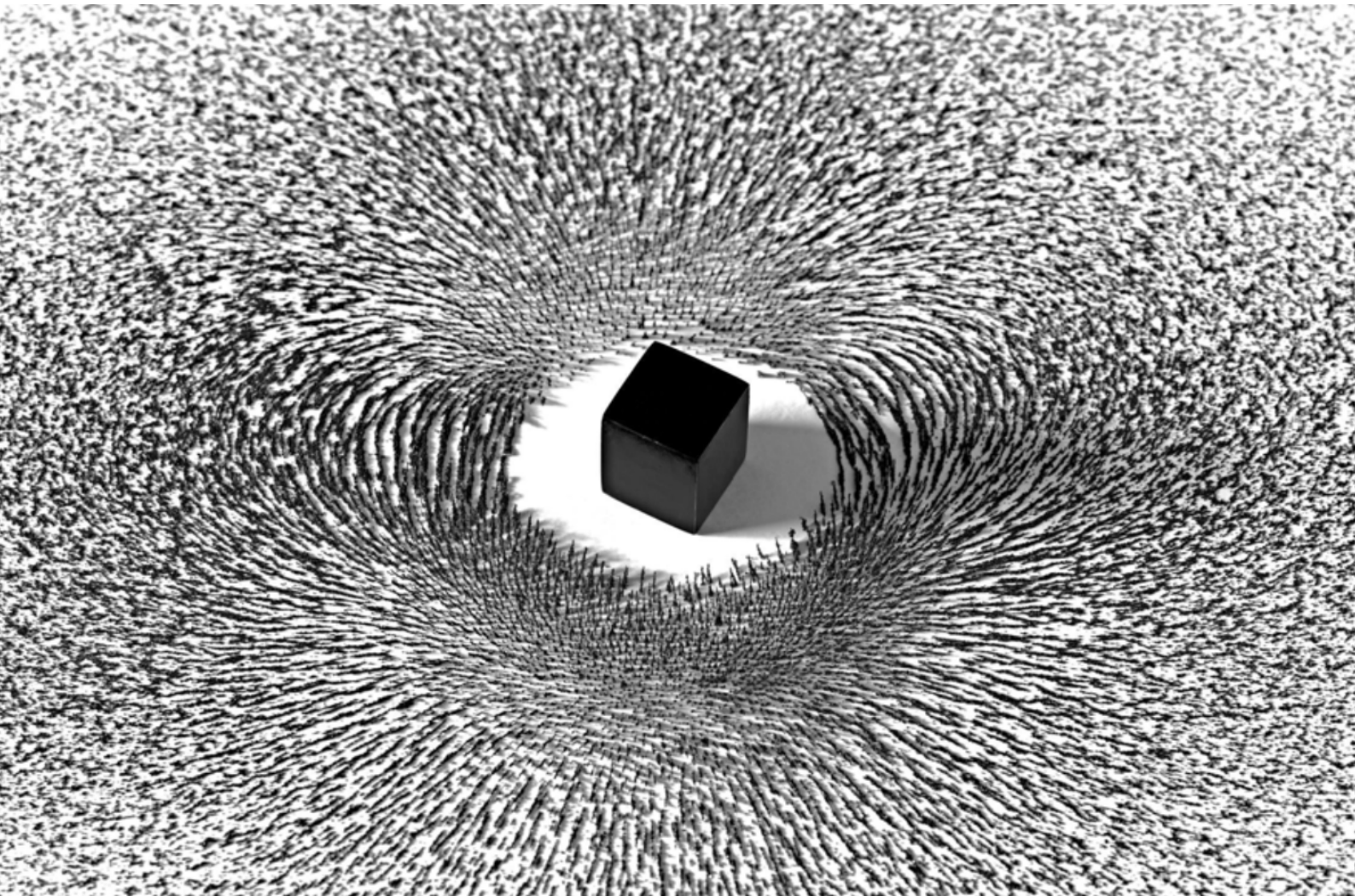


Ahmed Mater

Portfolio 2025



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Ahmed Mater

b. 1979, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia

Currently lives and works in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

An artist and doctor, Ahmed uses photography, film, video and text alongside traditional techniques such as painting, calligraphy and illumination to express his unique vision of the world – a vision based on his belief in the transformative potential of art. In recent years his country's landscape has also become his canvas, with Land Art installations at ALU-la in northern Saudi Arabia. Today he is one of the most significant cultural voices in the Middle East, both through his own art and his influential collaboration with other artists and institutions. His studio in Diriyah, Riyadh, is founded on the principle of open access and education, providing a space for young artists to develop ideas and contribute to a new cultural Renaissance in Saudi Arabia.

Mater's work has been widely exhibited at institutions internationally, including the Mori Museum of Art, Tokyo; the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; the Sharjah Biennale; the Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde; Ashkal Alwan in Beirut; Galleria Continua, Paris; the New Museum, New York; and Centre Pompidou, Paris.

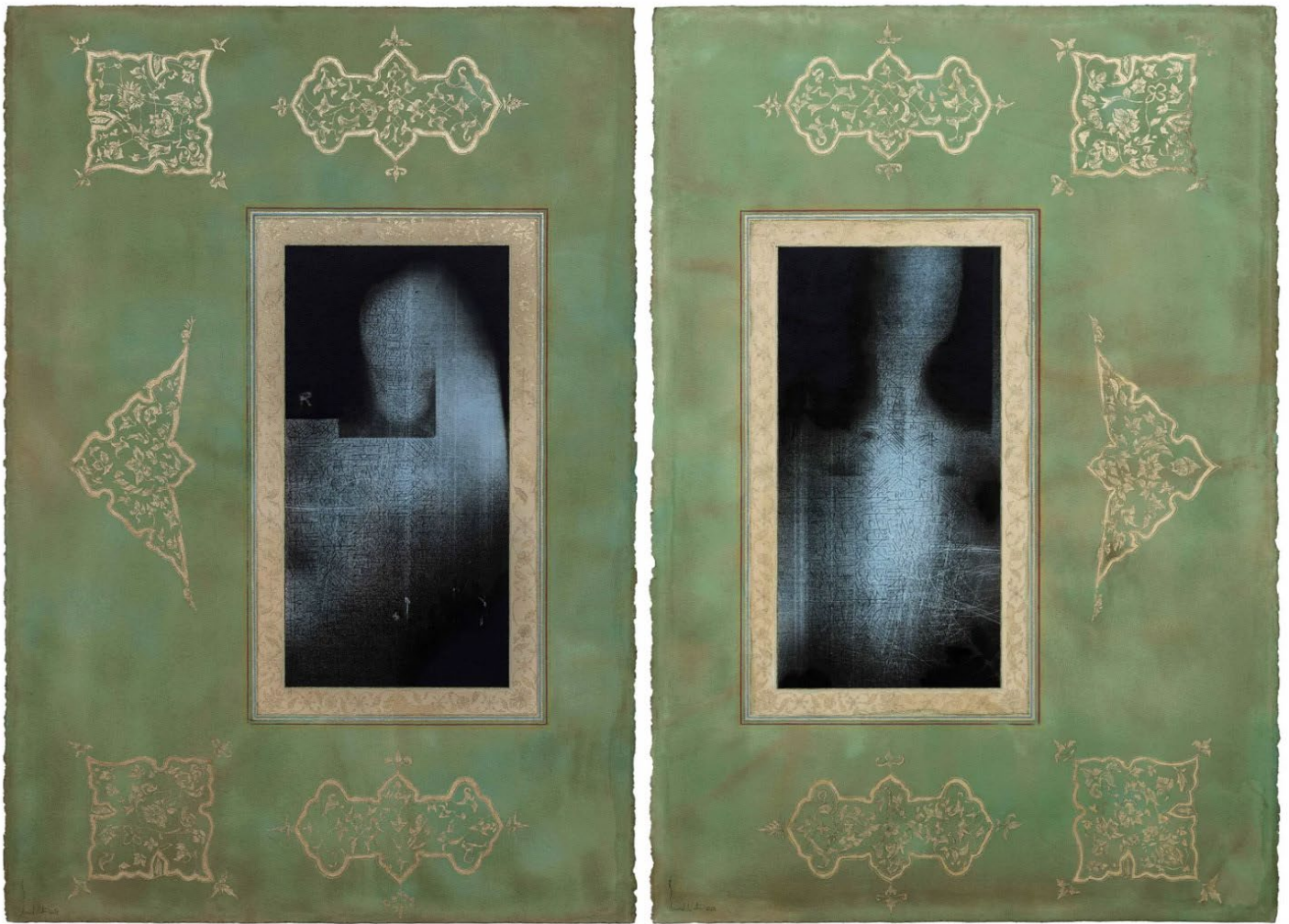
He has participated in various panels and talks at the Paris Louvre, the Berlin Akademie der Künste, The Armory Show New York, Art Basel Miami, Leiden Museum Amsterdam and Art Basel Hong Kong.

His work is held in the collections of the British Museum, London; the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; the Khalili Collection, London; the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, as well as a number of private collections.

In 2023, Ahmed participated in the first edition of the Islamic Arts Biennale in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, a milestone that was followed in 2024 by a mid-career retrospective of his work at Christie's London headquarters. Entitled Ahmed Mater: Chronicles, the exhibition featured more than 100 paintings, drawings, photographic works, sculptures, videos, and installations from his artistic career to date.

