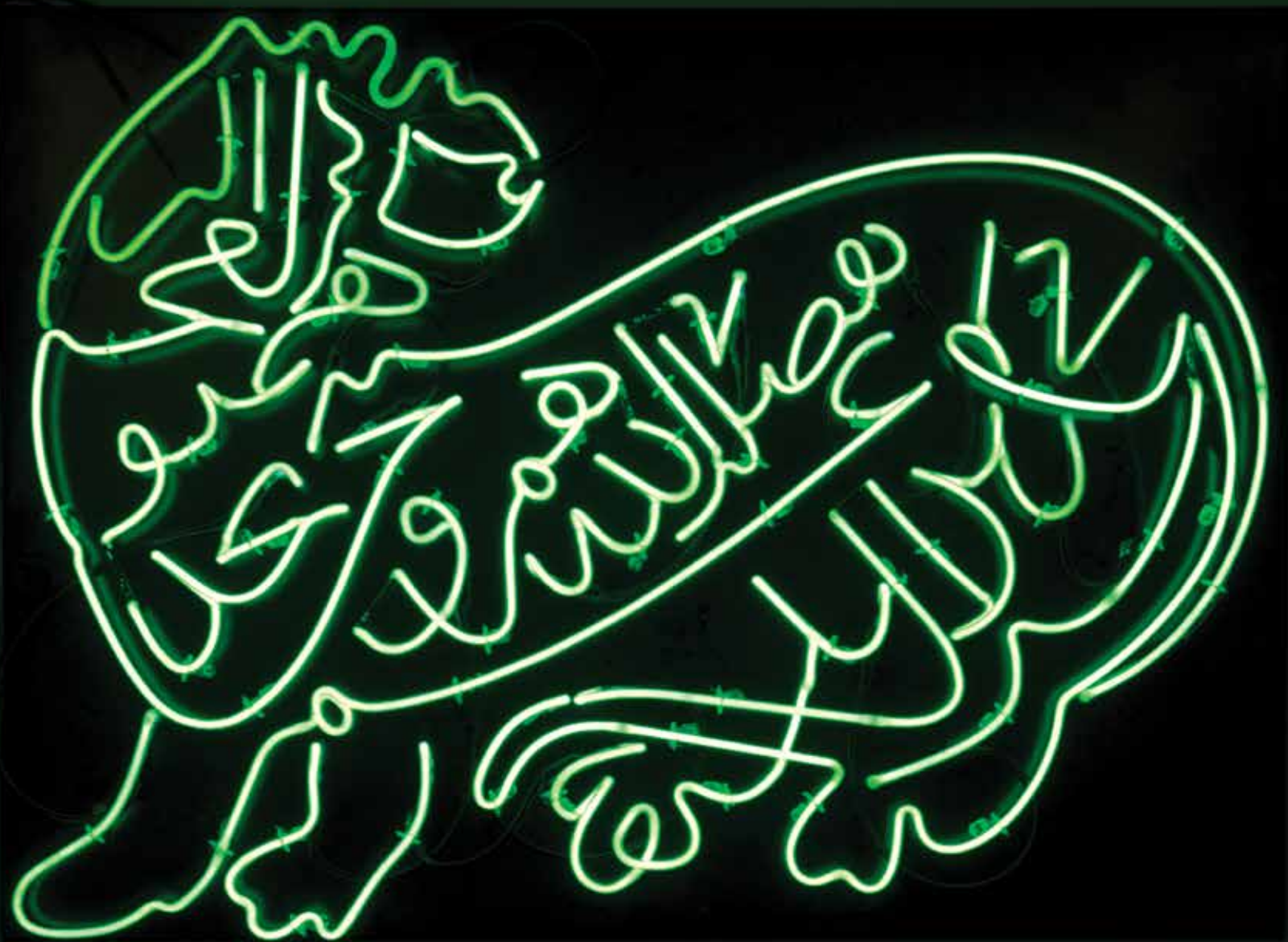


The artwork consists of several overlapping, wavy, ribbon-like shapes in various colors: green, orange, blue, and pink. These shapes are composed of numerous small, rounded, bead-like elements, giving them a textured, three-dimensional appearance. The background is a light, neutral color, and the overall composition is abstract and dynamic.

# MOATAZ NASR BROKEN PATTERNS





MOATAZ  
NASR  
BROKEN  
PATTERNS



# AFTERMATH: RECENT WORKS BY MOATAZ NASR

By Shiva Balaghi, Ph.D.  
October 2015

The aftermath. A map of the Middle East and North Africa made in shattered glass, quietly lit on a gallery wall. This is the artist Moataz Nasr’s beautifully haunting work on the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings that swept the region. What has become of the spontaneous protests movements, calling for freedom and justice? Where once there was a hopeful moment, now all that remains is shattered glass.

On a simple shelf against a white wall, Moataz has arranged 25 small figurines. *El Shaab* or The People, represents the different people of Egypt who came together as one unified voice for 18 days in Tahrir Square in the winter of 2011. There are the secular leftist intellectuals, wearing jeans and talking politics. There is the veiled woman lifting her hands in prayer. There is the revolutionary woman being dragged and beaten by the security police, her clothes ripped from her body. The moment photographed by citizen journalists on their cell phones captured the attention of the world, as they watched the Egyptian uprising being brutally suppressed. “The blue bra girl” became a revolutionary icon. And what has become of all those Egyptians who protested for a better life in Tahrir Square? They have been put back on the shelf, like little lifeless porcelain figurines, suggests Moataz Nasr.

“This body of work encompasses me,” Nasr tells me, speaking on his cell phone from a hotel room in Paris where he is working on a public commission. “Life is not one simple thing. There are always many things happening at the same time. The political, the social, the economic, the religious – these aspects of life all come together at the same time. I am expressing all of these things, in no particular order.”

