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Art Events

by Sophie She

## Imaginative Archeology: New Exhibition By Dima Srouji

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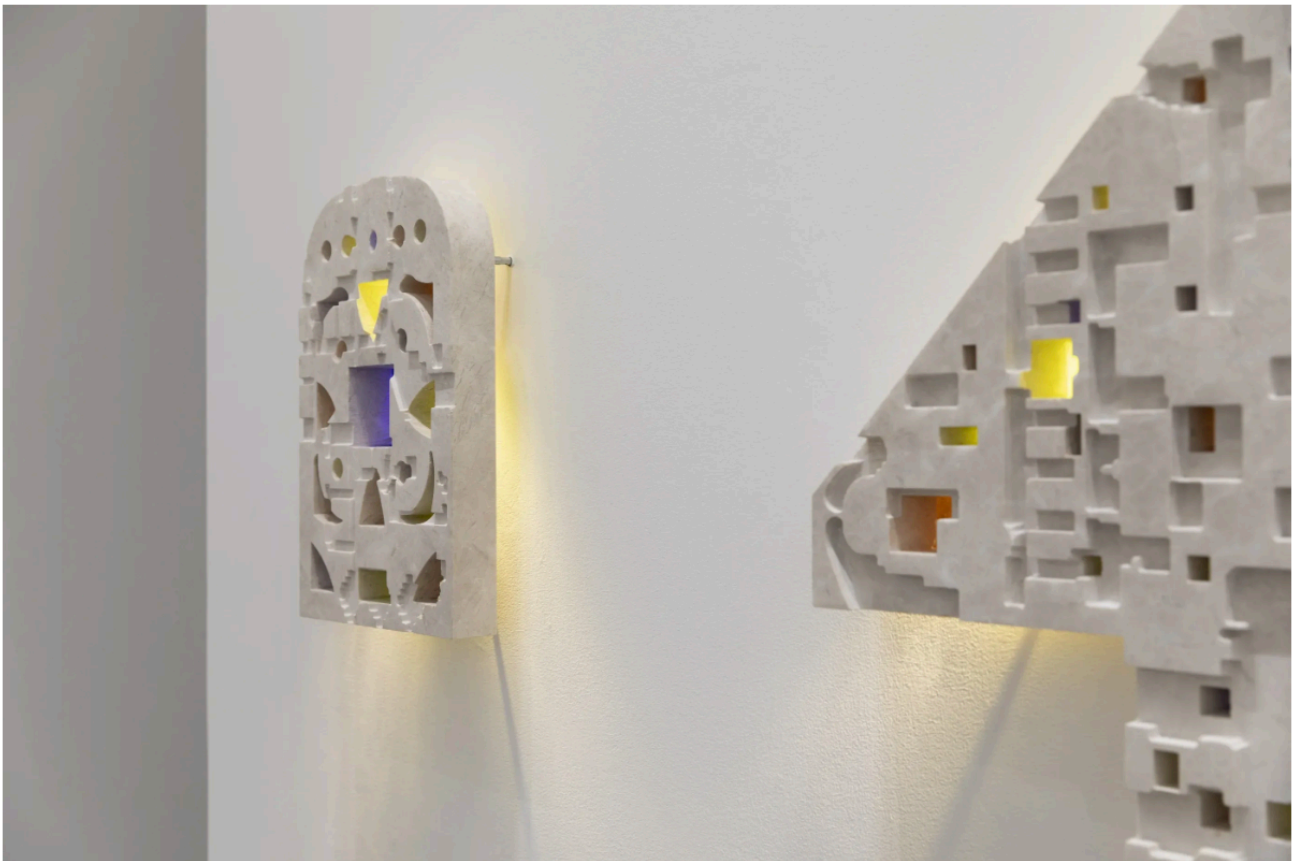
Lawrie Shabibi Gallery proudly presents Dima Srouji's solo exhibition, "Charts for a Resurrection." Scheduled to debut from May 7 to July 6, 2024, this showcase marks a profound exploration of identity, displacement, and cultural heritage through the artist, architect, and researcher's visionary lens.

"The exhibition is an ode to the land and its embedded memories."

Srouji's interdisciplinary approach transcends conventional boundaries, merging art with politics, architecture, and archaeology. Her creations serve not only as aesthetic expressions but also as powerful commentaries on societal issues. Collaborating with archaeologists, anthropologists, and artisans, Srouji crafts a diverse array of works spanning installations, product designs, and written pieces, each resonating with profound narratives and historical echoes.

The exhibition unfolds in two distinct realms: a spacious area named terrain and an intimate chapel-like space. Within the expansive section, visitors encounter an array of installations and archival prints, seamlessly blending authentic artefacts with Srouji's imaginative interpretations of archaeological landscapes. This exhibition truly erases the line between reality and imagery, forcing spectators to examine each piece and doubt its origin.

Dima Srouji: "The terrain is the land and its bodies of water, its excavated surfaces. It deals directly with soil, water, and the history of the land. The chapel, on the other hand, is not a space that exists in a particular location; it's not grounded. It's a spiritual levitating space that does not occupy space or time. The chapel, in some ways, is the moment of resurrection in itself, whereas the terrain is the process towards it."



Installation view, Dima Srouji: 'Charts for a Resurrection', 7 May-6 July 2024, Dubai. Photo by Ismail Noor of Seeing Things. Courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi

One of the striking features of the exhibition is the portrayal of stone-carved windows adorned with coloured glass, envisioning future archaeological monuments within the Palestinian landscape. Drawing inspiration from traditional Qamariya techniques, these windows offer a poignant commentary on the intersection of tradition and modernity.