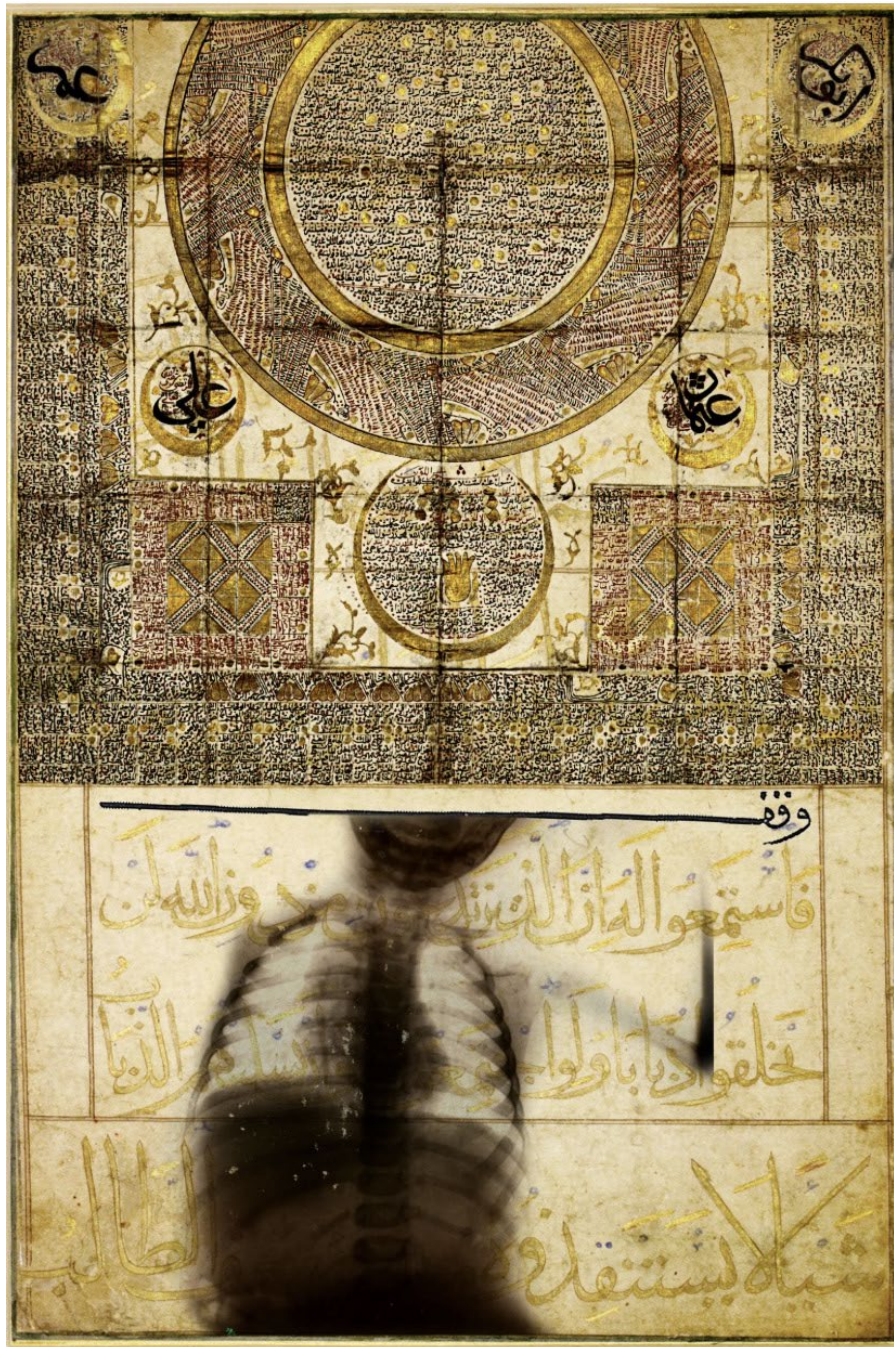
Illuminations

Like its title, this series irradiates to lay bare and draw together binaries that are often considered incompatible. The works blend the past, represented by traditional Islamic arts, with the present, through the innovations of modern medicine. Faith and science are brought together – two subjects that are often treated as essentially separate and full of tense contradictions.



Illuminations X-Ray II
Diptych, 2023

Gold Leaf, Tea, Pomegranate, Ink and Mixed Media
on Archival Arche Paper
Two Pieces, each 152.4 x 101.6 cm



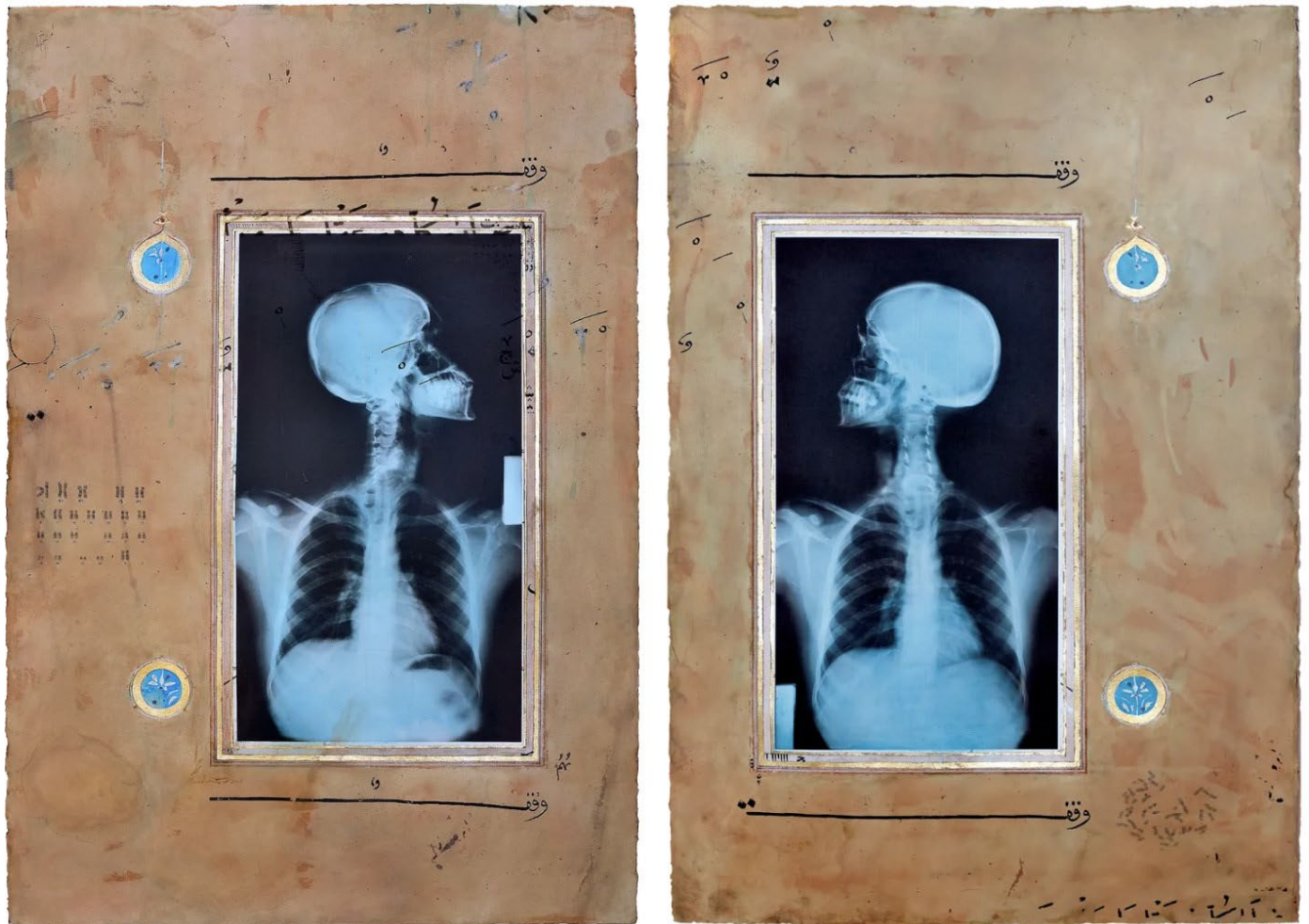
Talisman Illumination IV, 2013

Pomegranate tea gold leaf,
Chinese ink lacquer, and X-ray photograph
152 × 101.5 cm



Illumination Crane Tower (Diptych), 2025

Gold Leaf, Tea, Pomegranate, Ink
and Mixed Media on Archival Arche Paper
Two Pieces, Each 152.4 x 101.6cm



Illumination Diptych I, 2008

Gold leaf tea pomegranate Dupont Chinese ink
Offset X-Ray print and mixed media on archival Arche paper
Two pieces, each 165 × 110 cm



Mashq X Ray I, 2008

Gold leaf tea pomegranate Dupont Chinese ink
Offset X-Ray print and mixed media on archival Arche paper
100 × 70 cm

Magnetism

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When my grandfathers spoke to me as a child about their experience of Hajj they told me of the physical attraction they felt towards the Kaaba, that they felt drawn to it by an almost magnetic pull.

