

LAYLA JUMA

SQUARING THE CIRCLE



AISHA ALABBAR GALLERY

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Squaring the Circle

28 September - 6 November 2021

Aisha Alabbar Gallery is pleased to present *Squaring the Circle* by Emirati artist Layla Juma. In her first solo exhibition at the gallery, Juma explores the complexities of subtle states, finding balance by merging physical forms with abstract ideas. The artist sees shapes not as we see them but as dynamic beings with the potential to align despite their unique properties. Squaring the circle becomes a challenging process that looks for overlapping points in disconnected areas and blurs the divide between rational perception and experimental methods.

An architectural engineer trained to imagine and reimagine possibilities, Juma studies compositions of seemingly simple experiences. Drawing lines between points – visible and invisible – often resulting in irregular forms, shapes and sequences, which she traces to the links between elements of being.

Aware that there are infinite variations, combinations, and ways of seeing connections throughout the universe, Juma visualizes slices of how beings are connected. Whether the being is a feeling, a microscopic organism, a colour, a shape, a house or a city, it is a part of nature that constantly attracts new connections even when it seems detached. Juma's work addresses 'connecting' as a boundless idea.

Untitled Houses (2005 – 2011) is a series of urban landscapes and houses painted from memory. The artist contemplates her childhood home and what it has become. She meticulously

highlights multiple perspectives by repeating lines and accents of vivid colours, outlining the feeling of being connected to the same place at different stages.

In *Humans 2* (2015), a pair of black and white digital prints, Juma visualizes connections, intersections, and circles of communication between human beings. Speaking on the work, she explains, 'We think we are connected because of what we know about each other, but sometimes there are shared experiences that connect us unknowingly.'

Lonely Creatures (2010) is a playful painting series where the artist speaks to the intersection between internal and external connectedness. In solitude, the cartoon-inspired figures experience cycles of reflection and deflection, eventually morphing, or in some cases multiplying, into the same beings with slight variations. Another time-based process is explored in *Water Sculpture (Splash)* (2010). Embodied in layers of curvy stainless steel, an architecturally balanced structure emphasizes those unplanned connections made in states of random change, such as the physical act of splashing water.

These intuitive and reflective processes rely on imagination, in which Juma's paintings, sculptures, and digital works expand beyond the confines of the physical object. But, like the geometry challenge of *squaring the circle*, it cannot be resolved rationally in a finite number of steps.





Installation view of *Squaring the Circle*, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, 2021

Water Sculptures (Splash)
2010
Stainless Steel
150 cm x 150 cm x 75 cm





Installation view of *Squaring the Circle*, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, 2021



