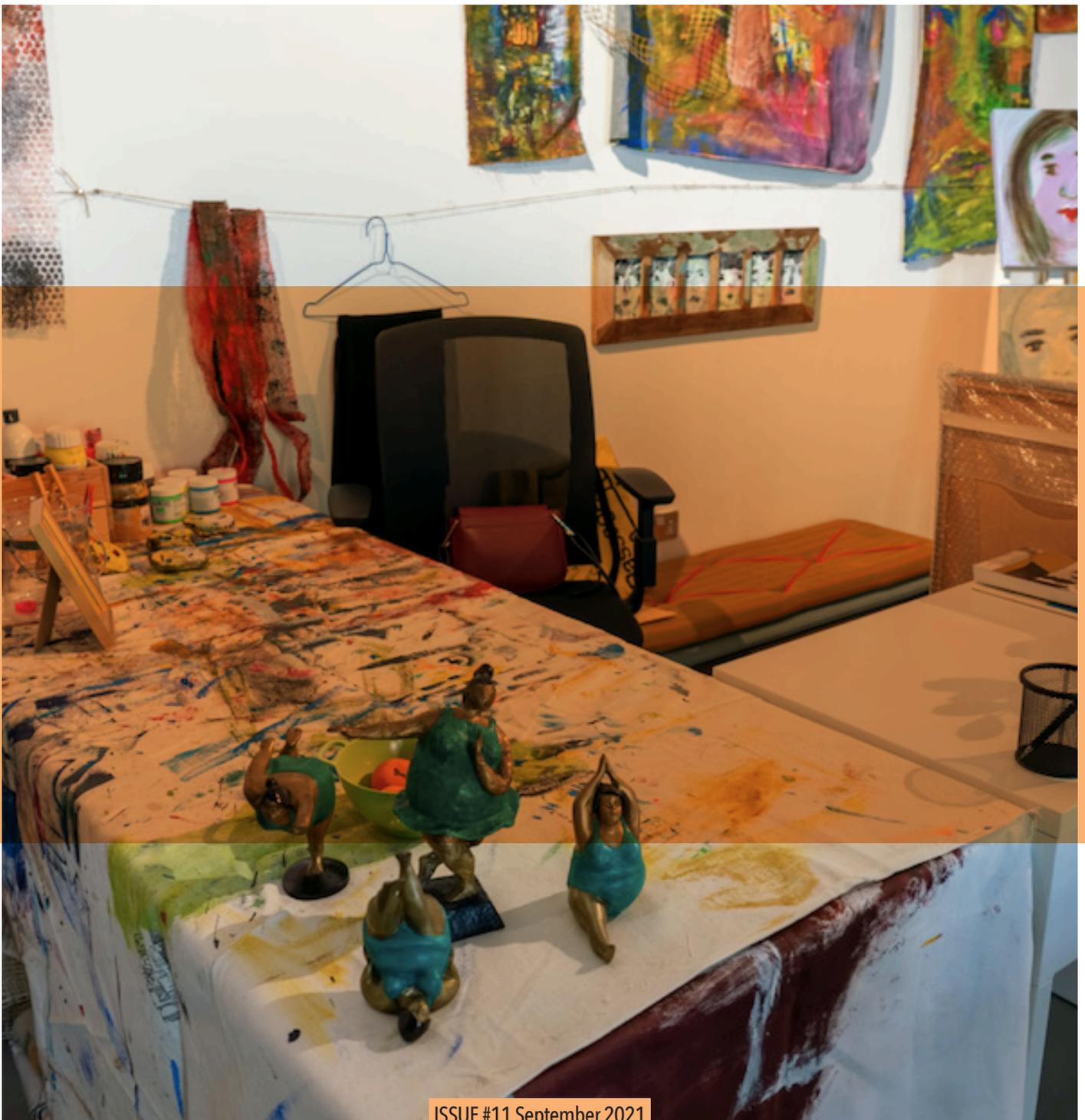


CONTEMPORARY IDENTITIES

International Art Magazine

Tetiana Ahmed Fauz | Mpumelelo Buthelezi | Alexandra Buxbaum | Alessandro Costanzo | Cristiana De Marchi
Antonio Freile | Horacio Quiroz | EdE Sinkovics | Maliheh Zafarnezhad | Nujoom Al Ghanem | Nina Heydemann



ISSUE #11 September 2021

The function of the contemporary artist is
to crystallize the popular
mythology of the times in which he lives.