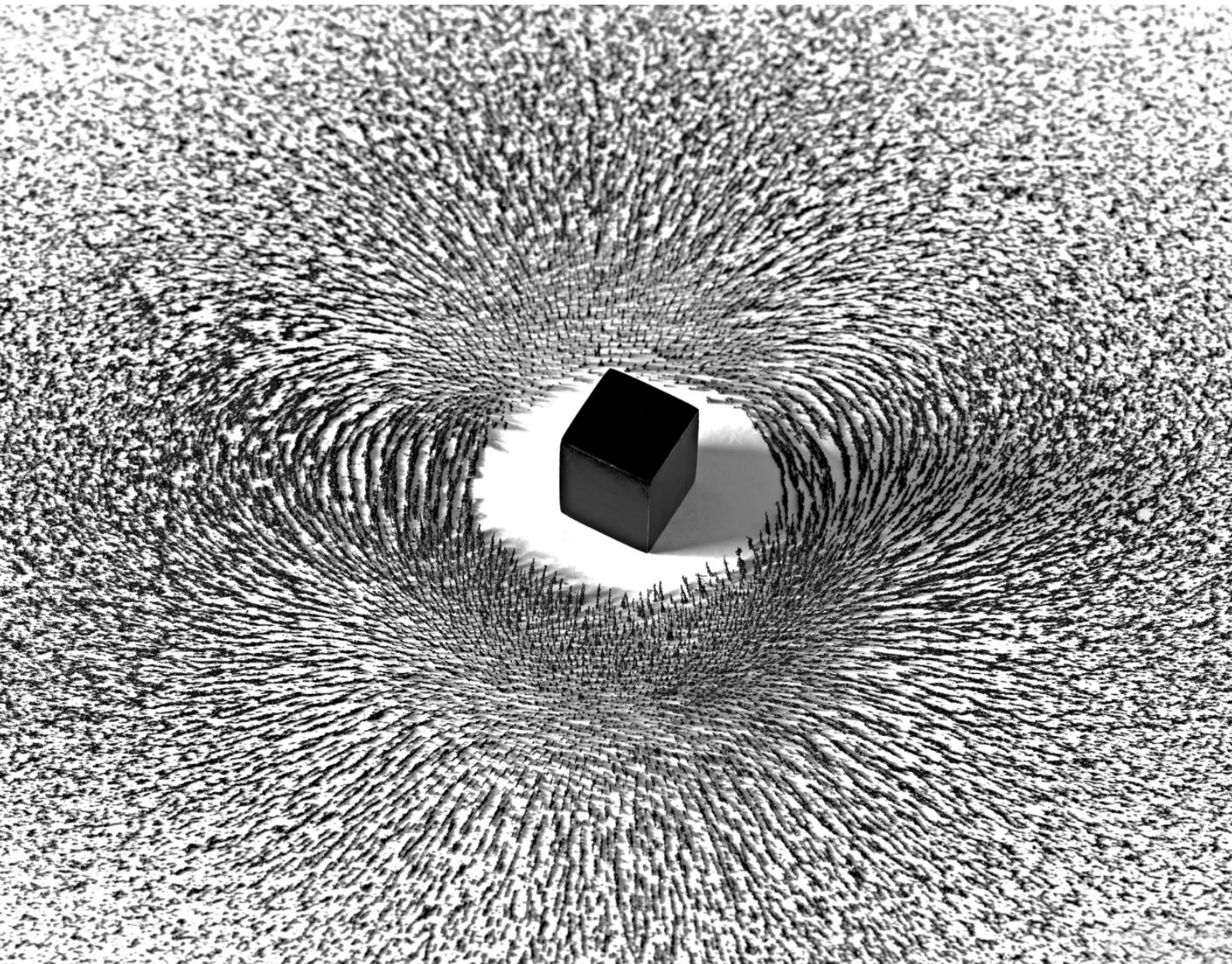
Ahmed Mater

The crisp black and white of this miniature diagrams the tensions of faith and religion. Iron filings radiate around a black cube, an emanation of attraction that evokes a congregation of pilgrims thronging the Ka'aba. The unseen pull of Islam's holiest site is made manifest in this moment of absolute equilibrium. The elusive draw is faith-driven, suggestive of the deeply spiritual force felt by the millions who pray in its direction five times a day, as well as those who circle during tawaf.



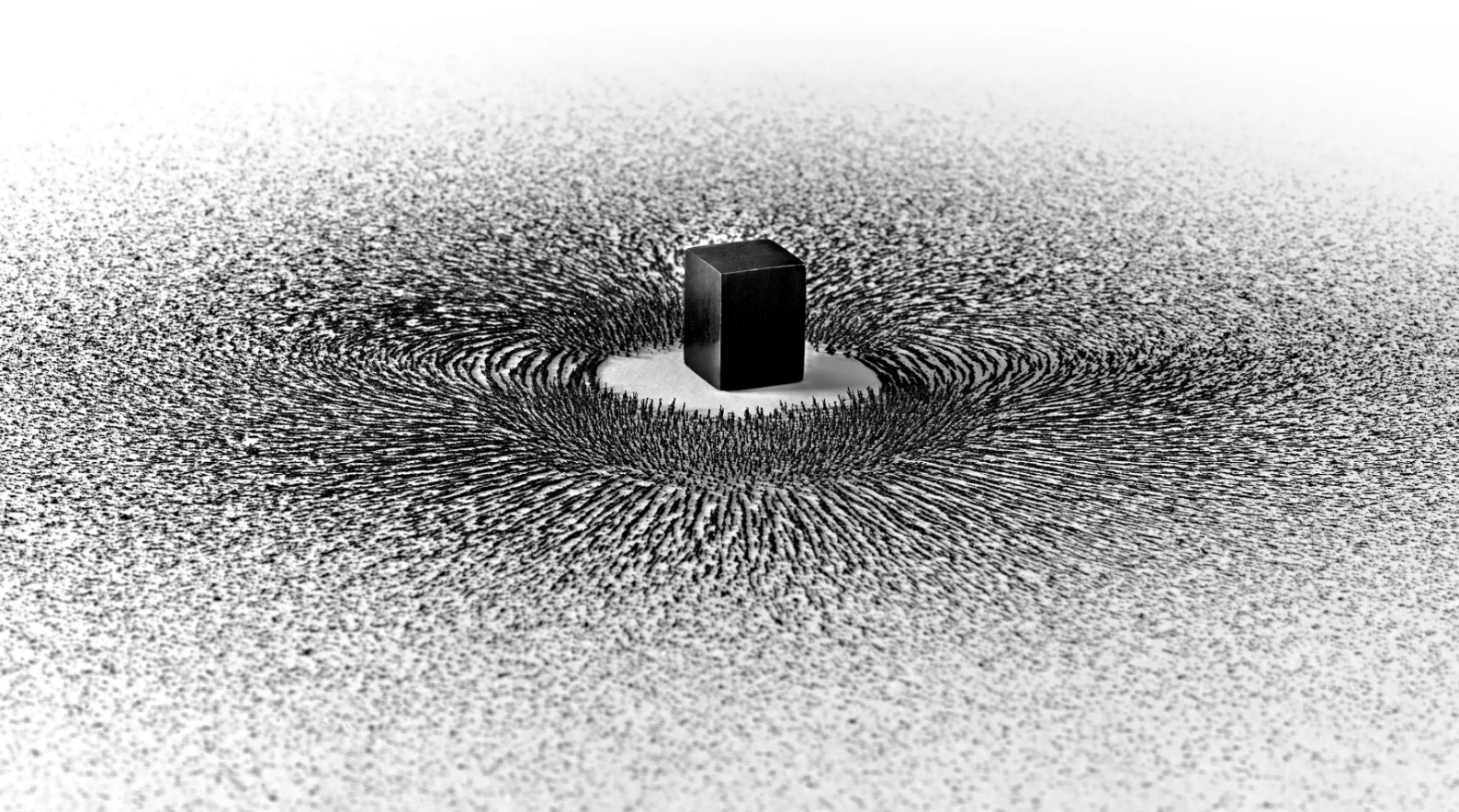
Magnetism Book, 2024

Installation of Iron Filings
and Magnets on Paper on a White Stand
15.1 x 45.4 x 31.4cm