On another wall of the gallery, hang three-dimensional Arabesque designs encased in plexiglass, as though they are precious historical object. *Arabesque I (Lost Heritage)* and *Arabesque II (Lost Heritage)* are stunning sculptural pieces that capture the intricacies of Islamic ornamentation, but are made from everyday basic materials – wood and matches. These works speaks to another aftermath of the recent revolutionary history of Egypt.



In his regular walks through Old Cairo, Moataz noticed with alarm that historic pieces and important antiquities were being looted.

The use of matches in Nasr’s work is multi-layered. At a basic level, matches remind him of his childhood. His father told him matches hold the power of fire but at the same time they are fragile—we can easily snap a match in two between our fingers. This notion of matches as potentially powerful and yet fragile is used to good effect in his art.

Nasr first started to use matches in his art in 2003. Watching the US bombing of Iraq, it seemed as though Iraq would be completely destroyed. So he made two maps of Iraq from matches – one he burned. But matches are not just a symbol of fire and destruction in his work. They also signal a quiet uneasiness, a hesitance, and a loss. In this case, the Arabesque pieces made of matches stand in for Egypt’s lost heritage.

Another of these sculptural pieces made from matches is entitled, *Khayameya*. It references the Egyptian traditional craft of tent making. In the Khan al-Khalili market in Old Cairo, you’ll find *Sharia al-Khayamiya* or the Tentmakers Street that dates back to the Mamluk era. Here in small stalls, merchants sell the iconic quilts made from layering colorful fabric into intricate designs taken from Islamic ornamentation and traditional Egyptian designs.

For the past thirty years, Nasr has been taking regular walks through Old Cairo. Some Friday mornings, he joins an informal group of scholars, writers, artists, and journalists who meet at a downtown café for a walking tour of the old neighborhoods. I ask Lee Keath, a journalist for the Associated Press, who is a regular at these walks to describe what they entail. “It’s a lot of noticing of details, like an Art Deco flourish on a façade or a door; how something newer has been built in and round something ancient; how people are using and reusing old things,” Keath explained. “It’s an extremely layered urban landscape.”

Above:  
*Elshaab (The People)*, 2012  
25 ceramic characters  
10.6 x 2.4 x 4 in each / 27 x 6 x 10 cm each





This sensibility, this attention to the shifting urban landscape of Cairo, is threaded throughout Nasr’s body of work. “In my art,” he tells me, “you can see how much I love this city, how much I want to learn about it.” Speaking with the curator and critic Hou Hanru in Rome in 2014, Nasr explained, “It wasn’t only about visiting museums or art scenes. If you are talking about my personal history, art is in everything around me. I was fascinated by the ancient Egyptian monuments that were everywhere; they were spread around the city the way billboards are now. The weather, the greenery, the Nile and even the people ... were all very influential.”

Cairo is deeply embedded in Nasr’s way of life and by extension his art. “Cairo,” he tells me, “is a city of contradictions. Everything is yes, and everything is no. Everything is rejected, and everything is accepted.” But Nasr takes what Cairo offers and translates it into a universal visual language. “I am an artist from Egypt, rather than an Egyptian artist,” he explains. “That is an important distinction. The whole world is my village. Travel connects me to many places. First and foremost, I am an artist.”

Much of Nasr’s work is a beautiful manifestation of the quotidian, reflecting the ways large political events are shaped by and press upon the lives of ordinary people. His work recalls the critic Raymond Williams’ articulation of “structures of feeling.” Some kinds of art, Williams wrote, convey a particular relationship between culture and society. Rather than advocating for any ideology, this art shows how historical processes are experienced. Political events, after all, are lived processes with “their own sense of rhythm,” Williams wrote.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, there is a quietly spiritual quality that resonates deeply in Nasr’s work. This he credits with his interest in Sufism, sparked at a young age by his beloved uncle. Even in times of political upheaval and turmoil, perhaps especially in such violent times, Nasr reminds us of the essential search for the transcendent. *The Key*, crafted of gorgeously reflective crystal, captures the light. In the light, we seek the key to wisdom, to love, to peace. Perhaps in the aftermath of it all, there will be light.

Opposite page:  
*Khayameya* (detail), 2012  
11830 Matches on Wood and Plexiglas  
399.3 x 39.3 x 3 in / 100 x 100 x 8 cm

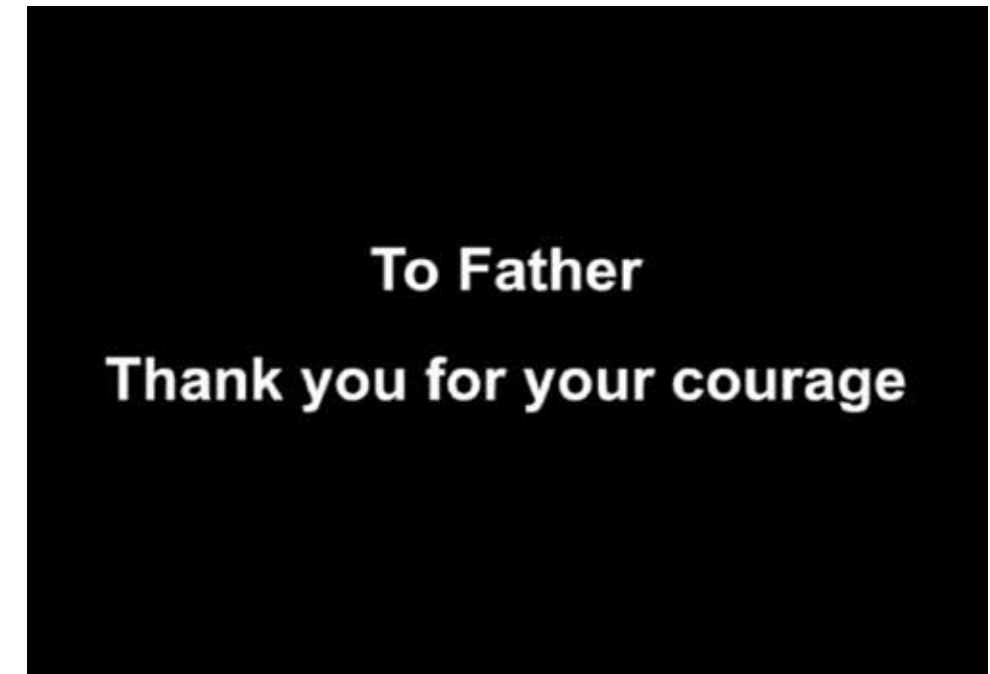
<sup>1</sup> Raymond Williams, “Structures of Feeling,” in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 128-135.



