in the United Arab Emirates who uses crochet, yarn, and soft sculpture to create immersive environments rooted in emotional introspection — confronting vulnerability and care through a language of fiber and form.

Sara Aref Ahli (b. 1993, Alabama) is an Emirati and Colombian-American visual artist who presents glass and mixed media works that probe the fragility of memory and the embodied experience of home. Her *Bone Marrow* and *Embodied Forms* series draw viewers into an otherworldly, intimate realm where inner states become sculptural landscapes.

Samar Hejazi (b. California, 1987) is a Palestinian-Canadian artist. Her works intricately weave together the cultural and spiritual memory of Arab and Islamic heritage through the medium of embroidery and thread-based installation. Her work transforms the traditional Palestinian *tatreez* into ethereal spatial interventions that hover between the material and the immaterial. Using suspended thread structures, Hejazi constructs visual metaphors for impermanence, fragmentation, and continuity. Her practice challenges the boundaries of craft and contemporary art, evoking memory not as a static artifact but as a dynamic, living transmission — a thread that tethers past to present.

Together, these artists speak to the enduring traces of the past — not as fixed narratives, but as open, shifting presences that inform how we see ourselves and our environments today.

"We're excited to partner with Sotheby's Middle East to present this timely exhibition," says Shilan Alabbar, Director of Aisha Alabbar Gallery. "Each artist offers a unique visual language

to consider how memory is held — whether in the body, in the land, or through artistic process itself.”

This exhibition marks a significant collaboration between a locally rooted contemporary art gallery and an international platform, offering a moment of intergenerational and cross-disciplinary dialogue at the heart of Dubai’s art ecosystem.

About Aisha Alabbar 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 MENASA 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: *Whispers of the Past*

Dates: September 10 – November 14, 2025

Location: Sotheby’s Middle East, DIFC, Dubai

Presented by: Aisha Alabbar Gallery

Artists: Dr. Najat Makki, Khalid Al Banna, Sara Al Haddad, Sara Aref Ahli, Samar Hejazi

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