



The Power of Intention
Curated by Bebe Leone

6 March – 1 April, 2025
Villa Cramer, Brera District, Milan

Participating Artists:
Alymamah Rashed, Bechir
Boussandel, Chafa Ghaddar,
Maitha Abdalla, Malik
Thomas, Nasser Almulhim,
Samo Shalaby.

La Serena Forte dei Marmi
(Summer 2025)

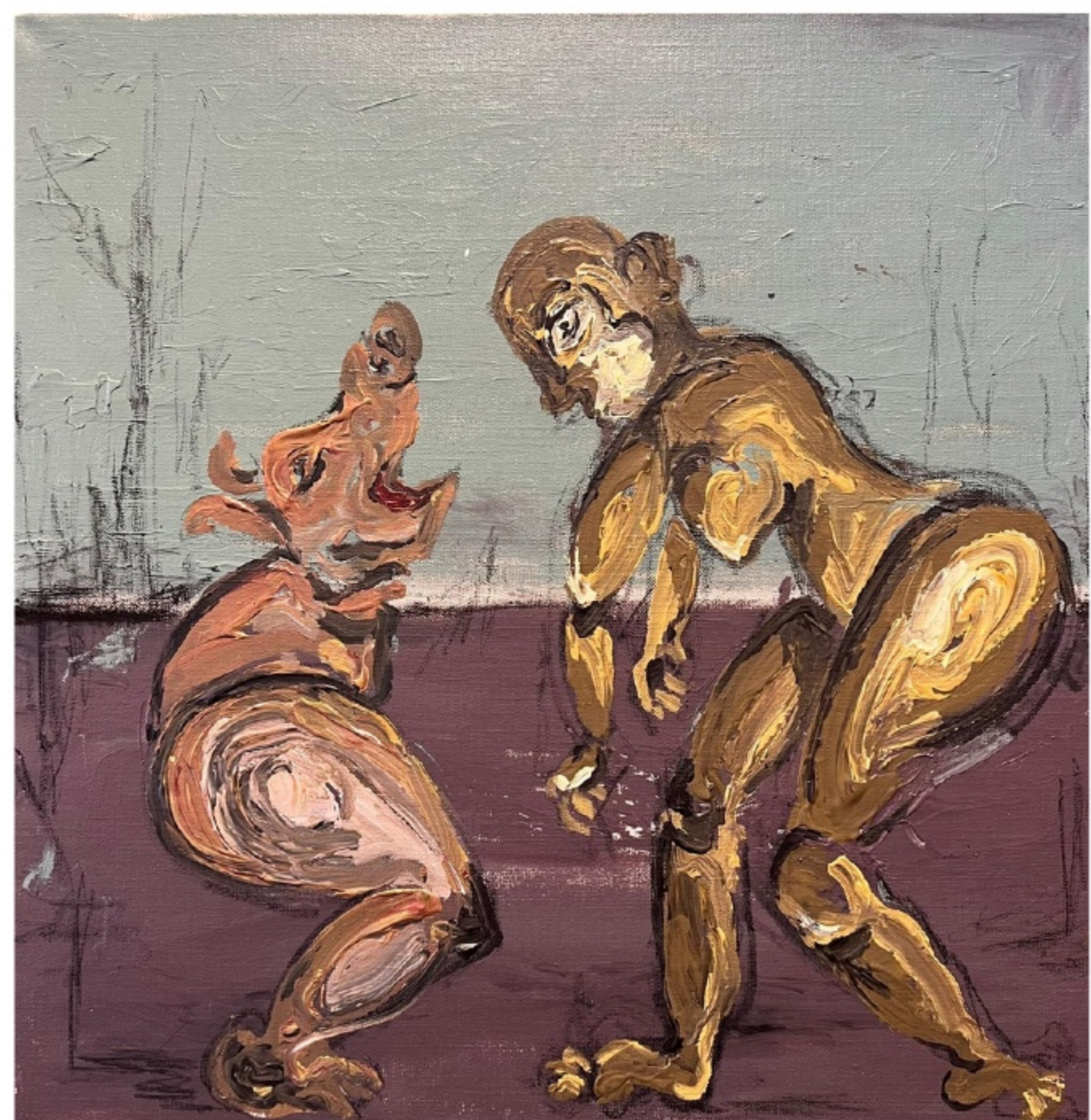
For over two decades, **Tabari Artspace** has championed MENA artists, amplifying often-overlooked narratives and showcasing the region's art scene to an international audience. The gallery is dedicated to artists who embrace fine art traditions, valuing a hand-touch approach across diverse mediums, from painting to sculpture.

