

PRESS RELEASE

Shaikha Al Mazrou
Expansion/Extension

17 September – 1st November 2018

For her debut solo exhibition Shaikha Al Mazrou presents *Expansion/Extension*. The title draws from the artist's own experience conceiving the show – expanding and extending her research into the meaning of sculpture, material and its representational function.

Soft, squashy, spongy –not qualities normally associated with steel structures, yet in this new series Al Mazrou makes them appear inherent. Each of the seven wet coated steel pieces created for the exhibition has an element of surprise, playing with positive and negative tension and illusions of colour and material. *Expand* is a single bright red cuboid that bulges out from the wall. Its crumpled edges evoke a sense of malleability and frailty. Other works are coated in recurring colours and different geometric combinations– two hues of blue, yellow and orange – that play with our sense of perspective and space. Not all are cuboid shapes– circles are a recurring feature in Al Mazrou's works: *Excel* comprises two round sculptures painted in opposite concentric colours that look like creased pillows.

Each work appears to end where another starts. The arrangements reverberate off each other and their groupings act as dialogues. *Engage*, comprising two large floor sculptures painted in bands of colour, resembles a pair of sacks stacked side by side just before the moment they fall into each other, while *Extrude*, a triptych of three vertical forms, is stretched upward, their edges marked to resemble thumbprints left behind on play dough (the title itself a reference to the pottery technique of passing clay through a small tube or “extruder”).

Some of the works, particularly where arranged in pairings, such as in *Engage* or *Excel*, appear like figures stopping in motion, their shapes seeming to inhale and exhale, stretch and shrink, reaching suggestively through the space to suggest a lost physical presence.

Al Mazrou's irreverent use of material and its apparent contradictions, using durable materials that are made to resemble something soft, pliable or ephemeral, is central to her practice. Fascinated by notions of physical space, her sculptures and installations materialize as simple gestures that emphasize the representation of tension, weight and space, whilst borrowing formally from minimalism and intellectually from conceptual art. *Exhale*, is a floor piece where a large glass sheet is held at an angle by what looks like two bean-bags, the weight of the glass is in a precarious balancing act that defies gravity and logic.

The influence of Donald Judd, Sol Lewitt and Carle Andre are all discernable in her work. Al Mazrou engages the formal aspects of minimalism as she explores the materiality in art. Steel, a mass-produced industrial material, combines with colour in her abstract geometric arrangements.

Expansion/Extension – whilst rooted in sculpture – is also an experiment in colour and painting. Some of the sculptures are produced as diptychs and triptychs; others hang from the walls like paintings. The colours used are bright- a new departure for Al Mazrou for works of this scale, very different from her recent works such *Ironic Experiments*, 2017 and *Scales*, 2017 both of which were markedly more muted. Her use of colour and geometric lines in this new series adds to the sense of perspective and illusion.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Over the last few years Al Mazrou has become known for her large-scale public commissions and sculptures. In 2014 Al Mazrou was one of five international artists commissioned by the Arab Fund for Art & Culture to produce a public artwork in Dubai as part of their event 'Make Art Possible'; in 2017 she was commissioned by Abu Dhabi Art to produce a large scale sculpture entitled *Scales* and she has also worked on a number of private and corporate commissions for the outdoors. More recently, Al Mazrou is the recipient of a commission by Art Jameel for a site-specific sculpture at the new [Jameel Arts Centre](#) due to open in November, 2018.

Al Mazrou was born in the UAE in 1988 and received her Masters in 2014 from the Chelsea College of Fine Art, University of the Arts London. Prior to that she studied at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah.

She has participated in several group exhibitions including most recently: *From Barcelona to Abu Dhabi: Works from the MACBA Art Collection in Dialogue with the Emirates*, organised by ADMAF, Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2018; *Beyond: Emerging Artists*, Abu Dhabi Art, UAE, 2017; *Art of Nature*, Abu Dhabi Festival, Umm Al Emarat Park, UAE, 2017; *Homage Without An Homage*, curated by Cristiana De Marchi, Art Dubai, Julius Baer Lounge, UAE, 2017; Faculty Show, Al Rewaq Gallery, College of Fine Art, University of Sharjah, UAE, 2017; *Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates*, Bolivar Art Gallery, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, USA, 2016; Abu Dhabi Art, with Lawrie Shabibi, Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2015; *A Public Privacy*, Inaugural edition of UAE Unlimited Arab Exploration, DUCTAC, Dubai, UAE, 2015; *Past Forward, Contemporary Art from the Emirates*, Fowler Museum, UCLA, LA, CA, USA, 2015; 1^o International Arezzo Biennial of Art, Arezzo, Italy, 2013; *Sharjah Cultural Days*, Museum of Modern Art, Passau, Germany, 2010; 14th Asian Art Biennale, National Art Gallery, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2010; *Experiment*, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE, 2010; *Exit 5*, College of Fine Arts and Design, Sharjah, UAE, 2010; *Closure*, Artwork-MK, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, UK, 2009; *Emergence*, Tenri Cultural Institute of New York, New York, USA, 2009; *Artists Over The Frontiers, Prayer Flags*, The Commune Chauveroché, France, 2009; *Artists Over The Frontiers, Prayer Flags*, Lyon, France, 2009; *Peace Postcard*, Contemporary art space, Gosford, Australia, 2009; *Peace Postcard*, ACU Gallery, Strathfield, Australia, 2009; *Peace Postcard*, Regional Centre for Educational Planning, Sharjah, UAE, 2008; *Peace Postcard*, Al Kahf Gallery, Bethlehem, Palestine, 2008; And Dar Al Fonoon, Creek Art Fair and design, Dubai, UAE, 2008.

She recently participated in March Project, an educational residency programme for young artists that provides opportunities to research, realise and present site-specific works at Sharjah Art Foundation.

Al Mazrou lives and works in Dubai and is currently a Sculpture Lecturer at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah.

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 six 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>

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