

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Nuqta: The Diacritic

by

Abdul Qader al Rais

Leila Heller Gallery is pleased to present its first ever solo exhibition of the pioneering Emirati Artist Abdul Qader Al Rais in “Nuqta: The Diacritic.” On view March 23rd to September 15th “Nuqta: The Diacritic” presents a series of the artist’s paintings across his third period of his work, which is marked by his engagement with bringing abstraction and local cultural heritage into dialogue. Al Rais incorporates the contours of calligraphy as well as the rocky cliffs, deserts, and shores of the region’s unique natural world into his rigorous study of the fundamental elements of color, form, and light. The works exhibited range from oil on canvas to watercolor on paper, and offers a painterly alternative to current understandings of the UAE’s art history as rooted in highly concept-based and anti-aesthetic installations.

The show’s title, “Nuqta,” derives from the diacritical marking used in Arabic script, which in stark opposition to the use of circular dotting in Latin scripts, is a diagonal definitive square, and often a central motif in Al Rais’ paintings. Appearing in an enlarged size, and contrasting with the sway of the smaller, surrounding curving letters, the Nuqta takes on an authoritative presence, adding a surrealist element by distorting the viewer’s sense of dimension, while recalling the relationship between geometry and language and its potential role in abstraction.

Beginning painting in 1964, at a time of limited cultural infrastructure, the self-taught artist struggled to access paint, and was isolated from international markets and Eurocentric forums of critique. Instead, Al Rais’ practice is informed by Gulf traditions of representations of the divine, culture and community, and is grounded in humility. Spending his youth in Kuwait in the 60’s and 70’s, while the country experienced an artistic and literary renaissance, he often visited Al Marsam Al Hurr, a studio and meeting point for artists, and encountered key figures in the Gulf modern art movement, including Sami Mohammed, and Khalifa and Lidia Qattan. Al Rais’ early works were representational and rooted in realism, where he mostly depicted traditional Emirati landscapes and architecture. The artist then took a hiatus from 1974 until the 1980’s, where his work began to take on political themes, and was particularly responsive to the first Palestinian Intifada, which is seen as the artist’s second period.

In the 90’s, Al Rais increasingly turned to abstraction and calligraphy, marking his third period, recognizing their shared meditative and spiritual qualities. Revitalizing calligraphy with a modernist take on the age-old tradition, singular letters are repeated and engulfed in color fields, and incite a sense of synesthesia, where the guttural sounds of the Arabic languages are celebrated and emphasized.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Abdul Qader Al Rais was born in 1951 in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, twenty years before the country was formed, and is considered one of the most iconic painters of the country. Al Rais received a Bachelor of Sharia Law from the United Arab Emirates University in 1982. A founding member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society, retrospectives of Rais' extensive artistic career have been held at the Sharjah Art Museum, and the Institut du Monde Arabe (Arab World Institute). The artist was featured in the UAE Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale, and his work is currently held by The British Museum, the Louvre, the Northwest Museum of Culture and Arts, the Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, and the Museum of Modern Art in New Delhi. Al Rais work has also been displayed at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, and his public murals can be found in the Dubai Airport and the Dubai Metro. Among his numerous awards are the Sheikh Khalifa Prize for Art and Literature, Abu Dhabi (2006); Golden Palm Award, Gulf Cooperation Council Art Exhibition, Doha (1999); first prize at The UAE in the Eyes of Its Artists, Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation (1999); Sultan Al Owais Award for Scientific Studies and Creativity, Dubai (1992, 1994, 1996) and first prize at the UAE Exhibition in China (1991).

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment over three decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting a creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 14,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East for the first time, the gallery is dedicated to supporting the evolving practice of established artists.