Magnetism IV, 2012

Diasec Mounted Fine Art Latex Jet Print
300 × 250cm



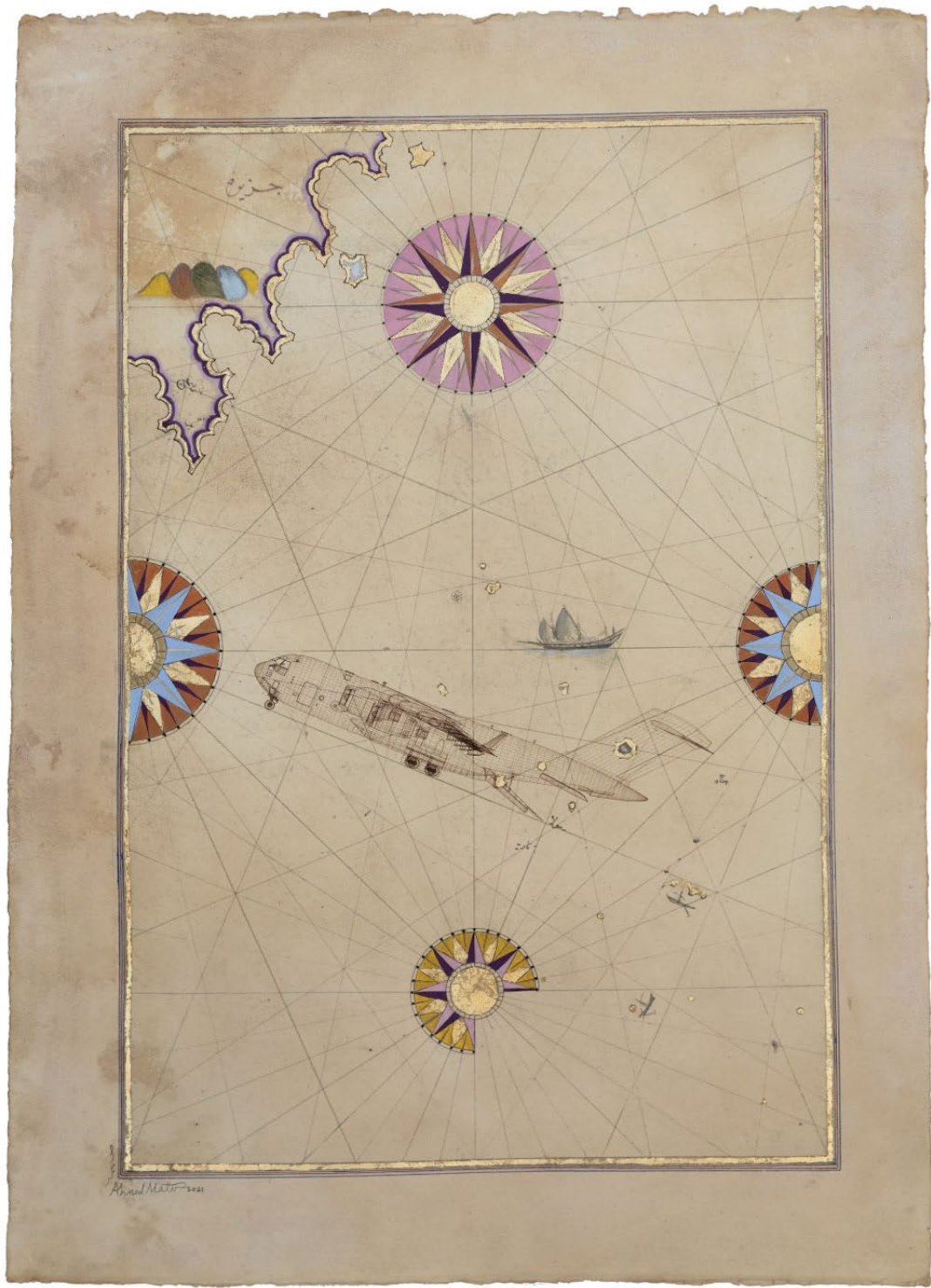
Magnetism III, 2012

Fine Art Latex Jet Print Mounted on Diasec
220 x 276cm

Grey Eagle

The polyurethane enlarged model of a General Atomics MQ-1 Predator – an American RPA, or remotely piloted aircraft – is covered in sand, both camouflaged for and clearly signalling its use in the Middle East. Cartographic designs link this new technology with more traditional ways of mapping the world, their illuminated and symbolic imagery placing them firmly in the sphere of Islamic art.

In the two gulf wars, UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) began to be used extensively in bombing raids and for sending back live coverage to US operators. These surveillance and offensive technologies help to engender the notion of the 'bloodless' war (though only on one side of the conflict), allowing policy makers in the West to distance the public from the brutal realities of engagement and increase the sense of alienation from the lives of those living in conflict zones.