Lonely Creatures – No. 13
2010
Acrylic on canvas
100 cm x 120 cm



Lonely Creatures – No. 12
2010
Acrylic on canvas
100 cm x 100 cm



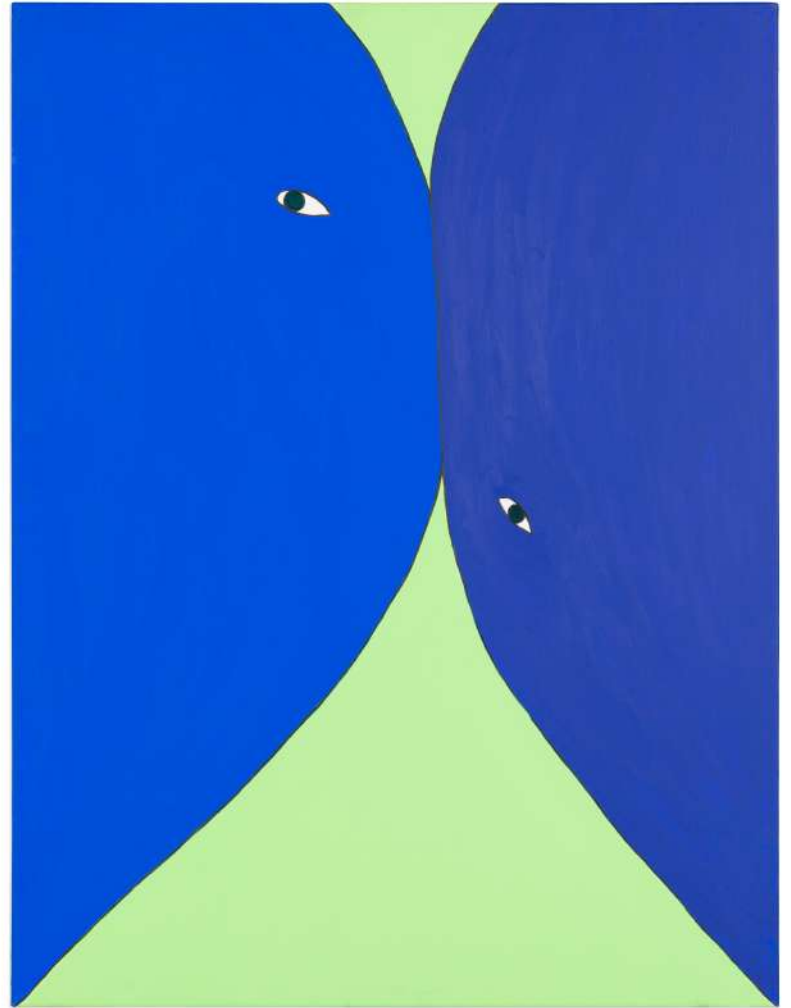
Lonely Creatures – No. 11
2010
Acrylic on canvas
100 cm x 100 cm

Installation view of *Squaring the Circle*, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, 2021





Lonely Creatures – No. 4
2010
Acrylic on canvas
117 cm x 88.5 cm



Lonely Creatures – No. 3
2010
Acrylic on canvas
117 cm x 88.5 cm



Installation view of *Squaring the Circle*,
Aisha Alabbar Gallery, 2021



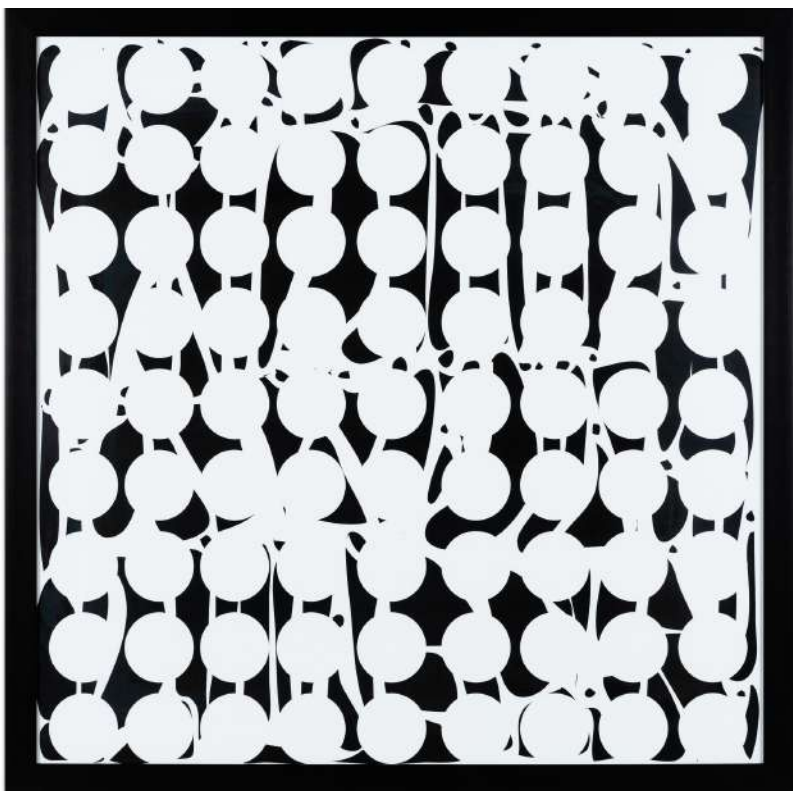
Installation view of *Squaring the Circle*, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, 2021

