

Asma Bahmim

Portfolio



أثر
ATHR



Asma Bahmim

Saudi, b. 1979

Lives and works in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Asma Bahmim (b. 1979, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia) is a Saudi artist and researcher specializing in the Philosophy of Children's Art and Geospatial Art. She is a faculty member at King Abdulaziz University, where she earned her B.A. in Art Education and M.A. in Drawing and Painting. She completed her PhD in Painting and Arts at the University of Jeddah in 2018.

Bahmim's work revives the ancient tradition of miniature painting through a contemporary lens. She blends traditional iconography with modern themes, using natural inks, pigments, recycled paper, and gilding techniques to explore identity, heritage, and the human experience. Her art invites reflection on the intersection of past and present, culture and memory.

Bahmim has exhibited widely, including *After Rain*, Diriyah Biennale Foundation, Riyadh, KSA (2024); Art Basel Paris, Paris, France (2024); Abu Dhabi Art, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2024); *Fantasia* (solo exhibition), ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, KSA (2023); *Amakin*, Ithra, Dhahran, KSA (2022); 21,39 Jeddah Arts (2021); Islamic Arts Festival, Sharjah, UAE (2018); Abu Dhabi Art, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2017) and the 9th Cairo Biennale, Cairo, Egypt (2013).



Reflection, 2022

Mixed media collage
43 x 45 cm



"Fantasia: A World Between Reality and Imagination" presented Bahmim's first solo exhibition with ATHR Gallery which consisted of a series of works that cultivated dialogues between imagined creatures that evoke moral lessons absent from modern discourse.

Bahmim crafts bejeweled turtles and golden-winged foxes, using these fantastical animals to address contemporary themes, drawing on the wisdom embedded in traditional fables like those of "Kalila wa Dimna".

In this surreal realm, the tiger safeguards the cornfields, while Al-Shaheen, the keen-eyed peregrine falcon, watches over the horizon. Here, by the Moon Pond, the king of elephants engages in debate with Fairouz the rabbit, each interaction, a reflection of the age-old stories passed through generations. This exhibition interweaved heritage and popular culture, creating a miniature world rich with allegory and timeless counsel.



For Amakin, Bahmim revisits an ancient practice: the insertion of texts, often du'a (supplications), into cracks in walls or between bricks. The artist notably first engaged in this practice at her aunt's home in al-Balad. Over the years, she has collected fragments of building materials: distinctive pieces of bleached coral, stone, and wood from the midst of the old city's remnants.

Bahmim assembles these salvaged pieces to create a wall punctuated by crevices, into which she inserts her own messages on folded paper adorned with handwritten texts or gold leaf. She describes this process as a way to preserve words imbued with the energy of the place. The artist lays them to rest within the folds of Red Sea coral stones, laden with fossilized shells that echo her sentiments when standing atop the walls of al-Balad's historic houses. Bahmim reflects on the profound connection she feels to this space:

"Here is where my mother walked. Here is where I heard the laughter of my aunts... Oh Attarin Street, you still bloom with broad-leaf thyme plants, and the smell of the stones remains unchanged, as the house lantern continues to shine"



Notes in Time, 2024

Mixed media collage
90 x 80 cm



The Woman and the Devil, featured at Art Basel Paris, 2024

For Paris Plus 2024, Bahmim curated a collection featuring a blend of unique works and specially-commissioned pieces. This collection encourages audiences to engage with intimately human themes that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries.

Bahmim presents a theater of femininity. The artist explores the layered subject through her cultural context whilst asserting that the experience transcends all boundaries. Her artworks center traditional methods, ironically marrying them with a contemporary feminist focus. She employs her iconic style of miniature painting and sculptural use of layered textures at a larger scale than that of her previous works. The artist intentionally evokes Arnaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*; the characters portrayed within the artworks collide with one another on a singular stage, across one storyline. Bahmim places the viewer onstage alongside them, wherein they navigate the feminine experience and transcend the boundaries of the individual to attain universality.



4 Marriage Contracts II, 2024

Mixed media collage

90 x 72 cm



Installation of Bahmim's wall at Abu Dhabi Art, 2024

For Abu Dhabi Art, Bahmim's use of media and motifs is intentional and meditative, as she repurposes pre-existing elements in an attempt to retain their three-dimensional nature. The artist marries concepts and materials, ensuring that the experiences they reflect are not flattened – she retains their complexity.

Bahmim crafts an intriguing experience that introduces a traditionally Eastern artistic approach whilst evoking a sense of familiarity within the Western audience. Echoes of Nancy Spero and Georgia O'Keeffe permeate the presentation in a form novel in both technique and sociocultural precedence.



Acquired by the Alqinneh Collection

Al Balad Stone, 2022

Gold and natural pigment, water colour on palm paper and stone printmaking
45.0 x 60.0 cm



Acquired by Art Jameel

Art Problem (Dreams Philosopher Series), 2016

Gouache, hand painting, collage, gold leaf and silk-screened pigment on paper
23.0 x 31.0 cm