As part of its mission to inspire the next generation of visionaries through immersive experiences, **Tabari Artspace** hosts a residency in collaboration with **La Serena Hotel** in Forte dei Marmi—an establishment deeply committed to the arts. The residency programme provides a unique platform for aspiring artists to refine their practice, offering a dedicated studio space, a serene environment, and ample resources for creative immersion along the striking Italian coastline. Residents produce and exhibit new works while opening their studios to guests, cultivating visibility, dialogue, and international engagement.

The concept of the talisman lies at the core of this exhibition. Historically, talismans have been objects imbued with purpose—created not only to protect but also to empower and guide. Unlike passive symbols of luck, they demand intent and action. The artists featured in *The Power of Intention* channel this ethos, treating their creative processes as acts of navigation through identity, memory, and spirituality while offering a timely reflection on how art responds to personal and collective challenges. The works in the exhibition collectively meditate on the role of creativity in navigating uncertainty. Created during 2024, a year marked by global flux and challenges, these pieces are united by their shared sentiments of optimism.



Nasser Almulhim's rhythmic paintings explore the dynamic between geometric and organic forms, creating a visual language that speaks to connection, self-reflection, and healing. Similarly, Maitha Abdalla explores identity through anamorphic characters set in intimate, often theatrical spaces. Her works capture the tension and vulnerability inherent in self-discovery.



Alymamah Rashed's surreal canvases examine her connection to spirituality, nature, and daily life, with expressive eyes serving as windows into reflections on universality and transcendence. Her work invites viewers into a deeply personal yet widely resonant introspection. In contrast, Chafa Gaddar's frescoes embrace fragility as a source of strength. Her delicate, time-intensive process transforms fleeting moments of creation and memory into enduring metaphors for the human experience.



Bechir Boussandel's luminous canvases evoke boundless spaces where conventional boundaries dissolve. Through bold and transformative use of colour, his works offer a sense of freedom and limitless possibility. Adding yet another dimension, **Malik Thomas** explores the male figure through a meditative lens, blending themes of desire and spirituality. His paintings reflect on intimacy and the intersections between human connection and the divine.



Samo Shalaby infuses the exhibition with his ability to traverse antiquity, surrealism, and grotesque aesthetics through a modern lens. Drawing on painting and photography, Shalaby melds motifs from disparate decades to construct worlds that feel both familiar and enigmatic. His works, steeped in symbolism and storytelling, challenge dichotomies, blending dreamlike narratives with sharp cultural critiques.



Just like a talisman transcends its physical form to embody personal empowerment, the visual language presented in the exhibition inspires a shift toward optimism and a renewed sense of collective purpose.

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For interviews and **MENA:** Laura@TabariArtspace.com
press enquiries: **EUROPE:** Rosanna@AnnScott.co.uk

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.

ABOUT ALYMAMAH RASHED

Visual artist [Alymamah Rashed's](#) surrealist paintings investigate the discourse of her own body as a Muslima Cyborg of the post-internet generation; fluctuating between the east and the west.

Rashed's notion of the Muslima Cyborg unites the fleshed body, the thobe, and a combination of the two which comes to form a third space - the one that she emits onto her canvas. Rashed engages with the cyborg not as a mechanical object but in the sense of spiritual intelligence, as a motor, or a form of technology, as opposed to artificial intelligence or programming. Referencing late Algerian modernist pioneer Baya Mahieddine's idiosyncratic form of autobiographical portraiture, her art negotiates her female subjectivity, regional folklore and the every day banal objects that Rashed encounters as well as the rapid social shifts that she has witnessed such as the rapid industrialisation of the Gulf region.

Rashed received her MFA in Fine Arts at Parsons School of Design in 2019 and her BFA in Fine Arts at The School of Visual Arts in 2016. She participated in various exhibitions in New York City including the Czech Center, Parsol Projects, and The New School.