Water Sculpture (Wave)
2008-09
Stainless steel
167 cm x 167 cm x 50 cm





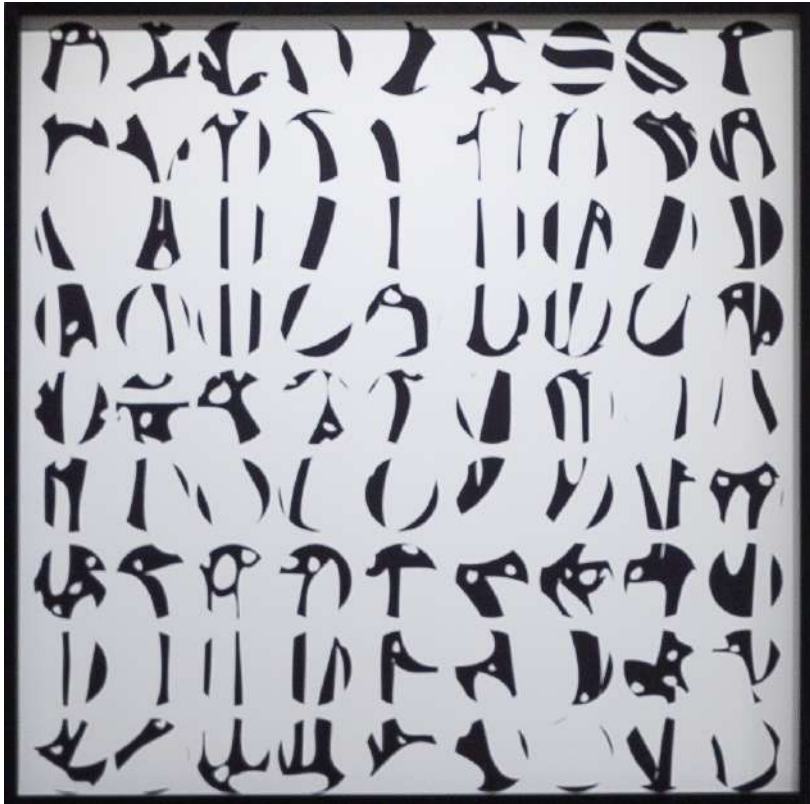
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Humans 2 (1)
2015
Digital print on paper
99 cm x 99 cm



