

BLUE

DRISS OUADAHI | SHAHPOUR POUYAN |
SHAIKHA AL MAZROU | SU YU-XIN

21 November 2020 – 7 January 2021

This November Lawrie Shabibi presents *Blue*, an exhibition that explores the dialectic between meaning and visual sensation. A colour that is saturated with meanings - freedom, intuition, imagination, expansiveness, inspiration, sadness, faith, spirituality, wisdom, peace, serenity, ethereality, infinity to name just a few- blue has more complex and contradictory connotations than any other colour.

Always among the most costly, scarce and difficult to extract, blue pigments were valued by the ancient Egyptians, to whom the colour represented the Nile, sky, creation and divinity. The lapis lazuli they used in their jewellery and statuary was mined in the mountains of Bamiyan in Afghanistan and brought overland thousands of miles across the deserts of Arabia. In medieval Islamic traditions, blue signified the impenetrable depths of the universe, and was used in the illumination of fine manuscripts, in the glazes of the ceramic tiles that sheath sacred buildings and on carpets, historically that most precious commodity; whilst from the 11th century onwards, blue was associated with divinity in Europe, and the builders of gothic cathedrals lined their walls with dazzling windows of glass coloured with cobalt. Chinese blue and white porcelain, which began production during the 13th century, borrowed from the Persian technique of cobalt blue underglaze, and is exported worldwide still.

The colour blue has kept its cachet across the centuries and individual artists have responded to it: from the star-strewn sky of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1520s), Picasso's *Blue Period* (early 1900s), to Yves Klein's patented *International Klein Blue* (1960), blue in its various hues continues to inspire.

Blue, the forthcoming exhibition at Lawrie Shabibi, is dominated by the colour and brings together works by a multi-generational group of artists - Driss Ouadahi (b. 1959), Shahpour Pouyan (b. 1979), Shaikha Al Mazrou (b. 1988) and Su Yu-Xin (b. 1991).

Geometric abstraction and transparency suffuse Driss Ouadahi's practice. For *Blue* he presents two paintings - *Errance / Wandering* (2018) and *Au Fur et à Mesure* (2018). Known for his depictions of brutalist structures and the built environment of urban alienation, Ouadahi's more recent works are devoid of social commentary, focusing instead on colour, light and transparency, engendering a transcendental feeling through visual sensation.

Similarly, in *Unfolded* (2020) Su Yu-Xin explores the relationship between visual language and sensory perception, constructing a delicate alternation of horizons, within which varying distances elicit different

modes of observation. Yu-Xin's layered surface and multiple perspectives generate a dynamic composition, an in-between place, which allows her to switch between figuration and abstraction, incorporating aspects of still-life, graphs, digital calendars, and fragments of text and memory.

A group of *Miniatures* by Shahpour Pouyan, made after a unique and highly unusual manuscript in the Bibliotheque National in Paris, continue a series began in 2008, other examples of which are in The Met, The British Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. These reproduce the illustrated pages of an illuminated Mi'rajnama (Ascent of the Prophet) manuscript made in Timurid Herat and written in the Chaghatay Turkish language in an Uighur script -as culturally diverse as was possible in the 15th century. Pouyan digitally and manually manipulates the images to remove the figures and their attributes. Without their protagonists, what is left are arresting monochrome skylscapes of saturated blue, resembling colour field paintings in miniature.

Finally, *Sky And Ocean And Everything In Between* (2020) Shaikha Al Mazrou investigates the perception of colour and the irony between literal meaning and spontaneous perceptions in art. Two blue resin blocks displayed on the floor, minimal in their aesthetics, poetic in their meaning, attempt to give form, both a thought and a sensation. Similarly, *Despite The Weather* (2020) questions the meaning behind what one sees. By using cyanotypes Al Mazrou manipulates light to superimpose numbers, emphasising the paradox between intangible concepts such as time and the rigid numerical constructs that represent them.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

DRISS OUADAH (b. 1959, Morocco) was raised in Algeria and studied at the École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts d'Alger before enrolling and subsequently graduating from the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Germany.

His recent solo exhibitions include *Extra Muros*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2019), *Systems of Demacration*, Von er Heydt-Kunsthalle Wuppertal-Barmen, Germany (2018), *Transposition*, Caroline Pagès gallery, Lisbon, Portugal (2016), *Breach in the Silence*, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco (2016), *Inside Zenith*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2014), *Implosion*, Caroline Pagès gallery, Lisbon (2013), *Trans-Location*, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco (2013), and *Breathing Space*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2012). Notable institutional shows include *Klassen Verhältnisse/Phantoms of Perception*, Kunstverein, Hamburg (2018), *Welcome Party*, Von Der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal (2018), *Dessine vos Desseins*, Musée public national d'art contemporain d'alger, Algeria (2018), *L'un et L'Autre*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018), *Beautiful Stranger*, Museum De Wieger, Deurne (2017) and *Future of a Promise* at Venice Biennale 54, Venice (2011).

Ouadahi's work is in public collections that include Von der Heydt Museum Wuppertal, Germany; Modern Forms, London, UK; FRAC Centre, Orléans, France; Herbert-Weisenburger-Stiftung, Rastatt, Germany; Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, Germany; Nadour Collection; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; Kamel Lazaar Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey; and Stadtparkasse Baden-Baden, Germany.