**To Mother**

**I hope that you have found some amount  
of happiness and peace in the new world  
that you have chosen yourself ...**





*Father and Son (still image), 2004*  
Video  
14 min loop



*The Wall (still image), 2012*  
Video  
1min 34 sec loop







*Oxymoron*, 2010  
Green Neon Diptych  
35.4 x 49.2 x 3 in / 90 x 125 x 8 cm and  
37.4 x 51.2 x 3 in / 95 x 130 x 8 cm





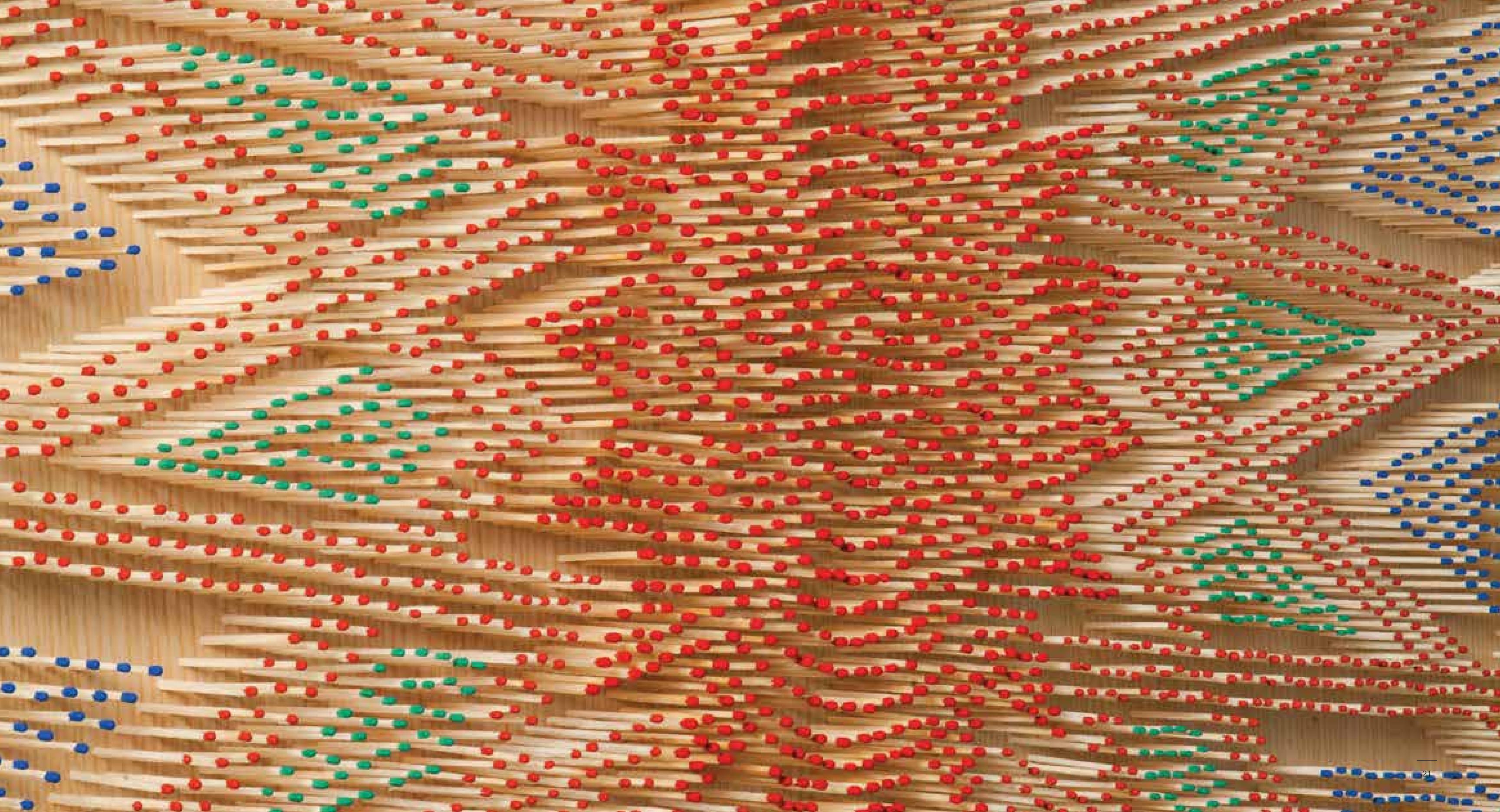
*Oxymoron II*, 2011  
5235 Gold Matches on Wood and Plexiglas  
43.3 x 55 x 2.8 in / 110 x 140 x 7 cm



