

Sarah Abu Abdullah

Portfolio 2025



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Sarah Abu Abdallah

b. 1990 in Qatif, KSA
Lives and works in Riyadh, KSA

Sarah Abu Abdallah is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice investigates the sociocultural conditions of Saudi Arabia. Abu Abdallah analyzes the Kingdom's landscape, a heterotopic allegory in her work. Working across video, painting, and installation, she navigates the intersection of the poetic and the absurd, integrating conversations with friends, family, and community into her collaborative pieces. Abu Abdallah constructs speculative spaces and narrative assemblages from fragments of reality, where disjunctions, absurdity, and awkwardness animate a distinctly local, hyperdigital visual lexicon.

Her practice unfolds in a diaristic mode, where mundane activities, shared public spaces, and the architecture of the home are recast as motifs through which she probes the subtext of everyday life. While her subjects appear disconnected at times, they operate with an abstract logic: seemingly fragmented elements coalesce to reveal a layered, shared narrative.

Recent exhibitions include *Art of the Kingdom*, curated by Diana Wechsler in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the National Museum of China, Beijing; *Feeling The Stones*, curated by Philip Tinari in collaboration with Wejdan Reda, Luan Shixuan and Neil Zhang, *Diriyah Biennale*, Riyadh, KSA, 2021; *For The First Time in a Long Time*, Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai, UAE, and Kunstverein Hamburg, Germany, 2019 (solo); *Unsettled Objects*, curated by Omar Kholeif, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE, 2019.

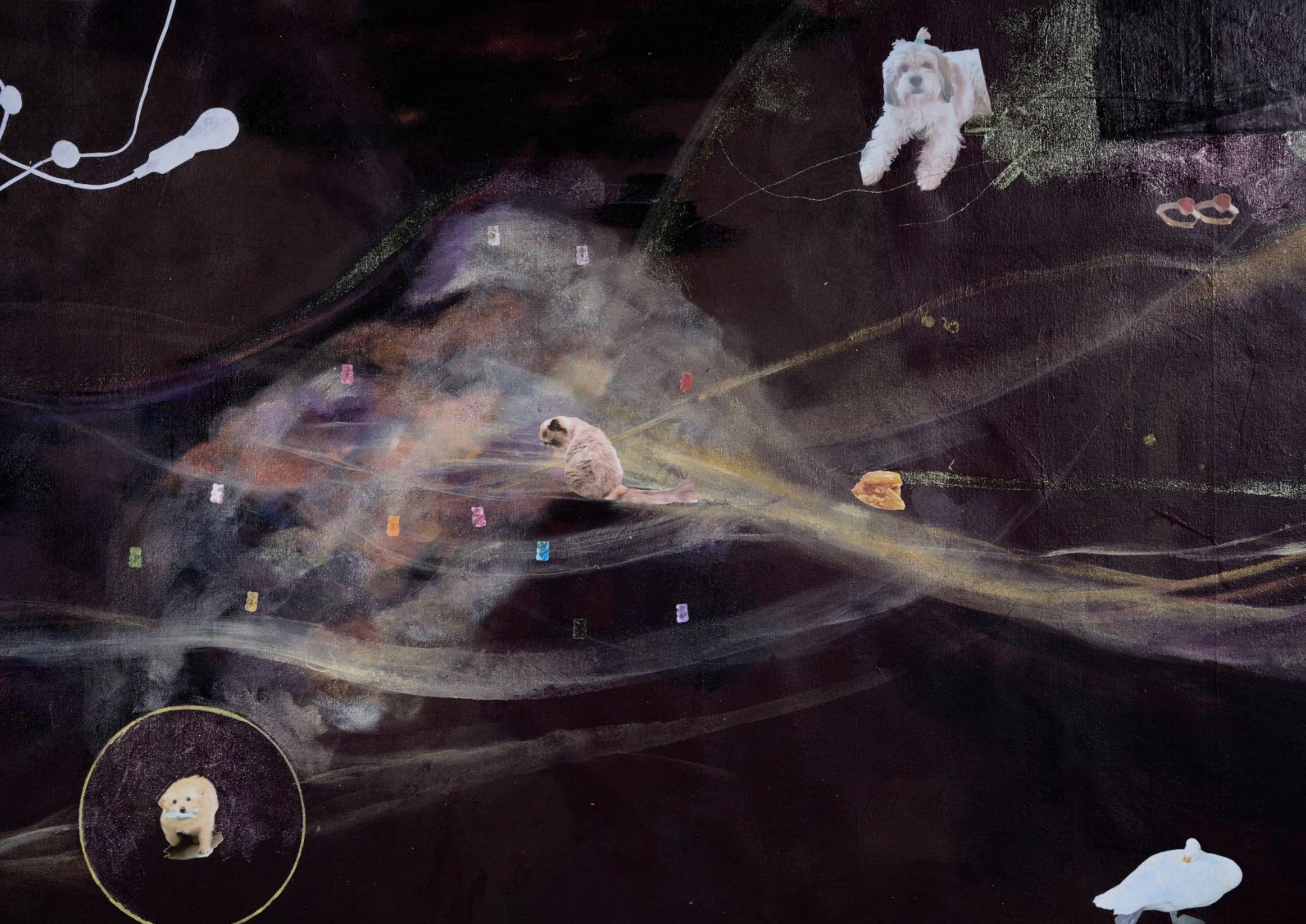
Abu Abdallah holds a Masters in Digital Media Art Studies from Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, USA, and a Bachelor of Fine Art from the College of Art and Design from the University of Sharjah, UAE. She has undertaken several residencies including Tokyo A La Carte: The Backers Foundation and AIT Residence Programme, Tokyo, Japan, and the Creative Exchange Lab residency at the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, Oregon, USA.

