



PRESS RELEASE

Everybody Changes Underwater | Faris Alshafar



Faris Alshafar, Chocolate (detail), oil on linen, 2026

Everybody Changes Underwater

Faris Alshafar

Monday 16 November 2026 to January 2027

Aisha Alabbar Gallery is pleased to present *Everybody Changes Underwater*, the first solo exhibition by Emirati artist Faris Alshafar, on view from Monday 16 November 2026 to January 2027. The exhibition brings together new oil paintings that mark Alshafar's move from monochrome into colour. Drawing on music, video games and everyday moments in which people change how they act and look, the paintings unfold like episodes, each with its own logic.

The works explore how we alter our appearance and behaviour in response to desire and expectation, whether internally cultivated or externally imposed. Marking an expansion of Alshafar's chromatic vocabulary, palettes thaw from glacial to nautical to terrestrial before vaporising into placeless places. Forms hang like marionettes across load-bearing negative spaces, held or erased by forces unseen, while glyph-like gestures recalling shells, clock hands

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and candles recur from one painting to the next. Through dissolution, distortion and discontinuity, non-linear narratives of immersion and personal augmentation reveal themselves.

Interpersonal, corporate and military circumstances enter the paintings not as subject matter but as sources of form. Moving between asynchronous realities, Alshafar returns to music and video games as environments more reliably revisitable than physical surroundings prone to abrupt change. The exhibition moves between cosmetic and introspective modes of alteration, its forms shifting across landscape, object and being. In *What It Feels Like for a Pearl*, a large oceanic painting in pearlescent tones, transformation is assured and tender: a grain of sand actualising its coveted final form. In *Void and Compensation*, a self-contained system of melting ice and smoke echoes Simone Weil's line in *Gravity and Grace*: "May I never sully anything, even though I be utterly transformed into mud."

Weil's concept of decreation is reframed within the practice less as self-sacrifice than as a letting go of visual consequence. Passages are redacted, leaving islands and fragments of form, a quilting of first impressions akin to everyday perception and its physical and digital interruptions. The paintings hold sensory provisions for a future self, to be perceived, used, altered or left untouched by whoever that turns out to be.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Faris Alshafar (b. 1995, Dubai, UAE) is an Emirati artist whose practice is informed by music and other time-bound sensory experiences. He perceives memories of these experiences as self-contained universes. Distinct forms and textures from these experiences come into being through rhythmic mark-making and layered abstractions in his paintings and drawings.

Glyph-like symbols and gestures coalesce into sonically resonating landscapes and arrangements that evoke and reference sensations themselves. Meditations on determinism and other philosophical facets are woven into the bodies of these works. By evoking the record of his experience both personally and impersonally, he opens flickering channels of perception for the viewer to move through. He lives and works between Dubai and New York.

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,

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artist-led initiatives, and strategic collaborations with leading curators, institutions, and cultural organizations both regionally and internationally.

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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