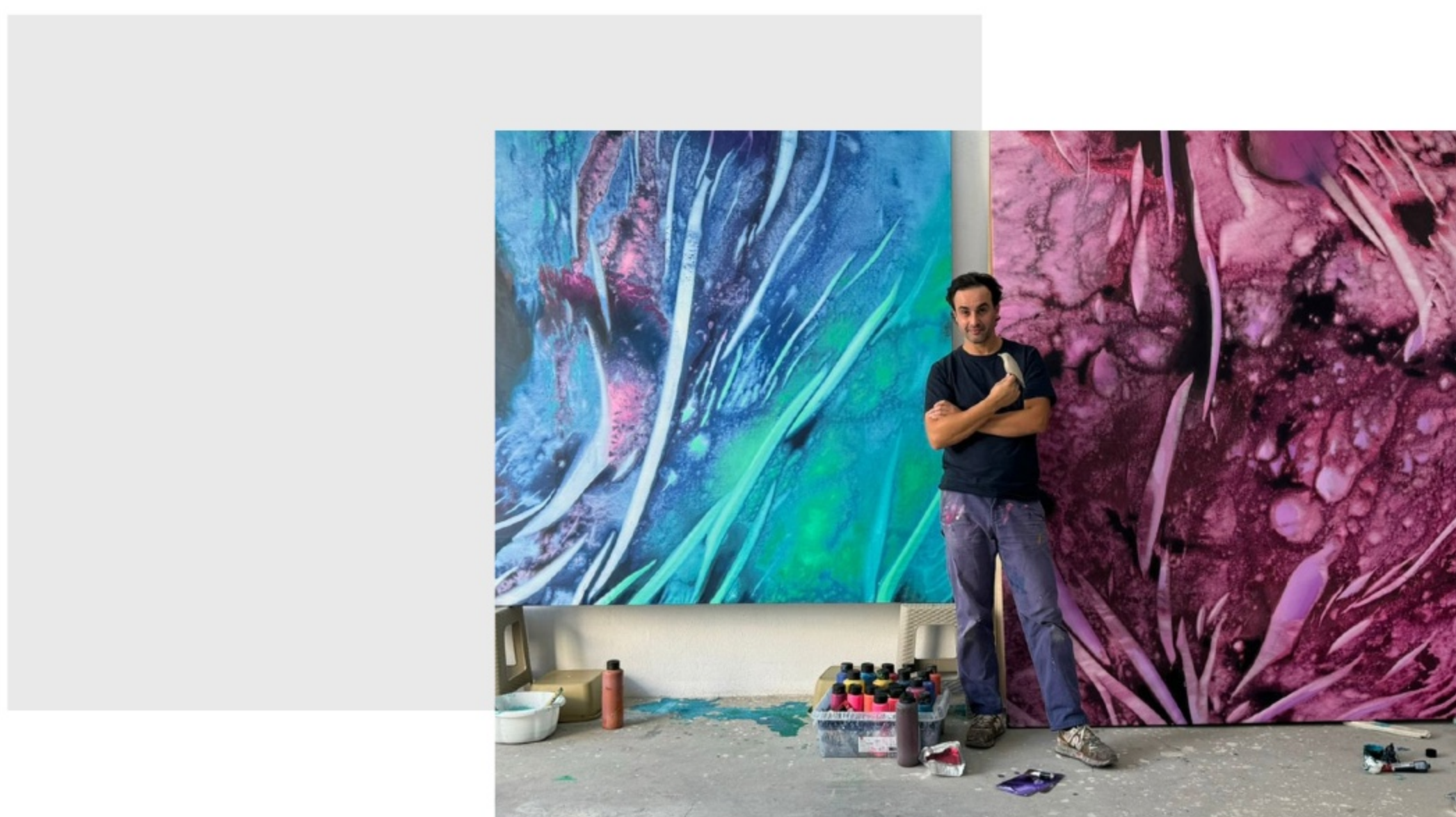
She is a recipient of the Masters Scholarship and the Merit Scholarship program by the Kuwait Ministry of Higher Education. She was also a fellow at the Professional Development Initiative Program sponsored by the National U.S-Arab Chamber of Commerce, Kuwait Ministry of Higher Education, Embassy of Kuwait, and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences.