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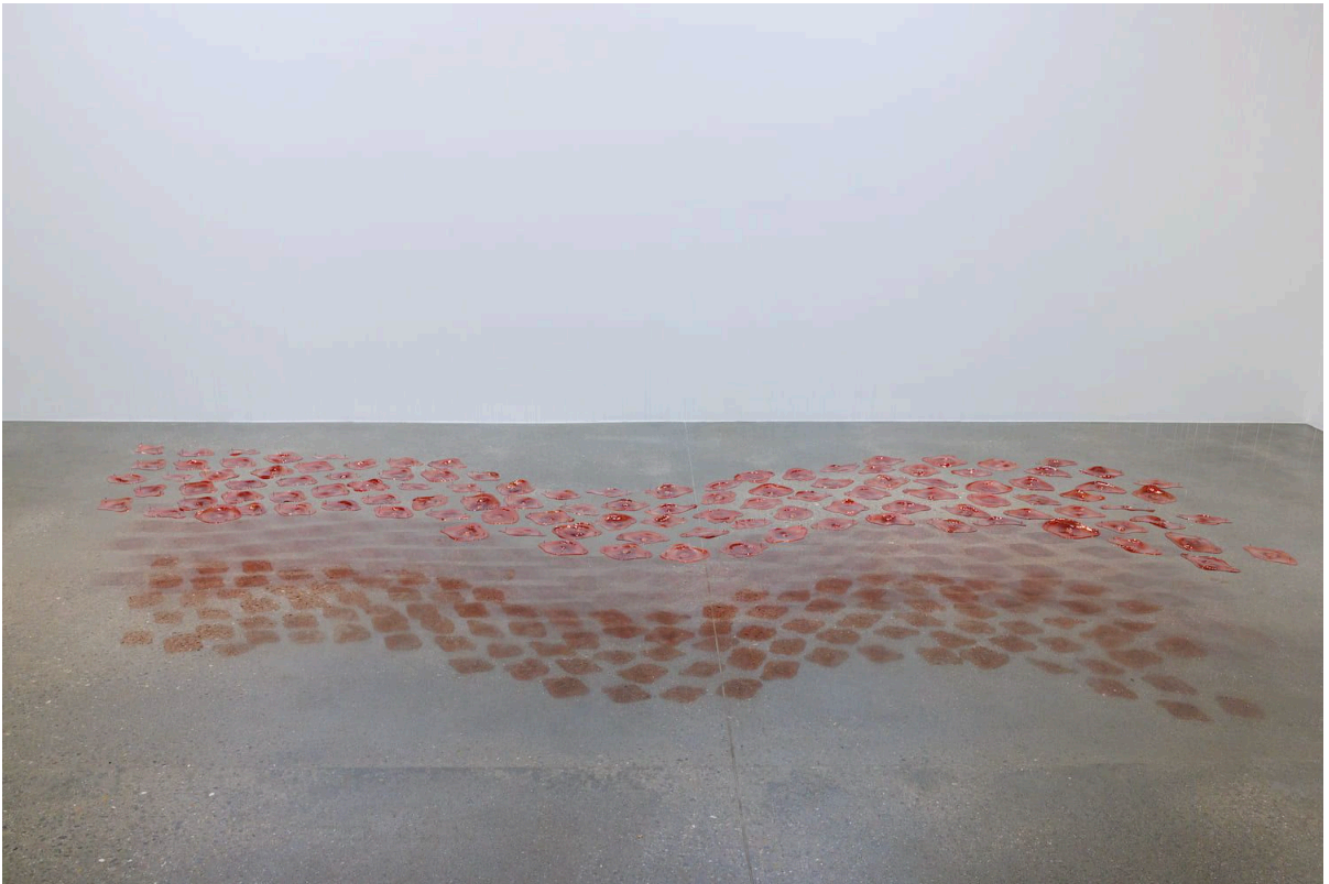
"Maternal Labour," a poignant series of aluminium prints, pays homage to the women known as "basket girls" – silent characters who laboured on the land for generations only to be enlisted by Western institutions for archaeological excavations. Through this work, Srouji sheds light on the untold stories of resilience and exploitation embedded within Middle Eastern history.



Installation view, Dima Srouji: 'Charts for a Resurrection', 7 May–6 July 2024, Dubai. Photo by Ismail Noor of Seeing Things. Courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi

Another compelling installation within the exhibition is a nine-square grid showcasing partially excavated glass vessels, evoking the meticulous techniques of renowned archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon. These vessels, unearthed by Palestinian workers, serve as haunting reminders of the region's rich heritage and the struggling history of cultural preservation.





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"The Red River," a collection of suspended hand-blown glass sculptures, serves as a poignant metaphor for the Belus River, tainted by nearby industrial activities. Through this work, Srouji delves into personal narratives of displacement and environmental degradation, intertwining individual experiences with broader themes of collective memory and resilience.



Installation view, Dima Srouji: 'Charts for a Resurrection', 7 May–6 July 2024, Dubai. Photo by Ismail Noor of Seeing Things. Courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi

In the tranquil confines of the chapel-like space, visitors are greeted by floating replicas of archaeological vessels traditionally offered to the deceased. Here the chapel serves as a sanctuary for reflection and remembrance, inviting viewers to contemplate the past while envisioning a future of liberation and cultural resurgence.

"Charts for a Resurrection" transcends the boundaries of conventional art exhibitions, offering viewers a profound journey through the intersections of history, identity, and memory. Through her visionary creations, Dima Srouji invites us to reimagine the past, interrogate the present, and chart a course towards a more inclusive and enlightened future.