

[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

Dr. Najat Makki
I Write in Colour

24 March – 30 June 2021

[Dubai, 16 March 2021] Aisha Alabbar Gallery is pleased to present *I Write in Colour*, the first solo exhibition of the artist at the gallery. Dr. Makki is considered one of the innovators of the local scene and has contributed to the complexity and richness of its artistic expression through her experimentation with color compositions and the use of fluorescent paints. Makki's consuming intrigue by the semantics of color and her skillful brush were harnessed at a young age, when she would witness the colormap of vivid herbs laid out in sacks at her father's spice shop. Thyme, henna, saffron and curcumin lured her in, presenting a new dawn of shade, texture and scent. To this day, Makki's practice is marked by daring surveys of new natural and synthetic materials, influenced by her reading of philosophy, poetry and her affinity for music. At times, she opts for large scrolls where paint bounces like music notes or rhythmic prose in melodic harmony.

Makki's fondness and resonance with nature are palpable. Spending her college years digging her hands in soil to knead and mold clay in order to create her sculptures, she instantly recognized mankind's oneness with nature. This opened her up to a visual palette that encompasses warm earthy hues and cyan blue skies; velvety purple supernovae explosions and cosmic green; deep oceanic turquoise and granite greys. What inspired her in color, followed in form: the radiance of circular suns and moons, the brilliance of crescents, the precision of hexagonal beehives, the triangular mountain peaks and sand dunes, the color gradient in bodies of water and stretches of land. These elusive properties of the natural world are captured and transfigured onto canvas through color and form, creating a hymn that synthesizes her deeply personal transient experiences of natural phenomena with universal seismic shifts.

Nowhere is her fascination with life-giving and nurturing aspects of nature more visible than in the female figures defiantly breaking up her swaths and strokes of color. Depicted in simple, abstract lines, mostly in profile and collectively gathered, Makki borrows from Ancient Egyptian relief carvings of female deities and mythological figures that embody tranquil stability, wisdom, strength and rebirth. Upon a commission from the Sharjah Art Museum, she furthered her curiosity for excavating the artistic potential of the unseen by establishing a name for these figures: Venus of Meleiha. Inspired by the Meleiha Fort in Sharjah where hundreds of coins and molds with the heads of figures from ancient civilizations were discovered, her mind journeys back in history to conjure up images of the females in these bygone eras. The celebratory figures are unabashed in presence to make up for what she perceived was lacking in the representation of women in society.

She has also maintained a visual journal which she called *Daily Diaries* (2015—ongoing). Made of leftover scraps of paper and excess paint from her larger works, these miniature, sketch-like paintings capture an observation, a mood, a fleeting thought. Like a daily ritual, it allows her to study different textures, patterns, compositions and concepts without the restraint of an end product. The storyteller journals in words, but Makki writes in color.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Najat Makki (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. What started as childlike wonder led her to Cairo, where she graduated with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in relief sculpture and metal from the College of Fine Arts (1982 and 1998, respectively). Upon returning to the UAE, the colorist and painter started exploring fluorescent paints through her

work in scenography for children at the Ministry of Education, introducing the Gulf to a style of abstract painting that is characterized primarily by large fields of flat, solid color, spread across, creating areas of unbroken surface and a flat picture plane. Her use of this material in contemporary art contexts created an unconventional viewing experience, often accompanied by UV-A lights that elevate matter from canvas in lurid dimensionality. This experimentation was first debuted in her solo exhibition at Al Wasl Club in Dubai in 1987, marking a turning point in her career and gaining her regional recognition. Makki later returned to the Egyptian capital to pursue a doctorate degree, making her the first Emirati woman to formally specialize in the philosophy of art (2001), adding a theoretical dimension to her practical aptitude and visual flair.

Makki has exhibited widely in her home country but also internationally in Egypt, France, Germany, India, Jordan, Switzerland, Syria, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Her works are in the permanent collections of the Sharjah Art Museum, the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi, Sultan Bin Ali Al Owais Cultural Foundation in Dubai, Women's Museum in Dubai and the Ministry of Culture and Youth in Abu Dhabi, among many. Makki was the only female artist among the 15 showing at *1980 – Today: Exhibitions in the UAE*, the National Pavilion UAE, the 56th Venice Biennale (2015) curated by Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi, and had an acclaimed retrospective at the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi entitled *Luminescence* (2019). She is a current member of the Dubai Cultural Council, the Emirates Plastic Arts Society and Art Friends Society. A multi-award-winning artist, she has received the Emirates Appreciation Award (2015), the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development's National Award for Arts, Sciences, and Literature (2008), Gulf Cooperation Council Biennial Award (1998), Sultan Bin Owais Cultural Award (1994), Jury Award, First session of Sharjah Biennial (1993), in addition to several excellence and merit certificates.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Aisha Alabbar Gallery was founded in 2018 and is a platform that promotes Pioneering Emirati, local and regional artists who communicate their innovative techniques through a diverse range of artistic genres.

The gallery is a multidisciplinary space that not only exhibits the work of artists, but also welcomes the exploration of fashion, cinema and all creative concepts. With ongoing workshops that cover multiple creative disciplines, as well as regular meet ups, talks and events, the gallery is a hub to freely engage in discussion, debate and discovery.

Founder and owner, Aisha Alabbar is recognized as a strong advocate for her ongoing contribution to the local art scene. She is also an established photographer, documenting her journey, growth and emotions through the use of photographic images.

For more information on Aisha Alabbar Gallery please visit: <https://www.aishaalabbarartgallery.com>

NOTES TO EDITORS

Exhibition: *I Write in Colour*

Participated Artist: Dr. Najat Makki

Duration: 24 March - 30 June, 2021

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

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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