Press Inquiries: For more information, images and prices, please contact iman@leilahellergallery.com



Yesteryear Series, 2007
Watercolor on Paper
207 x 157 cm

\$125,000

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The Past and Future, 1989

Oil on Canvas

187 x 86 cm

\$150,000-

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Ref. AQARP 1/1



Central Library, 2004 - 2005
Watercolor on Paper
105 x 75 cm

\$35,000

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Impressionism Series, 2004 - 2005

Oil on Canvas

140 x 110 cm

\$100,000

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Serenity Series, 2010
Watercolor on Paper
257 x 159 cm

\$150,000

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The Power of Letter, 2008
Watercolor on Paper
155 x 105 cm

\$70,000

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Serenity Series, 2017
Watercolor on Paper
157 x 207 cm

\$125,000

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Serenity Series, 2018
Watercolor on Paper
105 x 75 cm

\$35,000

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Ref. AQARP 1/1



Serenity Series, 2019
Watercolor on Paper
105 x 75 cm

\$35,000

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Abstract, 2018
Watercolor on Paper
105 x 75 cm

\$35,000

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, 2019
Oil on Canvas
285 x 200 cm

\$175,000

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Ref. AQARP 1/1



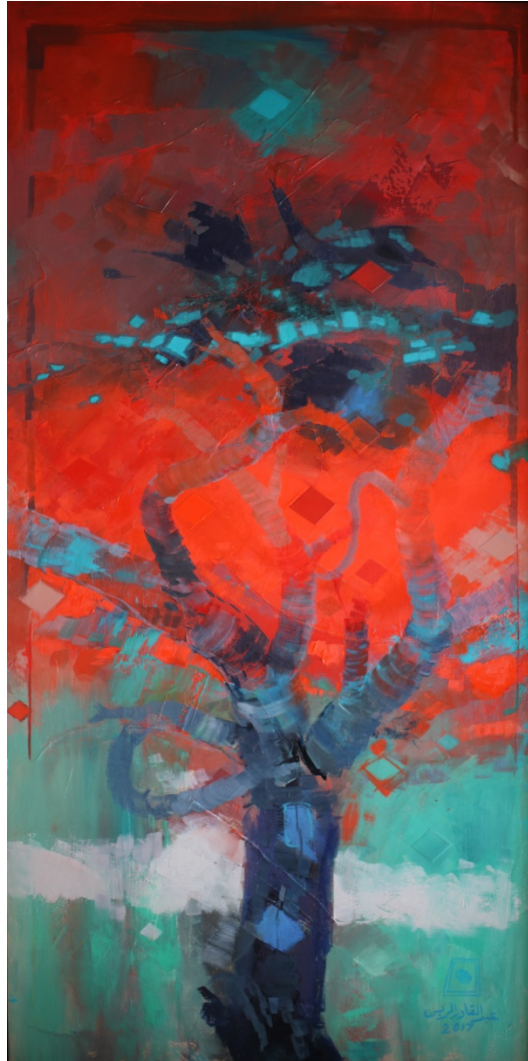
Alsamar Series, 2017

Oil on Canvas
200 x 100 cm

\$90,000

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