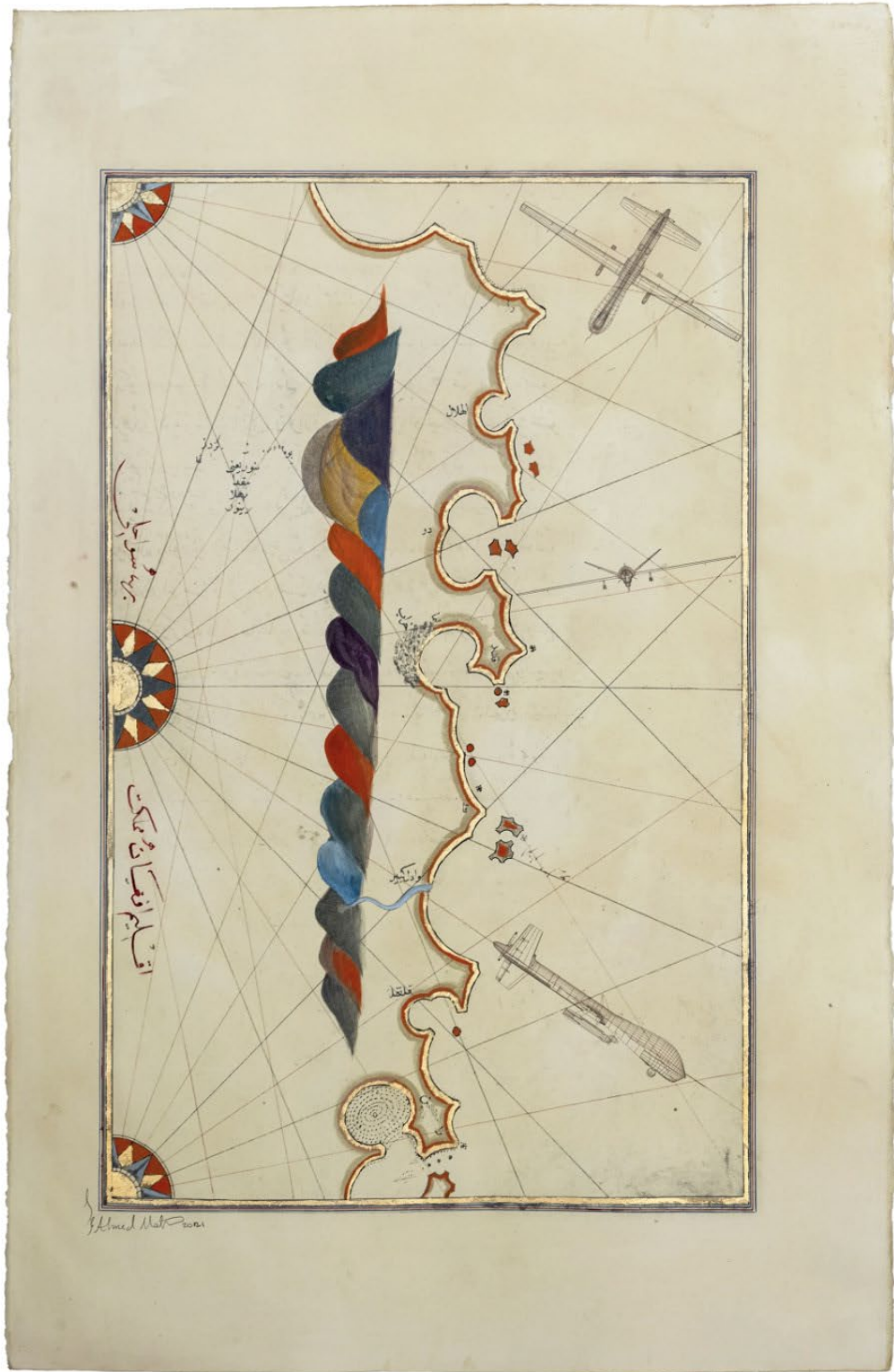
Grey Eagle #8, 2024

Mixed Media on Paper
105 x 75cm



Grey Eagle #3, 2024

Mixed Media on Paper
101 x 65cm

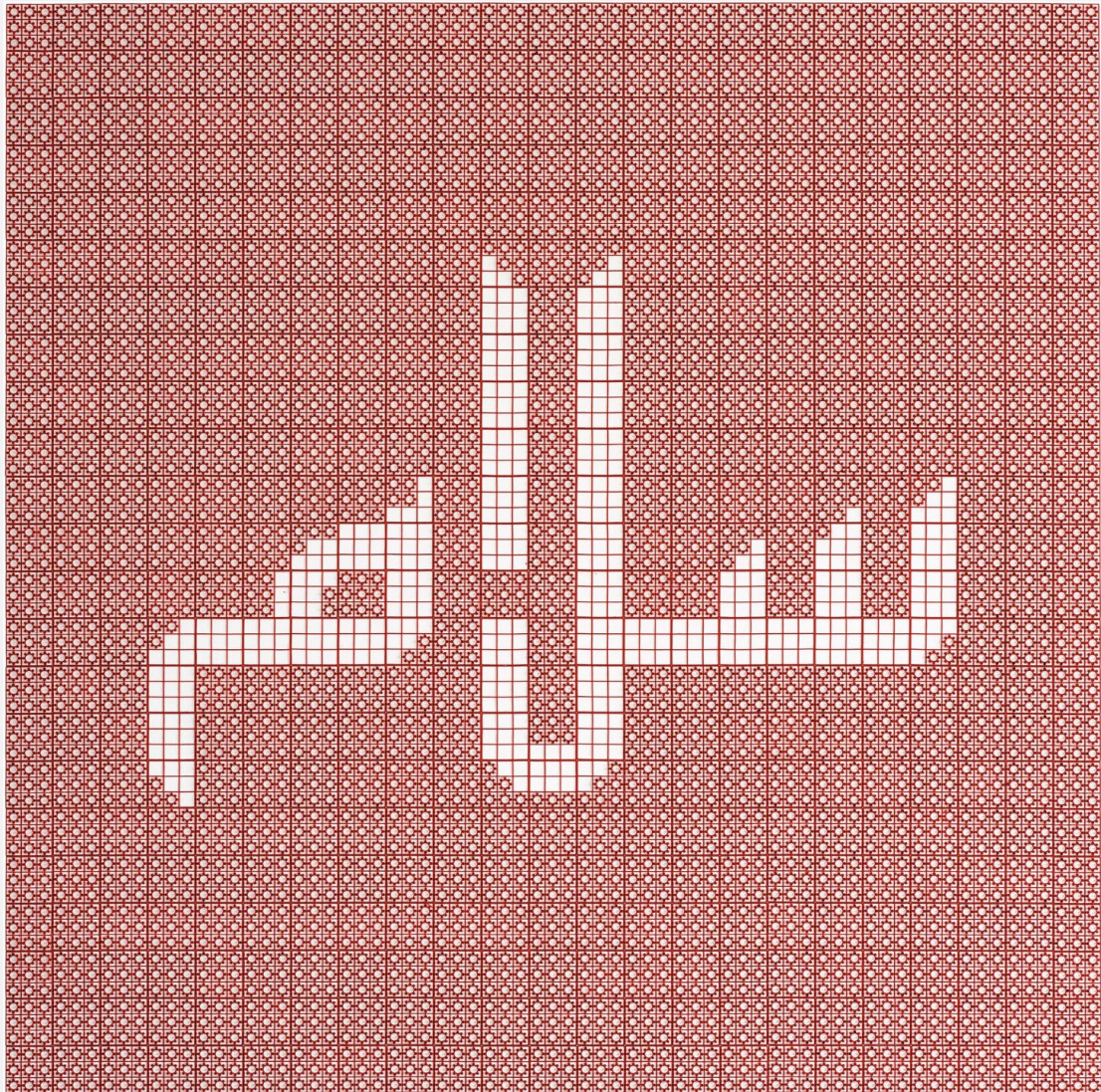


Grey Eagle #4, 2024

Mixed Media on Paper
101 x 65cm

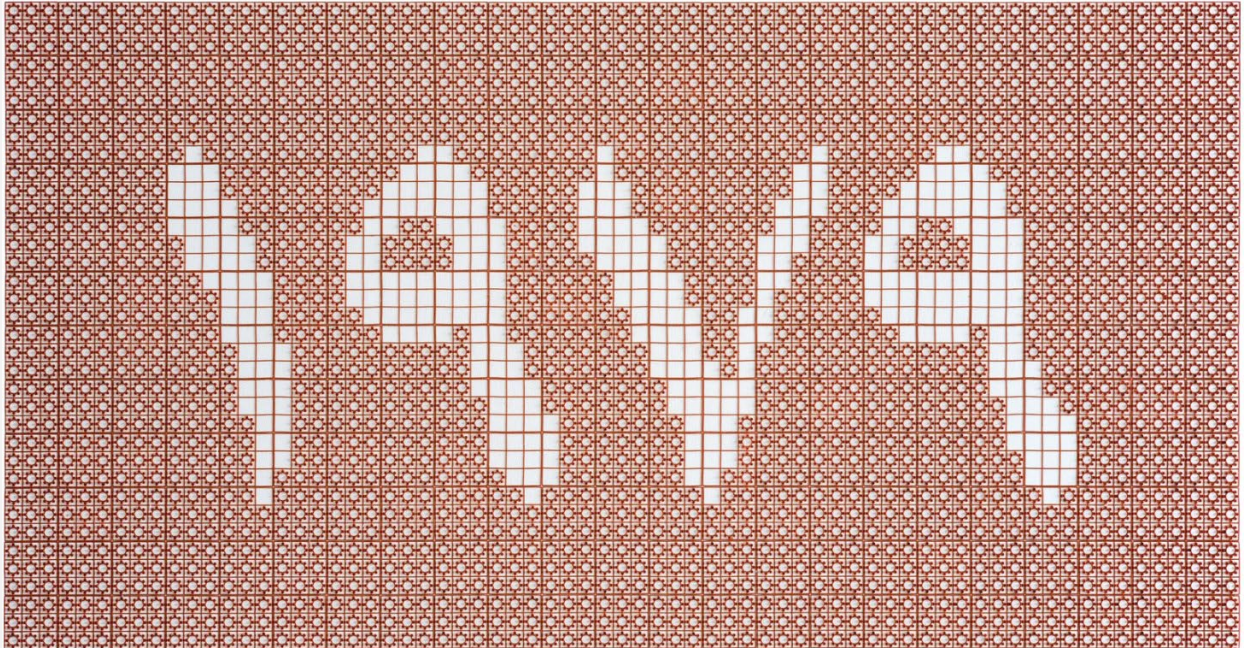
Guncaps

The cowboy is the nomad of the Western sands, much like the Bedouin is the nomad of the Eastern sands. This work uses the toy gun caps common across Saudi Arabia in the late 20th Century to seek what unites, rather than what sets apart.



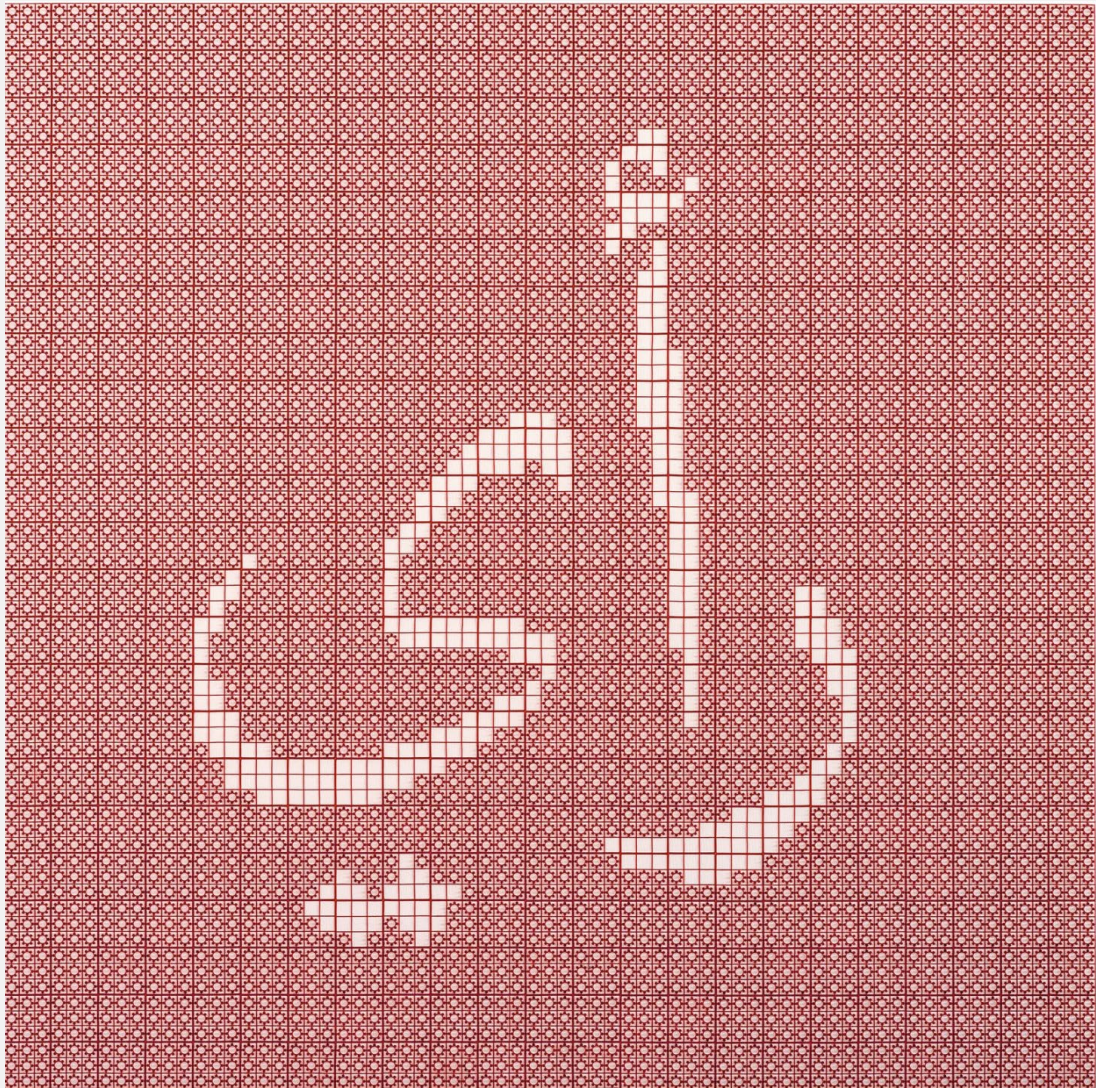
Salam, 2023

Plastic Toy Gun Caps Mounted on Wooden Board
185 x 185cm



1979, 2012

Plastic toy gun caps glued together into sheets
95 × 185cm



Ray, 2024

Plastic toy gun caps mounted on wooden board
185 × 185cm

Shatta

Early abstract experimentations with X-Rays were begun in the studios at Al-Meftaha Arts Village. In these works, the first synthesis of art and science, faith and medicine can be seen.