Acquired by the John Studzinski Private Collection

Code Blue, 2022

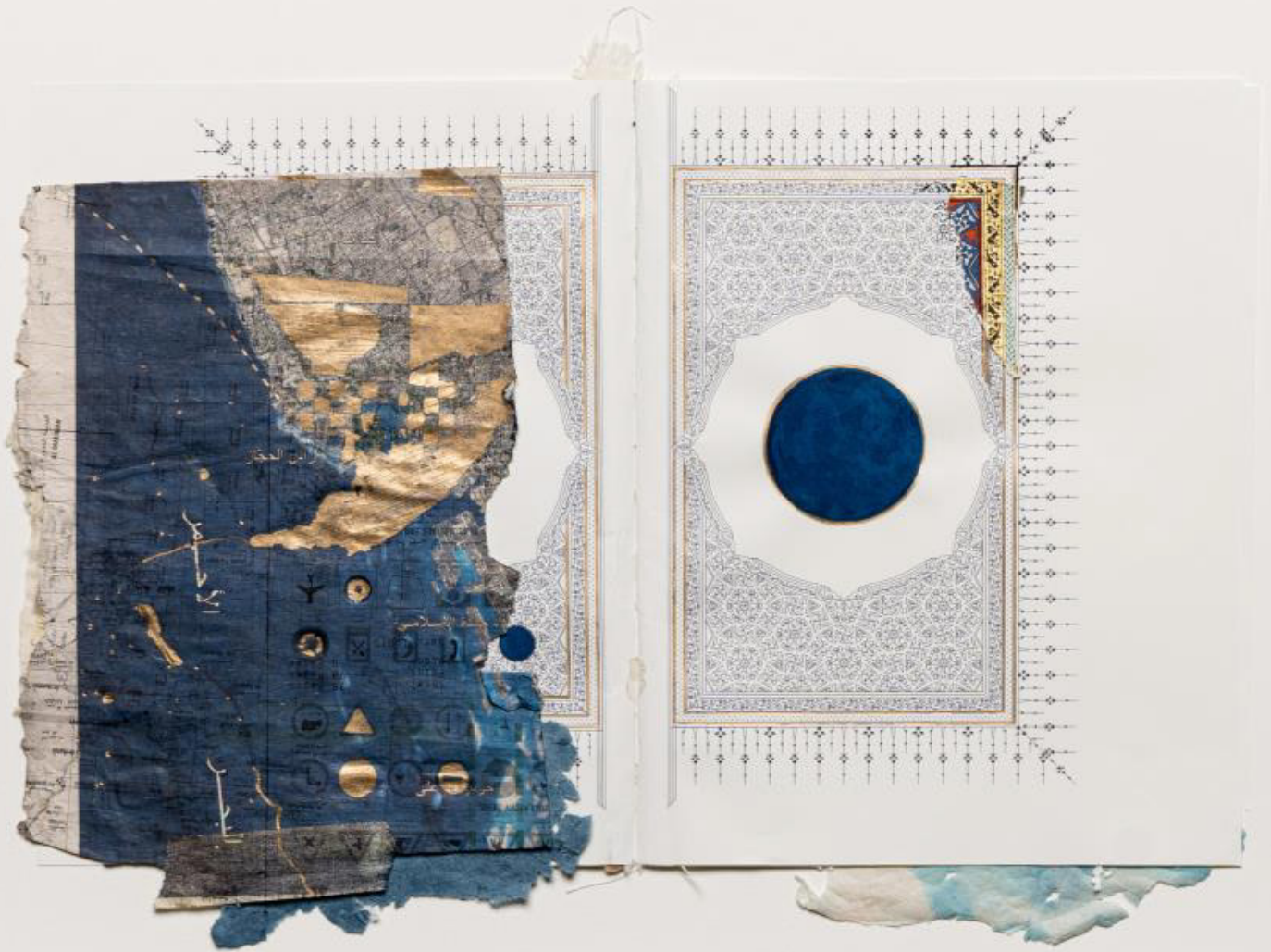
Mixed media collage: Blue indigo dyes and 22k water gold on natural mulberry paper
100.0 x 65.0 cm



Acquired HRH MM Al Nahyan Private Collection

*When I Lose You from the
Map of My Heart series, 2020*

Gouache, hand painting, gold leaf on panama paper and handmade paper
40.0 x 35.0 cm



Acquired by the Alqinne Collection

Blue and Red Sea, 2022

Gold, hand painting, natural blue flower pigment on Italy paper, panama paper.
45.0 x 60.0 cm



Acquired by Catherine Futter

Out the Book, 2022

Mixed media collage
90.0 x 65.0 cm

ASMA BAHMIM

Saudi, b. 1979

Lives and works in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

EDUCATION

2018 PhD in painting and Arts from the University of Jeddah

2008 Master's degree in drawing and painting, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, KSA.

2000 Bachelor of Arts, Fine Arts, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, KSA.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2026 *Here, Now*, curated by Noran Reda, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, KSA

2023 *Fantasia*, curated by Yasmeeen Tukan, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, KSA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2024 *Kalila wa Dimna*, the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, UAE

After Rain, Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale, Riyadh, KSA

Dubai Calligraphy Biennale, Dubai Design District, Dubai, UAE

2022 *Amakin*, Ithra, Al Dhahran, KSA

Amakin, curated by Venetia Porter, 21,39 Jeddah Arts, Saudi Arabia

2021 *The Secrets of Alidades*, curated by Fabien Danesi, 21,39 Jeddah Arts, KSA

2018 *How many stars in the sky?*, Islamic Arts Festival 21st exhibition, Sharjah, UAE

2017 Galleries Week: Warehouse 421, Mina Zayed, Abu Dhabi, UAE

2016 *Dreams & Memory*, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, KSA

2013 *The State of the Art*, Al-Mansouria Foundation, 9th Cairo Biennale, Cairo

ART FAIRS

2025 Abu Dhabi Art, Abu Dhabi, UAE

ReA Arte Fair, Milan, Italy

2024 Abu Dhabi Art, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Paris + Art Basel, Paris, France

2017 Art Dubai, Dubai, UAE

Abu Dhabi Art, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Shara, Jeddah, KSA

2016 Abu Dhabi Art, Abu Dhabi, UAE

COLLECTIONS

Art Jameel Collection

Al Jaidah Collection

Tamer Private Collection

أثر
ATHR
GALLERY

JEDDAH | RIYADH | ALULA