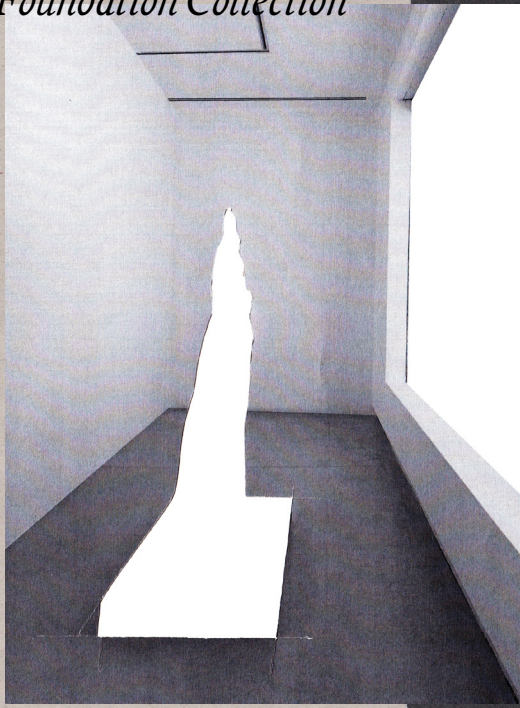
On Writing

Critical Reflections on Works from the Sharjah Art Foundation Collection



On Writing

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Contents

Introduction

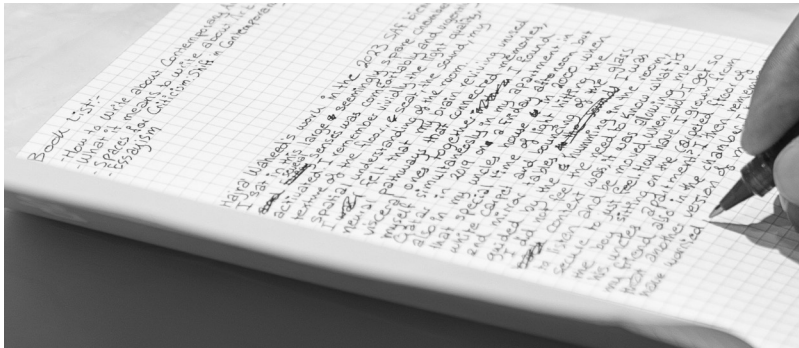
This zine represents the culmination of an art writing workshop held between September to November 2023 with15 enthusiastic, committed and erudite participants from universities across the UAE. The workshop sought to nurture critical reflections on select artworks from the Sharjah Art Foundation Collection by a new generation of writers, artists, poets and thinkers against the backdrop of the exhibition *In the Heart of Another Country: The Diasporic Imagination Rises* curated by Dr. Omar Kholeif, which ran from 15 July to 24 September 2023 at the Foundation. We were deeply aware that the artists featured in the exhibition—with many of whom we have nursed longstanding relationships—spoke to an embodied experience of the concept of diaspora. What we didn't anticipate was just how much the students—selected through an open call—would connect with these narratives and histories and make them their own through the lens of their personal histories of migration.

The workshop's three modules involved questioning the role and relevance of criticism, pitching reviews to editors and an exploration of various traditional and unconventional art writing formats. We subsequently commissioned the participants to review one artwork each of their choosing from a list of key works from the exhibition.

As we steered the process of editorial feedback, the world around us began to implode. Many of our participants remain directly impacted by the consequences of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The texts they evolved thus reflect the collision of our acute moment with long-term strategies for living with injustice, war and exile. Manifesting either as free-floating poems, unsent letters, lyrical reflections or probing reviews, the texts in this zine consider how we can speak to art at challenging times like these and how it may even speak back in the form of latent ideas, radical politics and solidarities.

— Rosalyn D'Mello & Jyoti Dhar


On Writing
Art Writing Workshop
In Conjunction with In the Heart of Another Country
Sept/Oct 2023



Normal

Khaled Esguerra

01

19 October 2023
Sharjah

Bani,

I trust this letter finds you in good health.

Thank you for allowing your work to be exhibited at *In the Heart of Another Country*. I did not know who you were or what you did until one night in Sharjah. It impacts me to this day.

Let me tell you about two encounters.

On 13 September 2023, I bore witness to *Memorial to Lost Words* in Al Mureijah.

It was a humid Wednesday evening, typical for September in Sharjah. Ayesha and I were speed-walking our way through the exhibition in preparation for the workshop the day after. Not too fast to completely miss some works, but not too slow to let the last galleries close on us.

After tiptoeing over Al Mureijah cats guarding the entrance with their watchful eyes, we entered the epilogue for the exhibition. Greeted by a cold blast on our faces as well as Dr. Omar Kholeif's notes in blue, we were surprised to find only two works in the space. Ayesha eyed the Mohammed Kazem piece, but I was captured by your sound.

I pointed out the speakers before pointing out the sculptures. 'There's, like, eight of these Genelec monitors in this room, dude. Do you know how expensive each one is?' I exclaimed. The music was coming from all directions, each channel playing its own stem. That was when I began marching towards your work.

The way each of the 25 sculptures, or tombstones, as you call them, was installed really forced me to move. I walked back and forth and around, bent down and peeked through to read the letters. The bass from the drums and pulsing synths backing the folk songs sung by the soldiers' families made me feel as though I was walking in a different, heavier dimension.

As I approached the last tombstone, leaning slightly on the ground, the soundtrack had entered its outro. The letter bearing witness to the erased stories and narratives of these people confronted me. The space between my body and the letter grew smaller yet heavier.

Blue—the word that describes most closely what I felt in my chest.

On 17 October 2023, I bore witness on Instagram to Gaza's Al Ahli Baptist Hospital flattened by a missile airstrike.

It was a humid Tuesday night, not atypical for October in Sharjah. The air felt heavier than usual. I did my best over the next ten days to maintain my composure and trudge through my daily routine.

The image of the press conference confronted me on my feed. Surrounded by the rubble, with only a fraction of the lives mercilessly robbed from this Earth lying on the ground, the Ministry of Health spoke about the horrific attack on live television.

The mainstream media frames the 75-year-and-ongoing occupation, displacement and brutalisation against us Palestinians as a 'conflict', 'skirmish' or 'clash'. This time, it is genocide. A genocide against a people. A genocide against the memorialisation of a lost people.

Red— the word that describes most closely what I felt in my chest.

Today, I scrolled through the images I took of your tombstones and re-encountered the last quote on the ground. It felt heavier than the first time.

Marching through those letters as I scroll through Instagram, passing by each tombstone as I browse each video, I reflect on what it means to bear witness. Lives, narratives, aspirations are all contained within a rectangular frame—physical and digital. Stories that, for many, are fleeting. Yet, the visuals and the words fail to leave me.

How can they look away, Bani? How do we get them to feel the red and blue? Is this what the world has trained itself to think is normal? The deaths of over 62,000 Indian soldiers conscripted into fighting for Britain in World War I? The deaths of over 5,000[1] Palestinians in Gaza this month? The deaths of over 10 million Congolese under Leopold II in 1909? The desensitisation to these losses and their reduction to numbers?