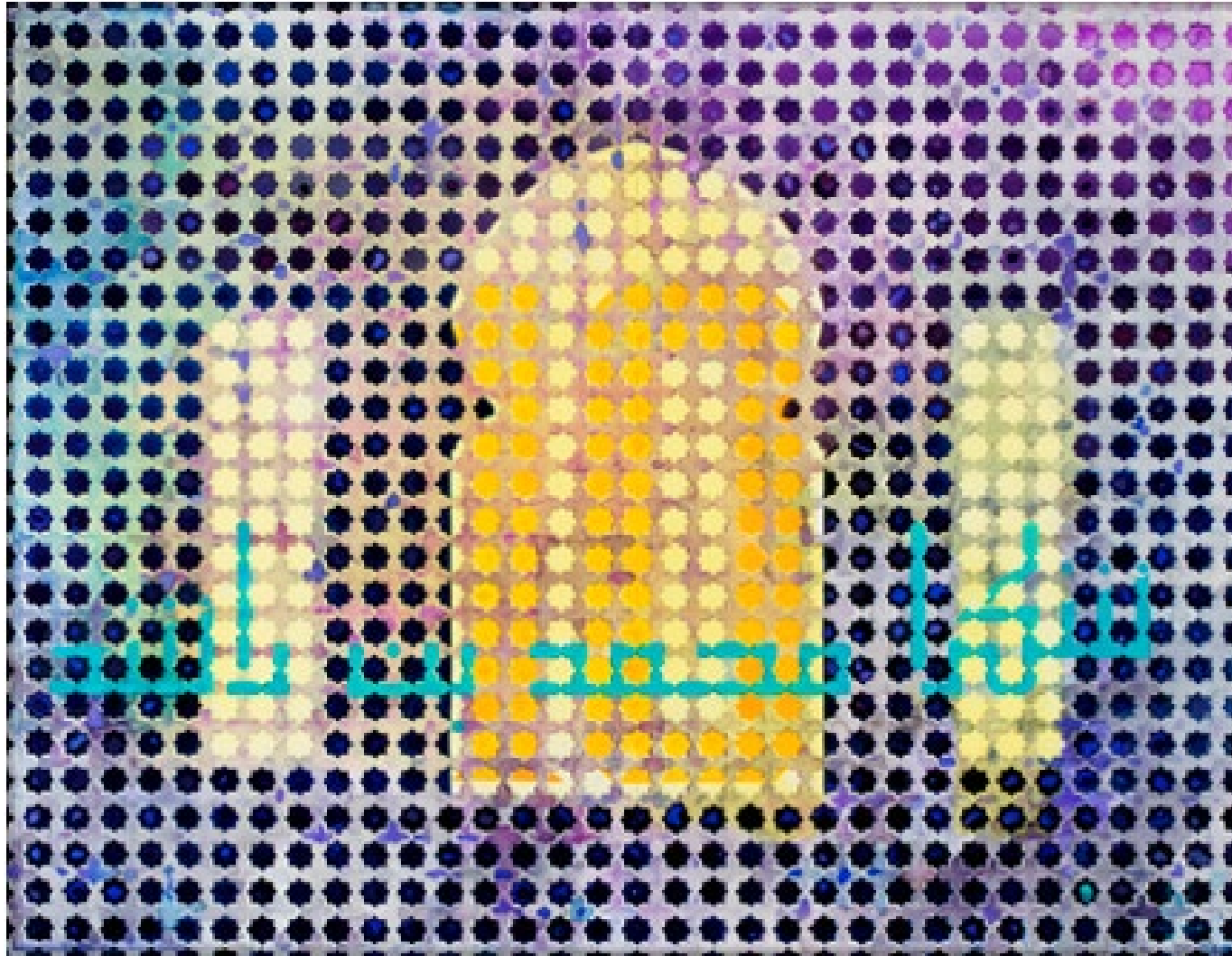
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Alsamar Series, 2017
Oil on Canvas
200 x 100 cm

\$90,000

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Years of Glory, 2016
Watercolor on Paper
157 x 207 cm

\$125,000

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Serenity Series, 2018
Watercolor on Paper
75 x 105 cm

\$35,000

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Calligraphy Series, 2017
Watercolor on Paper
105 x 75 cm

\$ 35,000

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Untitled
Watercolor on Paper
155 x 105 cm

\$ 70,000

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Untitled
Oil on Canvas
150 x 100 cm

\$ 85,000

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Untitled
Oil on Canvas
200 x 200 cm

\$ 100,000

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.



Untitled
Oil on Canvas
200 x 200 cm

\$ 100,000

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.



The Power of Letter, 2019
Watercolor on Paper
157 x 207 cm

\$ 125,000

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Serenity Series, 2015
Watercolor on Paper
157 x 207 cm

\$ 125,000

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Serenity Series, 2008-2009
Watercolor on Paper
155 x 105 cm

\$ 70,000

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Serenity Series, 2018
Watercolor on Paper
105 x 75 cm

\$ 35,000

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.



Untitled
Watercolor on Paper
257 x 157 cm

\$ 150,000

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