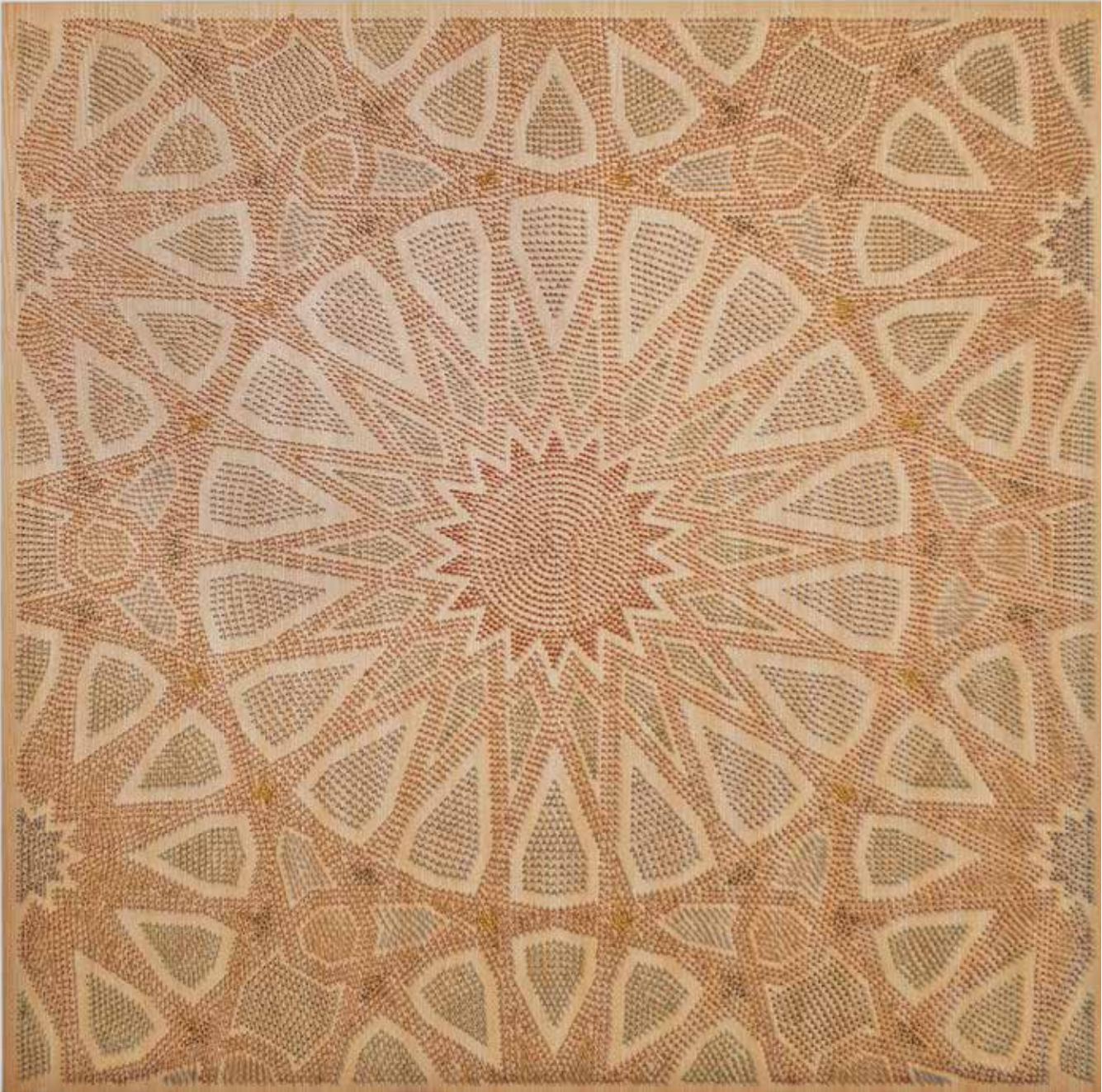


*Khayameya*, 2012  
11830 Matches on Wood and Plexiglas  
399.3 x 39.3 x 3 in / 100 x 100 x 8 cm