Authority figures are mourned for three days. Do we memorialise those we have lost over 30,201,000 days? Do we sculpt 250 more tombstones, or is that, too, just a number? One tombstone is crushing enough.

Allow me to suggest a 26th letter for your *Memorial to Lost Words*:

'Do not think that this is war. This is not war. It is the end of the normal.'

[1] The fact that I had to update this by changing a single digit, 4 to 5, since writing the first draft crushes me.

Khaled Esguerra is a photographer, visual artist and designer from Abu Dhabi. He is currently a senior in Visual Communications at the American University of Sharjah. His artistic practice tackles the complexities and nuances of second-generation immigrant identity in the UAE. Situated by his experience growing up and living in the city of Abu Dhabi, he works with photography and image-based methods, responding to the urban fabric that surrounds him. He was commissioned by Art Jameel for their Youth Takeover 2022 exhibition in Dubai, and his work has been listed by The National, Arab News, Canvas Mag *and more.*

Feeling Through Grip and Touch in Anuar Khalifi's Mirror Ball (2022)

Azim Al Ghussein

02

Three men are locked in either a dance, an embrace or a struggle. The colours draw me in. I see a large void where the three figures stand without any discernible floor. The vertical brush strokes feel weighted, hinting at gravity. The figures don't seem light or ethereal, and if I gaze too long, the void seems to weigh down on me. Despite variations in darkness and light, the space flattens, leaving me unsettled, feeling as though I am trying to recall an image from a dream.

Around the figures, the void, dark and heavy, gives way to a lighter atmosphere. They stand out more against this backdrop, yet they themselves are clothed in dark blue garments. This attire, highlights the labour of the painting as well as the firm grip the figures have on one another.

The hats and shoes are elements I've learned to read as part of mystical garb—Sufi attire perhaps? A smile crosses my face as I remember TikTok videos of witches chanting in Spanish. I think about how the painting might appear to me if the figures were dressed differently or if I were completely unaccustomed to their attire.

The primary yellow of their shoes and the red of their hats still commands my attention, perhaps even more than their distinctive forms. My focus shifts toward the locked circle formed by the men as they hold onto one another.

The tension in their grasping hands and the folds of their garments emphasise the pressure of their grip. I can't help but fixate on the visual of holding on tightly. In recent days, the images and videos shared in the aftermath of the devastating events in Gaza have been haunting. I recall the image of a daughter's hand stroking the white cloth in which a murdered parent is wrapped just before a burial or a father's clenched hands holding the remains of his child in a bag. I think of the emotional state that would lead someone to cling so tightly. I know this is what occupies my mind right now, and this is what comes up when the mind wanders. It's evident that this isn't what the artwork depicts, but I cannot shake off these painful images. While revisiting the painting on my laptop weeks later, I avert my gaze from the figures locked arm in arm in a desperate search for something else to focus on. I can no longer remember what I thought when I first saw these hands.

I attempt to read their faces, which appear less strained than the creases in their clothing or their hands gripping each other's shoulders and arms, appropriately ambiguous, not overly intimate, yet urgent. The artwork doesn't suggest tender intimacy. Nevertheless, the sight

of men interlocked in an embrace would surely demand attention, whether it's a performance, a riot, a fight or a huddle—behaviour that draws a crowd. The way their heads lean towards each other makes me think of a choreographed pose meant to be observed by an audience as well as an embrace between loved ones not meant to be seen by anyone else.

In this void, I feel exposed to a moment of urgent intimacy the nature of which I'm unsure of, for a struggle can be as intimate as an embrace can be aggressive. The grasping hands leave me feeling heavy and bound. I feel their weight now as my arms wrap around another body.

Azim Al Ghussein is an artist and illustrator living and working in Dubai. Azim completed a BFA in graphic design at the American University in Dubai and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with a focus on comics, as well as an MFA in printmaking. His studio practice involves comics, illustration and kinds of making that allow him to consider sharing (and caring), distribution and hospitality more thoughtfully . Azim makes soaps and prints in his kitchen, which is his makeshift studio between commissioned projects and his full-time job. Azim works as the Library and Research Manager at Jameel Arts Centre, where he focuses his efforts on research commissions, accessible library programming and book acquisitions.

Simone Fattal, Lovers **(1972)**

Marta Pieńkosz

03

love, a marvel of scarlet
spanning the canvas
like a meandering train
enveloping entities in a bustling aura
scattered shards of sunlight
the ever-shifting destination
enduring tension, parting or weaving
testing its capacity to bear the weight of somber moments
amidst the delicate glow of vulnerability

blood, a latent tension beneath it all
bestowing new life
the shapes of the embryo unfolding
the lovers' selfishly indulging bond
an unbroken flow of beginnings and endings
it is in these moments that love,
unbridled,
can run so deep it wounds
a damp patch, a rupture in the fabric of unity

mouth, a temple of sensuality
where the softest words are spoken
deepest affection gaining strength
transforming into sweet endearments
or the catalyst for animosity
it is in these moments that love,
unleashed,
morphs into the bitterest hatred
a tender machine inflicting the most profound hurt

heart, a tireless conductor
beating with unwavering dedication
its unceasing rhythm quickens with passion
the sweetest melody in its repertoire
or the notes of the most turbulent riptide
it is in these moments, that love,
unchecked,
can lead to a river of violence
a protective womb that both elevates and consumes

Marta Pieńkosz , a Warsaw-born creative coder, merges traditional art forms with cutting-edge visual programming. In her artistic practice, she delves into recent technological advancements and societal shifts, revealing how they impact our understanding of both the self and the world. Currently in her final year at New York University Abu Dhabi, Marta is pursuing a bachelor's degree with double majors in Interactive Media and Art and Art History. Her academic journey spans Crans-Montana, Abu Dhabi, New York and Los Angeles, which have enriched her practice with diverse perspectives. Marta's professional experience includes work with experimental design studios FIELD in Berlin and Tellart in Amsterdam.

A World of Shadows and Light

Zelalem Waritu on Rasheed Araeen's Before the Departure (Black Paintings) *(1963–1964)*

04

In the first gallery of *In the Heart of Another Country*, the vibrant blue wall along a corridor leads viewers from one room to the next. *Before the Departure (Black Paintings)* (1963–1964), a series of five black paintings by Rasheed Araeen, disrupts the flow, demanding recognition. Amidst a cerulean sea, glimmering light peeks through the dark islands.

Up close, each painting is built up of matrices, coats of criss-crossing lines. The bristles of the brush are visible and palpable, the artist having applied oil paint with varying thicknesses and transparencies. Time was taken to permit the pigment on each layer to settle and dry. There is grittiness in some of the lines when the brush was barely loaded with paint, while others are brash with bold as everything from paint to force was put into each stroke. Each painting was done in the same style of lattice work, with diamonds, squares, curved lines and semicircles. However, the amount of black varies, framing and revealing different views. A world of shadows and light.