ABOUT BÉCHIR BOUSSANDEL

[Béchir Boussandel's](#) poetic space combines ornament, the diffusion of light and the miniature portrait. In his painting, the image of the world is babelized at pleasure. As places that are both empty and inhabited, the artist's colourful and moving sand dunes are scattered with lonesome protagonists who echo each other in the vastness of the landscape. Anachorites who never meet, solitary in their crossing of the desert on their moving plots of land, these few characters extracted from multiple environments are arranged and isolated on the canvass as in a nursery rhyme : the dog, the horse and the palm tree; the bag, the Bedouin and the stick. Because of their scale and the precision of their construction, they are, so to speak, the figurines of a board game posing serenely and called to be moved. Except that the game is free of any logic. At times an element repeats itself identically, like an anomaly reminding us of the unreality of these lands made of decoys. Physics is not the law either if we are to believe the polyfocal diagram in which geographical birds-eye views and small full-length portraits are combined. This onirogenic dimension is attested to by the psychedelic range of the backgrounds, gradations of light coming from dawn or dusk and magnifying the often contrasting shadows of the figures. The motionless, sometimes hieratic attitude of the latter is treated in a polished touch, and contrasts with the hypnotism of the clay backgrounds painted with large brushes in a physical relationship to the colour.

Within these paintings, the various objects are as small and defined as the space is large and uncertain. Here, the absence of a horizon, freezing the image in time and space, is just as much a matter of metaphysical painting as it is Islamic ornament. A fanciful cartography whose treatment echoes the aspective figurations of the Nile valley in ancient Egypt. As the Egyptians settled down, they developed an iconography of the landscape that emphasised human activities rather than nature. Among others, the kemet ("black earth" which receives the Nile flood), the mehou ("marsh"), the dechret (desert, "the red", "the ochre"), the ouhat (oasis) can be distinguished. In his pseudo-topographical figuration, Béchir Boussandel also denotes, as much as he fractures it, an apprehension of the territory by those who inhabit it, discover it, exploit it.



ABOUT CHAFA GHADDAR

[Chafa Ghaddar](#) was born in Lebanon and currently lives in Dubai. She graduated from ALBA, Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts, where she earned her Bachelor degree in Fine Arts in 2007 and her Master's degree in Visual Arts in 2009. In 2012, she attended an intensive course in fresco and traditional painting techniques in Florence, Italy.

While developing a career in wall painting and surface finishing, she explores the use of fresco in contemporary practices as well as other processes, and works equally with murals, painting, drawing, photography and mixed media. She executes site-specific and public art works and has participated in several collective exhibitions between Beirut, Dubai, New York, Brussels and Verona, Italy. She was awarded the Boghossian Art Prize for painting in 2014, and was artist in residence at the Villa Empain in Brussels in October and November 2015.

Ghaddar had her debuting Solo show "The Visit" at Galerie Tanit, Beirut in 2018, followed by "Cacti in a daydream" in 2021. She has been selected by Tashkeel Studio as part of their Critical Practice Program 2018/2019 and exhibited with them "Recesses", her first solo show in the UAE.

Chafa was commissioned to produce a site-specific work for the 16th Lyon Biennale "Manifesto of Fragility" curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath.



ABOUT MAITHA ABDALLA

Emirati multi-disciplinary artist, [Maitha Abdalla's](#), practice combines film, photography, sculpture, painting, drawing and performance.

Abdalla harnesses the performative and constructed character of the theatre to tackle themes that range from folklore and mythology to gender, social conditioning and psychology. For the artist, the theatre is a space where she might confront and destabilize that which she has encountered in her social world, her imaginations, memories and fantasies at an objective distance. The artist's fantastical scenes shift between abstraction and representation and are charged with drama and melancholy. Abdalla's art forms an ongoing investigation into the self. She constructs characters that embody a distinct vector of her persona often constrained within tight domestic spaces that expose their vulnerability.

For Abdalla, her process is a continuation of the performance. She employs a bodily approach to painting, often applying dense layers of oil and acrylic paint with her fingertips and tracing around her own figure with gestural smears of charcoal.



