



Across a Velvet Horizon
Nada Baraka and Esraa Elfeky
Dual Exhibition

20 February - 8 April 2025
Tabari Artspace,
DIFC

Tabari Artspace presents *Across a Velvet Horizon*, a collaborative exhibition by Egyptian artists Nada Baraka and Esraa Elfeky. The exhibition orbits a sense of incompleteness, an expanse of the unknown that speaks to the human impulse to make sense of the past - to impose coherence on chaos, and create stories that mend the gaps in what we know. Here, history is unfixed and left open to question. Viewers are invited to sit with uncertainty, to embrace the search even when the full picture remains tantalisingly out of reach.

Stepping into the exhibition space feels like entering an unfamiliar archive, a space where fragments of history hover, waiting to be pieced together. Visitors become both archaeologists and storytellers, reconstructing meaning from what remains. The works hint at an unspoken event - a rupture - leaving the audience to work backwards, deciphering the traces left behind and the gaps they refuse to fill.

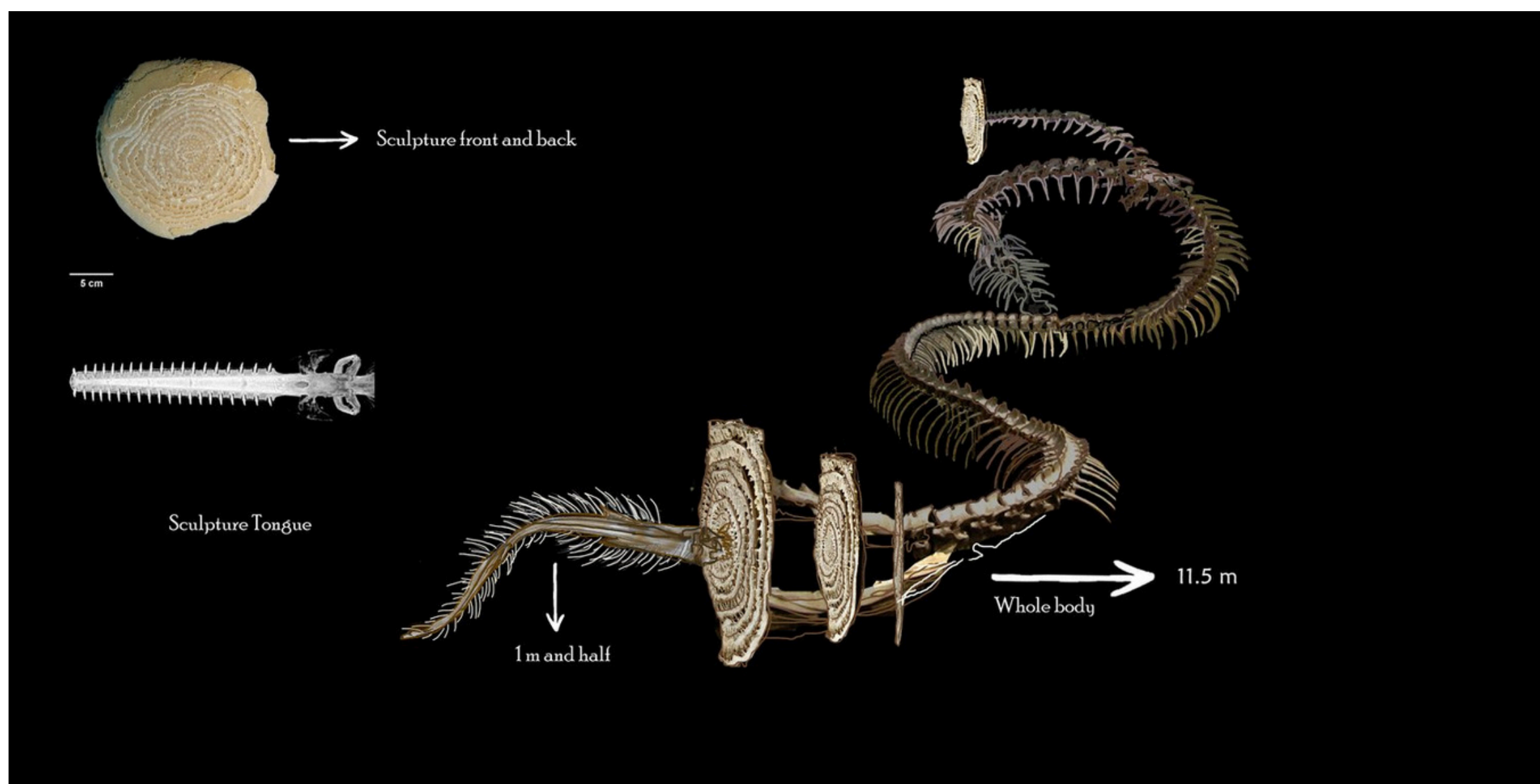
An atmosphere of mystery and discovery permeates the curation. Baraka's evocative paintings and Elfeky's tactile sculptures offer-up a dreamlike haze, where memory feels fragile and incomplete. They offer a visual narrative that blurs personal, cultural, and environmental histories, occupying a space between the real and the imagined. Rather than simply reflecting history the works on view confront its silences. Baraka's canvases wrestle with memory as mutable, shifting under the weight of interpretation, while Elfeky's sculptures suggest the land itself as a vessel of stories - holding onto lives long past, yet yielding only fragments.



