

## PRESS RELEASE

**Timo Nasser:**

***All Borrow Their Light***

28 February - 28 April 2023

Lawrie Shabibi is pleased to present *All Borrow Their Light*, the first solo exhibition of Berlin-based Timo Nasser at the gallery. Offering a comprehensive glimpse into Nasser's oeuvre, the exhibition comprises a carefully curated selection of paintings and sculptures from various stages of the artist's practice that contemplate concepts of mathematical and geometric thought models.

The exhibition's focus is on a new large-scale painting entitled *Atlas* (2023) which extends to 4 metres in length and develops his earlier series entitled *I Am a Sky Where Spirits Live* (2022-2023). In these paintings Nasser applies forms inspired by the 'Razzle Dazzle' camouflage used by the British and US Navy in World War I and II as a tactic to avoid detection. The vibrantly coloured recurring forms on the canvas are reminiscent of geometric patterns in a gigantic kaleidoscope and incorporate elements of camouflage from the animal kingdom, fractals, indigenous traditions, and Cubist paintings based on human perceptual mechanisms.

Nasser's fascination with geometry traces itself back to his interest in Islamic architecture and his study of *Muqarnas* ornamentation - a honeycomb geometric design in Islamic architecture that originated in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century, typically built into the underside of domes and arches and decorative in nature. By breaking down its core elements and analysing its rhythm and structure, Nasser explores the *Muqarnas*'s ideological, mathematical and geometric relationship to logic and the creation of the universe. In *All Borrow Their Light*, Nasser presents two works from an ongoing series examining the *Muqarnas*: his *Epistrophy* sculptures (2007- present) and his *One and One* drawings (2008 to present).

*Epistrophy* #8, 2017 is a large-scale polished steel geometric sculpture which derives its shape from the internal structure of a typical *Muqarnas*. By embedding it in the wall, the viewer sees the shape head-on so that the polished mirrored surface appears boundless and reflects the surroundings in multiple ways. This fragmentation of the reflection of the space becomes part of the artwork recreating the geometric structure of the *Muqarnas*, which at the time was portrayed as an entire universe of possible forms.

*One and One* #49 (2023) is part of Nasser's ongoing series of detailed geometric drawings made with white ink on black paper. Using only a ruler and compass, these drawings feature a repeating pattern that expands from the centre using triangles arranged in a particular rhythm to create repeating geometric patterns. Appearing to extend outwards infinitely, these drawings are like blueprints of his stainless-steel sculptures, delving into the mathematical beauty of Islamic architecture, geometry, and mathematics.

Storytelling and narrative play a role in the exhibition, blending the fantastical with the real and possible, as revealed in the series entitled *Teardrop Vessels* and series entitled *Unknown Letters*.

*Teardrop Vessels* is a series of clay sculptures made by the artist in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The exhibition features 80 of these clay works in varying forms, sizes and shades of charcoal grey: arranged in clusters, their shapes and vast quantities suggest the ritualist daily meditative practice these "tear-catchers" embody. Some of the shapes have a primordial quality about them, whilst others evoke the functional and minimal design style of the German modernist Bauhaus school, although their functionality is invented.

In his *Unknown Letters* series Nasserri created four sculptures (one of which is presented) each carved out of walnut in the shape of an imagined Arabic letter. These sculptures were inspired by the life of the calligrapher Ibn Muqla (885-940, Baghdad), who attempted to add four letters to the Arabic alphabet in 935 – none of which were added. Nasserri began in-depth research of the Arabic script and alphabet, paying particular attention to its forms and aesthetics. 'While searching for the letters, it occurred to me that Ibn Muqla might have seen missing letters in the stars.' He created his own letters based on the shapes of constellations in the stars that existed during the time of Ibn Muqla – none of which attach to any specific sound.

"Nasserri's practice involves alternating between ancient techniques derived from Islamic and Persian art and architecture, exploring modern and contemporary Euro-American art historical and philosophical concepts. By doing so, he creates a visual representation of the intersection of abstraction and symbolism through complex codes and patterns of 'consciousness' that he embeds into his art" (Timo Nasserri: The Pursuit of Truth' original essay by Sara Raza, 2023).

NOTE: The exhibition text includes quotes and adapted text from the original essay titled 'Timo Nasserri: The Pursuit of Truth' by award winning global contemporary art curator and writer Sara Raza. To quote Raza, please refer to the full text enclosed in the Press Kit or kindly contact Lawrie Shabibi.

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Timo Nasserri was born in Berlin in 1972 to a German mother and an Iranian father. He received his diploma in photography from the Lette-Verein, Berlin in 1997. Nasserri began his artistic career as a photographer before making the transition to sculptor in 2004. After travelling to Iran with his father he started to explore the relationship of geometry and Islamic architecture. Combining Islamic and Western cultural heritages, his work is inspired as much by specific memories and religious references as by universal archetypes described by mathematics and language, and the inner truths of form and rhythm.

He has held numerous solo and group exhibitions, including at Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai (2023); Sabrina Amrani Gallery, Madrid (2023); Mercedes-Benz Contemporary, Berlin (2022); Taubert Contemporary, Berlin (2022); Kunstmuseum Heidenheim, Heidenheim an der Brenz (2022); Museum Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt (2022); The British Museum, London (2021); The Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2021); Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich (2022, 2019); ZKM, Karlsruhe (2019); Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut / Hamburg (2009,12,15,19); CCA Andratx, Islas Baleares (2019); Stichting Kunstfort bij Vijfhuizen (2018); The Aga Khan Museum, Toronto (2017); The Melbourne Triennale (2017); Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2017); Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt (2016); AK Vienna (2016);

KW-Kunstwerke, Berlin (2015); and The Drawing Room Biennial, London (2021, 2019, 2015), among others.

Nasseri is a winner of the Abraaj Capital Art Prize in 2011 and was awarded the Saar Ferngas Förderpreis Junge Kunst in 2006.

His work is in the public collections of: Sammlung Daimler Chrysler, Berlin, Germany; British Museum, London, UK; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia; Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland; Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas, USA; and David Roberts Collection, London, UK; Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi, India; Barjeel Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; The Farjam Foundation, Dubai, UAE; The Mohammed Afkhami Collection, Dubai, UAE; Kamel Lazaar Foundation, Tunis, Tunisia; Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium; Art Jameel Collection, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Highness Sheikha Salama Bint Hamdan Nahyan Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE; Cohen Collection, Florida, USA; Sohst-Brennenstuhl Collection, Hamburg, Germany; Museum Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt, Germany.

Timo Nasseri lives and works in Berlin.

## **ABOUT THE GALLERY**

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 organises 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 presenting Middle Eastern artists to the international contemporary art community. By holding a regular programme of exhibitions, screenings and talks, publishing catalogues and participating in international art fairs, Lawrie Shabibi has been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in Dubai.

## **FOR GALLERY INFORMATION**

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## **PRESS INQUIRIES**

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