X Ray III, 2023

Mixed media and X-ray on canvas
135 × 105 cm



My Village, 1995

Oil on wooden panel
69 x 89 cm



UN 1441, 2002

Oil and Mixed Media on Canvas
120.5 x 91 cm



X-Ray Prescription, 2003

Mixed Media on Canvas
100 x 100 cm

Ashab Al-Lal: Al-Ula

Ashab Al-Lal, a vast installation situated in the hot sands of Wadi AlFann, a 65-square-kilometre 'valley of the arts' in AlUla in the north-west of Saudi Arabia. Visitors descend through a tunnel into a subterranean chamber, where a mirage will reflect their image above ground so that walkers in the desert will encounter their apparition.



Ashab Al-Lal II, 2022

Artist rendering



Ashab Al-Lali, 2022

Artist rendering



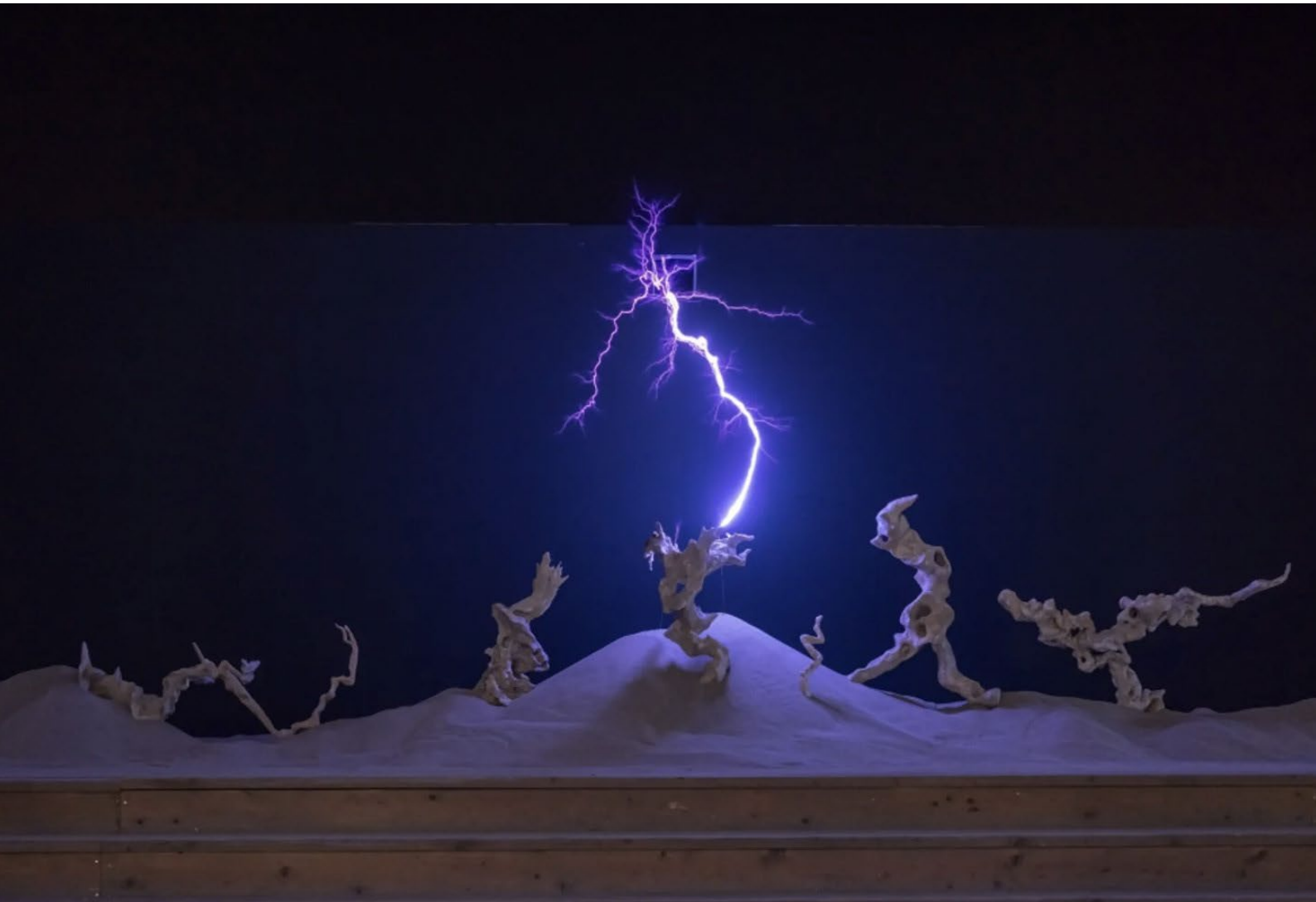
Ashab Al-Lal III, 2022

Artist rendering

Lighting Land

Seismic flashes of force conjure new cities and new structures of economic and social power in the vast and empty expanse of the desert.

The erratic and unpredictable energy of this work alludes to the radical transformation that have reconfigured Saudi society since the mid-20th century, first with the discovery of oil, and later with the founding of massive new urban centres.



Tesla Coil, 2017

Artist rendering



Lightning Land, 2017

Artist rendering

Ashab Al-Lal: Fault Mirage

Using found archival slides, the work tracks from the Kingdom's establishment in 1932, through the oil boom of the 1960s and 1970s. Layering conflicting scenes, the work explores the untold consequences of the Rentier economy – looking to the administrative metropolis of Riyadh, the intense production of the oil fields in the East and the obscured and fading stories of life before the petrodollar flooded the desert with cars, concrete buildings and the trappings of the West.



Al Malaz, 2016

Wood slide projector with glass slide
21.5 × 11.5 × 9.5 cm each



Television, 2016

Wood slide projector with glass slide
21.5 × 11.5 × 9.5 cm each



Crisis, 2016

Wood slide projector with glass slide
21.5 × 11.5 × 9.5 cm each



Cadillac, 2016

Wood slide projector with glass slide
21.5 × 11.5 × 9.5 cm each



Roadblock, 2016

Wood slide projector with glass slide
21.5 × 11.5 × 9.5 cm each

Desert of Pharan

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As a prismatic city of many layers and configurations, Mecca is a place of physical and symbolic approaches. As it shifts and changes, its many roads connecting past and present are being lost under the rubble of deconstruction and reconstruction - roads hastily paved towards ambitiously dreamt futures.

Ahmed Mater

Across hundreds of photographs and films, *Desert of Pharan* documents the rapid development of Islam's holiest city, a place in a state of constant transformation. The shifting urban environment of the city is witnessed, as well as the lives lived amid the tumult. The title is taken from the ancient name for Mecca, or the wilderness and mountains surrounding it - the Desert of Paran, or Wilderness of Paran, mentioned in the Old Testament.



