

ART REVIEW

Geometrical Wizardry: Timo Nasserı at Lawrie Shabibi

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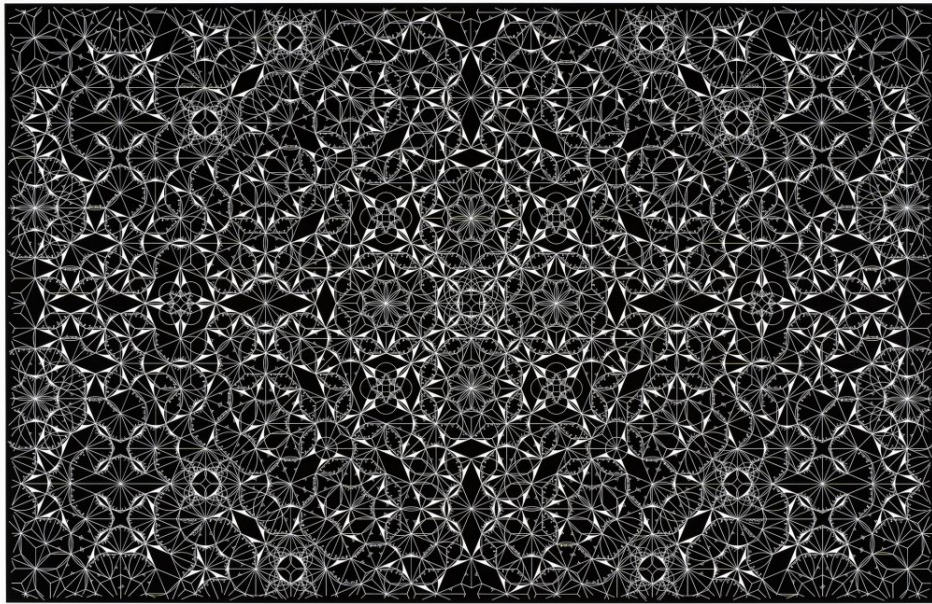
Timo Nasserı. *Atlas*. 2022, Acrylic and oil on canvas. 97 x 400 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi

Timo Nasserı's *All Borrow Their Light* at **Lawrie Shabibi** explores the artist's practice, which draws inspiration across mathematics, science and Islamic architecture in an inquiry into how we know what we know.

Born in Berlin to a German mother and an Iranian father, Timo Nasserı began his career as a photographer in 1997, but transitioned to sculpting in 2004 when he began creating artwork that combines his Western and Eastern heritage. His current show at [Lawrie Shabibi](#) reflects the complexities of his approach in new and interesting ways.

Walking into the gallery, one is immediately struck by the sense of unity in Timo Nasserı's work. Regardless of size or medium, there is a distinct thread and style reflective of his oeuvre. Spanning several stages of his career, Nasserı's first solo show at the Dubai-based gallery highlights the complexities of his inspiration, finding new perspectives in preexisting realities and discovering hidden truths within what is seen. From the traditional Iranian folktales he was told in his youth, to the work of the ancient Persian calligrapher, Ibn Muqla, Nasserı uses many diverse forms of inspiration and presents them across his artwork, while still maintaining the spirit of personal reflection.

Much of Nasserı's work utilises complex mathematical patterns or geometric shapes, some of which are inspired by Islamic architecture. Although non-religious by choice, he has always been fascinated by the geometry of Islamic design, especially the motifs he saw during his youth on travels to his father's house and mosques in Iran. This aspect is particularly evident in *Epistrophy #8* (2017), which is inspired by *muqarnas* ornamentation, a style of honeycomb geometrical design often visible on the underside of domes inside mosques. *Epistrophy #8* is made up of polished steel and Styrofoam and is embedded inside a wall, enhancing the sense of depth while encouraging closer inspection inside its mirrored walls. Intended to simulate a mosque dome removed from the ceiling, the sculpture creates an otherworldly experience through a kaleidoscopic effect, manipulating reality through a reflection of shifting images and scenes within the gallery. It simultaneously lures in viewers to look at themselves and their surroundings from a new perspective, and perhaps, to learn something by looking at distorted versions of themselves.



Timo Nasserri. *One and One #49*. 2023. Image courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi. Photography by Studio-Nasserri

Nasserri's work continues to prompt viewers to investigate reality as the show centres around *Atlas* (2023). Reminiscent of autostereograms, where a 2D-image creates an optical illusion so that it appears in 3D, *Atlas* is a four-metre-long painting consisting of abstract shapes, vivid colours and crisp, geometric lines. It is a clear demonstration of recent developments in Nasserri's practice. The painting draws inspiration from military camouflage, in particular a style known as 'Razzle Dazzle', which involved painting multicoloured abstract lines and shapes across the bodies of ships in order to make estimating their speed, size and direction of travel more difficult. Used by British and US Navy ships during the First and Second World Wars, this disguise pattern distorted and challenged human perception, as Nasserri similarly explores notions of hidden truths, surveillance and individual insight.

Stemming from his fascination with geometrical design in Islamic architecture and muqarnas ornamentation is the 2023 drawing, *One and One #49*. Made with white ink on black paper, the artist has utilised only a ruler and a compass to create complex patterns, endlessly repeating and creating countless shapes, again evocative of autostereograms. Upon closer inspection, written on the lines and in-between angles, are tiny mathematical equations, drawing viewers closer in to reveal another representation of hidden truths and explaining how this work was created. These blueprints show the vast amount of thought, planning and work that Nasserri invests in each individual painting and sculpture.



Timo Nasserri. *Teardrop Vessels*. 2022. Various sizes. Image courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi. Photography by Studio-Nasserri

Other recent works on display include a selection of 80 hand-crafted clay figures titled *Teardrop Vessels* (2020–2022). The sculptures take inspiration from the popular German modernist Bauhaus style while still maintaining the artist's attraction to abstract and geometric designs. These sculptures were created as part of a new vein of artwork made in response to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, during which Nasserri would create a vessel each day to the point that he had made more than 200. The resulting sculptures represent a moment of purgation and purification at a time in Nasserri's life when he was forced to look introspectively and find his own realities and hidden truths.

All Borrow Their Light is a small but revealing glimpse into the mind of Timo Nasserri. The exhibition exposes the artist's exquisite oeuvre through carefully curated works that playfully display his inspiration via a multifaceted approach that gives physical forms to geometric design with breathtaking effects.

All Borrow Their Light runs until 28 April 2023