Ran Andrews



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EDITORS' NOTE

Dear readers, we are very delighted to present an overview of different media and practice in ContemporaryIdentities' Issue 11.

Every time we assemble the number for us is a discovery of pieces of aesthetic and artistic language needs. The world in the last 2 years changed a lot, we are proud of representing this moment in our magazine and to make shorter the distances in this way.

Issue 11 features an interview with Nujoom Al Ghanem, an Emirati artist, poet, and film director and talk to her about her major recent solo exhibition at Maraya Art Center in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. In line with Nujoom's solo exhibition, ContemporaryIdentities also had a chance to interview with Nina Heydemann, the director of Maraya Art Centre and 1971 – Design Space.

Furthermore, we are very much thankful to the collaborated artists in this Issue.

In addition to Zoltán Somhegyi, our board member, we also had the pleasure of working with international guest writers such as Anna Guillot (Italy), Tima Jam (Iran-UK), Sophie Kazan (UK) and Johan Othman (Malaysia).

Last but not least, we are thankful to our joined design team sponsored by Studio Tehran for their hard work and effort.

Take care everyone
Sara Berti & Elham Shafaei

Tetrianah Ahmed Fauzi

Malaysia

Johan
Othman





Pink Crab, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 35x35 cm



Shy One, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 35x35 cm

Tetrina Ahmed Fauzi, a Malaysian born artist and academic, received her art training and education in Malaysia and the UK. In general, her works explore various mediums ranging from mixed media, photography, prints and drawings amongst others, and have been shown in Southeast Asia, the UK and the US. Her three recent works that are being presented here, show various permutations of folds of acrylic on canvas that allude to impressions of the floral or fauna. Although there is an apparent referencing to an animal as shown in the title of the piece called Pink Crab, however, the Tetrina has suggested that this kind of undisguised indexing can also be a mere illusion of more complex connotations. Indeed, perceptions of an artwork are mostly subjected to the viewers personal vantage point. Therefore, it can be viewed that Tetrina aligns her artworks with the awareness of the subjective emotions or intuitions of the viewers, which is just as complex.

Mpumelelo Buthelezi

South
Africa

Sophie
Kazan



Ingilosi, Photograph, Lustre photo paper, 122x58 cm

Mpumelelo Buthelezi is a South African artist and photographer. "I taught myself to become a photographer, he says, "to tell the untold stories of the communities of my country, to present them as narratives, full lives lived in the margins."

Buthelezi is passionate about photography. Born in the year of democracy, 1994, he is from the Born Free generation and the ability to document stories and examine unfamiliar spaces of society, particularly in Buthelezi's birthplace of Soweto, represents a special kind of freedom. Ingilosi – An Angel is a series of photographs which explore not only the notion of angels and faith – Ingilosi is a Zulu term for Angel – but also the notions of self-isolation and self-discovery. "I was photographing myself in my room [and] I felt isolated in my own environmental space... it was a wonderful process to document. It's an extended way of myself exploring my own ideas of being an angel and my personal gender identity."



Ingilosi, Photograph, Lustre photo paper, 122x58 cm



Ingilosi, Photograph, Lustre photo paper, 122x58 cm



Grain storage along Interstate 44, Illinois, 2018, Digital Photo, 40x60 cm

Are we perhaps underestimating the force of the banal? While focusing on the particular, on the extraordinary, on the curious, we tend to forget that very often it is the average, the unnoticed and almost unnoticeable that can describe our everyday reality the best. Alexandra Buxbaum confronts us with such details and elements of our surroundings that we may have easily overlooked, however that can describe our environment, our habits and modes of living more than something overtly cured and well-presented. Although Buxbaum examines the US landscape, we can do the same wherever we are; we can learn from her how to direct our focus also towards the appreciation of the average so that we can get a full picture of the context we live in.