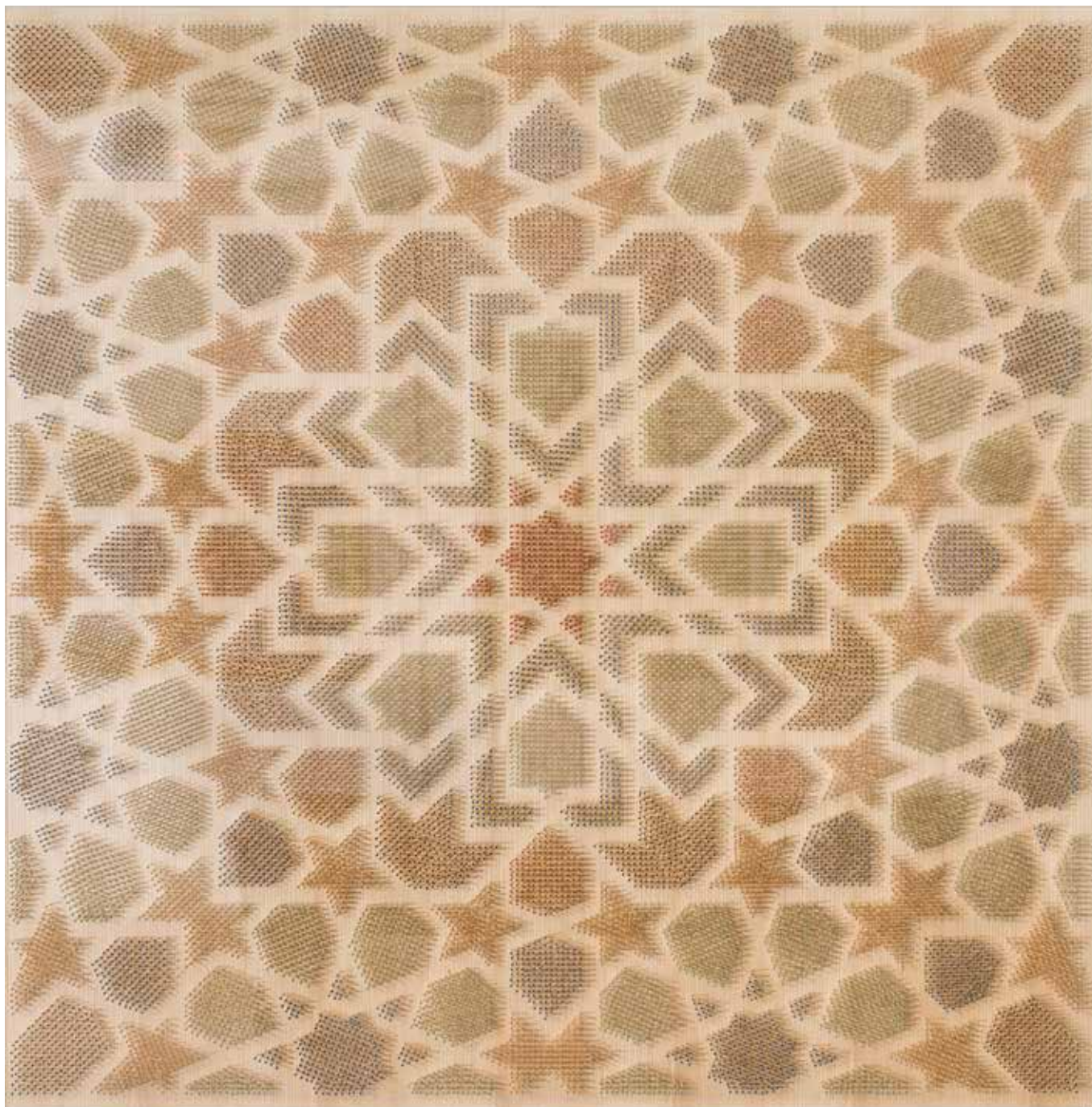




*Arabesque II (Lost Heritage)*, 2013  
21800 Matches on Wood and Plexiglas  
71 x 71 x 4 in / 180 x 180 x 10 cm

Previous page:  
*Arabesque II (Lost Heritage)* (detail), 2013  
21800 Matches on Wood and Plexiglas  
71 x 71 x 4 in / 180 x 180 x 10 cm

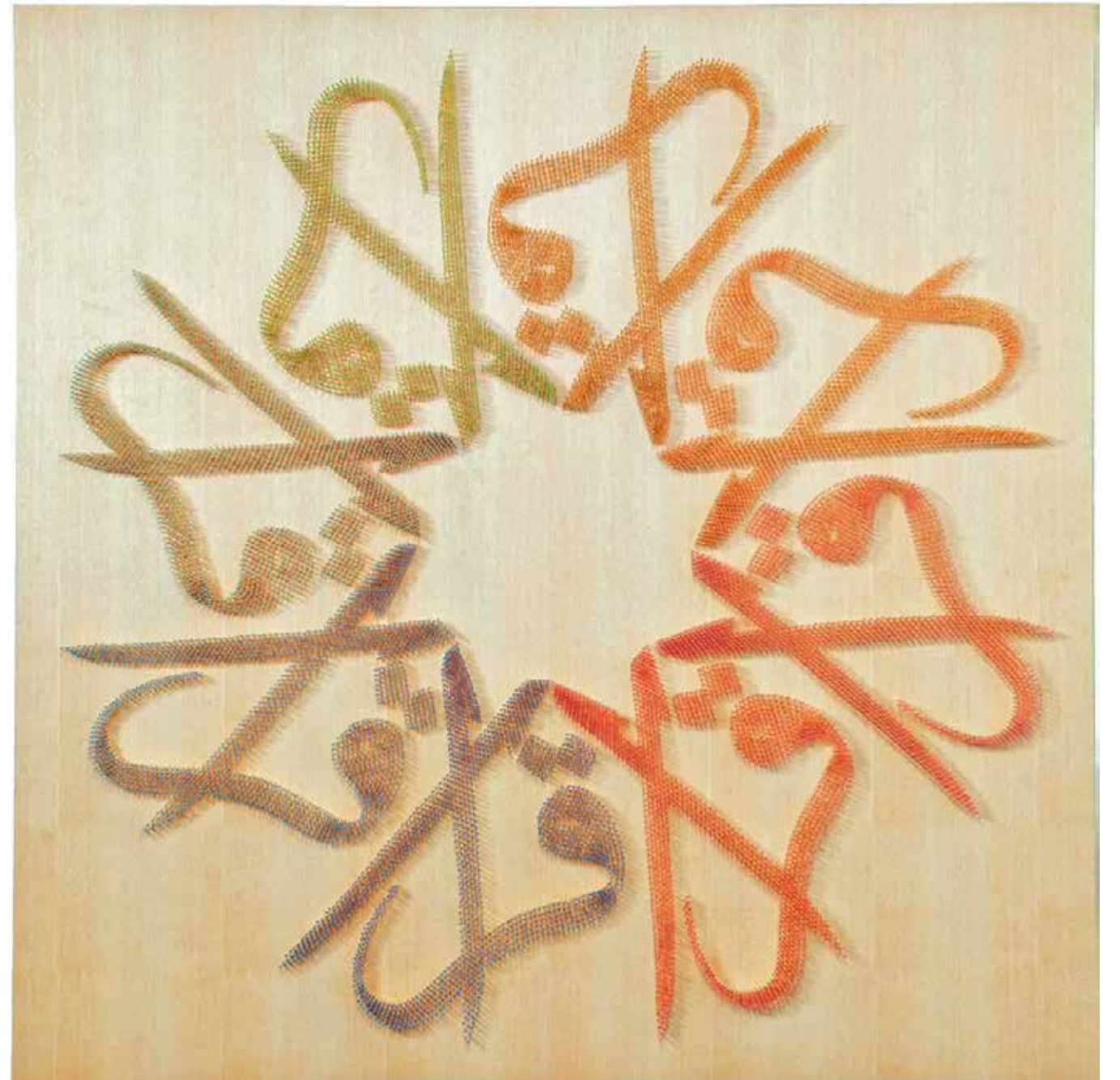




*Arabesque I (Lost Heritage)*, 2013  
21800 Matches on Wood and Plexiglas  
71 x 71 x 4 in / 180 x 180 x 10 cm



