



PRESS RELEASE

Aisha Alabbar Gallery Presents

Caravan of Colors Through Time: A Retrospective of Mona Al Khaja

Opening: Thursday, September 18, 2025 | 6:00 – 9:00 PM

On View: September 19 – November 5, 2025

Dubai, UAE — Aisha Alabbar Gallery is proud to present Caravan of Colors Through Time, a landmark retrospective celebrating over four decades of work by Mona Al Khaja (b. Sharjah, 1958), one of the pioneering figures of Emirati modern art. The exhibition opens with a reception on Thursday, September 18, 2025, from 6:00 to 9:00 PM, and will be on view from September 19 to November 5, 2025 at the gallery's Alserkal Avenue location.

Mona Al Khaja belongs to the first generation of Emirati artists whose creative pursuits began at a time when the UAE's cultural identity was still in its earliest stages. Her work stands as a vital record of the region's artistic development, bridging the foundational years of formal art education in the Gulf with the emergence of a distinct and independent visual language.

A graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo, Mona immersed herself in the vibrant artistic scene of Egypt during the 1970s and 1980s. Under the mentorship of pioneering artists such as Dr. Najat Makki and Abdulrahim Salim, she explored the expressive possibilities of abstraction, symbolism, and the evocative power of color. These early influences would become the foundation for a practice that has remained deeply committed to painting as a means of articulating both personal memory and collective history.

The exhibition presents paintings from every stage of Mona's career: early works created during her student years in Cairo, pieces produced upon her return to the Emirates, and recent compositions in which landscapes dissolve into contemplative visions. The desert's vast horizons, the intricate patterns of architecture, and the ephemeral shimmer of light are transformed into quiet meditations on time, place, and belonging.

In addition to the works spanning her decades-long career, Mona Al Khaja has recently created a series of powerful new pieces reflecting the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Palestine. These works continue her practice of using abstraction and color as a language to convey deep emotion and collective experience, highlighting the urgent realities of suffering, resilience, and hope. Through this body of work, Mona underscores the capacity of art to bear witness to contemporary social and political issues while maintaining the contemplative and meditative qualities that define her oeuvre.

Through her steadfast dedication to her craft, Mona has shaped a distinctly Emirati voice within the broader narrative of Arab modernism. As one of the first Emirati women to pursue a professional career in the visual arts, she has paved the way for generations to follow her work revealing how the visual language of abstraction can convey what spoken language often cannot.



Reflecting on her lifelong practice, Mona writes:

“The brush and colors speak when the tongue is silent.”

Shilan Samaei, Gallery Director at Aisha Alabbar Gallery, reflects: “Visiting Mona in her studio was an unforgettable experience. Leafing through old photographs, images of her as a young painter beside pioneers like Dr. Najat Makki and Abdulrahim Salim was like stepping into a pivotal moment in the UAE's cultural history. It was a time when an entire generation was not only creating art but also laying the very foundations of the nation's artistic identity. This exhibition stands as both a tribute to that unwavering dedication and a testament to the enduring influence of Mona's work

Caravan of Colors Through Time offers both a celebration of Mona Al Khaja's remarkable artistic legacy and an invitation to consider how art like memory can become a vessel through which we understand ourselves and the places we call home.

MONA AL KHAJA

Mona Al Khaja (b. Sharjah, 1958) is an Emirati painter. Having graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts of Cairo of Helwan University, in 1981, Mona studied under influential artists and educators from the Arab World including Hamed Nada, Mohammed Riyadh, and Ahmed Nawar. She is considered among the founding artists of the contemporary art scene in the UAE.

As one of the first generation of UAE artists, Mona's approach to painting is the result of formal study in the history of art, training in Egypt alongside artists such as Dr. Najat Makki and Abdulrahim Salim, as well as mastering techniques unique to Islamic culture. These sources provide her with abundant inspiration that she translates to the Emirati present, often blending symbolism and impressionist abstraction into her signature style. Mona uses figuration and abstraction, deliberately layering and blending colours and strokes to capture simplicity so elaborately. The artist mirrors her experience observing and recollecting acts of life at home and abroad.

She has had several solo exhibitions in the UAE, including a solo presentation at Abu Dhabi Art, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi (2021); Observe + Absorb, Majlis Gallery, Dubai (2019); Harmony: Aesthetics of Ornamentation in Emirati Heritage, Sharjah Heritage Museum, Sharjah (2019); and Chromatic Horizons, Sharjah University, Sharjah (2015).

Mona is a member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society and has continuously participated in its Annual Exhibition since its founding in 1980, in addition to participating in its international exhibitions in Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, France, Japan, Spain, Germany, Singapore, Iran, India and Morocco.

She participated in numerous exhibitions in the UAE, including 7 + 7, Sultan Bin Ali Al Owais Cultural Foundation, Dubai (2020); Artists and the Cultural Foundation: The Early Years, Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi (2018); The Perpetual Kingdom: Contemporary Arabic Calligraphy, Gallery Ward, Dubai (2016); Sikka Art Fair, Dubai (2015); Her Colourful Papers, Sharjah Calligraphy Museum, Sharjah (2010); and Sharjah Biennial (2001 and 1999).



Internationally, Mona participated in notable exhibitions, including Kunooz Fine Art Exhibition and Auction, Bvlgari Hotel Knightsbridge & Christie's, London, UK (2015); Jewels from the Emirates, Delta City Mall, Podgorica, Montenegro (2011); The Reflective Mirror, United Nations Headquarters, New York, NY, USA (2010); The International Exhibition of the Renaissance and Great Masterpieces of World Art, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan (2009); Cairo Biennial (2004); Kuwait Biennial (2002); and Oman Art Biennial (1990).

Mona has received multiple awards, including the Al Owais Award, Dubai (2019 and 2004); and L'Officiel Arab Women Award, Dubai (2010). She also participated in the Fujairah International Arts Festival Residency in 2018.

The artist sold her first two paintings at age 14 to a prominent art patron in the UAE. Today, her works are in important collections in the UAE including, Barjeel Art Foundation, American University of Sharjah in Sharjah; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural Foundation, Mubadala Investment Company and Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage in Abu Dhabi; Dubai Collection, Sultan Bin Ali Al Owais Cultural Foundation and Commercial Bank of Dubai in Dubai; and internationally in The Museum of Modern Art in Kuwait and The Jordan Museum in Amman, Jordan. Her works are also in private collections in the UAE and abroad.

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, 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

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Venue: Aisha Alabbar Gallery, Alserkal Avenue, Warehouse 19b, Dubai

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