Casino at Bullhead city, Arizona, 2018, Digital Photo, 40x60 cm

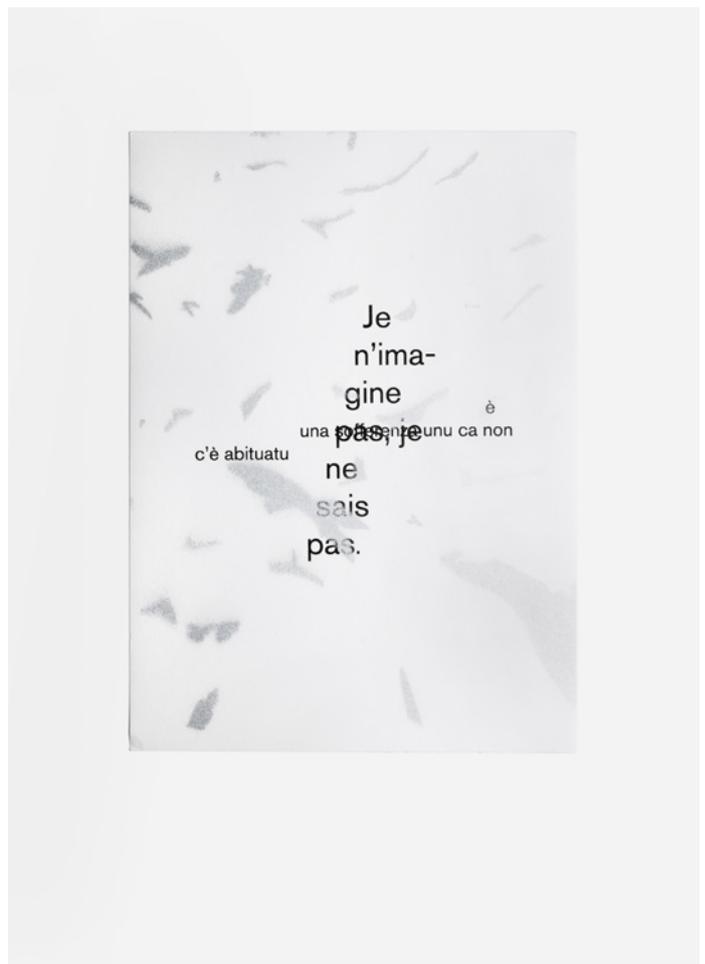
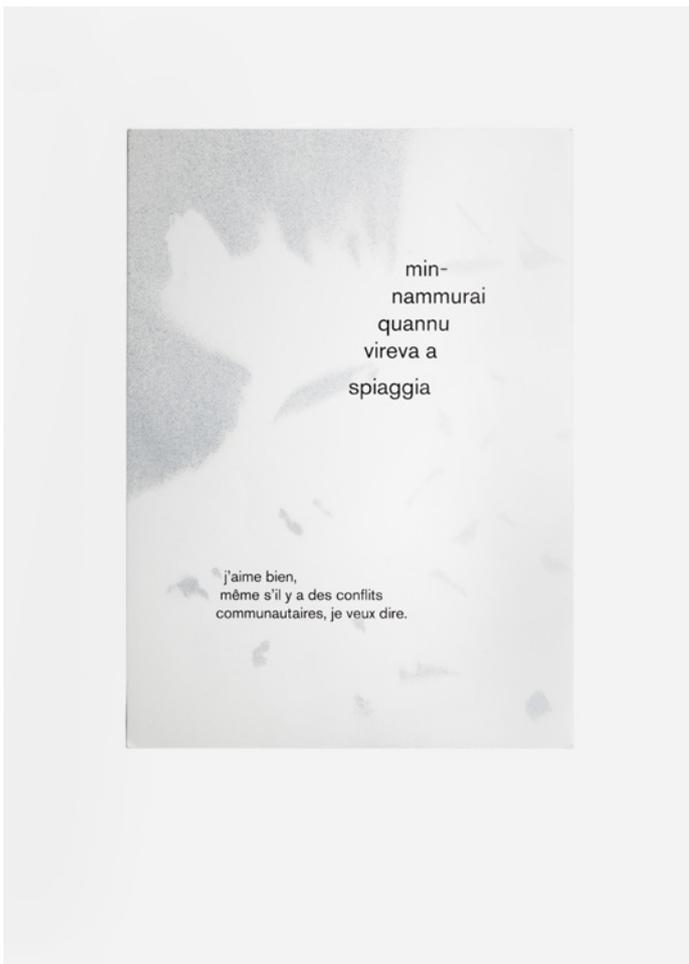


