

# Emirati artist Najat Makki presents latest neon paintings in Dubai: 'Experience the joy of colour'

[thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/art/emirati-artist-najat-makki-presents-latest-neon-paintings-in-dubai-experience-the-joy-of-colour-1.1234149](https://thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/art/emirati-artist-najat-makki-presents-latest-neon-paintings-in-dubai-experience-the-joy-of-colour-1.1234149)

June 5, 2021

More than 35 works by the pioneering artist, including new paintings created in the past year, are on view at Aisha Alabbar Art Gallery



I Write in Colour includes more than 35 artworks by Makki, including her abstract neon paintings. Courtesy the artist and Aisha Alabbar Art Gallery

A neon waterfall cascades from the ceiling at Aisha Alabbar Art Gallery. This shock of colour is actually a fishing net doused in neon paint and an artwork by Emirati artist Najat Makki.

In her latest solo exhibition, I Write in Colour, Makki embraces electric greens, pinks and yellows, a continuation of her years-long fascination with these vivid pigments.

“When neon paint first arrived in the UAE in the 1980s, I was enamoured with its possibility. First, the fact that it had such a vibrant and robust pigment appealed to me,” the artist says. “Secondly, when neon paint is illuminated with blacklight, it is transformed into a completely new experience. It brings a third dimension into the painting ...”

Indeed, the artist often displays her paintings under UV light with the intention of giving visitors a chance to “feel and experience the joy of colour – the depth and changes that neon facilitates”.



The artist often arranges to display her paintings under UV light. Courtesy the artist and Aisha Alabbar Gallery

I Write in Colour includes more than 35 artworks by Makki, from abstract neon paintings that are bold and dramatic to smaller, more playful works on variously shaped canvases, as well as sculpture and installation.

Born in 1956, Makki is a pioneering figure in the UAE art scene and was one of the first Emirati women to study art abroad in the 1970s. Over the past 40 years, she has expanded her subjects, motifs and style, adding elongated female figures on to her canvases in the 1990s, experimenting with sculpture and eventually focusing on neon paintings.

“I have never shifted away from sculpture. In my paintings, you will see an attempt to push three-dimensionality through my techniques. I interrogate the surface, using the colours’ compositions, forms and elements,” she explains, adding that she works on building layers of colour on top of each other to add density and texture.

In 2019, Makki was celebrated via a survey exhibition at the reopening of the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi. Titled Luminescence, the exhibition traced the artist’s career and practice in addition to documenting Makki’s role in UAE art history through an archival section of newspapers and photographs.

Her latest paintings at Aisha Alabbar Gallery – one of which shows a field of sunny yellows and lime greens overlaid with orbs and notches, and another layers of ocean blue and candy pink – were created during the pandemic.