Araeen's civil engineering studies in Karachi informed his method. In the 1950s, he set himself up as an artist who began to paint and draw what he saw despite having no formal art education. Towards the end of the decade, he developed an eye for viewing the world in basic geometric shapes[1]. In his series 'Boats: Towards Abstraction' (1960), boats in the harbour became an arrangement of vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines. *Before the Departure (Black Paintings)* is the product of his fascination with the architecture of Hyderabad, Pakistan. In an interview, he describes the forms of windows consisting of 'one side rectangle shape and both sides triangles'.

This series of black paintings was done before his departure from Pakistan to the UK in 1964. They are examples of artmaking informed by his life in and around Karachi before he left for London, where he was introduced to minimalistic western art and its history. In 1965, his work began to be influenced by discourse around him, taking on more symmetrical and minimalistic art forms. He dismissed the western art scene's interpretations of his abstract work as being a way around Islam's taboo against figuration. He does not consider his work to be rooted in western minimalism either since he did not have access to such visual or literary resources in Karachi[2]. If anything, his style arose from his background in civil engineering and observations of reality.

His work takes up the entirety of the canvas, not leaving a fraction of it unfilled. One can lose oneself standing in front of one of the five Black Paintings and get carried

away trying to detangle the overlapping brush strokes and interwoven shapes. It is the asymmetrical, almost untidy, raw depiction of reality in its most basic form which demands attention. In blocks, the series reflects buildings against the night sky. Rooms of light, like shimmering stars, try to break free and reveal the construction's silhouette as well as the temporariness and ever-shifting nature of our cities and the people who live within these architectural structures. The fight between dark and light, in their imperfect harmony, reflects our living in the moral gray. Araeen captures the microcosmic grit of urban spaces. The paintings themselves can be read as windows with white light shining through, deconstructed into fragments locked together by black frames—stained-glass windows void of colour telling different stories.

[1] *Rasheed Araeen: Before and After Minimalism*, [online video], *Art Basel*, 29 March 2018, https://youtu.be/GwJqcpP-qd4?si=ZqlGfqIImWNZCzXR, accessed 15 November 2023.

[2] Ibid.

Zelalem Waritu, an Ethiopian American, has lived in the US, Mexico, Ethiopia, India, Paraguay, Japan, the UAE and the UK. Through her studies in Literature and Creative Writing as well as Art and Art History at New York University Abu Dhabi, she seeks to understand how identity shaped in a foreign environment is expressed in art and writing. Having never lived in one place for more than three years, she has pursued ways to convey the simplicity and complexity of ephemerality and multiculturalism through her own art making in drawing, writing, painting, sculpting, and film.

Etel Adnan, Mount Tamalpaïs **(2015)**

Hana Othman

05

During a televised interview, Etel Adnan was once asked to name the most significant person she had ever met. 'A mountain,' she answered revealingly. Her unanticipated response helped her discover that Mount Tamalpaïs, a spectacular landmark in Northern California, constituted the very core of her being.

Adnan, who was born in Beirut in 1925, spent several decades living in the immediate vicinity of Tamalpaïs. The journey that led to Northern California is rooted in various life events and choices, including her education, artistic pursuits and a complex setting of endless conflict. Her personal longing and connection were likely major factors in her decision to reside in the region, as her art suggests. Her remarkable explorations across various mediums have left an incredible mark on the world of art.

Although *Mount Tamalpaïs* is personal, it still invites viewers to explore their own connections to landmarks, mountains or even nations that hold special value in their lives. The textile artwork employs rich woolen threads that infuse a sense of warmth, comfort and relief, imbuing the artwork with an intimate and vibrant quality. This is not the first time Adnan produced hand-woven tapestries inspired by her memories. Her interest in this medium dated back to her upbringing in Lebanon. 'In Beirut, there was no art museum, and there were no paintings at home. We had rugs, and the aesthetic enjoyment came from them,' she once stated.

Through her practice, Adnan skilfully intertwined concepts of time, medium and emotions to explore her profound bond with nature. Her 'seeing' Mount Tamalpaïs daily and embracing its form are evidence of how time can be a powerful force in art. Moreover, her choice of wool as a medium makes me aware of the patience, dedication and effort the medium of tapestry demands, adding to the complexity of the idea of time as viewers observe the investment and commitment the artwork encompasses.

The earthy green and blue tones create a serene atmosphere and elicit emotions towards the natural world. *Mount Tamalpaïs* serves as a reminder that we can form attachments to landscapes as significant as those to other human beings. To me, the artwork celebrates and cherishes such relationships, expressing love and gratitude.

Hana Othman is a graduate from the American University of Sharjah with a degree in Design Management who has lived in both Kuwait and the UAE. Passionate about art and art history, she seeks to explore the deeper narratives and emotions nestled within these domains. Her intense curiosity for psychology and human behavior drives her to perceives art as a portal into the complex realm of others' thoughts and emotions, forming distinctive connections in the process. In her relentless pursuit of creativity, Hana finds immense joy in sharing the beauty and significance of art through her writing.

An appreciation of Huguette Caland's Maameltein (1970) in the performative style of 'Li Beirut' by Fairuz

Eman Mohideen

06

Large crowds of men, women and children are seen eagerly awaiting the appearance of their favourite singer on stage, their eyes longing to reunite with the voice that instils life and love into anything and everything it touches. The curtains begin their gentle ascent, revealing a breathtaking sight of the legendary Lebanese singer Fairuz, draped in a flowing black gown embedded with dozens of Swarovski crystals. She announces, to roars of applause erupting from the audience, that she will be opening the show with her most acclaimed work, 'Li Beirut' [To Beirut]. A poem, or perhaps a eulogy, to Lebanon, scented with emotions of admiration, longing and anguish, 'Li Beirut' reveals the innermost desires and conflicts nestled within the city's alleys. A moving melody begins to engulf the concert hall.

To Beirut,
In the glory of your shores, the sea relishes herself.
Firm, unruly black lines contour your body.
Bathed in the light of a vast,
resilient moonbeam,
both tender and brutal,
you cast away
the eclipsing shadows
of men's monstrosities,
which weigh upon you tonight,
yesternight and tomorrow.

To Beirut,
An intimate look at your cityscapes,
under the nostalgic lens of a microscope,
reveals a lesser-known universe
thriving with exuberant, gem-like creatures
that enable desire
and arouse exploration.

To Beirut,
Your daughters recall
the very moment
their wardrobes
metamorphosed,
when mothers defied
the rules of symmetry and ritual
through designs handwoven into large kaftans,
abstract forms
that birthed the revolutions
that were smuggled onto dinner tables,
revolutions
that bent and contorted the linear,
black borders of the patriarch
to make room for liberation.

To Beirut,
Passengers at the departure terminal
speak in languages
that can only translate
to loss and hope.
The poet's luggage is held for further inspection
after the scans revealed
suspicious swathes
of green and white,
a handful of jasmine,
branches of olives.

To Beirut,
When the notion of home arises,
I tell them
home is the scent
of round tangerines strung against
melancholic gardens,
its pieces gently picked apart
by the hands of dear ones
to be shared and devoured
at the altar of love.
I tell them
home is a whimsical vessel
that can no longer withstand
the ever-widening girth
of the roots of dreams.

To Beirut,
where home contains multitudes,
hued,
hopeful.