Tourist stand at the Continental Divide, New Mexico, 2018, Digital Photo, 40x60 cm



Same green, same sky, 2020, Installation project, webcam, sound recorder, inner tubes, sound installation, variable dimensions

Alessandro Costanzo's aesthetic work is permeated with a completely conceptual dimension. During a residency in Brussels-Uccle, Costanzo made a reflection on the problems connected with interpersonal communication in "Same Green, Same Sky", a project with anthropological implications. Having been invited to the historical Maison Grégoire designed by Henry Van De Velde, the Sicilian artists chose the garden as the site for a setting, putting it into relation with another, similar one in Sicily. In these two places there are webcams located in the trees that operate over days, each one sending its own view onto the net. At the same time, again from sites that are thousands of kilometers apart, two people expressing thoughts on their own lived experiences are recorded.



Same green, Same sky #note, 2020, Series of drawings, spray and print on paper, 34x24 cm each

The clips taken from their speech generate non-unmodifiable mixtures that take shape as audio within the Maison and which then become images on paper, still as a text that is at the limit of an unmodifiable semantics. Thus, in the external and internal places belonging to the house two people meet, a Belgian and a Sicilian, people who due to their excessive rooting in their own territories show that they are incapable of being able to exchange anything. A cycle of drawings is what remains of the impossible dialogue.



The echo of the void, 2021, Textile-based performance

The echo of the void is a solo exhibition of Cristiana de Marchi's work being shown in September 2021 at 1x1 gallery, Dubai. A textile-based performance documented photographically and through video. "Over the past year and half, I have explored quite different themes and even techniques," says de Marchi. "I am giving myself the freedom to create something that is empty – the void."

The artist explored "slow" and painstaking activities such as knitting, noting its links to gender roles, aesthetics and politics. She knitted a square, measuring 2m2. "It [The echo of the Void] explored the relationship with the body – as the knitting became heavy, I had to work with it wrapped around me; it became my space of confinement [and] corresponds to the smallest cell size used in some countries ... You realize how small the dimensions are when you see the canvas on the wall of a gallery."



The echo of the void, 2021, Textile-based performance



The echo of the void, 2021, Textile-based performance



Introibo, 2013, Installation, handmade paper and graphite, variable dimensions

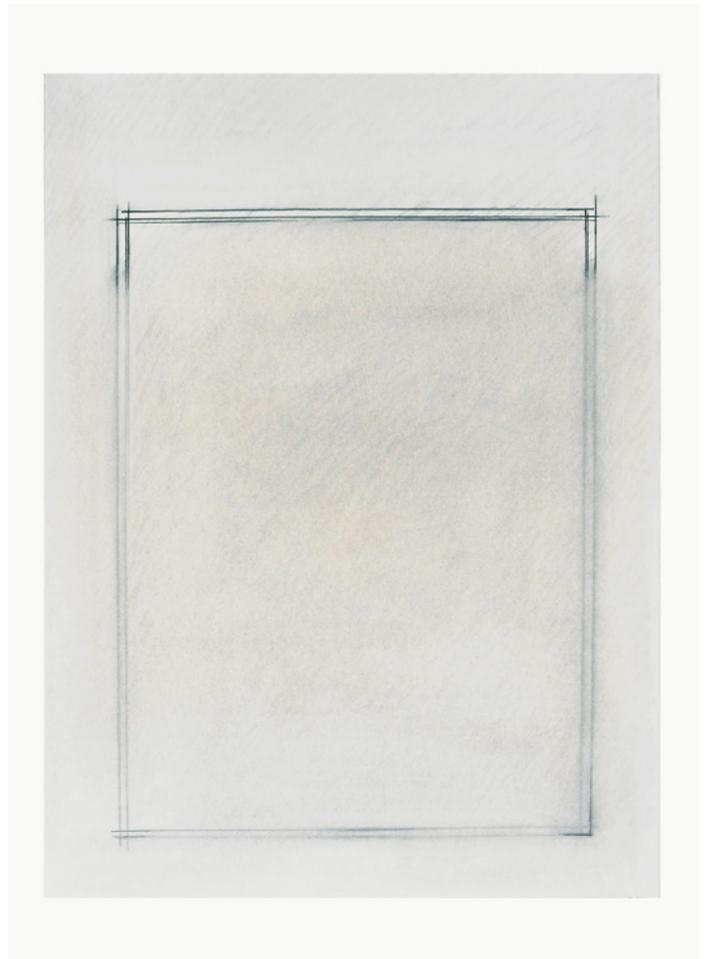
Antonio Freile's activity unfolds over decades in painting, drawing and in his "Chartae", singular artefacts of his own radical invention and construction. In the context of a practice that was constantly centred on experimentation, two constants on which the artist often dwelled are drawing and the book.