*Khayameya (Read)*, 2012  
12840 Matches on Wood  
71 x 71 x 4 in / 180 x 180 x 10 cm







*Elshaab (The People) (detail), 2012*  
25 ceramic characters  
10.6 x 2.4 x 4 in each / 27 x 6 x 10 cm each





*Elshaab (The People) (detail), 2012*  
 25 ceramic characters  
 10.6 x 2.4 x 4 in each / 27 x 6 x 10 cm each





*The Return of the Griffin*, 2013  
Polyurethane Foam and Leather  
63 x 51.4 x 25.3 in / 160 x 130.5 x 64.4 cm

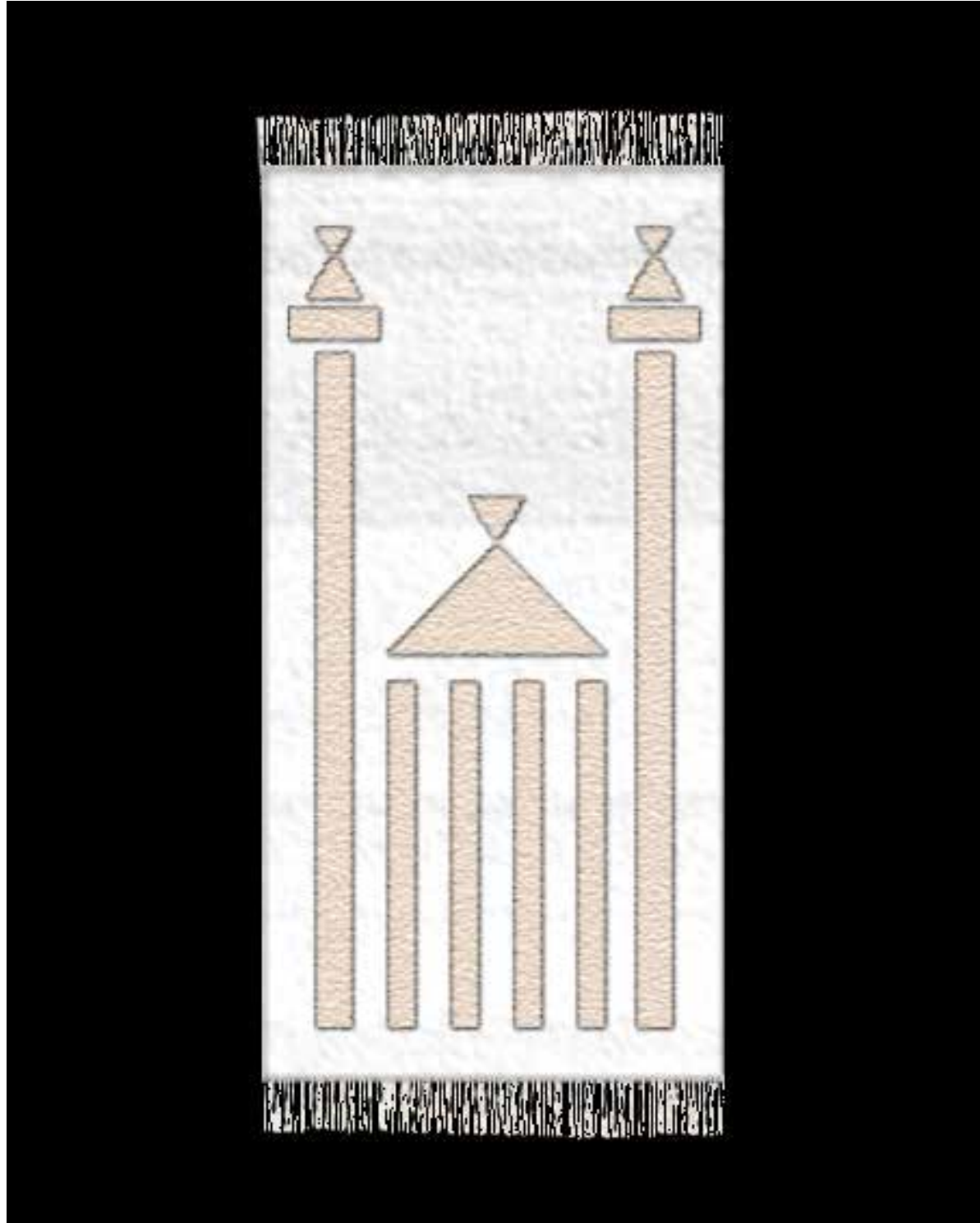






*The Shattered Glass*, 2015  
Digital rendering





*Carpet, 2002*  
Textile





*Petro Beats*, 2015  
33 Metal Petrol Cans  
207 x 7.9 in / 5.25 m x 20 cm







*The Key (Installation Image)*, 2011  
Crystal  
28 x 15 x 1.2 in / 71 x 38 x 3 cm





