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## **Khalid Al Banna**

### **Layered Contradictions**

**27 January – 6 March 2021**

Aisha Alabbar Art Gallery is pleased to present *Layered Contradictions*, the first solo exhibition of the artist at the gallery. Repetition and chance are contemporary artist Khalid Al Banna's modus operandi. Surveying his characteristic body of work in collage and fabric, *Layered Contradictions* reveals his approach to world building that transcends the limitations of reality. A tireless experimenter who pushes the limits of his own practice, Al Banna takes a chance on the inspiration of the moment in a meditation of form and technique that captures a tension between deep deliberation and the promise of randomness.

Al Banna looks at the principals of dimension, form and space only to subvert them. Nowhere is this irreverence more visible than in his black and white collages. In *Intersection (2020)*, a series of abstract works on paper which he rips and re-arranges at random permutations, Al Banna probes the possibilities of color constraints and the conflict in stratified geometric shapes. While lack of color acts as material in *Intersection*, it's his series of *Intersection colour (2020)* that allows rigor to compete with randomness. With the precision of celestial bodies orbiting in space, he cuts paper into geometric figurations and layers them into galactic swirling masses, resulting in a relentless optical illusion. In a work that has never been shown publicly, *Imprints (2011)*, overlays paper with colored ink only to relinquish the role of fabricator in the second half of the process when Al Banna tops his composition with a second sheet of paper that he brushes over with varying degrees of pressure to let material reveal itself in a taste for the accident.

Constituting another site of innovation, *Evolution (2017)* is a series of mixed media and collage on paper that sees his use of fabric in a nostalgic mosaic of material. Like a lasso that ropes him back to his childhood at old souks, fabric is a charged material. He superimposes the sentimentality of time onto layers of fabrics, crystals, beads and mirrors in a biome of materiality. Likewise, in spheres of interlocking narratives, *Gargour (2020-21)* sees fabrics as neutralizers of opposing forces. This cluster of sculptural experimentations has steel rods wrapped in multi-hued fabrics redolent of traditional fishing nets in the UAE. The meticulous gestures of bending, morphing, tying, weaving and knotting look at what slips through the magma vis-à-vis what remains unabsorbed.

Al Banna's compositions are layered, both in subject matter and material – he blurs the lines and softens the edges of competing forces. He builds otherworldly scenarios bursting with an energetic force that reconciles contradiction and births new meaning.

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Khalid Al Banna (b. 1975, Sharjah) is a contemporary Emirati artist based in Sharjah, UAE. He has staked his place in the local art scene since the early 90s, renowned now for using collage as a primary technique to explore subject matter pertinent to the history and rapid transformations of his home country. Al Banna's work is a reflection of his world view. Drawing primarily from elements of design, his canvas is the negative space and his art is life projected against it. His fascination with world-building, borrowed from the field of architecture, gave rise to his hallmark Black and White collages: a diaristic series of abstract paper works using ink and collage which foreground process. He weaves together vague depictions of his landscape, the past and the present as well as blurry scenes from world affairs as experienced through his status quo.

After a decade of Black and White collages, he moved on to expanding the limits of his practice and perception. By 2009, after wandering into an old souq by his studio at Bait Al Shamsi, he stumbled upon an abundance of textile shops. The quaint storefronts, the fast-paced mercantile spirit and the muffled cacophony of overlapping cries for attention by the sellers, beckoned him into a new world – one in dizzying motion. Enter his sculptural fabric collages which are both the medium and the message. In his textile compositions, Al Banna addresses tradition as an agent in constant flux, using artifacts of a bygone period through a contemporary lens. Fabrics, crystals, beads and mirrors are worked and reworked in cathartic repetition, calling upon practices prevalent in Islamic ritual such as prayer and ablution, as well as the shapes of sacred geometry.

Al Banna has participated in several prominent exhibitions, including Al Burda Endowment Exhibition at Manarat Al Sadiyat, Abu Dhabi (2019), *Portrait of a Nation*, Abu Dhabi Festival, (2016) which traveled to the Collectors Room Berlin / Olbricht Foundation, Berlin (2017) as well as Kennedy center, Washington DC (2010) in addition to group exhibitions in France and Austria. He took part in the Emirates Fine Arts Society's annual exhibitions since 1998 where, in 2006, he staged his first solo exhibition.

His works are held in the collections of the Sharjah Art Museum, Barjeel Art Foundation, Abu Dhabi Music & Art Foundation (ADMAF), UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development, the Culture Department of Sharjah and the UAE embassy in the USA, amongst many.

## **ABOUT THE GALLERY**

Aisha Alabbar Art Gallery was founded in 2018 and is a platform that supports 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 pioneering 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 Art Gallery please visit:  
<https://www.aishaalabbarartgallery.com>

**Al Banna is leading a Collage Art workshop at the gallery on Saturday 21 February.**

## **PRESS ENQUIRIES**

For more information, please contact:

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