Freile's discourse presents itself as an articulated and problematic self-reflection. In particular it makes reference to the corpus of studies and works regarding a precise cycle that investigates space and light through drawing and which has value as germination of painting. It is an analysis carried out as a praxis oriented in the direction of an additional expressive consciousness, of drawing that introduces a painting that is alluded to rather than being actually practiced, a painting that is resolved in an incorporeal minimum of absorbed colour, as an underlying practice, as an aleatory datum rather than as an effective entity. It thus deals with an operation that is able to go beyond the very definition of drawing given that it is carried out as a happening (situation) completely directed towards research.

Widely studied by critics, Antonio Freile's work is present in international galleries and collections.



Blind Red Book, 2014, Handmade colored paper, copies 9-16/60, 15x11x1.5 cm, Courtesy KoobookArchive, Catania, IT



Untitled, 1970, Drawing, graphite on paper, 70x50 cm each

Olamide Ogunade

Nigeria | Tima
Jam



Woman with Pride, 2021, Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 91x91 cm

Olamide Ogunade, a Nigerian visual artist passionate about art, as evidenced by his participation in artistic activities such as acting, dancing, and drumming.

Olamide discovered his ability to draw at the age of six which developed as he grew older. Inspired by events in his culture, which prompts him to express himself using various mediums such as oil paint, charcoal, paint, or pencil. His work combines figurative expression with colour, making it contemporary, and it addresses issues in African society. The skin is an essential thing he loves to create, which necessitates a focus on details, as well as vibrant colours, which is summed up with Bubbles, capturing the moment of pressure, as well as the fact that the situation we find ourselves in is temporal. Olamide's art tends to engage its audience, drawing their attention to catharsis and making them wonder how on earth it was created with hands.



Neon Brothers, 2021, Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 91x122 cm



Visit to my tailor, 2021, Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 91x91 cm

Horacio Quiroz

Mexico | Tima
Jam



You can't hurt me no more (Transderella), 2020, Oil on canvas, 100×140 cm

Horacio Quiroz studied Graphic Design at Universidad Iberoamericana and then worked as a Creative Art Director for several international advertising companies. In 2013, he decided to abandon advertising to devote himself entirely to art, to reconnect with the spontaneity he possessed as a child. Horacio's artwork is an examination of the concept of polarity, influenced by The Kybalion, Carl Jung, and Tao's hermetic philosophy writings. The human body is being used to depict mobility and change. He sees the body as a mechanism that not only performs physiological functions, but also as an emotional vessel that holds our entire temporal and spiritual history. The body perceives matter and space in this way, learning to experience its own humanity. Similarly, his painting explores the tensions between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic on the same support. It investigates the resulting dichotomy between the beautiful and the grotesque.



The Hope of the Speechless Teenager Boy, 2020, Oil on canvas, 120 cm diameter



The Hope of the Speechless Teenager Boy, 2020, Oil on canvas, 120 cm diameter



The painting with an empty street (the floating orange), 2008, Acrylic on canvas, 131x172 cm

EdE Sinkovics is methodically investigating all forms and occasions of remake, re-use, upgrade and upcycling. In his earlier series he re-elaborated well-known paintings, merging classical styles with his own. Later he examined the possibilities of contemporary studio production, i.e. having ordered a technically medium-quality painting that he then re-worked, modifying and overpainting it to make it become his own as a form of aesthetic appropriation. In the last years he is busy with actual up-cycling, creating images, often with strong references to traditional motifs and styles, out of discarded and waste materials, to give them a second life.