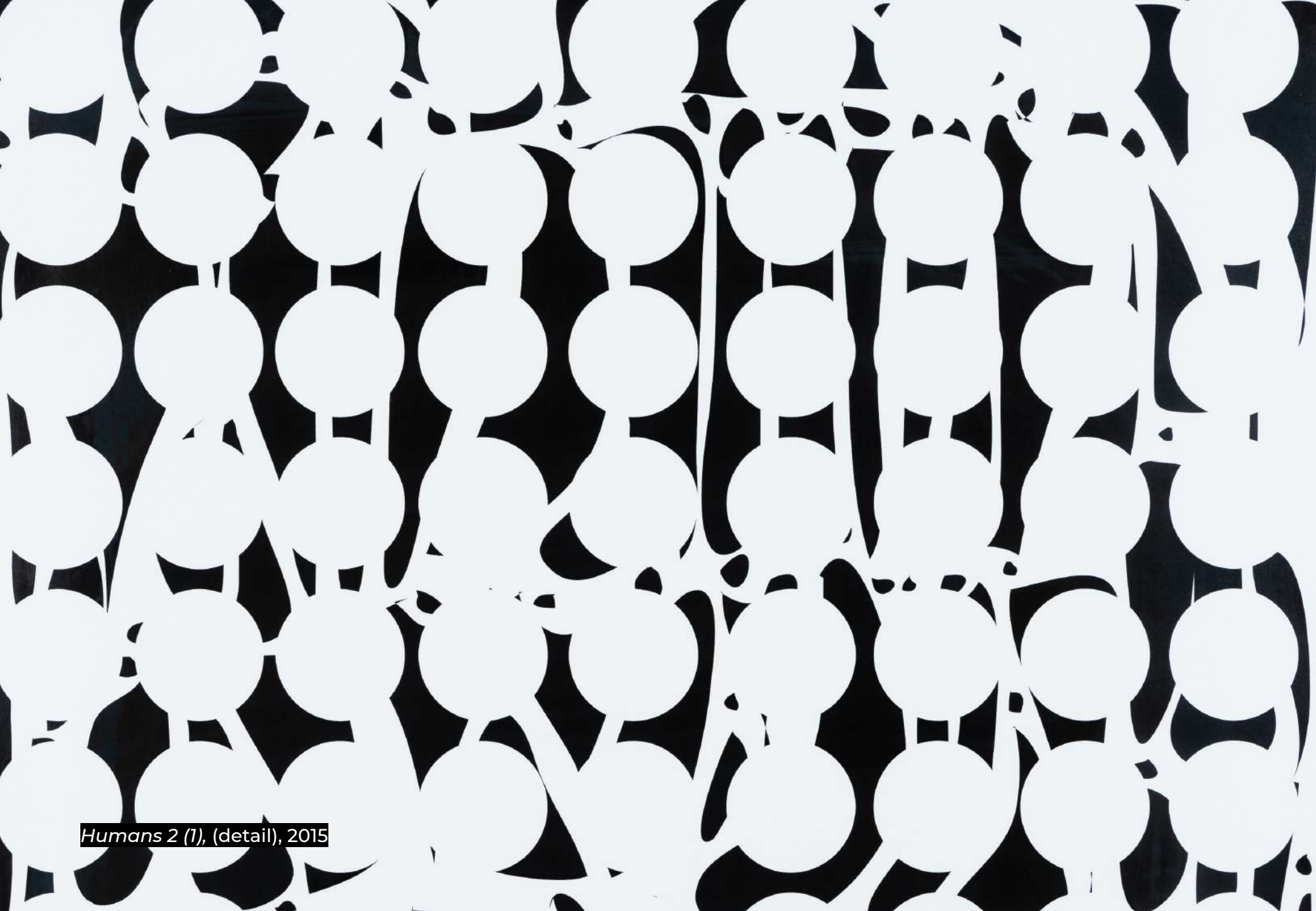
Humans 2 (2)
2015
Digital print on paper
99 cm x 99 cm



Humans 2 (3)
2015
Digital print on paper
99 cm x 99 cm



Humans 2 (4)
2015
Digital print on paper
99 cm x 99 cm



Humans 2 (1), (detail), 2015



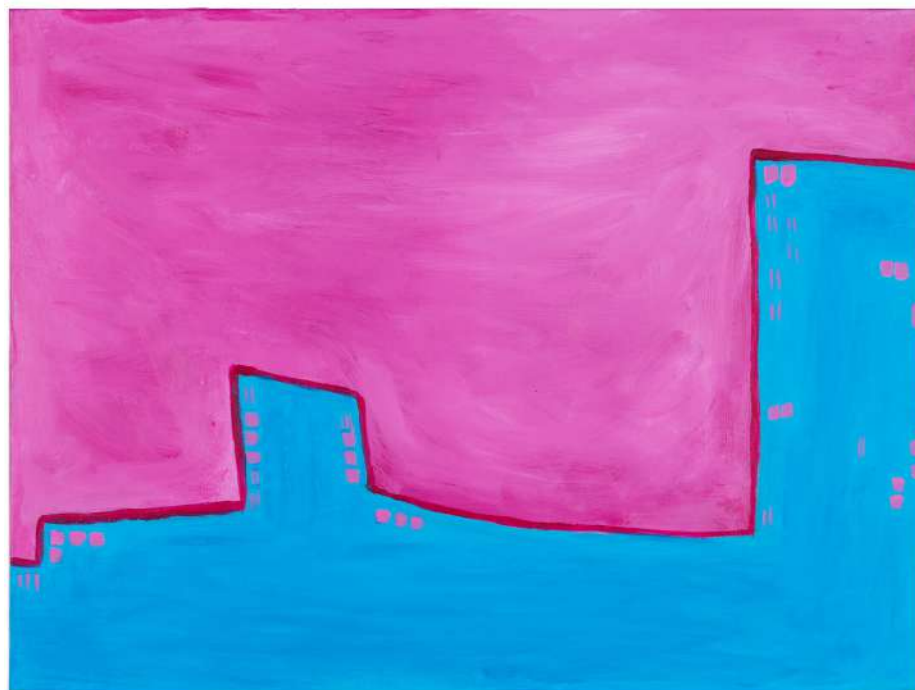
Installation view of *Squaring the Circle*, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, 2021