ABOUT MALIK THOMAS JALIL

[Malik Thomas Jalil](#) (b. Kent, UK) is a visual artist based between Amman, Jordan, and London. His practice spans painting and textile printmaking, with both disciplines informing his approach to materiality, surface, and form. With a background in fashion print, Thomas's early exposure to textiles as a medium for drawing and dyeing laid the foundation for his artistic exploration.

At the core of his work is an intimate engagement with desire, centering the male form within the canvas as a venerated subject. Drawing from traditions of historical iconography and Mesopotamian clay reliefs, he constructs layered, confessional narratives that reflect his personal landscapes of longing and devotion. Through painting, drawing, and printmaking, Thomas creates spaces where abstraction and figuration intersect, offering a visual language that merges personal mythology with historical references.

His approach to textile printmaking is rooted in a fascination with distortion and improvisation—elements that emerge through the process of translating drawings into screen prints. The interplay between abstracted line work and figuration is central to his practice, evoking the woven and embroidered textures of textiles through intricate, linear compositions.



ABOUT NASSER ALMULHIM

Nasser Almulhim is a painter and sculptor based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He holds a bachelor's degree in Studio Art from the University of West Florida in Pensacola, Florida.

Utilising a highly saturated palette, absorbed from the Abstract Expressionism movement, Almulhim meditates upon the interaction between geometric and organic forms and their connection to the human psyche. His practice assumes a playful and intuitive approach to art-making, doubling as a therapeutic act that opens what the artist understands to be: "The gate of self-healing." His work materialises his inner imagination, transposing it into two- and three-dimensional forms. The artist employs various methods to establish a spiritual healing process between inner energy and universal power. A principal theme within Nasser's practice is the relationship between spirituality and mental processes, and the visual representation of this bond. He's interested in the immediate impact of forms and colours and how their unification might establish rhythmic energies and speak of inner emotions. Almulhim examines the relationship between colour and human behaviour patterns and unpacks the ways in which colour can stimulate energetic or psychological shifts. The dialogue between these elements unfolds throughout Almulhim's practice.



ABOUT SAMO SHALABY

[Samo Shalaby](#) is an Egyptian Palestinian fine artist based between Dubai and London. Growing up in Cairo and Dubai before pursuing his artistic education at Central Saint Martins, Samo was exposed to a myriad of artistic expressions, styles, and forms of art-making that have shaped his unique creative oeuvre. Exploring fields such as stage design, costume design, and jewelry, Samo began integrating strands of theatrical essence into his work, infused with a distinct dramatic flair. His artistic explorations traverse the styles of antiquity, surrealism, and the grotesque, filtered through his own contemporary and personal lens. His work embodies an inherent fascination with blurring the boundaries between identity, culture, and couture, often through dichotomous narratives that lurk behind beautiful facades. Combining a range of aesthetics and motifs from various decades, Samo crafts new worlds that are familiar yet so far away. Whether on camera or canvas, symbolism, and storytelling are crucial elements for conjuring Samo's vision into existence.



ABOUT THE CURATOR, BEBE LEON

[Bebe Leone](#) is a private art advisor and independent curator with a focus on emerging contemporary artists. As an independent curator, Bebe is dedicated to creating a dialogue between the Italian culture that shaped her identity and the Middle Eastern world that profoundly influenced her perspective. Born and educated in Italy, her heritage forms the backbone of her personal and professional ethos. However, her years living in the Middle East offered her an invaluable opportunity to immerse herself in a rich and multifaceted cultural landscape. Through her work, she aspires to build a platform where these cultures can converge, enriching both and contributing to a more nuanced global cultural narrative.