The Dirt of Venus, 2018, Plastic (contains 80% collected ocean plastic) on wood, 107x160cm



Bishop in the background, 2006, Acrylic on canvas, 100x70 cm



Aposing Times, 2021, Collage, image transfer and acrylic on assembled wood blocks and shaped Plywood

Maliheh Zafarnezhad, an Iranian-born artist currently living in the UK, is educated and trained in both her country of origin and the West, and internationally established. *Aposing Times*, *Infinite Rehearsal*, and *The Lightness*, are amongst her recent artworks, which are three dimensional mixed medium structures consisting mainly of acrylic, image transfer, wood and glass. Maliheh has expressed her recent concerns with her relationship to the new normality during the current pandemic that has awoken a strong awareness regarding motherhood and being a wife. This sensitivity towards self subjectivity is also placed in the context of nature, particularly her recent attention to swans, which Maliheh attributes to strength, faith and hope. These signs can clearly be seen in the representation of human figures in relation to nature as the space, in *Aposing Times* and *Infinite Rehearsal*, and the apparent impression of a swan in *The Lightness*. Extending on the concept metaphors employed by Maliheh, these three works appear to portray a self reflection through the use of wood, as representing nature that in turn, presents images of nature. And perhaps the human figures hint at the idea of representing children in relation to nature, which in turn can be a metaphor for the mother.



Infinite Rehearsal, 2021, Photo transfer, collage and acrylic paint on assembled wood blocks on wooden cable drum reel



The Lightness, 2021, Photo transfer, collage, acrylic, acrylic crystal beads, glass and assembled found wood cuts

Nujoom Al Ghanem & Nina Heydemann



CI: Tell us about your early influences.

NA: I am Nujoom Al Ghanem an Emirati artist, poet, and film director, was born in Dubai and was lucky to be raised at my grandparents' house where I could find everything that helped me become who I'm today including books, music, and cameras. I used to accompany my aunt when she used to go to the only city library in Bur Deira, Dubai Library, or to attend exhibitions in which she took part. I grew up watching her painting and taking photos and felt that I wanted to be like her.



I began to paint at a very early age and write my own journal then short stories when I was in mid-school. My first poems were published in early 80s in the local newspapers. I graduated from high school around the same time but couldn't go study abroad for family reasons. Then, after getting married and had my first two daughters I could travel and did my bachelor's degree in video production with two minors, fine arts and theater followed by a master's degree in film production.

I published eight poetry collections and have produced around twenty films including short fiction, short documentaries, art films and seven feature length documentaries.

In terms of work experience, I started my career as a journalist in the 80s, then shifted in the early 2000s to work as a training coordinator, head of training and human resources development, then Director of new media.

Nowadays, I work as an independent film director, a professional trainer in filmmaking and creative writing as well as art mentor.



CI: Can you tell us about yourself, and how you ended up working as an art director at Maraya Art Center?

NH: I am Nina Heydemann. I was appointed as the director of Maraya Art Centre and 1971 – Design Space in 2018 and before that was working as the Head of the Visual Arts Department at the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation. I've always been interested in the Middle East and my first experience working in the UAE was when I was setting up an exhibition showcasing works from the Deutsche Bank Art Collection in Dubai in 2008 focusing on the period of Bauhaus in Germany.

CI: What art do you most identify with?

NA: Filmmaking is my profession whereas art and poetry are my passion. I believe that everything I produce has a reflection or a fragment of my passions. Poetry has always been the one constant artform that I keep coming back to again and again.

CI: Tell us about your early influences.

NA: At the very beginning my knowledge about poetry came from school curriculums. And out of boredom I started reading literary high school textbooks belonged to my aunts. Those textbooks helped me develop an early awareness of the different forms and types of poetry from various eras including pre-Islamic, under-Islamic, the Arabic renaissance, modern, etc. But soon I discovered modern poets such as Nizar Kabbani, Adonis, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, Mahmoud Darwish Ounsi el-Hajj and others. As I was searching for new names and resources I stumbled upon literary periodicals, books and cultural supplements that made me realize the broader aspect of art which includes, literature, theater, visual art, cinema, and other forms. In the early 80s I was quite ready to go beyond poetry to something wider, especially after reading about Western and Eastern European artistic movements, such as Dadaism and Russian futurism. It happened that I then met Khalid Albudoor, Hassan Sharif, Yusuf Khalil and together we co-founded our own group Aqwas.