# MOATAZ NASR

**B. Alexandria, Egypt in 1961**  
**Lives and works in Cairo, Egypt**

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Broken Patterns*, Leila Heller Gallery, New York  
*The Maze*, Forum européen Arts et Territoires / The European forum  
Arts and local communities, ABBEAYE De Noirlac, Bruère-Allichams, France
- 2014 *ArtTalks*, Cairo, Egypt  
GALLERIA CONTINUA / Le Moulin de Saint Marie, France
- 2013 *THE Journey of a Griffin*, Villa Pacchiani Centro Espositivo, Santa Croce sull'Arno  
*Harmonia*, Centro Espositivo per le Arti Contemporanee SMS, San Michele degli Scalzi, Pisa  
*Tectonic Shift*, GALLERIA CONTINUA / Le Moulin, France
- 2012 *Collision*, Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai, UAE  
*Moataz Nasr / Hidden Landscape*, Akershus Fortress, Oslo, Norway  
*The Tunnel*, Galleria Continua / Beijing, China
- 2011 *In a Nutshell*, Selma Feriani Gallery, London, UK  
*Moataz Nasr -The Maze* (The People Want the Fall of the Regime), MAP, Mobile Art Production, Gothenburg, Sweden  
*Réactions en chaîne*, Château de Blandy-les-Tours, Blandy, France  
*The Other Side of the Mirror*, Galleria Continua / San Gimignano, Italy
- 2008 *A Memory Fills with Holes*, Galleria Continua / San Gimignano, Italy  
*Cairo walk*, Sultan Gallery, Sabhan, Kuwait
- 2006 The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Darat al Funun, Amman, Jordan  
*Entrapment*, Galleria Continua / San Gimignano, Italy
- 2005 *The Echo*, Touchstones Art Gallery, Rochdale, UK
- 2004 Falaki Gallery, The American University in Cairo, Egypt  
Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
- 2003 Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt  
Franco Riccardo Gallery, Napoli, Italy
- 2002 Franco Riccardo Gallery, Napoli, Italy  
"Espace-La Bodega" Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
- 2001 Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
- 2000 Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt  
Egyptian Cultural Center in Paris, France
- 1999 Al Ahram House Gallery, London, UK  
Akhnaton Gallery, Centre of Fine Art, Cairo, Egypt

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Follia Continua!*, Le CENTQUATRE - Paris, France  
*Icastica*, Arezzo, Italy  
*The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Purgatory and Hell Revisited by Contemporary African Artists*, Smithsonian National

*Museum of African Art*, Washington; USA

*All The World's a Mosque*, Ancient Theatre of Carthage, Carthage, Tunisia

*The Echo*, NGVI, National Gallery of Victoria, Southbank, Australia

- 2014 *The Divine Comedy from the Perspective of Contemporary African Artist*, SCAD – Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah; USA

*Galleria Continua at Le Bristol*, Le Bristol Hotel, Paris

*"Made by... Feito por Brasileiros"*, a creative invasion, Cidade Matarazzo, Sao Paulo, Brasil

*Park in Progress 11*, Nicosia, Cyprus

*East's – Contemporary Visions. Villa Ada Meets the World*, Multicultural Festival, Roma- Italy

*The sea is my land - artisti dal Mediterraneo*, Triennale, Milan, Italy

*Heaven, Hell, Purgatory – The Divine Comedy from the Perspective of Contemporary African Artists*, MMK, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany;

*Arab Contemporary - Architecture, Culture and Identity*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark

- 2013 *The See Is My Land*, MAXXI, Rome, Italy

*Terms and Conditions*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore

*THE WAVE Culture Festival*, Sdr. Nissum, Humlum, Nørre Snede and Vorgod-Barde, Denmark

*Tappeti estremi, da Timbuctù all'Arte Contemporanea*, Fondazione 107, Turin, Italy

*Video(works)*, Athr Gallery, Jeddah, UAE

*In peace and with compation. 5th Caravan Festival of the Arts*, Cairo, Egypt; London, UK

*Métamorphose*, FITE - Festival International des Textiles Extraordinaires, Hue, Vietnam

*100<sup>3</sup>*, Art Hotel Gran Paradiso, Sorrento, Italy

*Every Day Matters*, Faurschou Foundation, Copenhagen

*Turbulences II*, Boghossian Foundation / Villa Empain with the collaboration of Espace culturel Louis Vuitton (Paris), Bruxelles, Belgium

*Pen to Paper*, Al Madad Foundation in collaboration with Athr Gallery, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

*Cadavre exquis, suite méditerranéenne*, Marseille Provence 2013 Capitale européenne de la culture en Pays d'Aix, Musée Granet Place Saint Jean de Malte 13100 Aix-en-Provence, France

- 2012 *Long Live Free Art!*, ArtTalksEgypt, Cairo, Egypt

*Mirages d'orient*, Collection Lambert, Avignon, France

*Encounter: The Royal Academy in the Middle East*, Gallery 1&2, Doha, Qatar

*In Spite of it All*, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE

*La belle et la bête*, Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez, Bordeaux, France

*System and Patterns*, MGLC - Mednarodni graficni likovni center / International Centre of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia

*Fictions and dissensions*, 3rd Uluslararası Çanakkale Biennale / International Çanakkale Biennial, Çanakkale, Turkey

*Par Nature*, Centquatre, Paris, France

*Métamorphose*, FITE - Festival International des Textiles Extraordinaires, Musée Bargoin, Clermont-Ferrand, France

*Where is the Time?*, Foundation IZOLYATSIA - Platform for Cultural Initiatives, Donetsk, Ukraine



