

PRESS RELEASE

Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim

Embryonic Coat

18 May - 16 July 2022

Lawrie Shabibi is pleased to present *Embryonic Coat* by Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim (b. 1962, UAE) - his third solo at the gallery. Ibrahim's intensely experimental and prolific art practice conveys his deep fascination with memory, imagery and ways of seeing and experiencing the environment, coming from both his personal experiences and the kind of innate memory found in our DNA, which he describes as a 'primitive urge.' *Embryonic Coat* explores the conception or manifestation of the known, experienced, or imagined as contained within rudimentary forms, referencing the protective sheath around a seed or the membrane around an embryo.

The exhibition runs concurrently with Ibrahim's major new installation for The National Pavilion UAE at the 59th Venice Biennale - *Between Sunrise and Sunset* - a room-filling sculpture made from 128 abstract and organic elements in his signature medium of papier-maché.

Such was the scale of the Venice commission that Ibrahim spent ever more time in and around his home studio and its adjoining garden, with its old trees, flower beds and potted plants. As always, what inspired him were his surroundings, and so naturally, his new series of paintings and cardboard assemblages fixate on these plants. They become his central motif, endlessly repeated, reconfigured and recoloured, much as the abstract notations in his *Symbols* paintings and murals, or the vertical marks in his *Lines* works. Although often regimented, as with all of Ibrahim's works these plants are somehow also treated individually and with tenderness. Entitled *My Garden's Details*, this new body of work makes its first public appearance here.

Showing alongside these are recent papier-maché sculptures of the same period, including six large-scale works entitled *Standing Bodies* - among the most dynamic of Ibrahim's semi-figurative sculptures to date. His three-dimensional works materialize spontaneously through weeks of experimentation with various materials, either coloured or black and white paper, though often mixing in leaves, grass, tea, coffee, or tobacco into the paper to produce nuanced natural and neutral tones. Some are anthropomorphic and dynamic - others emerge as organic plant-like forms, and some toy-like. Whereas a few clearly relate to those in the Venice installation, in contrast to it, here we are presented with an eclectic range of objects - trees, combs, robots, various humanoid figures, flowers etc. The interchangeability of titles underlines the flexibility and mutability of Ibrahim's visual language.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

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

Ibrahim is currently representing the United Arab Emirates at the 2022 edition of the Venice Biennale, in an exhibition entitled *Between Sunrise and Sunset*, curated by Maya Allison (Executive Director of The New York University Abu Dhabi Art Gallery) for the National Pavilion UAE.

In March 2018 the Sharjah Art Foundation opened *Elements*, a survey of works spanning three decades of his practice, curated by Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi. Other solo exhibitions include *Dusk Till Dawn* (2011) at Lawrie Shabibi, Cromwell Place London, *Memory Drum* (2020) and *The Space between the Eyelid and the Eyeball* (2019) at Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, and a series of solo shows at Cuadro Gallery, Dubai (2018, 2016, 2015, 2013).

Significant group exhibitions include participations in *But We Cannot See Them: Tracing a UAE Art Community*, 1988-2008 at The NYUAD Art Gallery (2017); *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Yay Gallery, Baku (2015); the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi (2016); the 53rd Venice Biennale, Venice (2009); the Sharjah Biennial (1993, 2003 and 2007); and the Dhaka Biennial (2002 and 1993). Institutional exhibitions include the Kunstmuseum, Bonn (2005); the Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah (2005 and 1996), the Ludwig Forum for International Art, Aachen (2002); Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (1998); Sittard Art Centre, the Netherlands (1995), and the Exhibition for the Emirates Fine Art Society in the Soviet Union, Moscow (1990).

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*.

He received the first prize for sculpture at the Sharjah Biennial in 1999 and 2001 and has been a member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society since 1986, founding Art Atelier at the Khor Fakkan Art Centre in 1997. He has participated in artist residencies at Trans Indian Ocean Artist Exchange, Kochi Murzi Biennale, India (2016); A.i.R Dubai (2015); Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2009) and Kunstcentrum Sittard, the Netherlands (1994-1996, 1998-2000).

His works have been acquired by significant international collections, including Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah; Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah; Art Jameel Collection, Dubai; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha; Kunstcentrum Sittard, Sittard; The British Museum, London; and Le Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

He lives and works in Khorfakkan, United Arab Emirates.

ABOUT LAWRIE SHABIBI

Lawrie Shabibi is a contemporary art gallery housed in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. The gallery supports the long-term development of the careers of young international contemporary artists with a focus on those from the Middle East and North Africa. The gallery also organizes art historical exhibitions working with an older generation of artists from the region. Liaising with curators, institutions, museums and collectors the gallery has successfully introduced international artists to the region whilst at the same time presented Middle Eastern artists to the international contemporary arts community. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, Lawrie Shabibi has in the space of eleven years been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai.

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

PRESS INQUIRIES

Please contact Margharita Poroshina:

E. margarita@lawrieshabibi.com

M. +971 56 6066087

T. +971 4 346 9906