CI: Tell us about "MALAMIH" your recent major solo exhibition at Maraya Art Center.

NA: I started working on the artworks that are currently exhibited at "Malamih" in 2016. Initially, my goal was not to create a project that revolved around faces. It happened gradually that I was fascinated by certain people's expressions and emotions. I realized that I began to constantly seek people's expressions without intending to do so – I continued to observe human expressions and emotions until the walls of my studio were occupied with them. Even when I realized that I had already produced hundreds of these artworks, the traditional concept of a portrait wasn't what I was striving for. It was only when I started hearing comments from visitors of my studio that the faces I created were intimidating and provoking, that I decided that these works must be exhibited in a similar way – in a large volume and surrounding the viewers from all angles. Meanwhile, I also started working with different materials, such as concrete, cement, ceramics, and wood. Each one of these materials that I worked on manifested into its own section of the exhibition. "Malamih" reflects all the formats that I have been experimenting with for the last six years and it consists of 15 sections in total.

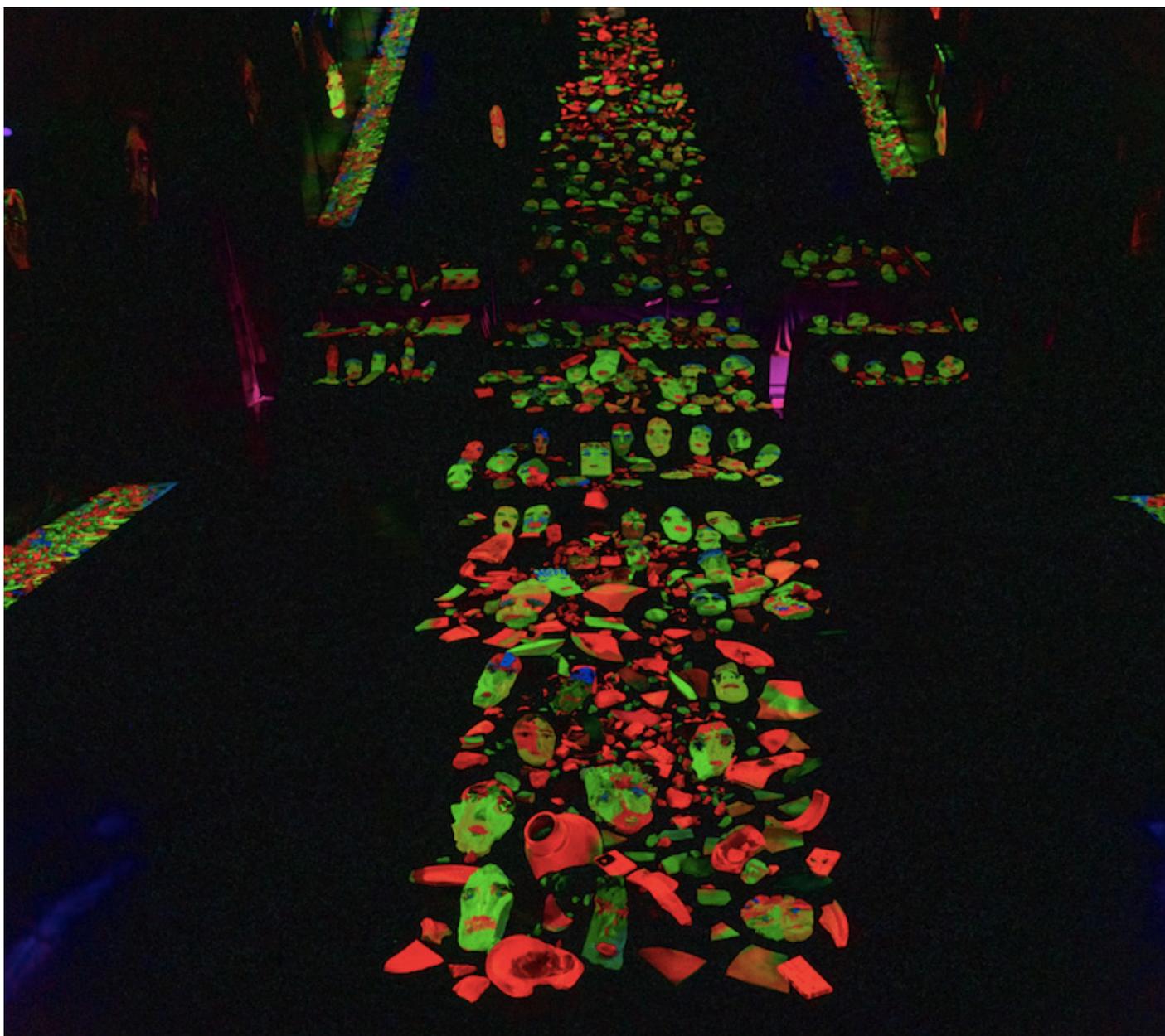


CI: Tell Us about "MALAMIH" Nujoom Al Ghanem's recent major solo exhibition at Maraya Art Center.

NH: This exhibition is entitled "Malamih – Faces, Phantoms and Expressions" and is showing for the first time a largely unknown artistic body of work of Emirati filmmaker and poet Nujoom Alghanem. The show comprises approximately 2000 faces that Nujoom Alghanem has created since 2016 in all different kinds of materials – canvas, burlap, denim, bubblewrap, ceramic, clay – as well as digitally animated faces that the artist has modified using Instagram