Untitled Houses (Sharjah Water Tank)
2011
Acrylic on canvas
60 cm x 80 cm



Untitled Houses (2)
2011
Acrylic on canvas
60 cm x 80 cm



Untitled Houses (1)
2011
Acrylic on canvas
60 cm x 80 cm



Installation view of *Squaring the Circle*, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, 2021



Untitled Houses (3)
2011
Acrylic on canvas
60 cm x 80 cm



Untitled Houses (4)
2011
Acrylic on canvas
60 cm x 80 cm



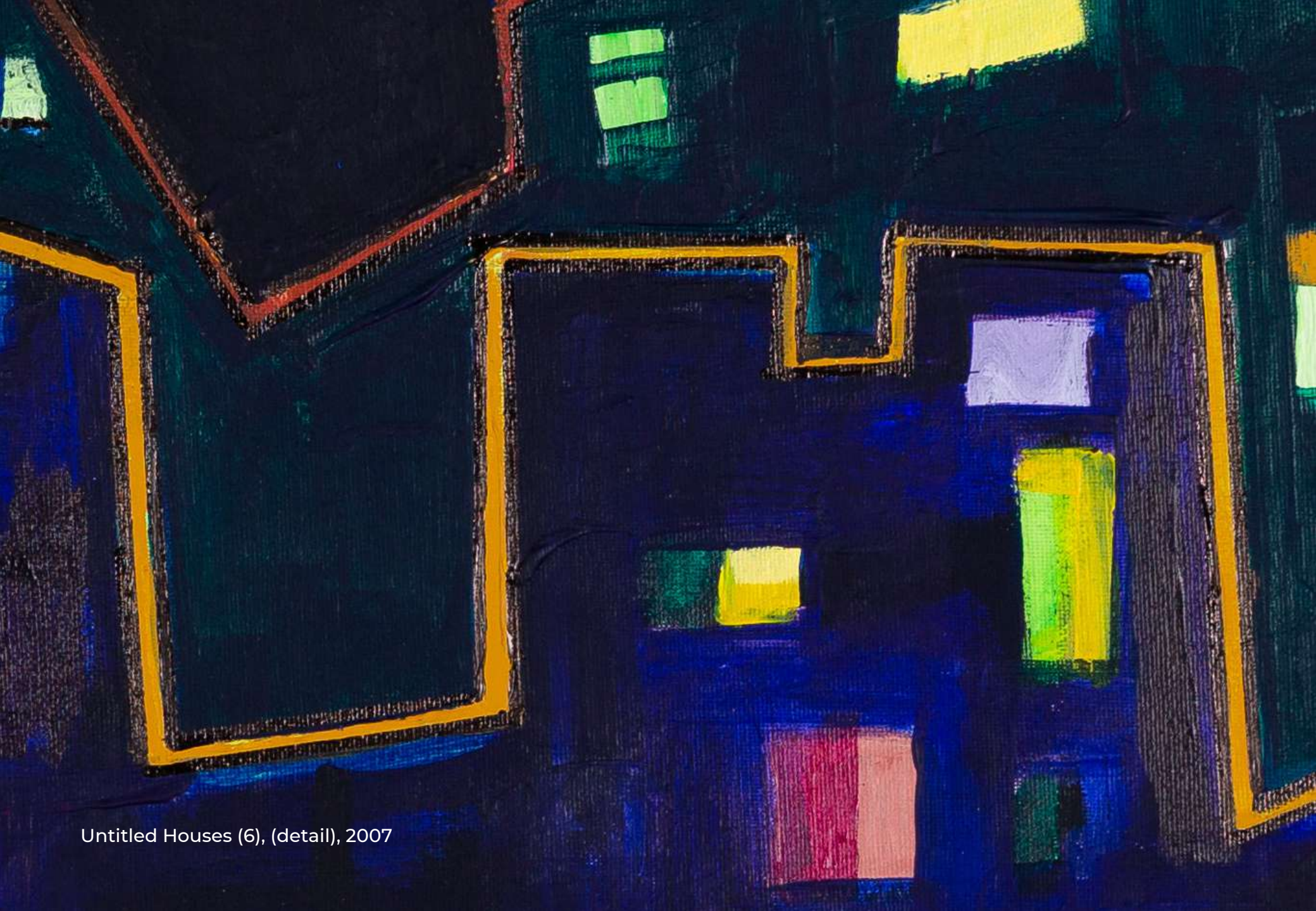
Untitled Houses (Blue and Orange), (detail), 2007



