

# LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

*There May Exist*

By

Zeinab Alhashemi



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2024

Oil Barrels, Camel Hides  
Photograph credit: Artur Walczewski

Leila Heller Gallery is thrilled to announce the historic debut of the esteemed Emirati artist Zeinab Alhashemi at *The Theseus Temple* in Vienna, with her installation titled "*There May Exist*". Scheduled for its inaugural unveiling on the 17th of April 2024, this marks a significant milestone as Alhashemi becomes the first Emirati artist to showcase her work at The Theseus Temple.

"There May Exist" is a captivating installation composed of oil barrels transformed into a striking pyramid. Through this evocative piece, Alhashemi explores the profound metamorphosis that has swept through the United Arab Emirates since the revelation of oil. As viewers engage with the installation, they are invited to contemplate the shifting landscape of the region and the enduring legacy of cultural traditions.

Drawing inspiration from the transformative impact of oil discovery in the Arabian Peninsula, Alhashemi's work delves into the complex interplay between progress and tradition. With a keen eye for detail and symbolism, her installations prompt viewers to reflect on the dynamic relationship between past and present, offering a visual dialogue on the cultural and economic heritage of the Gulf region.

The significance of camels to the cultural fabric of the UAE serves as a central theme in Alhashemi's work. By incorporating camel hide and fur tanned in El Ain, an oasis city in the UAE, her installations pay homage to the shared adaptation of humans and camels to their environment. Through these sculptural compositions, Alhashemi invites audiences to ponder the future of the relationship between humans and camels, echoing the sentiments of Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum regarding the evolution of transportation and its implications for cultural identity.

"There May Exist" will be on display at The Theseus Temple, Vienna from April 17th to October 13th, 2024. Visitors to the exhibition will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in Alhashemi's thought-provoking installations and explore the enduring cultural significance of camels in the UAE.

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Zeinab Alhashemi is a conceptual artist based in Dubai, UAE. Her multidisciplinary practice explores themes of cultural identity, heritage, and environmental sustainability. Through her site-specific installations and sculptures, Alhashemi seeks to create immersive experiences that provoke thought and dialogue about the evolving landscape of the Arabian Peninsula. With a focus on materials and structures, her work serves as a testament to the enduring legacy of cultural traditions in the UAE.

#### ABOUT THE THESEUS TEMPLE

The Theseus Temple was built between 1819 and 1823 by court architect Peter von Nobile. It was designed to house a single work of contemporary art: Antonio Canova's white marble masterpiece Theseus Slaying the Centaur. For almost seventy years this artwork stood alone inside the building, until in 1890 it was moved to the newly completed Kunsthistorisches Museum, where it remains today on the museum's monumental staircase. The Kunsthistorisches Museum group now uses the Theseus Temple for a series of exhibitions of single works of contemporary art, harking back to the original purpose of the building. One artwork appears each year for a limited time.

#### ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment over four 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, Central Asian, Southeast Asian 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 16,000 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. In addition to presenting a dynamic exhibition schedule, Leila Heller Gallery actively organizes shows with world renowned curators, hosts educational panels and film screenings, and produces catalogs and books with scholarly essays. Each year the gallery participates in major international art fairs and stages off-site projects as a platform for exploring new conversations within a wider context of galleries, artists and institutions.