Sarah Abu Abdallah's work can be found in the collections of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, UAE, Jameel Arts Center, Dubai, UAE, Greenbox Museum, Amsterdam, NL, and Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE.



Art Basel Paris, 2025

Sarah Abu Abdallah presents a large-format mixed-media canvas that extends her signature bricolage approach, weaving together fragments of daily life - phone images, clipped text, and vernacular graphics - into a vivid and legible composition. Through careful layering and intuitive organization, the work transforms everyday visual debris into a cohesive surface, reflecting her ongoing interest in how personal experience, memory and contemporary image culture intersect within the rhythms of daily life.





You Ask, We Answer, 2025

Acrylic, ink and collage on canvas, Animation
175 x 5,000 cm, 5 minutes

Commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation

The sweeping 50-meter *You Ask, We Answer* (2025) unfolds as an immersive exploration of fate, longing, hope and the contradictions of existence. The painting features a projected animation, reflecting Abu Abdallah's practice of assembling narratives, rituals and relics of everyday life, alongside fragments of the incessant mediated data flows we are subject to in a hyperconnected present.

Spanning multiple rooms, the work invites viewers into a labyrinthine journey through the artist's mind. Oscillating between expansiveness, intimacy, calm and restlessness, the painting's blue landscape evokes both sky and the water. Collage, stickers and moving animations punctuate the surface, layering personal, playful elements over profound existential themes.

البيت من القدر

ارفع
ماتشاء!

كباب الشفاة السرية





Horizontal Dimension, 2021

Acrylic, ink, pencil, and papier-mache on canvas
170 x 2,500 cm

Created in collaboration with Ghada Al-Hassan
Commissioned for the inaugural Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale

Horizontal Dimensions is a sprawling dialogue between mother and daughter that charts the line between public and private. The twenty-five-meter-long canvas is suspended and draped across the site, forming its own spatial field and enveloping its surroundings. The artists employ a range of techniques, including collage, photography, print, and painting, to construct a layered visual system. Their musings on the home, memory, cosmology, astrology, and dreams are transposed into visual structures that chart an interplay between emotion and form.

Lines traverse the surface, linking fragments and mapping a network that recalls the neural pathways through which memory and imagination operate. Layered with paper, ink, newspaper, acrylic, and gesso, the saffron-yellow canvas is richly textured and embedded with private histories, unfolding from right to left as a constellation of personal narratives. *Horizontal Dimensions* is a system of coded reflections, translating the artists' intimately shared consciousness through overlapping gestures and recurring motifs.