Untitled Houses (Blue and Orange)
2007
Acrylic on canvas
60 cm x 75 cm



Untitled Houses (6)
2007
Acrylic on canvas
60 cm x 75 cm



Untitled Houses (6), (detail), 2007

Untitled Houses (5)
2011
Acrylic on canvas
90 cm x 60 cm





Untitled Houses (8)
2005
Acrylic on canvas
61 cm x 112 cm



Untitled Houses (7), (detail), 2005



Untitled Houses (7)
2005
Acrylic on canvas
73 cm x 92 cm

Floating Market (Bangkok)
2008
Acrylic on canvas
75 cm x 60 cm



Layla Juma
Squaring the Circle
28 September – 6 November 2021

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Layla Juma (Sharjah, 1977) is a multidisciplinary artist from the Emirates. An artist as well as architectural engineer, Juma is interested in compositions of visible and felt connections. Experimenting with abstract concepts and physical forms, she explores links between elements of being. Her work is often open-ended yet balanced, where each composition presents a layer of traced links.

A member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society since the early 2000s, Juma is among the third-generation of Emirati artists and takes inspiration from prolific UAE conceptual pioneers – including Hassan Sharif and Mohammed Kazem.

She participated in exhibitions in the UAE and internationally, including 'From Barcelona to Abu Dhabi: Works from the MACBA Art Collection in dialogue with the Emirates', Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi (2018); 'Portrait of a Nation', Me Collectors Room, Berlin, Germany (2017); 'There Are Too Many Walls But Not Enough Bridges', Kunst(Zeug)Haus, Rapperswil-Jona, Switzerland (2015); 'Emirati Expressions III: Realised,' Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2014); 'MinD/Body,' DUCTAC's Gallery of Light, Dubai, UAE; Singapore Biennial (2008); and Cairo Biennial (2006).

Her works are in several collections in the UAE, including ADMAF, Environment Agency, and Al Dar Hotel & Hospitality in Abu Dhabi; Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah; JP Morgan Chase Bank in Dubai; and internationally in Art Towada Center, in Aomori, Japan.