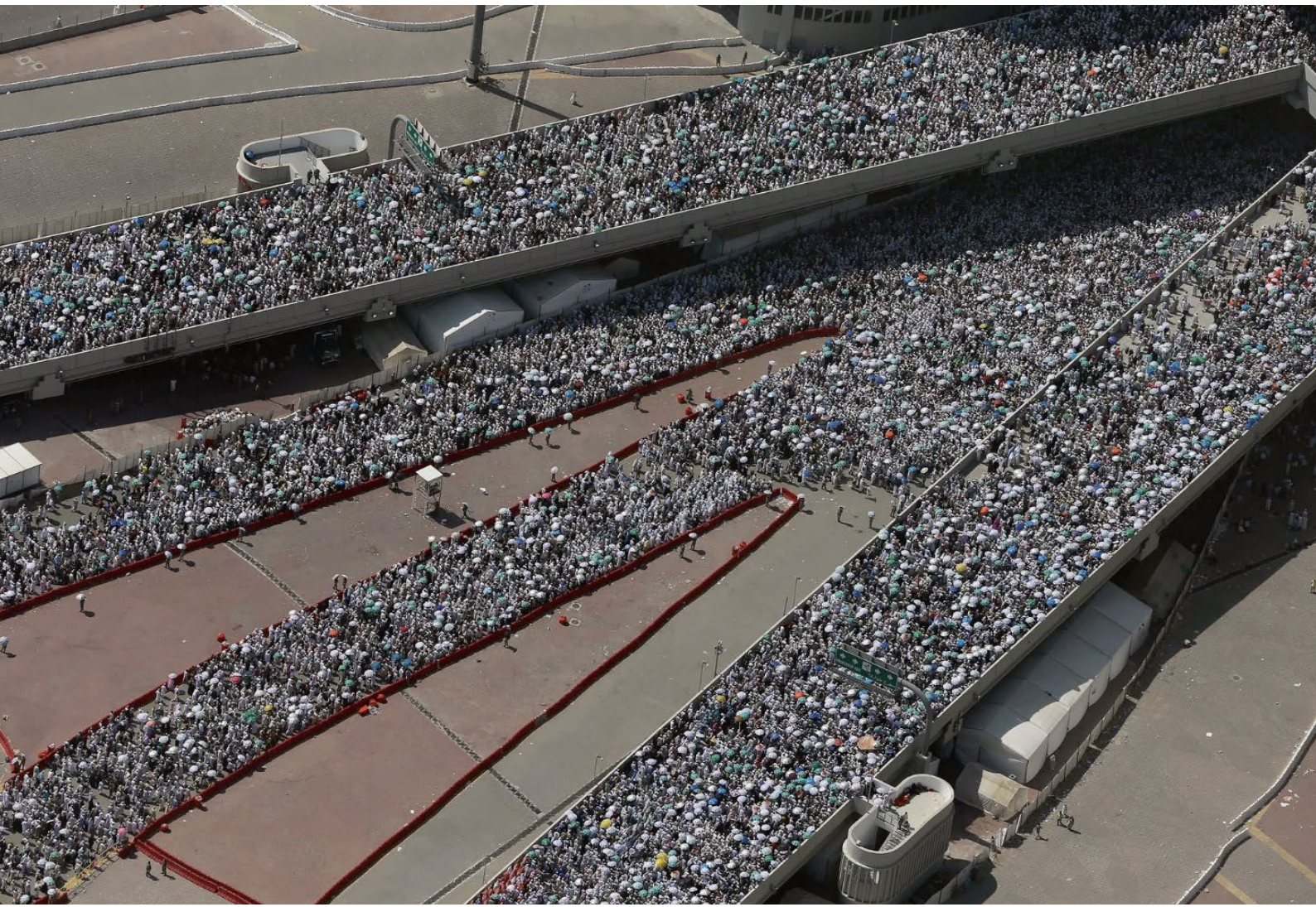
Clock Tower (Mecca Time), 2015

Laserchrome print on kodak real photopaper
182.8 × 122cm



Abraaj Al Beit Tower, 2012

Laserchrome print on kodak photopaper
140 × 200cm



Human Highway, 2012

Laserchrome print on kodak photopaper
140 × 210cm



Hajj Season, 2015

C-print

50.8 × 76.2cm

100 Found Objects

Mecca is timeless and ever-changing. The city – symbolic, physical – exists in a rapidly transforming social, urban and political context. Its identity is reconfigured and its history obscured. As its urban reality shifts, so too its status and significance for the global community of Muslims.

Collected over many years, these 100 objects tell the story of a place. Each artefact connects with memories, ideas, symbols, histories. In an attempt to get close to the reality of the place, each piece becomes a voice.



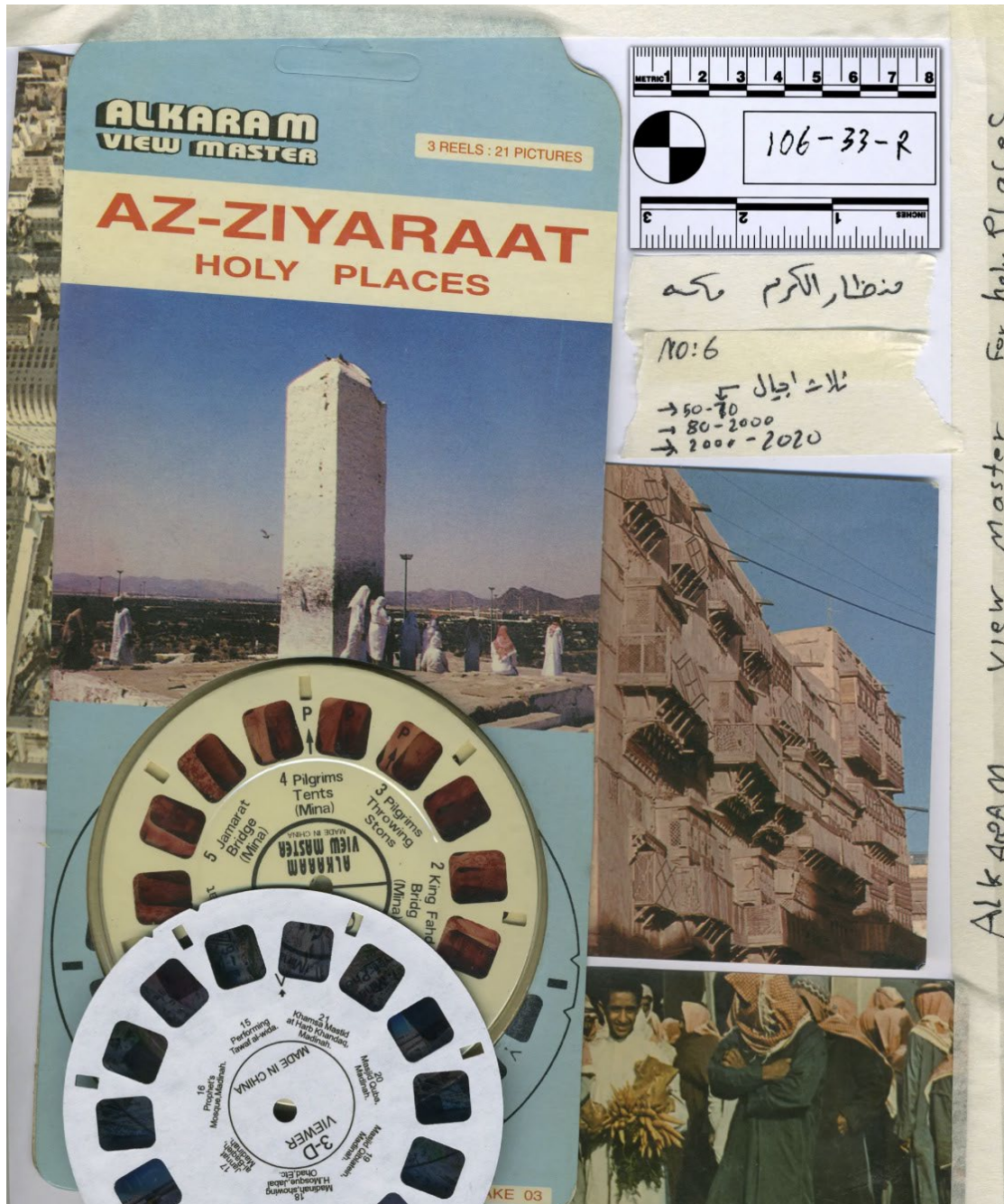
View Master I, 2014

Found in an old shop in Mahbas Al Jinn, Mecca, now demolished, 2011
1960-1980 CE 1380-1400 AH



View-Master II, 2014

A gift to the artist from his father, after he had done Hajj as a child, 1984
1980-2000 CE 1400-1421 AH



Rose Windows, 2014

A gift to the artist from his father, after he did Hajj as a child
1980 CE 1400 AH



Mirror of the two sacred places (*Mirāt al-haramain*), 2014

Found in old Meccan family home, 2015
1925 CE (date of first publication) 1344 AH



Mahmel, 2014

Donated by a family in Mecca, 2015
1853 CE 1269 AH

Mecca Windows

Collected from demolished buildings in Mecca, these colourful panes of glass belong to the disappearing fabric of the city. Objects harvested from a perpetually changing place, they provide a literal 'window' onto the past and a former way of life.