Baraka's paintings act as portals into fractured, surreal landscapes. Inspired by her late grandfather Ahmed Ali Kamal's archive, her acrylic and oil canvases incorporate elements like postcards heavy with hidden emotions, their texts faintly discernible beneath vivid layers of paint. Works such as *The Edge of Saudade* and *The Colour of Why* exude an aching sense of longing, as though the past is slipping through one's fingers. Baraka describes her process as engaging with the 'antilogic' of dreams, where memories are reimagined into surreal narratives. A wooden structure within the gallery serves as both sculpture and metaphor - a map inviting viewers to navigate these fragmented stories and construct connections of their own.



Elfeky's sculptures, in dialogue, evoke artefacts from a lost world. Inspired by a desert plot in Cairo that was once submerged beneath the sea, her soft, fabric-covered forms resemble fossils or the remnants of ancient organisms. Her largest work, *The Blue Wadi Resurrection*, sprawls across the gallery floor like a relic unearthed from deep time, in contrast with works in smaller scale. Threads, leather, and fabric intertwine to create forms poised between decay and renewal, extinction and adaptation. Suspended sculptures hover in liminal spaces, as though caught between worlds, waiting to be deciphered.



Across a Velvet Horizon resists offering answers, instead provoking questions and inviting the audience to engage with uncertainty. How do we reconstruct history from fragments? What stories are hidden in the traces left behind? And how do we come to terms with what is missing?

-ENDS-

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ABOUT NADA BARAKA

[Nada Baraka](#)'s work exists in a state of flux, oscillating between abstraction and surrealism in her paintings and installations. At its core, her process narrates experiences through expressionist and surrealist methods, where visceral forms gain ever-changing contexts to challenge the obvious and extract meaning from absurdity.

Currently, her focus is on the diverse personal archive of her late grandfather, Egypt's former Minister of Irrigation, engaging with site-specific presentations that explore the decontextualisation of archival materials and spaces.

Themes of connecting past and present, reflecting on social environments, and examining private versus public material underlie her work.

Based in Egypt, Baraka holds a BA in Visual Art from the American University in Cairo and an MA from Central Saint Martins, London. She has exhibited widely, with solo shows in Cairo and international group exhibitions. In 2023, she received the Anna Award from Latitudes Online and launched The Valley of Walls, selected for an Apex Art exhibition.



ABOUT ESRAA ELFEKY

[Esraa Elfeky](#) is an Egyptian multimedia artist who works with video, sculpture, drawing, sound, and installation. Her work unearths the complex relationships that exist between the natural world, the body, time, and the urban environment. For the past six years, Elfeky has navigated themes such as the apocalypse, decay, and resurrection as an ongoing exploration of her native country. The often overlooked landscape of the desert specifically, becomes a site for imagination, solitude, storytelling, and reflection on both historical and political events.