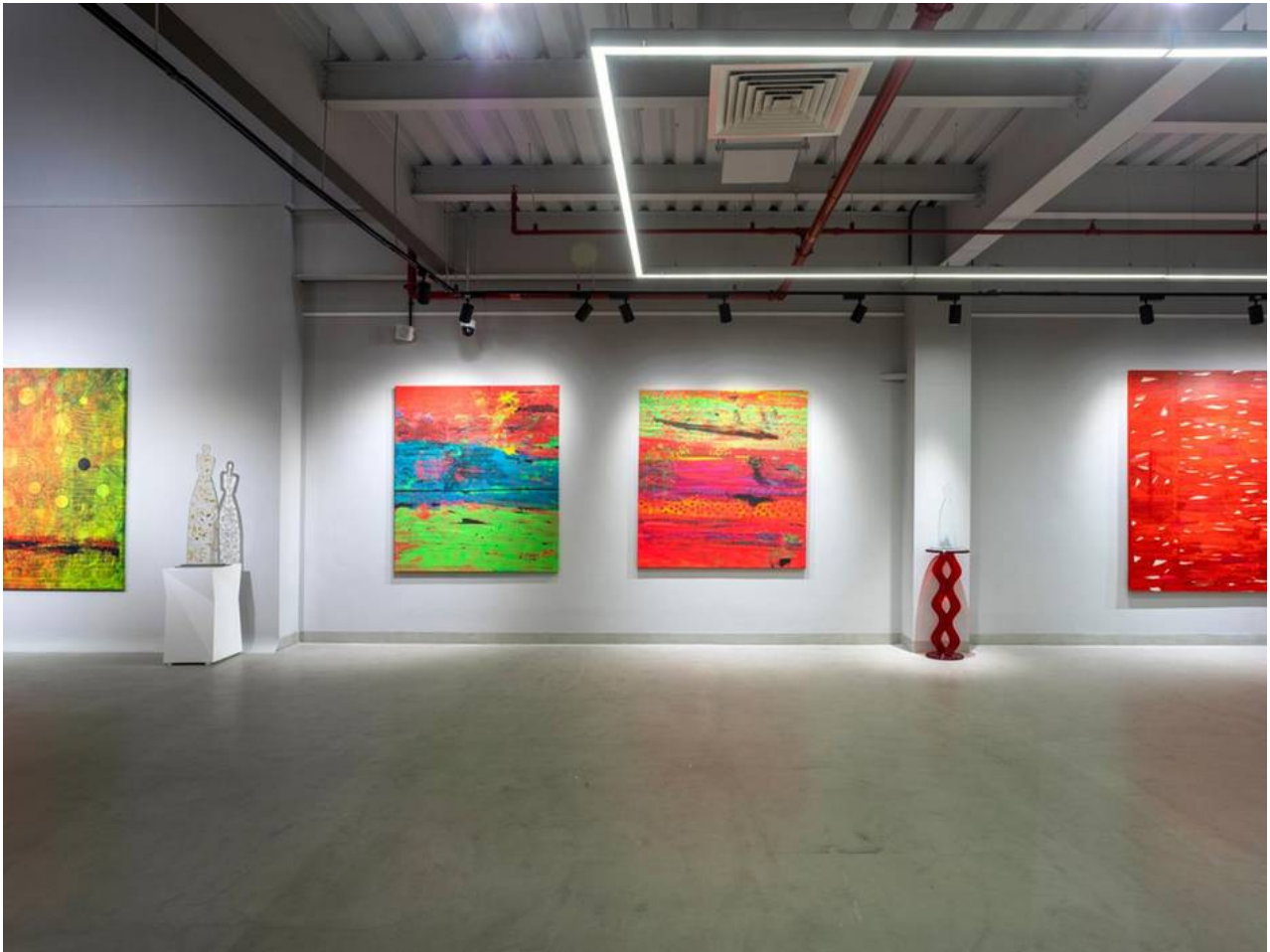


An untitled neon painting by Najat Makki created in 2020 in response to the pandemic. Courtesy the artist and Aisha Alabbar Art Gallery

Makki says that the period gave her more time to reflect and express ideas through new paintings and mixed media works.

“These artworks focused on the importance of solidarity to overcome the crisis. The intense colours were an expression of fear and anxiety that people felt at that time,” she explains.

Her process has always been intuitive, she says, allowing the colours to emerge and build until she feels she has found the right balance. “I don’t necessarily know what the outcome will be,” she says, though she often gives herself time to evaluate the painting until she finds that it bears “harmony” and “internal rhythm”.



I Write in Colour is on view until the end of June. Courtesy the artist and Aisha Alabbar Art Gallery

Despite their abstract nature, she constantly draws from her own visions and personal experiences.

Makki keeps a daily visual diary where the stuff of daily life – “It may be a thought or a feeling from the lives of my friends and our environment. It could be about nature, including the inspiration of trees, animals or my relationships with place and time,” she says – gets transformed into sweeps of colour and shape that find their way on to the canvas.

*I Write in Colour is on view at Aisha Alabbar Art Gallery until Wednesday, June 30. More information at [aishaalabbar.art](http://aishaalabbar.art)*

*Published: June 5, 2021 08:24 AM*