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## PRESS RELEASE

MOHAMED AHMED IBRAHIM

### *Memory Drum*

19 September – 12 November 2020

Lawrie Shabibi is excited to launch the new season with a solo exhibition by Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim. Entitled *Memory Drum* and comprising works produced mostly during his time in isolation during lockdown in his Khorfakkan studio, this is the artist's second solo at the gallery.

Two new bodies of work have emerged from Ibrahim's six months of seclusion: a group of large paintings with plant-like forms (either trees or flowers) - his *Boulevard* and *Flower* series; and a group of sculptures that are either vaguely anthropomorphic, or else resemble toys from earliest stages of childhood. Both bodies of work are seen through a minimalist lens and alternate between brightly-coloured and neutral hues.

The title of the show - *Memory Drum* - has several meanings. In psychology, there is a theory that unconscious neural patterns acquired from past experience are stored in the central nervous system within a kind of memory storage organ, analogous to a drum, such as that used to store music in the old-fashioned roll pianos. It can also refer to the "drum memory" of early computers, a magnetic storage device widely used in these machines in the 1950s and the 1960s, forming the apparatus of their working memory. For Ibrahim, however, there is a further level of meaning, a theory of innateness in developmental psychology - that children have an innate knowledge. This innate knowledge for the artist is more important than that learnt later on throughout the course of life. Although most people lose touch with it through learned behaviours, Ibrahim is constantly aware of it. Especially so during this time of enforced isolation, which has forced him to go back deeper still into his "drum memory".

The new paintings, *Flowers* and *Boulevards*, are rooted in Ibrahim's previous semi-figural paintings of symbols. More plant-like than figure-like, both represent growth and are interconnected, yet on different scales. The same forms become either flowers or towering trees, depending upon context: the *Flowers* paintings are growing from schematic pots, whilst the *Boulevard* paintings recall aerial maps of cities or landscapes, with large trees lining roads or rivers. Conversely, they may also be read as zoomed-in slides of organic matter viewed under a microscope.

Play is central to Ibrahim's practice. With much of his three-dimensional work in papier-maché, before making his sculptures he may play for weeks with his materials, mixing in leaves, grass, tea, coffee or tobacco into his paper mix to produce nuanced natural and neutral tones. Although they may seem at first painted, Ibrahim's brightly coloured sculptures actually contain no paint, with the colours coming from the shredded coloured paper itself. Some of the free-standing sculptures evoke humanoid figures and are named as such - *Dancer Contessa*, for example. The smaller wall-based sculptures have the feel of children's toys – either rattles or those that hang over babies' cribs.

The change in emphasis toward semi-figural, both in painting and in sculpture, is a clear development in Ibrahim's practice, balanced as it is by tendencies that remain: the repetition of mark-making and forms in the paintings; the automatic almost subconscious object-making of the sculptures, analogous to organic growth; the disregard of scale, and the vibrancy of colour and texture that suffuse both.

## About the Artist

### Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim

Khorfakkan-based Emirati artist Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim (b. 1962, Khorfakkan, UAE) is part of the UAE's first generation of contemporary artists from the 1980s and 2000s, an avant-garde that included Hassan Sharif, Abdullah Al Saadi, Hussein Sharif, and Mohammed Kazem.

Ibrahim has exhibited internationally including at the Venice Biennale (2009), the Kunstmuseum Bonn (2005); the Sharjah Art Museum (2005 and 1996); the Dhaka Biennial (2002 and 1993); the Ludwig Forum (2002), the Havana Biennial (2000); the Cairo Biennial (1998); the Institut du Monde Arabe (1998); Kunstscentrum Sittard (1995). Significant group exhibitions within the UAE include *But We Cannot See Them: Tracing a UAE Art Community, 1988-2008* at The NYUAD Art Gallery (2017) and the Sharjah Biennial (1993- 2003 and 2007).

In March 2017 *Elements*, a survey of works spanning three decades of practice, was presented at the Sharjah Art Foundation curated by Hoor Al Qasimi. *The Space between the Eyelid and the Eyeball* was his first solo at Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2019).

Ibrahim's public works include: *Falling Stones Garden* (2020), Al Ula, Saudi Arabia, commissioned by the Royal Commission for Al Ula and Desert X; *Grocery* (2019), Madinat Zayed Market, Abu Dhabi, UAE, commissioned by Ghadan 21, Government of Abu Dhabi as part of the For Abu Dhabi initiative; *Untitled* (2019), Reem Central Park, Al Reem Island, Abu Dhabi, UAE, commissioned by Aldar Properties PJSC in partnership with Abu Dhabi Art; *Kids' Garden* (2019), Sheikh Khalifa Medical City, Abu Dhabi, UAE, commissioned by Abu Dhabi Health Services Company; and *Bait Al Hurma* (2018), Al Mureijah Square, Sharjah, commissioned by the Sharjah Art Foundation as part of the exhibition *Elements*.

His works are in significant international collections, including the Sharjah Art Foundation (UAE), the Sharjah Art Museum (UAE); Art Jameel (UAE); Arab Museum of Modern Art (Qatar); Kunstcentrum Sittard (Netherlands), the British Museum (London) and The Centre Pompidou (Paris).

Ibrahim works and lives in Khorfakkan, United Arab Emirates.

## About the Gallery

Lawrie Shabibi was founded in 2010 and opened its doors in early 2011 in Alserkal Avenue, located within the light industrial warehouse district of Al Quoz in Dubai. Following the relocation of several renowned galleries, this quickly became the hub of contemporary art in the region. We support the long-term development of the careers of young international contemporary artists, with a focus on those from the Middle East and North Africa, and more recently diasporic artists within the UK. We have also organized art historical exhibitions, working with an older generation of artists from the Middle East and North Africa region. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, in the space of nine years we have been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai. In October we will open a London outpost in Cromwell Place with a solo exhibition for renowned Moroccan modernist Mohamed Melehi.

For more information on Lawrie Shabibi please visit: <http://www.lawrieshabibi.com>

### PRESS INQUIRIES

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