Currently based in Sharjah, Eman Mohideen is a 24-year-old behaviour therapist with a background in psychology. She was born and raised in the heart of Sharjah as a third-generation Malayali migrant to the UAE. Besides child psychology, her interests include poetry, writing and visual documentation, particularly around the memories and familial aspirations of the Gulf-Malayali diaspora. Her art and writing, often drawing inspiration from personal narratives, aim to create spaces that nurture tenderness, resonance and meaningful connections.

Hayv Kahraman, Identification: Facial Hair **(2016)**

Brettany Gamutea

07

In a quaint little village nestled beneath towering trees, a tradition flourished. Before sunset, the wise and the young, the experienced and the curious, all gathered to share stories. Among them were the bright-eyed Nene and Nanay Juaning, her beloved grandmother. With the sun casting a warm, golden glow on their faces, they sat beneath the canopy of trees, ready to spin a tale that would weave its way into the hearts of generations to come.

Stories by Nanay Juaning were well known for their moral subtext. This day's story was no different. 'Once, in a distant land where homesickness brewed in the hearts of many, there lived a community of people who had left their homes,' she began. 'They were known as the Diaspora.'

'The Diaspora had a secret,' Nanay Juaning continued. 'A secret so profound that they were compelled to conceal their true identities. They wore masks of normalcy, blending seamlessly into the fabric of society. Some laboured in bustling markets, some in busy offices, others in the peaceful nooks of libraries. They were like chameleons, adopting new identities to keep their true selves hidden.'

'But Nanay, why did they hide who they were?' Nene questioned.

Nanay Juaning smiled, her eyes filled with a knowing wisdom. 'My dear, the Diaspora had left their homeland behind, and with that, they carried pieces of their past, their culture, their beliefs deep within them. However, the world around them was different, and they feared that revealing their true identities would set them apart, leaving them vulnerable.'

Nene nodded, understanding the struggle of being away from home, even if she had never experienced it herself.

Nanay Juaning's voice took on a more serious tone, 'One day, word reached the government about the Diaspora and their hidden identities. They became an enigma, a puzzle that needed solving. The government watched them closely, categorising each one carefully.'

The listeners grew in number as the story became more engrossing.

'My dear, this story teaches us that sometimes people are forced to hide who they truly are to blend in, to protect themselves. It serves as a gentle reminder to be kind and considerate because we can never completely know the struggles that others face.'

'So, Nanay, it means that we should be kind and empathetic to those who are different, even if we don't know the whole story?' Nene asked.

Nanay Juaning nodded with pride. 'Indeed, my dear. Our stories are more than just fairy tales; they contain life lessons. Remember this, and you will grow up to have a wise and compassionate soul.'

As the evening sunlight bathed the village, Nanay Juaning's story about the Diaspora and their hidden identities merged with the ideas flowing and floating around Hayv Kahraman's remarkable artwork *Identification: Facial Hair* (2016). The six portraits within this singular painting are like the characters in the story, individuals living in a world that compels them to hide their true selves. Each face presents a different persona, complete with distinctive hairstyle and facial hair and serve as wary taxonomies of lives in search of disguise, much like those of the Diaspora, who concealed their identities. Like the tale, *Identification: Facial Hair* teaches us that even when people are forced to hide their true selves, they are still part of a larger narrative.

Kahraman's art transcends its surface, much like the lesson from Nanay Juaning's story, and becomes a testament to the resilience of those who, despite the need for disguise, boldly reclaim their true identities. Kahraman's extensive body of work is indeed a testament to resistance and receptivity. It delves into the intricate phenomenology of architecture, memory and gender, mirroring the complex tapestry of life itself.

Identification: Facial Hair is a vivid example of this exploration as it weaves a tale of identity, concealment and the human spirit's enduring quest for authenticity. Kahraman left her native Iraq at a young age, and her personal journey mirrors that of the Diaspora, who carried pieces of their past, their culture and their beliefs deep within them. Her perspective invites viewers to contemplate the complexities of identity and the ways in which society categorises and observes those who are different. *Identification: Facial Hair* is a reflection of human experience and a reminder that, beneath the surface, we are all connected by the shared struggle for authenticity, acceptance and the courage to reclaim our true selves.

Brettany Greeze Gamutea (b. 2004) grew up with her parents and three siblings in Guimaras, one of the 7,641 islands in the Philippines. Her loving family instilled in her a sense of love and religious faith, which she feels responsible for passing on to others through kindness and compassion.

She is currently studying psychology at New York University Abu Dhabi. Like most people her age, she is still unsure about what to do in the future, but she sees this uncertainly as a blessing. Every day is another adventure, not a predictable map.

Don't y'all wanna go home?

Aya Jarrar on The Ballad of Special Ops Cody *(2017) by Michael Rakowitz*

08

Michael Rakowitz's *The Ballad of Special Ops Cody* is a powerfully written, shot and composed film, eliciting questions about the trauma incurred in war, the repatriation of artefacts and the role of cultural institutions in creating and restoring narratives.

It belongs to one of Rakowitz's ongoing projects, *The invisible enemy should not exist*, in which he recreates Iraqi artefacts from the National Museum of Iraq. He views these replicas as 'ghosts of the original artifacts, returning to haunt Western institutions'. Rakowitz's artistic practice is deeply rooted in his Iraqi-Jewish heritage and his family's history. His grandparents were forced to leave Iraq in the early twentieth century, and stories of displacement and cultural loss have been significant inspirations for his art.

The Iraqi influence is immediately recognisable through the film's score, which combines oud, violin, guitar and percussion to create a soulful soundscape. Interspersed with the music are the thoughts of Special Ops Cody as he attempts to forget and distance himself from the atrocities of the Iraq war. These thoughts are voiced by an ex-combat medic in the US National Guard, deployed to Camp Bucca in 2004.

Filmed at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the stop-motion film begins with a brief explanation of Special Ops Cody's origin story as an action figure created by the US Army to be sold as a 'substitute for a deployed parent'. We see Cody standing at the entrance steps of the institute, a low camera angle dwarfing the action figure's scale in comparison to the institutional nature the building represents.

We hear Cody's disoriented thoughts as he enters the building. 'Where am I?…Why am I here?…Who am I?' Upon recognising the stolen Iraqi artefacts pristinely stored in the building, Cody wonders what they are doing there as he points to the unjust displacement of the sculptures and scripts. Afraid, confused and anxious, he tries not to remember the war, not to think about it. Nevertheless, it haunts him.

Cody's mission becomes clear: he must 'free' the sculptures and faces that remind him of the war. With a toy rope and grappling hook, he makes his way up a transparent, elevated vitrine housing Mesopotamian votive statues. Cody urges them to leave: 'You guys, why are you here? Don't y'all wanna go home, be free? I can get y'all out of here. Now's your chance.' The statues stand petrified, refusing to stray from their state of displacement, rooted in their uprootedness.

By centring Cody's story, a placeholder for a US veteran whose goal is to clear his conscience and forget

his trauma by 'freeing' the stolen artefacts, Rakowitz reminds us of the one-sidedness of western narratives. Had those fragmented artefacts not been there, confronting their oppressors, they would have simply been erased from our consciousness, and the atrocities of the Iraq war would have remained a foggy, inaccessible memory for the American soldier.