Born in 1977 in Sharjah, UAE
Lives and works in Sharjah

EDUCATION

2001 BA Architectural Engineering, United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain, UAE.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Squaring the Circle*, Aisha Alabbar Gallery, Dubai, UAE
Interconnected, 37th Emirates Fine Arts Society Annual Exhibition, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah, UAE
- 2018 *From Barcelona to Abu Dhabi: Works from the MACBA Art Collection in dialogue with the Emirates*, Abu Dhabi Festival in partnership with Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, UAE
- 2017 *Portrait of A Nation*, Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF), me Collectors Room Berlin / Stiftung Olbricht, Berlin, Germany

- 2017 *And Along Came Polyester*, Athr art gallery, Jeddah, KSA
Homage Without An Homage, Julius Baer, Art Dubai, Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, UAE
The Art of Nature, Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF), 14th Abu Dhabi Festival, Um Al Emarat Park, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Experiences for a Group of Artists, The College of Fine Arts and Design (CFAD) at the University of Sharjah, Sharjah, UAE
- 2016 *Portrait of A Nation*, Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF), 13th Abu Dhabi Festival, Emirates Palace Gallery, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Emirates Fine Arts Society Exhibition, Sikka Art Fair, Al Fahidi District, Dubai, UAE
- 2015 First gathering for Gulf Fine Artists Union, Doha, Qatar
There Are Too Many Walls But Not Enough Bridges, ORYX Foundation, Kunst(Zeug)Haus Rapperswil Museum, Switzerland
Turning Point, Tashkeel, Dubai, UAE
- 2014 8th Fine Arts Exhibition, the Cultural Center in collaboration with EFAS, Umm Al Quwain, UAE
Empty 10, 1x1 Gallery, Dubai, UAE
- 2013 *Emirati Expressions: Realised*, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, UAE
- 2012 *MinD – Dubai Contemporary*, DUCTAC, Mall of the Emirates, Dubai, UAE
30th Annual Exhibition of Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah, UAE
- 2011 29th Emirates Fine Arts Society Annual Exhibition, Sharjah, UAE
- 2010 *Vis Roboris*, AB Gallery, Lucerne, Switzerland
- 2009 28th Emirates Fine Arts Society Annual Exhibition, Sharjah, UAE
- 2008 27th Emirates Fine Arts Society Annual Exhibition, Sharjah, UAE

- 2008 *Season of Art, The Flying House, DIFC, Dubai, UAE*
Greek Art Fair, Al Bastakiya, Dubai, UAE
Wonder, 2nd Singapore Biennale, Singapore
- 2007 *Dubai Dubai, Total Arts Gallery, Dubai, UAE*
- 2006 *Beauty and the Beast, Emirates Fine Arts Society with Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, UAE*
Miniatures Arts Exhibition, Kuwait Arts Association, Hawally, Kuwait
10th Cairo International Biennial, Cairo, Egypt
- 2005 *Window, Total Arts Gallery, Dubai, UAE*
Women & Art Global Perspective, Sharjah, UAE
Youth Flashes, The French Cultural League, Dubai, UAE
The UAE Cultural Week, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2004 *23rd Emirates Fine Arts Society Annual Exhibition, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah, UAE*
- 2003 *22nd Emirates Fine Arts Society Annual Exhibition, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah, UAE*
- 2004 *Summer Course Exhibitions of Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE*
- 2002 *Dubai Youth Theatre Exhibition, Sharjah, UAE*

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2017 Member, Jury Committee, Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammad bin Rashid Award for Painting, Dubai Women's Association, Dubai, UAE
- 2015 *Member, Jury Committee, Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammad bin Rashid Award for Painting, Dubai Women's Association, Dubai, UAE*
- 2014 *Member, Jury Committee, Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammad bin Rashid Award for Painting, Dubai Women's Association, Dubai, UAE*
- 2013 *Member, Jury Committee, Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammad bin Rashid Award for Painting, Dubai Women's Association, Dubai, UAE*