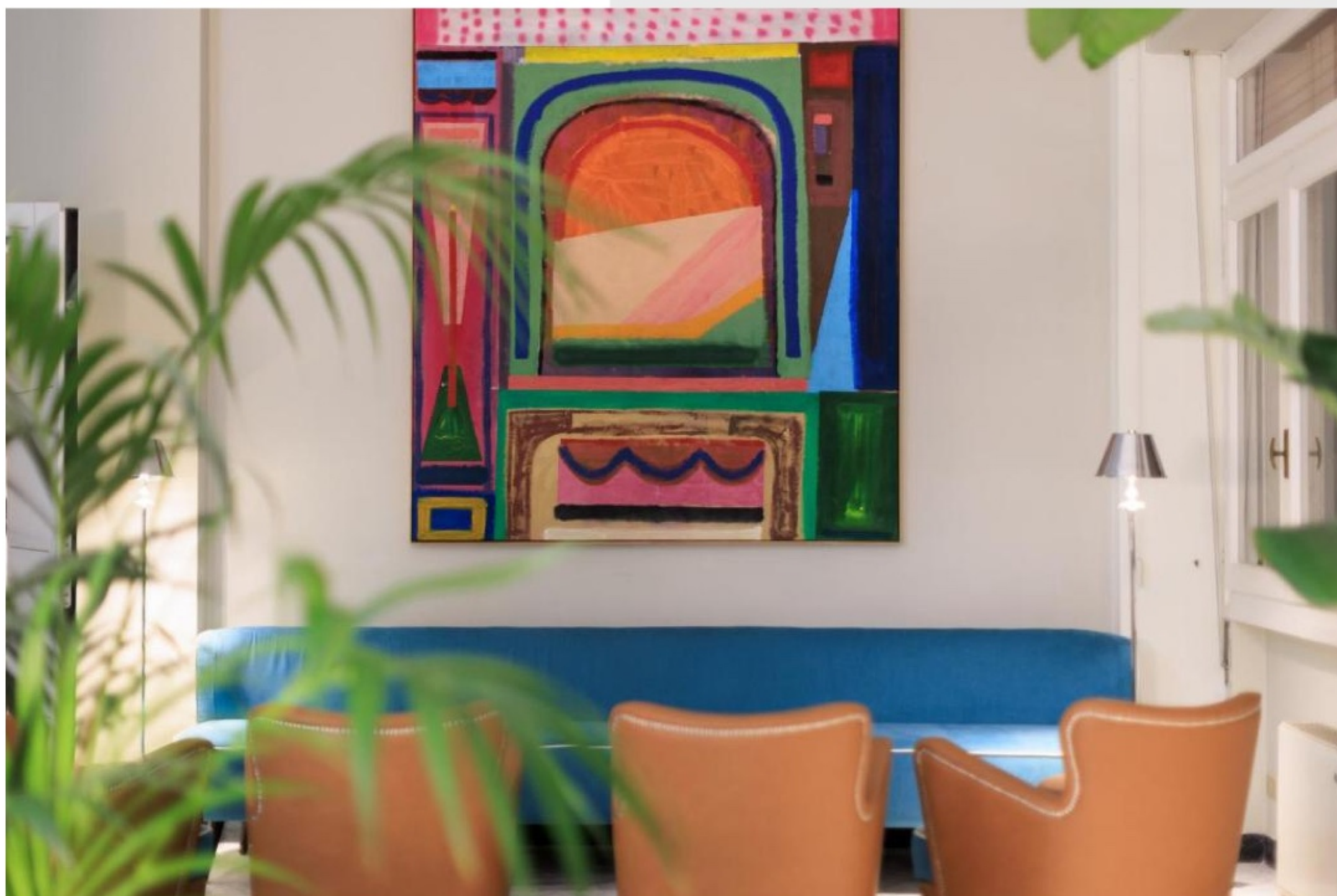


ABOUT THE LA SERENA HOTEL RESIDENCY

The [La Serena Hotel artist residency programme](#) offers a unique platform for aspiring visual artists to refine their practice, providing a dedicated studio space, a serene environment and ample resources for creative immersion within the striking setting on the Italian coastline.

Residents will produce and exhibit new works and open their studios to guests, cultivating visibility, new conversations and international engagement.

Guests are warmly welcomed into a thoughtfully curated, immersive gallery experience, adorning all spaces of the hotel with works by both established and upcoming artists, including those who are part of La Serena's exciting residency programme.



TABARI

ARTSPACE

Tabari Artspace LTD. The Gate Village Building 3
Podium Level Dubai International Financial
Centre

P.O. Box 506759, Dubai, UAE

Tel: +971 4 323 0820

info@tabariartspace.com

www.tabariartspace.com