The votive statues' refusal to leave their new context may also be due to the paralysing fear of the now unfamiliar. Like displaced people, they have been pulled out of their context, their homeland, and pushed into a new place into which they refuse to assimilate. Holding onto their history and identity, the statues remain in their spot because they cannot leave even if they are miraculously granted the right of return. They have been altered by their expulsion. They are foreign, traumatised, and they do not belong wherever they go. So they stand, facing their oppressor, reminding him of his victims, hoping that they will be the last ones. If the injustice lies in uprooting the Mesopotamian votive statues, is returning them an adequate form of justice and reparation? Or is it a way for the oppressor to forget his crimes?

Cody comes close to one of the small statues, and they face each other, eye to eye: 'When I see you, your faces, I see your faces without eyes and I think of that day, they were broken, but we destroyed them. You were broken, so we keep you, locked up, fragile, temperature controlled, humidity controlled without the chance of human hands touching you, except for a quarterly dusting, but always gloved. I will always be gloved too. And never again shall blood course through my veins.'

Two attendants lower the glass casing of the vitrine as Cody aligns himself with the Iraqi statues, mirroring their pose. He is sealed into the display with them, never to be touched again. Now museumised and locked in place, the Iraqi artefacts, plus Cody, are protected behind glass walls, forcing us to remember.

Aya Jarrar is a Palestinian writer/creative/project manager based in Dubai. As a student, she excelled in comparative analysis and academic writing, and she is currently transferring these skills to art criticism. Growing up in Sharjah and Amman as a child of diaspora, Aya has a unique perspective from which she addresses themes of privilege, identity and belonging as well as the preservation of cultural heritage through decentring western perspectives and interests. In the past, Aya has written about western media bias in reporting on the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the urgent need to document, preserve and share untold narratives.

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, CG8 (1982)

Ayesha Fernandes

09

Sitting on her terrace,
reflecting, watching, embracing
the old turn new.
Accustomed to looking at the ceilings
of beautiful Iranian mosques,
Farmanfarmaian looked up at her New York Terrace,
wishful for a fraction of her hometown's beauty.
Instead, a netted fabric,
masked the tumbling asphalt,
holding together
the crumbles of her second home
on Fifth Avenue.
But, to her,
a new version of beauty nestled beneath.
An understanding of coexistence
with her given circumstances.
Her two worlds,
two stories,
two realities,
overlapped, woven,
carefully constructed
unequivocally
as one.

Perhaps the shifting patches of colour and texture
were reminiscent
of her first home.
One that held rich histories of
spirituality and grandeur,
yet, at the same time, fond memories
of nature and nurture.
A reflection of her childhood
surrounded by her father's painted images,
and his muses,
the flowers, butterflies and birds,
flourishing in the beautiful gardens,
and ornamenting their ceilings, doorways and windows.

The glittering trails
of a butterfly emerging from her chrysalis,
into a world of further transformation
and adaptation.
Symbols of her childhood intertwined with her new
reality,
objects that were once confiscated
from her life,
living in exile.
Elements from what once was,
torn apart,
reconfigured and intertwined,
with what is.

A stray away from her usual geometry.
A fluid counterpart to her kaleidoscopic creations.

A mark of freedom?
A liberation from the complexities of her two homes.
An exploration of the power
of transcending time and culture.
Trying to memorialise this moment,
as the world surges past.
Enacting its rush
through her free forms,
while soothing
her longing for belonging
by piecing together the fragments
of her two homes.
A work in progress,
slowly built upon,
as time goes by.

The colours vibrate with energy,
twinkling under the gallery lights,
illuminating her truths.
Like the mesmerising mirror mosaics and stained glass,
inextricably linked to her Iranian heritage,
creating a dynamic tension that pulls you
inward,
drawing you closer,
evocatively, yet ambiguously,
emanating from the scatters of her past,
projecting glimpses of her future,
to unveil her many metaphorical and physical layers.

Like confetti,
a celebration of continuous thoughts in motion,
vibrating and vocalising across the canvas.
The flutter of butterflies guides our eyes
across the canvas and into her life,
clearing the path to highlight hidden facets,
detailing the sense of transformation and freedom,
breaking free from form.
Both obscuring and revealing,
a sense of journey.
The two sides of her life,
her experience with complex geographies,
mapped out in net,
wriggling to emerge,
patched together in a distorted lattice,
manifesting somewhere between abstraction and figuration,
from the fading crevices of her imagination.
Woven to bring such traditional configurations into the third dimension,
visualising images and shared experiences
of vast generations,
struggling to articulate and voice
words that could not be said,
and the infrastructures

that make up their being.
Abstracted forms surface,
bringing to attention
neglected splinters and bygone escapades
that conditioned their very existence.
Her audience observes old beauty in new ways.
A reflection of a life lived between two cultures,
across the histories of east and west.

Still, she remains,
excavating the layers of her past,
present
and future.

Ayesha Fernandes is a Sharjah-based visual artist and designer pursuing a bachelor's degree in visual communication at the American University of Sharjah. Her work predominantly revolves around fine arts and illustration. Through her practice, she aims to explore social and environmental issues and their impacts, using unconventional mediums inspired by nature. Her material research, involving biodesign, investigates the possibilities arising from the inextricable links between humans and nature. Aside from this, she is passionate about curation and exhibition design and hopes to narrate the untold stories of people and places.

Amal Kenawy, You Will be Killed 2 **(mid–2000s)**

Hala Nasar

10

To be suspended between life and death sounds like a nightmare.

Unable to go back or move forward, you are held between two ends of a sentence, between a letter and a period. You remain. Waiting to be saved.

In You Will Be Killed 2 (mid-2000s), Amal Kenawy paints a raw self-portrait modelling her own death. Determined to leave a legacy of her people through herself, Kenawy engraves herself onto the white canvas with soft black brushstrokes that move back and forth. Soft and harsh shadows and scribbles form her hair, and her half-open, lifeless eyes and protruding collarbones beg for attention against dark magenta, which explodes out of her nose in bursts.

When grappling with the idea of death, one must understand the difference between dying for a cause and dying because. In the early 1990s, Kenawy witnessed such a scenario in a military hospital in Egypt. Her self-portrait testifies to the pain and anguish caused by war and raises questions like 'How far can violence go?' and 'How fragile is one's mortality?'.

Kenawy's artistic practice has a history of exploring feminist, social and political topics, including the first Gulf War (early 1990s) and its impact in Egypt. Her reflection on the realm of death and mortality pushes the narrative and invites colourful discourse into what is otherwise a black and white territory. She does not hold the idea of mortality as a static inevitable occurrence, but rather as a revolutionary concept. With a certainty that belongs to the future, Kenawy suggests that while death is inevitable, it does not have to define us. However, it does tell us that we are all heading to the same soil. After all, the only thing in life that is certain is death. Thus, Kenawy invites her audience to be intentional with their lives and think about who they wish to be when their fingertips touch the earth for the last time. She especially understands the untimely manner of death due to her cancer diagnosis in 2003. With that in mind, Kenawy's ability to translate the fragility of mortality and illustrate the suffering that belongs to her people represents her shared experience of the human condition.