- 2012 Member, Jury Committee, Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammad bin Rashid Award for Painting, Dubai Women's Association, Dubai, UAE
- 2012–2011 Participant, Foreign Residency Program of the Emirates Foundation, Cite Internationale des Arts, Hotel de Ville, Paris, France
- 2011 Designer, 29th Annual Catalogue of Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- 2011–2010 Curator, 29th Annual Exhibition of Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- 2010–2009 Member, Jury Committee, Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammad bin Rashid Award for Painting, Dubai Women's Association, Dubai, UAE
- 2009 Participant, Foreign Residency Program of the Emirates Foundation, Hangar Visual Arts Production Center, Barcelona, Spain
- Executive Editor, UAE Fine Art Society Magazine, Al Tashkeel #20 and Al Tashkeel # 21, Sharjah, UAE
- Author, Al Tashkeel Magazine # 20, Sharjah, UAE
- 2007 Author, Al Tashkeel Magazine # 19, Sharjah, UAE
- 2006 Curatorial Assistant, 25th Annual Exhibition of the Emirates Fine Arts Society Silver Jubilee, Sharjah, UAE
- Member, Jury Committee, Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammad bin Rashid Award for Painting, Dubai Women's Association, Dubai, UAE
- Dubai Police Competition for Children's photography, Dubai, UAE
- 2006 Journalist, Al Khaleej Newspaper, Sharjah, UAE
- Author, Emirates Fine Arts Society Catalogues for the 24th & 25th Silver Jubilee Exhibition, Sharjah, UAE
- 2005 Member, Jury of Graphic Design Competition at GITEX Exhibition, Dubai, UAE
- Author, Al Tashkeel Magazine # 18, Sharjah, UAE
- 2004 Member, Jury Committee, Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammad bin Rashid Award for Painting, Dubai Women's Association, Dubai, UAE
- Dubai Police Competition for Children's Photography, Dubai, UAE

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- 2010 3rd prize in Tawasol 1 Exhibition, Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- 2005 2nd prize, Emirates Lady Award, Sharjah, UAE
- 2004 3rd prize in The Annual Exhibition. Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE

AFFILIATIONS

- Since 2004 Administrative Member of Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- Since 2002 Member of Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- Since 1999 Member of Youth Theatre, Dubai, UAE
- Since 1999 Member of Engineering Society, UAE
- 2017– 2014 Administrative Member of Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- 2014– 2012 Secretary General, Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- 2012– 2010 Chairman of Emirates Fine Arts Society
- 2010– 2008 Secretary General, Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- 2010– 2007 Member of “The Flying House”, Dubai, UAE
- 2008 Public Relations Officer, Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- 2006 Media Officer, Emirates Fine Arts Society, Sharjah, UAE
- 2004

COLLECTIONS

- Environment Agency, Abu Dhabi, UAE
- ADMAF Art Collection, Abu Dhabi, UAE
- Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah UAE
- Al Dar Hotel & Hospitality, Abu Dhabi, UAE
- Art Towada Center, Nanjo & Associates, Aomori, Japan
- JP Morgan Chase Bank New York, Dubai branch, Dubai, UAE

Aisha Alabbar Gallery is one of the first Emirati-led gallery in Dubai focused on contemporary and modern art by Emirati, local, and regional pioneering artists. Founded in November 2018 and located in Al Quoz, the gallery seeks to further the practices of emerging and established artists, who are the inspiration for the gallery's diverse range of programming.

Dedicated to locally-based artists and producing five innovative exhibitions per year, Aisha Alabbar Gallery has built a reputation not only for rigorous exhibition presentation but also for collaborations with renowned curators, investing considerable resources in bringing the practices of pioneering artists to the contemporary stage.

A commitment to education and community strengthens the gallery's exhibition programme. Each show is accompanied by workshops and seminars with the purpose of engaging diverse audiences. The gallery seeks to contribute to a lasting, evolving UAE arts ecosystem through its exhibitions, accompanying programming and commissioned, in-depth publications.

Warehouse 101, al Quoz 2, Dubai, UAE
T. +971 4 344 7747
M. +971 54 442 6598
info@aishaalabbar.art
www.aishaalabbar.art