Tools. She has also painted faces on objects such as wooden boxes and chopping boards. Rather than being portraits, the multitude of faces attempts to show the entire spectrum of human emotions and the impressions people leave on us throughout the course of our lives. Some people are forgotten, some are only remembered as fragments, some facial expressions leave long lasting impressions on us. All of these aspects are addressed in this exhibition.





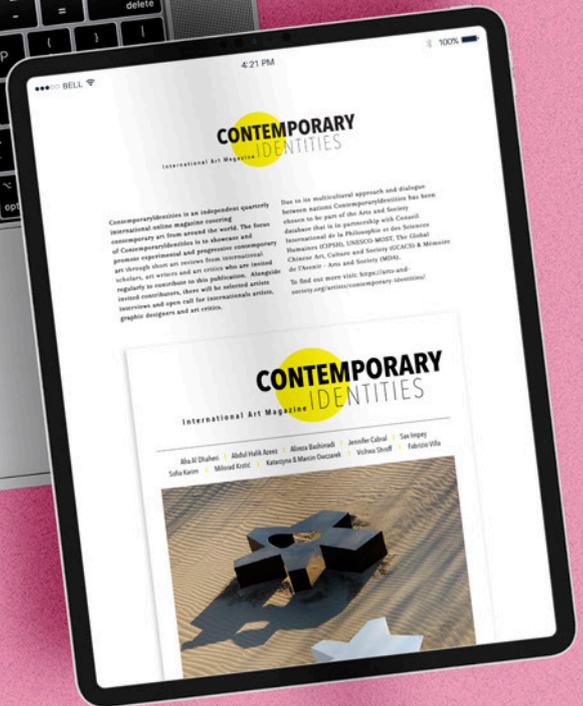


CI: What does your work aim to say?

NA: We are so much into our own world, emotions, traumas, apprehensions, anguish, or confusion even when we are surrounded by people. We look but don't see, we hear but we don't listen. In "Cathedral of Faces, specifically, you almost hear the faces talking to you without using words. The exhibition is also about creating an individual experience for each person who enters it. There are no two people who view the same expression the same way.

CI: has the pandemic affected Maraya Art Centre? Are there challenges specific to MAC compared to other galleries or art spaces? What are some of the steps that MAC has taken towards its future plan beyond the pandemic? Do you have any major shows coming up?

NH: As any art institution during the pandemic, Maraya Art Centre has implemented social distancing guidelines and precautionary measures in its premises. Our online programming has expanded by offering workshops online, -360degree virtual tours, open air courses and publishing our catalogues on our website. At the same time, visitors can come to our gallery space and see the exhibitions in person. Exhibitions have been prolonged as well. Our next show will focus on new works by Palestinian artist Hazem Harb who is based in Dubai and will open by the end of September 2021.



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