	<i>Mediterraneo: incontri o conflitti?/The Mediterranean Region: Bonding or Fighting?</i> , Palazzo Gargasole, Gagliano del Capo (Lecce), Italy
	<i>Radici, Memoria, Identità e Cambiamento nell’arte di oggi</i> , Palazzo De Sanctis, Castelbasso, Italy
	<i>Neon. La materia luminosa dell’arte</i> , MACRO, Rome, Italy
	<i>Arab Express, The Latest Art from the Arab World</i> , Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
	<i>Revolutionary Bodies, L’animal a l’esquena</i> , Celrà/Girona, Spain
	<i>DAK’ART 2012, 10th African Contemporary Art Biennale</i> , Dakar, Senegal
	<i>Intrecci</i> , Museo delle Trame Mediterranee, Gibellina (TR), Sicily, Italy
	<i>Moataz Nasr-Loris Cecchini</i> , Studio Carlotta Pesce, Bologna, Italy
	<i>Aboard the Heart of Gold</i> , 7th edition of Bologna Art First, Palazzo d’Accursio (Piazza Maggiore), Bologna, Italy
	<i>Histories of Now: Six artists from Cairo</i> , Museum School and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
2011	<i>Miniatures, 14th Islamic Art Festival</i> , Sharjah Museum, Sharjah, UAE
	<i>The Maze (The People Want the Fall of the Regime)</i> , Hors Les Murs, Jardin des Tuileries, Paris, France
	<i>A Rock and a Hard Place, Old Intersections-Make it New</i> , 3rd Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, State Museum of Contemporary Art (SMCA), Thessaloniki, Greece
2010	<i>21st Century: Art in the first Decade</i> , Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia
	<i>Rencontres PICHA</i> , 2nd Lubumbashi Biennale, Lubumbashi, Congo
	<i>BARAKAT/The Gift</i> , Stux Gallery Chealsea, New York City, NY
2009	<i>Made in Afrika</i> , National Museum, Nairobi, Kenya
	<i>Reflections of Africa</i> , MAMA - National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Algiers, Algeria
	<i>Coexistencias / Coexistences</i> , 2nd Canary Islands Biennale, Centro de Arte La Regenta, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
2008	<i>Al Madina</i> , Ebdaa Art Gallery, Mohandessin, Egypt
	<i>Resilence</i> , Galleria Continua / Le Moulin, France
	<i>Les Recontres Internationales de la Photo</i> , Centre Cervantes, Fez, Morocco
	<i>Traversées (Crossings)</i> , Grand Palais, Paris, France
2007	<i>11 artists from Africa Remix – fringe touring exhibition</i> , Maseru (Lesotho); Durban (South Africa); Cape Town (South Africa)
	<i>Machine-RAUM – a biennale for video art and digital culture</i> , Vejle Art Museum and part of the Spinning factory, Vejle, Denmark
	<i>A.B.O. - curated by Achille Bonito Oliva</i> , Bologna Artefiera, Bologna, Italy
2006	<i>Another World. Bamako 2005</i> , La Centrale Electrique/European Center for Contemporary Art, Bruxelles, Belgium
	<i>AFRICA REMIX</i> , Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden
	<i>Un autre monde – 6e édition de la photographie de Bamako</i> , BnF, Paris, France
	<i>L’image révélée : de l’orientalisme à l’art contemporain</i> , Musee de la Ville de Tunis, Palais Kheireddine, Tunis, Tunisia
	3rd Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial 2006, Japan
	<i>AFRICA REMIX</i> , Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
	<i>Cross-Currents: Water as a Metaphor for (African) Identity?</i> , Tufts University Art Gallery. Aidekman Arts Center, Medford, NY
	<i>Ghosts of Self and State</i> , Monash University Museum of Art, Monash, Melbourne, Australia
2005	Bamako Biennale for African Photography, Mali

	2nd International Triennale of Contemporary Art, Yokohama, Japan
	7th Sharjah Biennale, UAE, awarded the Grand Prize
	<i>AFRICA REMIX</i> , Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
	<i>4x4</i> , Artists Space, Broadway, New York, NY
	<i>Loose Your Identity</i> , Kunstverein Kreis, Ludwigsburg, Germany
2004	25th Sao Paulo Biennale, Sao Paulo, Brazil
	Busan Biennale, Busan, South Korea
	<i>AFRIKA REMIX</i> , Museum Kunst Palast, Dusseldorf, Germany
	7th Dak’art Biennale, Dakar, Senegal. Awarded the Ministry of Culture Prize
	<i>Le Opera e I giorni</i> , Triennale, Certosa di Padula, Italy
2003	50th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
	<i>Disorientation</i> , House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany
2002	6th Dak’art Biennale, Senegal. Awarded The Biennale Prize 2002
2001	<i>Intresecus-Extrincus</i> , Studio Casoli, Milan, Italy
	<i>Ambiente: Le Area Non Protette</i> , Palazzo Pretorio Sala del Consiglio Comunale, Sondrio, Italy
	8th International Cairo Biennale. Opera Arts Palace, Egypt
2000	<i>Group exhibition with Egyptian and Italian artists</i> , Gezira Art Center, Cairo, Egypt
	5th Cairo International Biennale for Ceramics, Opera House Arts Palace, Cairo, Egypt
1999	27th National Exhibition for Fine Arts, Opera House Arts Palace, Cairo, Egypt
1998	<i>The First Show for Artists over 35 years and honored</i> , Museum of Fine Arts (Hussein Sobhy), Alexandria, Egypt
	4th Cairo International Biennale for Ceramics, Center of Art, Cairo, Egypt

RESIDENCIES

2015	Villa Lena, Palaia, Italy
	Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington; USA
2014	Artos Cultural and Research Foundation, Nicosia, Cyprus
2013	Nirox, Johannesburg, South Africa
2012	Meddance: incontri in movimento, Masseria Torcito, Cannole, Italy
	HS_Projects, France

PUBLIC ART AND SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Crystal Ball / Al Maaden, Parc de Sculptures Al Maaden, Marrakech, Morocco

Foundation IZOLYATSIA, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine

Platform for Cultural Initiatives, Donetsk, Ukraine

Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome (MACRO), Rome, Italy

Permanent Installation at Museo del Cristallo, Colle val d’Elsa, Italy

Permanent installation at La Bodega lounge (Hurricane), Cairo, Egypt

Permanent installation at Diwan in Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt



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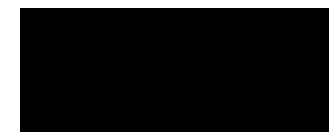
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