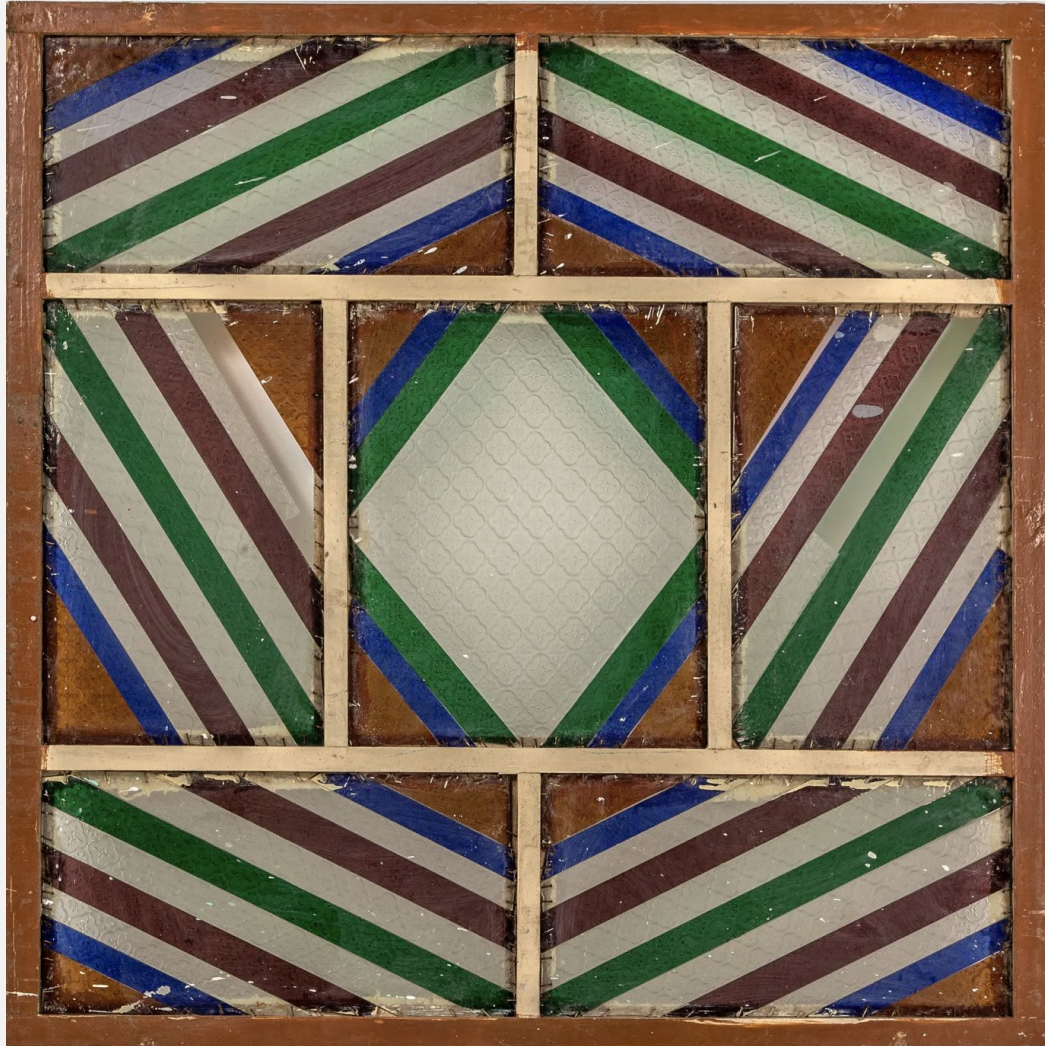
Mecca Windows, 2013

Installation of 25 Found Window Frames with Glass
Various Sizes



Mecca Windows, 2013

Found Window Frame with Glass
Various Sizes



Mecca Windows, 2013

Found Window Frame with Glass
Various Sizes

The Empty Land

The Empty Land is inspired by nineteenth-century descriptions of the American West. Here, an image of an oasis is surrounded by aerial views of silent streets, military bases, abandoned public projects, and discarded oil barrels.



The Empty Land, 2012

1/24 archival print with a silkscreen glaze
on 410gsm Somerset Tub paper
50 × 70 cm



The Empty Land, 2012

2/24 archival print with a silkscreen glaze
on 410gsm Somerset Tub paper
50 × 70 cm



The Empty Land, 2012

3/24 archival print with a silkscreen glaze
on 410gsm Somerset Tub paper
50 × 70 cm



The Empty Land, 2012

4/24 archival print with a silkscreen glaze
on 410gsm Somerset Tub paper
50 × 70 cm



The Empty Land, 2012

5/24 archival print with a silkscreen glaze
on 410gsm Somerset Tub paper
50 × 70 cm

Antenna

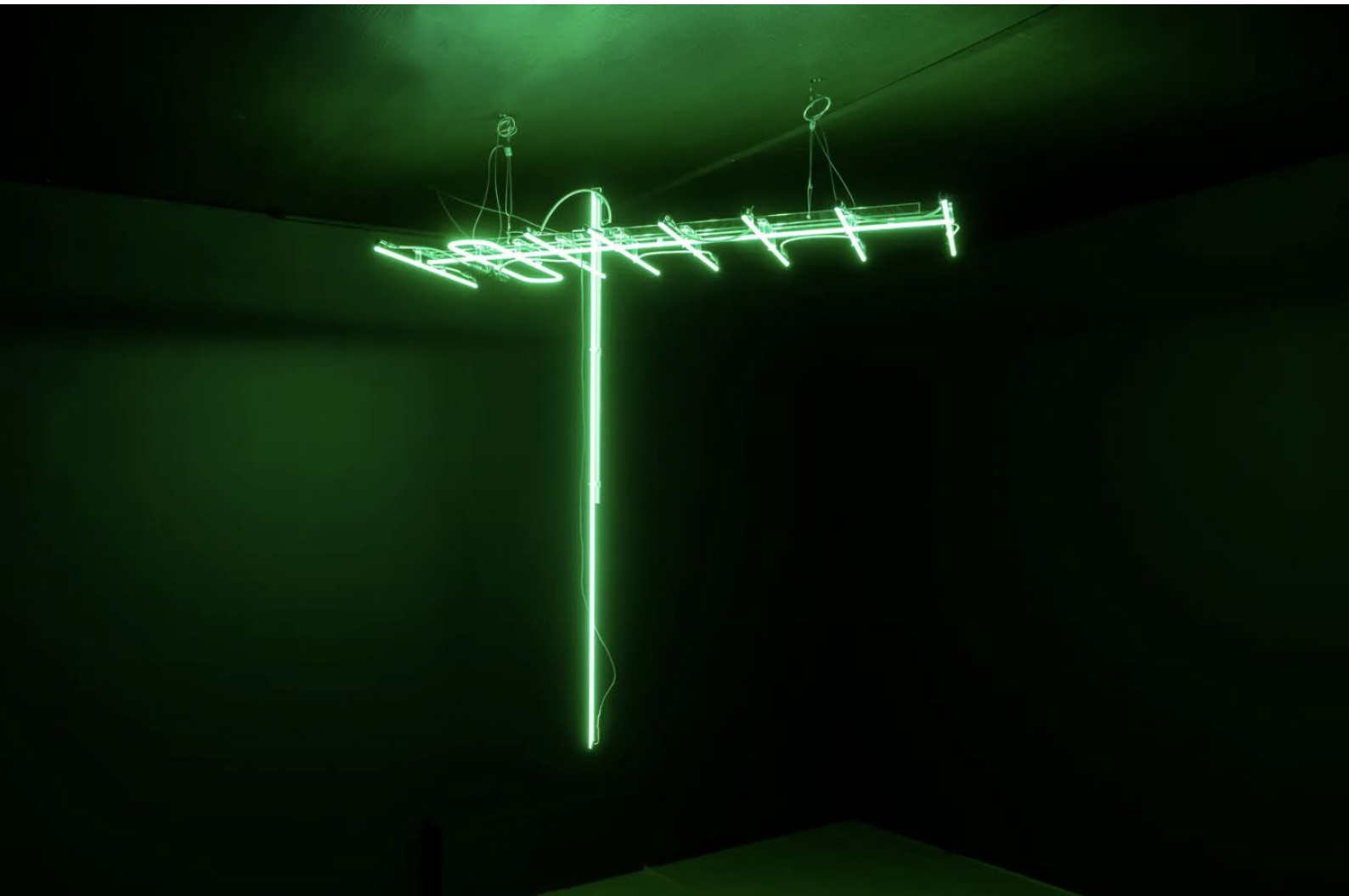
A boy stands on the flat, dusty rooftop of his family's traditional house in the south-west corner of Saudi Arabia. With all his reach he lifts a battered TV antenna up to the evening sky. He is searching, like so many of his generation in the Kingdom, for ideas, for music, for poetry – for a glimpse of a different kind of life.



Antenna (White), 2010

Neon Tube

150 × 150 × 50 cm



Antenna (Green), 2010

Neon Tube

150 × 150 × 50 cm



Antenna (Blue), 2010

Neon Tube

150 × 150 × 50 cm



Antenna (Pink), 2010

Neon Tube

150 × 150 × 50 cm

Yellow Cow

Yellow Cow is a series of interventions, performances and installations inspired by a passage in the Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow), the longest chapter in the Qur'an. It is not a work of art that seeks resolution, but an ongoing project that inserts this ancient story into a contemporary consumer society. The project has been realised as a film, a shop installation, a brand and a series of products.



Yellow Cow Cheese (Yellow), 2010

Silk-screen printed with 9 colours on 410g Summerset Tub Paper
144 × 115.5 cm



Yellow Cow Cheese (White), 2010

Silk-screen printed with 9 colours on 410g Summerset Tub Paper
144 × 115.5 cm

Solo Exhibitions

- 2025 UCCA Edge, Shanghai
- 2024 Christie's, London
- 2023 Al Muharraq, Bahrain
- 2022 Wadi AlFann, AlUla
- 2019 Brooklyn Museum, New York
- 2018 King Abdullah Economic City, Saudi Arabia
- 2018 Galleria Continua, Paris
- 2017 Galleria Continua, San Gimignano
- 2017 Alserkal Avenue, Dubai
- 2016 Smithsonian, Washington DC
- 2013 Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah
- 2010 The Vinyl Factory, London
- 2009 Artspace, Dubai
- 2006 Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, London
- 2004 King Khalid University, Abha

Biennials

- 2025 Islamic Arts Biennale
- 2019 Biennale d'Architecture d'Orléans
- 2020 Biennale d'Architecture d'Orléans
- 2014 FotoFest Biennial, Houston
- 2013 Biennale Jogja
- 2013 Sharjah Biennial
- 2012 Kochi Muziris Biennale, Kerala India
- 2011 Venice Biennale
- 2008 Cairo Biennial
- 2008 Venice Biennale
- 2007 Sharjah Biennial

Group Exhibitions

- 2025 Diriyah Art Futures, Riyadh (2025)
- 2019 Tropen Museum, Amsterdam (2019)
- 2016 Guggenheim, New York (2016)
- 2016 Haus der Kunst, Munich (2016)
- 2014 Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2014)
- 2014 New Museum, New York (2014)
- 2013 Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (2013)
- 2013 Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek (2013)
- 2013 Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City (2013)
- 2013 Ashkal Alwan in Beirut, Lebanon (2013)
- 2013 Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2013)
- 2013 Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (2013)
- 2012 Institut du Monde Arab, Paris (2012)
- 2012 British Museum, London
- 2011 Mori Art Museum, Tokyo
- 2006 British Museum, London

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GALLERY

JEDDAH | RIYADH | AL ULA