Multitude, 2022

Singapore Biennale

Sarah Abu Abdallah's work challenges the impossible by piecing together improbable elements and connections as a gesture of hope and outlet for new narratives through mixed media. Abu Abdallah explores issues of obscurity and value, probing the social and cultural conditions of contemporary Saudi Arabia.

For The First Time In a Long Time

Art Jameel and the Kunstverein, Hamburg

The works in *For the First Time in a Long Time* may be read through Foucault's heterotopia. For Foucault, utopia signifies an idealized projection of society that exists nowhere in reality. Heterotopia, by contrast, describes a realized counterpart, spaces that exist in the world yet reflect, contest, or invert the structures of the societies that produce them. Among his examples are the cemetery, the museum, and the motel; within the contemporary Gulf, one might add the housing compound or the shopping mall.

Foucault considers such spaces as microcosms where normative social and technological orders are momentarily suspended, even as they continue to shape our perception of urban life. The heterotopia remains open-ended, resisting conceptual containment. It designates an unsettling "other space," one that overlaps with familiar reality while simultaneously disrupting it, a space capable of subverting not only social organization but also the language through which space itself is understood.





Sara Abu Abdallah carries, with subtle ease, the weight of cultural traditions and shifting identities amid ongoing economic, social, and political transformations. Her practice, often infused with a quizzical humor and an idiosyncratic visual language, emerges from the textures of everyday life in Saudi Arabia. Adopting a distinctly contemporary and quasi-feminist stance, Abu Abdallah resists the seductive clarity of the explanatory or the picturesque. Instead, she constructs a layered, rhizomatic narrative that traces the complexities of the ordinary; her everyday, our everyday.

In her visuals, virtual and physical realities intertwine, unfolding into narratives of coexistence. These compositions are populated by signs of digital communication and visual idioms: Manga drawings, microscopic imagery, and fragments drawn from Google searches, all contextualized within private, domestic spaces. They probe the intersections between the personal and the collective, between mediated and lived experience.

Abu Abdallah's work reflects on how technological interfaces such as Skype or YouTube generate new forms of community without dissolving the social, cultural, or political frameworks that define access and belonging. Her practice navigates these tensions, revealing how every form of coexistence entails a continual negotiation of categories, conventions, and norms. She exposes the fragility and fluidity of the structures that shape both individual and collective identity.



Co-Workers, 2015

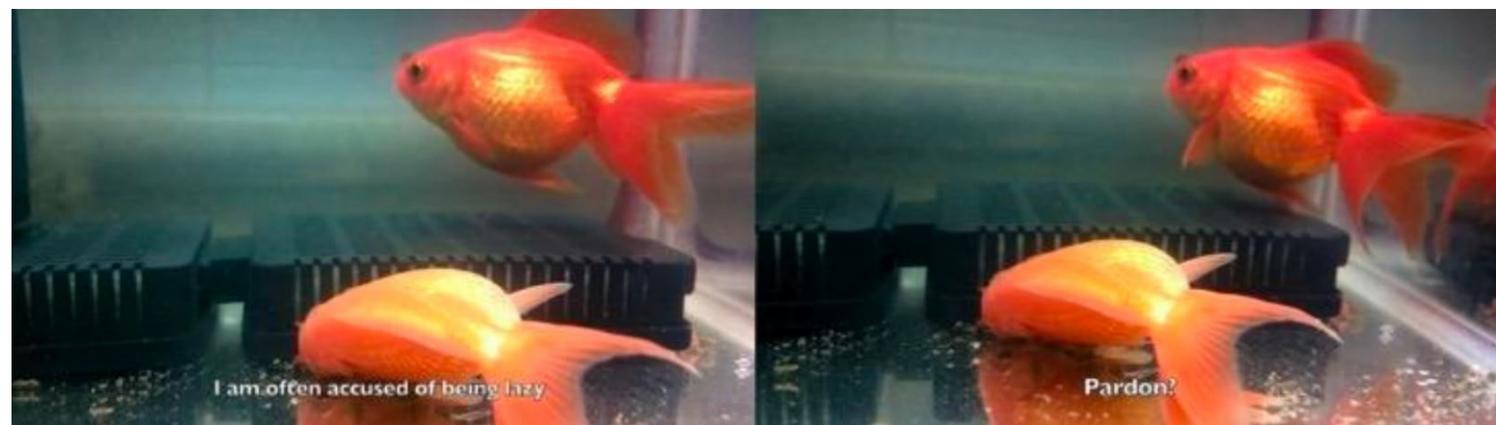
Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris

