

Press Release

Lawrie Shabibi's Participation in Art Dubai Modern Mina A'Salam, Madinat Jumeirah 19-22 March 2014



Lawrie Shabibi is pleased to announce its participation in Art Dubai Modern, the first dedicated section to 20th century art by artists from the Middle East and South Asia to be held at Art Dubai. We will be presenting a solo booth of early work on canvas and on paper by the renowned Lebanese artist Nabil Nahas. The focus of this group will be four major paintings from 1977-1979, a period when Nahas was engaged with geometric abstraction. These works formed the basis of Nahas' first two solo shows in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the last three decades they have been shown together only once, at his 2010 retrospective, the inaugural show at the Beirut Exhibition Center.

Nabil Nahas was unusual amongst young Lebanese painters of the late 1960s and early 1970s, travelling to the United States in 1968 for his training rather than Paris. The early experiences he had there, especially his time at Yale studying for his MFA at the start of the 1970s informed much of his subsequent work. There Nahas encountered many of the most prominent contemporary artists of the time but it was Al Held who was teaching at Yale University at the time that became Nahas's mentor.

The paintings in this group demonstrate Nahas' early interest in Islamic art and the parallels he drew between these tessellated ever expanding patterns and the three dimensional repetition of

the same volumetric forms one could find for example in stress structures, thus fusing different geometric systems together and slowing considerably the reading of the paintings.

Nahas' quick progression between styles belies the technical finesse of these early works and also the ground-breaking nature of these series: at the time very few artists of Middle Eastern origin had attempted to do something similar. These complex geometries, poised between order and chaos, anticipate his much later *fractal* paintings for which he is perhaps best-known.

This phase was not long-lived and comprises of distinct stages. The earliest, the 1977 paintings, are formed of overlapping geometric systems with an emphasis on optical mixture and the dematerialization of the surface, which diverge markedly from the contemporary works of Stella and Held. Nahas' use of geometry was less recognizable, as the abstractions of these paintings do not feel so much like geometry as decorative motifs from the pantheon of Islamic art imbued with an eerie luminosity. By 1978 the paintings show dramatic changes- the delicate colours and subtle overlaps gave way to bolder tonalities and a harder-edged, seemingly chaotic, Euclidean geometry. Between the years of 1979-1980 Nahas' sharp edges again gave way to looser brush strokes blurring the edges of ever more complex compositions, which led to further experimentations with painting and his eventual abandonment of this phase. As would be the case in his much of his subsequent career, having engaged with a problem, Nahas moved onto another, yet was able to revisit certain aspects in his later series.

About Nabil Nahas

Nabil Nahas is Lebanon's most renowned living artist. Although thoroughly schooled in Western abstract painting, Nahas takes his inspiration from a diverse range of influences, most significantly nature, and occasionally Islamic art, in particular its abstract geometric and chromatic qualities.

His works can be found in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia, the Vorhees Zimmerli Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, and the Colby College Museum of Art, Maine, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, the Flint Institute of Art, Michigan, and the Michigan Museum of Art UMMA. In July 2013 he was awarded the honour of the National Order of the Cedar, for services to Lebanese culture.

Lawrie Shabibi

Founded in March 2011, Lawrie Shabibi is a contemporary art gallery housed in a 3000 square foot warehouse in Dubai's Al-Quoz industrial district. The gallery's mission is to promote the works of innovative contemporary artists mainly from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. The programme's focus to date has been to support mid-career and emerging contemporary artists by holding a regular programme of exhibitions, participating in art fairs and publishing catalogues. Lawrie Shabibi regularly engages the community by organizing public programmes such as artist talks and screenings, both at the gallery and at non-profit spaces in Dubai.

Art Dubai Modern

Art Dubai launches a new section in 2014, devoted to modern art from the Middle East and South Asia. Art Dubai Modern will include 11 galleries, each of which presents a solo or two-person show, featuring work by modern masters.

Art Dubai

Over the last seven years, Art Dubai, the leading international art fair in the MENASA (Middle East/North Africa/South Asia), has become a cornerstone of the region's booming contemporary art community

In 2013, Art Dubai welcomed 25,000 visitors—including 75 international museums groups—and hosted 75 galleries from 30 countries.

The eighth edition of Art Dubai takes place March 19-22, 2014, at Madinat Jumeirah. Besides the gallery halls, the fair's extensive programme includes commissioned projects and performances, artists' and curators' residencies, an exhibition of new works by winners of the annual Abraaj Group Art Prize and the critically acclaimed Global Art Forum.

Art Dubai is part of Art Week, an umbrella initiative that highlights the plethora of exhibitions, projects and events that now coincide with the fair each March, the most dynamic time in the UAE's cultural calendar. Special events include Design Days Dubai, the only fair in Asia dedicated to product and furniture design; Sikka, a fair dedicated to new work by UAE-based artists; and Galleries Nights, featuring 40 new exhibitions across Al Quoz and the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC); plus other projects, museum shows and major events throughout the Emirates, Qatar and the Gulf.

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