As one would expect, being an Arab woman in a politically anxious climate is tricky to navigate. Just as it is Kenawy's pain that guided her to create her art, it is her inherent 'Arabness' that stationed itself and bloomed in the desperation of her art. That desperation is nothing less than a cry for help or a call for solidarity, yet it is so strongly felt in the themes of her work that it almost becomes her. In this case, her art is a self-portrait, making the artist synonymous with her art, yet

it is also a painting of a woman who is no longer alive, swept into a sea of purple. However, the irony is that she infinitely remains alive through her painting. Thus, if the artist is the art and the art is the artist, Kenawy is inadvertently a self-portrait of a woman that once was and perhaps remains to be.

Using her own body for art was always Kenawy's forte. Treating her body as a canvas and a vessel of expression, she channelled her thoughts and feelings through time again and again. Her process began with a photo of herself lying flush on a hard surface with her hair around her head like a halo. She drew geometric lines and jotted down measurements of the canvas on the photo, as if planning what it would look like. Her shoulders were bare, and her eyes were slightly open with pupils spaced out and her mouth slightly ajar. Quite literally a model for her own death,

Kenawy's vision comes to life through a series of sketches and paintings. Comparing Kenawy's actual photo to *You Will Be Killed 2* brings a new element of understanding to her process. The evolution of her work, from her photo to the complexity of the painted canvas, is a distinctive study on its own, encouraging the eye of the beholder to consider mortality as a subject of expression through the wicked implications of violence.

Kenawy's analysis of violence through her series of paintings is gentle, but she caresses the canvas with both boldness and fear. She boldly brings forward what it means to be a woman, yet the fear of what is to come is in her brushstrokes. While violence is typically meant to be harsh, Kenawy's work is calm. She is gentle with her declaration of death, and her admittance of it does not signal defeat, but bravery. Therefore, her expression of these ideas through art is oxymoronic.

Unfortunately, Kenawy's raw account of Egyptians' suffering and question of mortality in the mid-2000s channeled through herself is an ironically painful foreshadowing of her own suffering in 2012 through the unforgiving claws of her illness. Regardless, I would like to imagine that as she received the suffocating news of her cancer, she thought back to *You Will Be Killed 2* and held her head high in crisp defiance of the inevitable.

Hala Nasar, a Palestinian based in Dubai, studies journalism and theatre at the American University of Sharjah (AUS). Her hobbies include reading while sipping fruit tea, baking sugary seasonal pastries and watching sitcoms with her cat Olive. She has been involved in several academic journals and has done fiction and film writing courses at Stanford University. At AUS, she loves crafting long-form journalistic pieces and working on costume design and theatrical makeup for shows. Through her narratives, she wishes to bring gooey comfort and raw despair to her readers.

Letter to Saloua Raouda Choucair

Fatima Uzdenova on Choucair's Interform *(1960–1962)*

11

Dear Saloua,

I spent a long time living far away from my grandmother. A consequence of the rupture of what was at one time the biggest country in the world. In August 1995, I travelled to the UAE and never left. Life continued to happen between 'When are you coming back?' and 'How did you get here?'. I'm not a migrant, I'm not an immigrant. I'm not a muhacir. I'm just someone who adapted to life in the in-between.

I wonder if that's what draws me to your sculptures: liminality, movement, the dualism of interior as exterior (life) or vice versa, besides your masterful command of scale.

i'm never as happy as when i am moving

haraka baraka, my friend, haraka baraka

in movement, there is blessing

maybe because that's when my insides feel still

circling the studio
pacing up and down the street nursing a panic attack
and soothing a rage

a 49 bus or better yet a train

planes are my least favourite
so much labour to fly 'well'

it doesn't rock my throat and gut and knees and thighs into submission
my jaw does not unclench nor eyes soften

i barter with God in case we dive
hotel room as barzakh[1]
airport as barzakh
hospital waiting rooms as barzakh
borders as barzakh
statelessness as barzakh
barzakh of temporary people

I remember the last time I saw your work before my return to the UAE and the COVID-19 pandemic. A friend of mine suggested we take the train to Cornwall and see Huguette Caland's solo exhibition at Tate St Ives. I was not familiar with her work at the time and am so grateful to my friend for the introduction. I fell in love with Huguette's work and remember wishing that I had the boldness and joy with which she pursued life and art. Did you know her? That week was also a kind of a barzakh: I was no longer a student, but not yet an artist out in the world.

After lunch in the museum cafe, we began circling down and out of the building, and there it was, one of your *Poems*. A transfixing encounter, as always. Even now, as I write these words, I find myself mesmerised.

The next time I saw your work in person was in the second year of the pandemic. By then, I had settled into a reclusive life, which I still lead today. One afternoon I was rereading Kaelen's 'The Lovers at the Park at Midday'[2] and sharing pictures of your work on Instagram and my yearning to see it, a friend messaged very matter-of-factly, 'You can see Saloua's sculpture at Sharjah Art Museum. I will pick you up at xxx time tomorrow.' I will forever remember this as the kindest act of grace I received during the hellscape of the pandemic.

I learned that your *Interform* was in *In the Heart of Another Country* after the exhibition had ended. It was a humid summer night in Sharjah. Knowing that we were in the vicinity of each other at the same time and place produced an unusual experience: an intimacy of experiencing absence, illuminated by my previous encounters with your work. I thought of Interform being carefully packed away or sitting in a crate, or maybe it was still sitting on a plinth in a dimmed gallery, beckoning me towards our next encounter.

This summer, I began looking into walking to your works that are installed in public spaces. The drive to Doha is 7 hours and 28 minutes long. For some reason, the walking distance is no longer available to view on Google Maps. The walk to Beirut would take 25 days through Iran, Iraq and Syria.

In *Philosophy of Walking*[3], Frédéric Gros describes pilgrimage as one of the most significant cultural forms that walking takes: 'The primary meaning of peregrinus is foreigner or exile. The pilgrim, originally, is not someone heading somewhere (Rome, Jerusalem, etc), but essentially is one who is not at home where he is walking.'

I will always be walking to you and with you, one way or another. It always feels like home.

[1] Barzakh is a barrier between corporeal and ethereal worlds in Islamic eschatology. It is sometimes viewed as a manifestation of a paradise or a nightmare, depending on the state of one's soul and/or one's deeds. Furthermore, a human being can be viewed as Barzakh in itself, an intermediary between divinity and elementality, in spirit and matter.

[2] Kaelen Wilson-Goldie, 'The Lovers at the Park at Midday', in Jessica Morgan, ed., *Saloua Raouda Choucair* (Tate Publishing, 2013), 151-161.

[3] Frédéric Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking* (Verso, 2011), 107.

Fatima Uzdenova (b. Karachay-Cherkess Republic, USSR) holds an MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art, London. She is also an alumna of the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Emerging Artists Fellowship (SEAF), in partnership with Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, USA. Selected exhibitions include The Last Equestrian Portrait, Spring/Break Art Show, New York (2018); Re: Over everything which exists under the sky, Gasworks, London (2018); Staple: What's on Your Plate? Hayy Jameel, Jeddah (2021); and An Ocean in Every Drop, Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai (2022). She lives and works in Dubai.