The Salad Zone, 2015

Video Installation

For abc/art berlin contemporary 2015, Sarah Abu Abdullah exhibited two video works: *The Salad Zone*; *The Turbulence of Sea & Blood*, and four prints: q-VR 01, q-VR 02, q-VR 03, and q-VR 04.

The Salad Zone uses glimpses of multiple narratives including familial domestic tensions, a juvenile dream of going to Japan, one person's tendency to smash TVs in moments of anger, and eating fish. While using scenes from the artist's surroundings and life in Saudi Arabia, like streets or malls, the work does not attempt to provide the whole picture, but instead, takes a rhizomatic approach to story telling, shedding light on shards of the everyday that act as abstracts to an underlying narrative.





Karam, 2021

Mixed Media
120x120 cm



Capacity, 2019

Mixed Media
120x120 cm

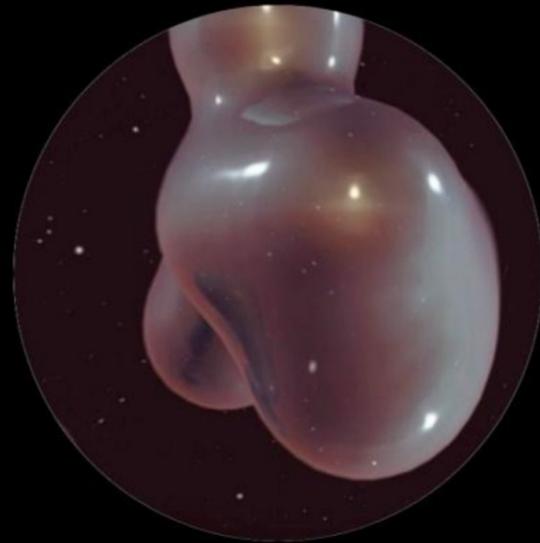


Saudi Automobile, 2014

Video

Video link

"Painting a wrecked car like icing a cake, as if beautifying the exterior would help fix the lack of functionality within the car. This wishful gesture was the only way I could get myself a car—cold comfort for the current impossibility of my dream that I, as an independent person, can drive myself to work one day"



18 Blankets, 2017

Video

18 Blankets is an immersive, experiential project through which the artist examines the absurdity of reconstructing daily life within the confines of domesticity. The work's unsettling yet compelling quality, shaped through the participation of her family and friends, reveals the intricate processes that constitute the idea of home. It traces a journey continually tangled and untangled by the uncanny presence of the familiar, where private domestic spaces become sites of both comfort and estrangement.



The House That Ate Them Whole, 2018

Three-channel Video installation

[Video link](#)

The House That Ate Them Whole, a video installation on a ten-minute loop, was commissioned for the 2018 edition of the Gwangju Biennale. The work presents a sci-fi narrative in which a house becomes the protagonist, gradually “swallowing” its residents by enveloping them in domestic objects and creating, in effect, an inescapable black hole. Told from the unusual perspective of the house as a living entity, Abu Abdallah transforms what is conventionally perceived as safe and secure into an aggressive, consuming space that devours its inhabitants.

This speculative narrative subverts conventional domestic order and probes broader questions of space, gendered social divisions, and the politics of containment. The house is both setting and character, revealing how the familiar can become threatening and how architectural and social structures shape, constrain, and consume those within them.

