

## CULTURE

# Lawrie Shabibi presents works of Hamra Abbas at Frieze Seoul 2023

25 Aug 2023 09:17 



Hamra Abbas is inspired by the history and craftsmanship of South Asia.

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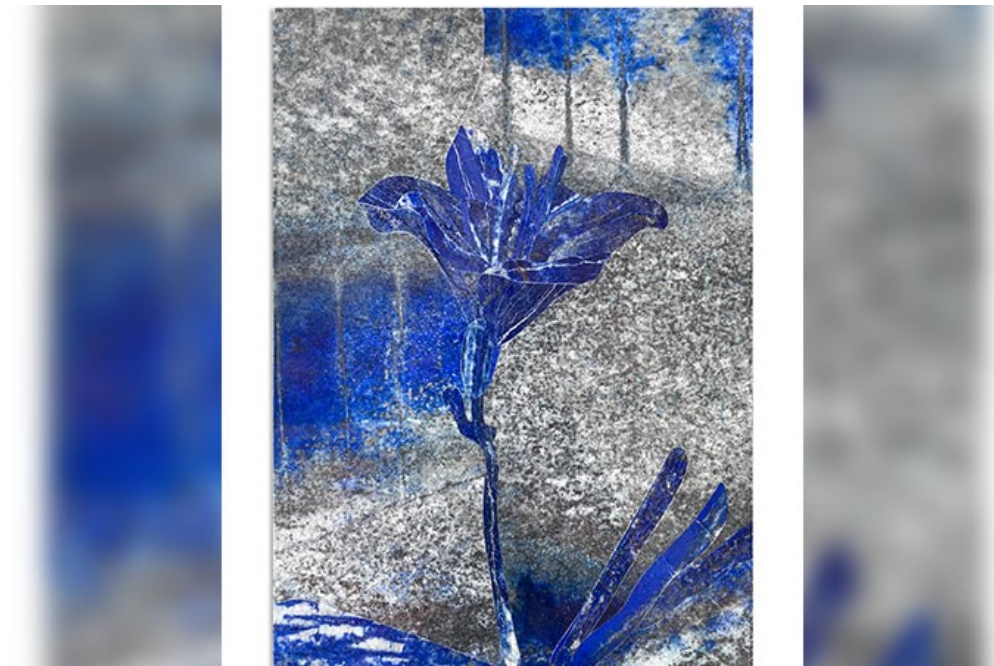
For Frieze Seoul 2023 (Sept. 6 – 9), Lawrie Shabibi is presenting a selection of new marble inlay works by Hamra Abbas (Pakistani, b. 1976, Kuwait) including a new iteration of her large-scale series titled Mountain 6 (2023). Abbas has for some years been experimenting with marble inlay (Pietra Dura) a decorative art form that involves the use of cut and fitted coloured stones to create intricate images, breaking new ground as she pulls this traditional practice away from its historical function, to create a new form of aesthetics.

Her works reference Mughal architecture and its traditional use of garden motifs, where idyllic images of landscapes represent paradise and perfection, immortality

and mortality - an earthly utopia in which humans coexist with nature in perfect harmony. She unearths the symbolic significance of nature imagery in relation to architecture and their interplay in the representation of nature and colour. Drawing attention to the geographical origins of lapis lazuli, particularly in Badakhshan, Afghanistan, she investigates its historical significance and sheds light on its utilisation in the history of art, unravelling its cultural and artistic implications.

Her research leads her to uncover the rich heritage associated with this precious gemstone, revealing its historical usage beyond its purely visual qualities. Mountain 6 (2023) is a marble pentptych that captures the iconic imagery of the K2 Mountain in Pakistan. The work showcases the timeless beauty of white snow and the rugged handsomeness of its rock formations. It has come to be a metaphor for the pursuit of perfection and truth. Abbas' Flower Studies series, inspired by photographs she has taken on her travels, harnesses her vision to create intricate studies in marble inlay. This traditional technique, deeply rooted in the South Asian region's rich history and fine craftsmanship, becomes her medium for immortalising the essence of each wildflower in stone.

Abbas received her BFA and MA in Visual Arts from the National College of Arts, Lahore, in 1999 and 2002 respectively, before attending Universitaet der Kuenste in Berlin, where she did the Meisterschueler in 2004. She has exhibited internationally with recent solo and group exhibitions including COLOR/GARDEN, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2022); Color Wheel, Canvas gallery, Karachi (2021), Precaution, ARTER, Istanbul, Turkey (2021); Tonight No Poetry Will Serve, Barefoot Gallery, Colombo (2021); Under Construction, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2021) and Every Colour is a Shade of Black, COMO Museum of Art, Lahore (2020).



Flower Studies 9, in Lapis Lazuli on marble.

Her work has been exhibited as part of Karachi Biennale Karachi (2019, 2017) and the Lahore Biennale (2018). She an Honoree of the Asia Arts Game Changer Awards 2021 and is the recipient of the Jury Prize at Sharjah Biennial 9 and the Abraaj Capital Art Prize in 2011. She was shortlisted for the Jameel Prize in 2009. In 2021, she presented Garden (2021) - a large-scale public art intervention commissioned under the Expo 2020 Dubai Public Art Programme, intended to remain on site as part of the future city of District 2020. Her work is part of significant collections, including British Museum, London, UK; the Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio, USA; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas, USA; 21c Museum Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky, USA; Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, USA; USA Art In Embassies Collection, USA; Burger Collection, Hong Kong; Koc Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey; Borusan Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey; Kadist Collection, Paris, France; Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels, Belgium; Devi Art Foundation, Gurugram, India; King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra), Saudi Arabia and Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, UAE. Abbas currently lives and works in Lahore, Pakistan.

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, the area quickly became the hub of contemporary art in the region; the gallery has been a forerunner in the development of the contemporary art scene in the region in general and the UAE in particular. Its initial focus was on the practices of emerging contemporary artists from the Middle East and North Africa (the Global South), and in the past five years, it has introduced artists from other regions and generations; yet with the focus on the “underrepresented”.

A major centre of attention for the gallery is the support of artists from the diaspora who create work in all media, exploring issues such as identity, memory, history and socio-political issues specific to the diasporic experience. Another part of the programme is the organisation of art-historical exhibitions, which includes working with an older generation of artists. Of note here are the historic shows presented for the Moroccan pioneer Mohamed Melehi (1936-2020) and most recently, Iraqi/French Mehdi Moutashar (b.1943) – both at Abu Dhabi Art Fair; works from the 1950s–1970s were being showcased. Lawrie Shabibi also works with globally renowned museums and have placed works with The Guggenheim, Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou, The British Museum, Dallas Museum of Art, LACMA and the Cincinnati Art Museum. By integrating older (and emerging) artists with younger artists, it creates the context and depth for its programmes, something important and no less necessary when working with underrepresented regions.