In 2014 Ouadhi received the Grand Prix Léopold Sédar Senghor Prize at the 11th edition of Dak'Art, the Biennial of Contemporary African Art in Dakar, Senegal.

Ouadahi currently lives and works in Düsseldorf.

SHAHPOUR POUYAN (b. 1979, Iran) has an MFA in Integrated Practices and New Forms at Pratt Institute, New York, and has an MFA in Painting from the Tehran University of Art.

Recent group and solo exhibitions include: Miniature 2.0 - Miniature in Contemporary Art, Pera Museum, Istanbul (2020), Clapping With Stones, Rubin Museum, New York (2019), The Moon: A Voyage Through Time, Aga Khan Museum, Canada (2019), Speaking Power to (Post) Truth, Curated by Sara Raza, Jane Lombard, New York, USA (2019), After Examining The Logbook, The Doctors Assume They Are Dealing With The Plague, Galerie Nathalie Obadia Cloitre Saint Merri, France (2019), Untitled, Barbara Walters Gallery, Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York, USA (2019), Punk Orientalism, Curated by Sara Raza, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Canada (2018), White Anxieties, Curated by Raul Zamudio and Juan Puentes, WhiteBox, New York City, USA (2018), Only the Morning Bird Treasures the Flower Garden, REDCAT, Los Angeles, California, USA (2018), In the Fields of Empty Days, Los Angeles County Museum (LACMA), California, USA (2018), The New Minimalists, Abrons Arts Center, New York City, USA (2018), LB01, Lahore Biennial, Pakistan (2018), Wūshuī, Copperfield, London, UK (2018), and The Incarnation of the Body Politic, The Armory Show, Focus Section, with Lawrie Shabibi, New York, USA (2018).

His work is part of many prominent private and public collections including: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, New York; Collection of Robert Littman and Sully Bonnelly, New York, USA; The Abby Weed Grey Collection of Modern Asian and Middle Eastern Art, New York; The British Museum, London; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Mohammed Afkhami Collection, Dubai, Huma Kabakci Collection, Istanbul; SYZGY, New York; The Farjam collection, Dubai; Zoroastrian Cultural Institute, Paris and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran.

In 2016, Pouyan was shortlisted for the Jameel Prize 4 by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK and has been awarded the Civitella Ranieri Fellowship for Visual Arts in Umbria, Italy. He is currently the Kenneth Armitage Fellow in London.

Pouyan currently lives and works between New York and London.

SHAIKHA AL MAZROU (b. 1988, UAE) received her MFA in 2014 at the Chelsea College of Fine Art, University of the Arts, London where she was awarded the prestigious MFA Student Prize. Prior to that she studied at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah where she was recently a Sculpture Lecturer.

Recent solo exhibitions include Rearranging the Riddle, Maraya Art Centre Sharjah, Sharjah (2020), Expansion/Extension, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2019), Solo Projects, Abu Dhabi Art with Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2018). She has participated in a number of group exhibitions including, most recently: Paulo Cunha e Silva Art Prize Finalist Exhibition, Galeria Municipal do Porto, Porto, Portugal (2020), Upsurge: Waves, Colour And Illusion, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2020), MATERIALIZE, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2019), Artissima, Dialogue section, with Lawrie Shabibi, Torino (2018), From Barcelona to Abu Dhabi: Works from the MACBA Art Collection in Dialogue with the Emirates, organised by ADMAF, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi (2018).

Shaikha Al Mazrou is a finalist of Paulo Cunha e Silva Art Prize (2020). In 2018 Al Mazrou was awarded the first Artist's Garden commission by the Jameel Arts Centre for her public piece Green house: Interior yet Exterior, Manmade yet Natural (2018). She has also been commissioned by Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF), Abu Dhabi Art & Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority and The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC).

Al Mazrou currently lives and works in Dubai.

SU YU-XIN (b. 1991, Taiwan) holds a MFA in Fine Arts from Slade School of Fine Art UCL.

Notable solo and group exhibitions include: A Hue to Spell, KuanDu Museum of Fine Art, Taipei (2019); hic sunt leones, 798 Art Centre, Beijing (2019), Taiwan Biennial- Wild Rhizome, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung (2018), Building Code Violation III, Special Economic Zone, Long March Space, Beijing (2018), A World in a Grain of Sand: Mapping Shapes and Sites for Social Deometries, Atlantis Fosun Foundation, Sanya (2018), Trembling Surfaces, Long March space, Beijing (2016), Future Island, Saatchi Gallery, London (2016), 2016 Slade Degree Show, UCL, London (2016), Refuse: Refuge: Refuse, The Koppel Project, London (2016), Small press project, University College London, London (2016), 2015 Slade Interim show, UCL, Slade School of Fine Art, London (2015).

Su Yu-Xin lives and works between London, Taipei, and Shanghai.

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.

As of 2020 Lawrie Shabibi has a UK outpost at Cromwell Place in London.

FOR GALLERY INFORMATION

lawrieshabibi.com

PRESS INQUIRES

Zoya Zalatimo

zoya@lawrieshabibi.com

+971(0) 4346 9906