Elfeky is the recipient of grants and awards such as the special mention award of the 5th GABES CINEMA Festival, the Wijhat travel grant- El Mawred, Gypsum bursaries, Pro Helvetia artist residency, the Warehouse421 production grant, the International Summer Academy of Fine Arts grant in Salzburg 2020, and the 25th Youth Salon Prize for Installation Art at Cairo's Opera House. Her work has been exhibited worldwide at venues such as W139/Netherlands, 9th Biennale Gherdeina/Italy, Kunstverein Hamburg/Germany. GABES CINEMA FEN festival/Tunisia, Mena Film festival/Canada, MMAG Foundation/Jordan, Warehouse421/UAE, Townhouse Gallery/ Egypt.



ABOUT TABARI ARTSPACE

In 2003, at a time when the UAE art scene was still nascent, [Tabari Artspace](#) art gallery was founded by Maliha Tabari in Dubai. With a twofold aim of preserving histories of craft emerging from the MENA region, while elevating young artists in the Gulf on a global stage, Tabari Artspace's forward-looking vision situates itself in the contemporary art world's dynamic moment. Tabari, who was trained as an artist herself, has re-envisioned the art gallery since 2017 to bridge the storied past with an ever-changing present, with a program that juxtaposes the breadth of Arab heritage with the promise emerging artists hold for the future.

Today the gallery is constantly embracing new discourses and amplifying the voices of women and youth. Tabari Artspace is committed to documenting and showcasing art practices in MENA, positioning them on a par with those on the international art scene. Its roster of artists have been exhibited in institutions and biennials including but not limited to: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Institut du Monde Arabe, Sharjah Art Museum, Venice Biennale, Sharjah Biennial, São Paulo Biennial, and are part of collections such as the Barjeel Art Foundation, British Museum, Dalloul Art Foundation, The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Kamel Lazaar Foundation, Lyon Biennale, The Khalid Shoman Collection, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and Yale University Art Gallery.

The foundations for this international outlook began with the realization that artists from the Arab region were noticeably absent in the West. Tabari's approach was to represent artists who were creating unique visual vocabularies in their medium and particular contexts. In Egypt, this included the late Adam Henein in sculpture and Omar El-Nagdi in abstract expressionism. In Lebanon, she worked with Hussein Madi before he became hailed for his talent of melding Cubism with Islamic abstraction. Tabari has also launched the careers of artists such as Saudi Arabian artist Ahmed Mater, Iranian artist Farhad Moshiri, Syrian artist Louay Kayyali, and Egyptian artists Mohamed Abla and Adel Siwi, before they became influential. By bridging mid-career artists with emerging talent, Tabari Artspace has succeeded in building an international collector base interested in the region's evolving artistic production across generations.

Moving fluidly between a platform for exhibition-making and artist mentorship, Tabari Artspace has taken an in-depth focus on GCC-specific, female-centered narratives, increasingly working with Kuwaiti, Emirati and Saudi artists such as Alymamah Rashed, Maitha Abdalla, Al Maha Jarallah and Lulwah Al Homoud. Tabari Artspace's communal spirit extends to its all-women team, which nurtures and elevates artists who are overlooked at home, placing them in a broader historical context.

Now in its second decade of operation, the artists shown at Tabari Artspace offer a living visual archive of social change, contested borders and aesthetic movements in the region at large. Grounded in the cosmopolitan city of Dubai with a branch in Cromwell Place in London since 2015, the art gallery lends visibility to its artists through international shows and residencies, as well as creative collaborations with other spaces. In line with its research-driven approach of enabling artists to grow, Tabari Artspace also functions as an incubator. It has recently partnered with the revamped boutique hotel La Serena in Forte Dei Marmi, launching an artist residency that serves as part-creative sanctuary, part-maker's studio. Located near neighboring marble and stone foundries, this art space offers sites of material exploration that resonate with the art gallery's emphasis on contemporary craft.

TABARI

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