A Letter to Amir Nour

Nujud Al Hussain

12

Dear Amir,

As I sit here gazing at a black and white photo of you, captured by an analogue film camera, I find myself transported to a moment in time. The year is 1962. You, then a 26-year-old student at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, stare back at me from the past. Clad in a black sweater over a shirt, you casually rest your ankle on a stand that cradles one of your sculptures, a stoic yet serene presence. Your gaze, however, doesn't fixate on the sculpture but instead drifts into the distance. There's a faint crinkle in your brow, an echo of some internal struggle. You seem lost in thought, peering beyond the confines of the photograph.

Are you reminiscing about the horizons of your childhood in Shendi? Do you recall the grazing sheep and goats, the distant riverbanks, the endless stretches of sand and desert? It's as though you were surrounded by boundless space, and, in that expanse, you were a child who observed, yearning to interpret and understand the world around you. You seemed compelled to retell the stories, recreate the scenes and express the realities you witnessed. Your art became the medium through which you extracted the essence of your experiences, solidifying them in a tangible form, grounded by gravity, geometry and materiality.

As I approach the end of my bachelor's degree in architecture, I find a sense of solace in your artistic journey. The struggle to discover one's medium of expression is an integral part of the process that moulds our future selves. Your commitment to exploring and conveying art outside of its original context resonates deeply with my own quest to find my voice in architecture. I believe the essence of your artistic practice lies in your ability to concisely, yet eloquently, convey the intricacies of identity, diaspora and cultural exchange through your work.

However, as I delve into your artistic evolution, I'm struck by a paradox. Though deeply rooted in your Sudanese memories, it has occasionally been labelled 'too western'. This raises a conundrum: how can one reconcile the authenticity of art that is profoundly personal and a reflection of one's upbringing even if it appears foreign to others? While you were introduced to minimalist vocabulary during your education in the UK and US, the end result, despite its minimalist style and western appearance, inherently carries the essence of your Sudanese heritage. This duality is beautifully encapsulated by the title of your retrospective exhibition in Sharjah titled *Brevity is the Soul of Wit*, which is drawn from an Arabic proverb underscoring the importance of minimalism and direct, unembellished expression. For

people of the diaspora, it's impossible to deny the impact of moving from one region to another and the profound influence moving has on one's sense of belonging. Your art reflects the notion that we are not confined to one place but remain influenced by both our roots and the places we have lived. You are not alone in this experience.

I'm reminded of Mahmoud Darwish's conversational poem with Edward Said in New York. While discussing identity, Darwish writes:

'And your identity?' Said I.

His response: 'Self-defense… Conferred on us at birth, in the end it is we who fashion our identity, it is not hereditary. I am manifold… Within me, my outer self renewed. But I belong to the victim's interrogation.

Were I not from that place, I would have trained my heart to raise metonymy's gazelle there…

So take your birthplace along wherever you go and be a narcissist if need be.

Exile, the outside world. Exile, the hidden world. Who then are you between them?'

I believe your work embodies this sense of being in between. Your creations have, in many ways, become a reflection of yourself, carrying the weight of your values and enduring memories. Inspired by Sudan's landscapes and architectural elements, in your work, you ingeniously reinterpret these spatial elements into new forms, breathing new life into familiar elements while compelling the audience to perceive them through an entirely fresh and transformative lens.

One of your remarkable creations is *Grazing at Shendi* (1969). It speaks to the vastness and isolation you contemplated across the river in Sudan. Your words evoke complex emotions and meanings, drawing us into the experience: 'On the other side of the river was an empty horizon—sand and desert. You get overwhelmed by the space. And it's a scary type of feeling too because there's nothing there to enhance your mind. So, you go back into yourself and think of your physical existence.' This piece serves as a canvas for us to explore the deeper layers of interpretation within your art.

Balance is a recurring theme in your work, mirroring your artistic journey and your ability to navigate the diverse influences that have shaped your identity as an artist. I'm intrigued by how you managed to arrive at this delicate equilibrium and capture the essence of your childhood while navigating a sea of artistic influences, both western and African.

Lastly, *Moon*, 2016, a captivating spherical piece crafted from steel, stands still, defying its inherently non-fixed form. In many of your works, you manipulate spheres to achieve balance and stillness, despite their potential for movement and contextual variation. These minor adjustments create a significant impact and add depth to your pieces.

Your life journey, from your Sudanese beginnings to your education in London's artistic bastions and later at Yale in New Haven, is intrinsically tied to your intellectual growth. Each step seems to have drawn you closer to your core, echoing Suzan Alaiwan's words: 'All the paths I took led me back to myself, as if I had never been anything but a message to myself.' Your art consistently reflects a deep connection to your hometown of Shendi, emphasising the importance and influence of your heritage and culture for your work and life as observed by your wife and those close to you.

Thank you for sharing your unique perspective and inspiring countless others, like myself, to navigate the complexities of artistic expression and self-discovery.

Sincerely,
Njood

Nujud AlHussain is a Saudi architecture student currently pursuing her education at the American University of Sharjah (AUS). She contributed to Bahrain's National Pavilion publication for the Venice Biennale (2023), focusing on map drawings and icons. Nujud is also a co-founder of The Student Collective at AUS, a club fostering discussions on architecture, art and design that blur boundaries between various design disciplines. Nujud is passionate about form, light and materiality and actively seeks ways to use these elements to craft spatial experiences.

Marwan, Untitled **(1969)**

Lina Najem

13

The somber figures called me over from across the gallery. As I walked to face them, they gazed back at me. Amid the bleak background, their expressions were uncanny. While the shorter man sneered with his face half-turned, his towering counterpart looked down with severe resolve. The pair was intimidating, but I couldn't look away.

Studying the painting's fluid lines and greyscale scheme, I thought I recognised the artist. I looked over the label to confirm my intuition. Yes, it was a work by the artist known as Marwan, whose famous painting *Three Palestinian Boys* (1970) I had encountered in New Haven eight years ago. Back then, I wrote that I was at once mesmerised and unsettled by his painting of the three youngsters, captivated as I was in equal measure by the incongruity of the two visible faces and the invisibility of the third. Though no figure is cut off in *Untitled* (1969), the oil painting before me in Sharjah, it is this resonance between presence and absence that endows the work with its haunting quality. Examining the pair, I question the relationship and affect between them but cannot conclude who they are or what they feel. The painting's anonymity and the label's contextual erasure certainly compounds this obfuscation, yet there is something beyond their namelessness that draws me in.

In her book *Ghostly Matters*, sociologist Avery Gordon explores connections linking horror, history and haunting to propose the necessary but simple argument that past social forces control present life in different and more complicated ways than is generally assumed. She uses the phenomenon of haunting as a language and experiential modality to describe 'that which appears to be not there' but is a 'not there' that nevertheless acts on and meddles with 'taken-for-granted realities'[1]. Haunting, therefore, points us to the appearance of a visible absence that draws attention to itself, like a ghost, which is something that lingers, not something that disappears.