Education

- 2015** Master of Fine Arts in Digital Media, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), USA
- 2011** Bachelor of Fine Arts, College of Art and Design, University of Sharjah, UAE

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2026** I Stay In Pieces, ATHR Gallery, Riyadh, KSA
- 2019** For The First Time in a Long Time, Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai, UAE
- 2019** For The First Time in a Long Time, Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany
- 2017** 18 Blankets, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- 2016** The Salad Zone and Other Videos, Sarah Lawrence College, New York, USA

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2025** Sharjah Biennial 16: You Ask, We Answer, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE
- 2024** Art of the Kingdom, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and National Museum of China, Beijing
- 2024** Deceit of Men, Frustration of Women, curated by Alaa Tarabzoni, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 2023** Perceptible Rhythms/Alternative Temporalities, curated by Maya Khalil
- 2023** Noor Riyadh: Deep Waters, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 2023** Returning to a Present, Athr Gallery, AlUla, Saudi Arabia
- 2022** In the Heart of Another Country, Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany
- 2022** 7th Singapore Biennale, Singapore
- 2022** Re-appearing Imaginaries, MISK Art Institute, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 2021** Spacetoons, Curated by Zain Al Saie, Athr Gallery, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- 2021** Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale, JAX District, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 2021** Unsettled Objects, Curated by Omar Kholeif, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
- 2020** Poached, inaugural Very Public show, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 2020** Noor Riyadh, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 2019** Out of Place, Athr, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- 2019** Al Obour, Curated by Dr. Effat Abdullah Fadag, Saudi Art Council, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- 2018** Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement, Co-Curated by DIS and Andrea Bellini, Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Switzerland
- 2018** Imagined Borders, Gwangju Biennale, Asia Culture Center, South Korea
- 2018** Memories of 10 Years, Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 2017** Selected VII, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK
- 2017** Seepage/Ritual, Abraaj Art Prize Exhibition, Dubai, UAE
- 2016** Do It in Arabic, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
- 2015** CO-WORKERS, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, France
- 2015** Prospectif Cinéma: Filter Bubble, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
- 2014** Pale Fireworks, RISD Museum, Providence, USA
- 2014** Private Settings: Art After the Internet, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland
- 2014** Arab Contemporary, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark
- 2014** Rhizoma, 55th Venice Biennale, Italy
- 2013** Sharjah Biennial 11, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE

Art Fairs

- 2025** Art Basel Paris, Paris, France
- 2023** Frieze London, London, United Kingdom
- 2021** Shara Art Fair, 7th Edition, Saudi Art Council, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- 2019** Art Berlin, Berlin, Germany
- 2018** Art Dubai, Dubai, UAE
- 2018** Art Dubai, Dubai, UAE
- 2015** ABC Art Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Awards, Grants, Prizes, Residencies

- 2025** Commissioned artist for Sharjah Biennial 16, Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE
- 2023** Commissioned artist for Noor Riyadh (Riyadh Art), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 2023** Ramses Wissa Wassef Arts Center x Misk Art Institute Residency, Giza, Egypt
- 2022** Commissioned artist for 7th Singapore Biennale, Singapore
- 2020** Commissioned artist for Noor Riyadh (Riyadh Art), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 2018** Commissioned artist for Gwangju Biennale, Asia Culture Center, South Korea
- 2018** Commission for the Biennale of Moving Image from Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Switzerland
- 2018** Tokyo A La Carte: The Backers Foundation and AIT Residence Programme (The BAR), Tokyo, Japan
- 2017** Shortlisted for the Abraaj Art Prize, Dubai, UAE
- 2017** Arts Initiative Tokyo Residency, Japan
- 2017** Production Programme Residency, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
- 2017** Creative Exchange Lab, Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, Oregon, USA
- 2016** Sharjah Art Foundation Production Program Grant, Sharjah, UAE
- 2016** This Time with FEELing, White Building, London, UK (Residency)

Talks

- 2019** Kunstverein in Hamburg with curator Tobias Davids, Germany
- 2017** Panel Talk, Dubai Film Festival, Dubai, UAE
- 2014** New Voices, New Visions: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, USA
- 2013** Arts and Culture in Transformative Times, Asia Society, Open Society Foundations, New York, USA

Collections

- Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
- Greenbox Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Guggenheim Abu Dhabi
- Barakat Trust
- Jameel Arts Center

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