With their dark lumps, crevices and curves, the figures' unshapely bodies are disturbing. I want to deem them murky members of the underworld, but before I can determine the precision of my judgement, I feel ashamed of my fear-turned-disgust. As I am watched in reverse by the unrelenting stares on their pallid faces, my postulation breaks down. What I first perceived as an ominous situation against me no longer holds. As I continued to look, and almost surveil the situation, the common opposition that I assumed existed between us falters, reflecting my own sense of visual superiority. On the face of the figure on the right, I now begin to read signs of entreaty. Is he requesting an intervention or

assistance to cover up the deed? On the left, the resolve I initially detected remains steadfast, but disappointment enters the frame. Amid the silence of the scene, I grasp for details that become increasingly impossible to breach.

As an artist, Marwan was preoccupied with the ghostly matter of the human spirit. 'I paint souls,' he once said, fascinated as he was with the anguish of the human condition and the range of emotions that can be exhumed from the body and the face[2]. In this sense, Marwan's work is both a mirror and an entry point to contemplate our interior composition as conflicted beings.[3] Forgoing assertion, I listen to the painting's register of silence through its simultaneous association with plentitude and malevolence. With silence's potential to dissolve apparent opposites into one another, I start to see the pride and protest in the figures' refusal to be known. Grasping at the hope that this quiet gesture entails, I dream alongside them of a possibility of freedom beyond the knowing gaze.

[1] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 8.

[2] Omar Kholeif, 'Marwan Kassab-Bachi (1934-2016)', *Artforum*, 7 December 2016, https://www.artforum.com/columns/omar-kholeif-on-marwan-kassab-bachi-1934-2016-231946/.

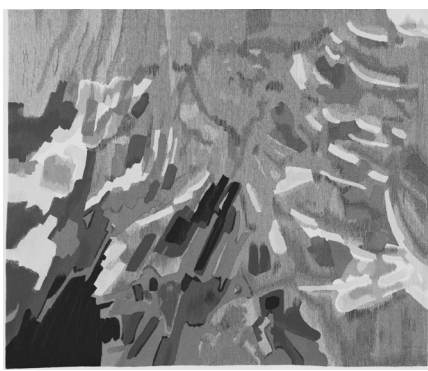
[3] Charlotte Bank, 'Marwan: Topographies of the Soul', Barjeel Art Foundation, 2014, https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Charlotte-Bank_Marwan-Topographies-of-the-Soul_BAF.pdf.

Lina Najem is a researcher and writer with a deep interest in Middle Eastern, South Asian and African history, culture and politics. Passionate about storytelling, she strives to craft impactful narratives across media for a diverse range of audiences. Bridging her experience in documentary filmmaking and journalism, Lina works to amplify authentic voices, uncover marginalised stories and make specialised knowledge more accessible. Currently based in Dubai, she works at a cultural consultancy.

Anuar Khalifi
Mirror Ball, 2022
Acrylic on canvas
200 x 175 cm

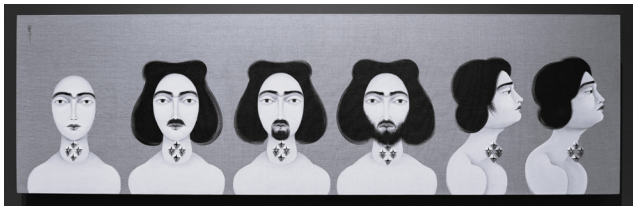
Rasheed Araeen
Before the Departure, 1963–1964
From 'Black Paintings', 1963–1964
Oil on canvas

Bani Abidi
Memorial to Lost Words, 2016–2018
8-channel audio
80 x 50 x 1.5 cm each



Etel Adnan
Mount Tamalpaïs, 2015
Wool tapestry, 170 x 212 cm
Commissioned by Sharjah
Art Foundation

Huguette Caland
Maameltein, 1970
Acrylic on canvas
95 x 115 cm



Hayv Kahraman
Identification: Facial Hair, 2016
Oil on linen
63.5 x 218.4 x 7.6 cm

Simone Fattal
Lovers, 1972
Oil on canvas
65 x 54 x 2 cm

Michael Rakowitz
The Ballad of Special Ops Cody, 2017
Stop-motion video, 14 minutes 42 seconds
Commissioned by Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Monir Shahroudy
Farmanfarmaian
CG8, 1982
Mixed media collage
128 x 128 cm

Amal Kenawy
You Will Be Killed 2, Mid-2000s
Mixed media on canvas
150 x 200 cm

Saloua Raouda Choucair
Interform, 1962–1960
Wood
49 x 12 x 12 cm

Amir Nour
Moon, 2016
Steel
100 cm diameter

Marwan
Untitled, 1969
Oil on canvas
89 x 130 cm

All works from the Sharjah Art Foundation Collection
Photos by Shavanas Jamaluddin
Images courtesy of the Foundation

Workshop Instructors

Rosalyn D'Mello *is a feminist writer, art critic, columnist, essayist, editor and researcher currently based in the Italian Alps. She is the author of* A Handbook for My Lover *(HarperCollins India, 2015). D'Mello writes a weekly feminist column for* mid-day*, and a monthly memoir-based art column on contemporary art for STIRworld. She was a fellow at Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen, Innsbruck (2021–2022), an Ocean Fellowship Mentor, Venice (2021) and the recipient of an India Foundation for the Arts research grant (2019–2022). Her writing has been internationally published and anthologised, most recently in* Future Library: The Red Hen Anthology of Contemporary Indian Writing *(2023).*

Jyoti Dhar *is an art critic and editor based in the UAE. Her writing has appeared in books (on Seher Shah, Nasreen Mohamedi, Jitish Kallat and Geoffrey Bawa) and periodicals (*Art Asia Pacific, Artforum, Aperture, Even, Isskustvo Arts Journal, Modern Painters, Motherland, post at MoMA, WeAreOrlando *and* The Sunday Times *in Sri Lanka). She was the founding editor of ChinarTree.com, assistant editor of* The Ceylon Chronicle *and contributing editor for* Art Asia Pacific*. She received the Forbes India Emerging Art Writer of the Year award (2014) and First Prize at the International Awards for Art Criticism 4 (2017). She currently manages editorial and content strategy for Sharjah Art Foundation.*

Workshop Organiser

Hadeyeh Badri *(b. 1988) is a UAE-based designer and fibre artist. Her weavings combine the legacy of the Jacquard loom while calling upon a trope in pre-Islamic poetry,* al-wuquf ʻala al-atlal *[standing by the ruins]. Prior to her current role as an Adult Learning Senior Coordinator at Sharjah Art Foundation, she taught at the College of Art, Architecture and Design, American University of Sharjah. In 2010, Badri co-founded Mobius Design Studio, and she was also a finalist for the sixth edition of the Jameel Prize. Her handwoven digital tapestries were commissioned by the fashion brand Qasimi for their AW23 collection. She holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2019).*

On Writing

Critical Reflections on Works from the Sharjah Art Foundation Collection

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Edition of 100

Sharjah Art Foundation
https://sharjahart.org
@sharjahart
Al Shuwaiheen, Arts Area
PO BOX 19989
Printed in UAE
2023

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2023