

PRESS RELEASE

**NASSER AL SALEM:
AMMA BAAD**

Curated by Maya El Khalil

Opening:
Mon, 01/07/19
18:30-21:00

Exhibition dates:
02/07-10/08/19

Times:
Mon-Sat, 11:00-18:00

Venue:
Delfina Foundation, London

In his first solo exhibition in the UK, Nasser Al Salem uses his expanded conception of calligraphy to present a new series of works exploring the relationship between language, time and space.



Nasser Al Salem, *Amma Baad*, 2018. Aluminium and black paint. Courtesy of Athr and the artist.

Delfina Foundation is proud to present *Amma Baad*, an exhibition of sculptural objects and works on paper by former artist-in-residence Nasser Al Salem. Curated by Maya El Khalil and presented in partnership with Shubbak Festival, the show is Al Salem's first solo exhibition in the UK.

Amma Baad continues the artist's expansive approach to the practice of Arabic calligraphy, both in terms of form and through his conceptual approach to the phrases with which he works. In this new series, Al Salem contemplates the Arabic phrase 'amma baad', an expression that proves difficult to translate into English. Often found in formal Arabic correspondence, the expression follows initial salutations and greetings, while preceding - and perhaps anticipating - the main subject or story to follow. It is a moment dense with expectations.

Delfina Foundation

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We live in times of exponential change, both in terms of our technological capabilities and the socio-political orders in which we are embedded. This has brought about a heightened sense of the simultaneity of events and altered our perception and understanding of place. The past and future are merging while the present is almost disappearing.

Through sculptural, print and hand-drawn renderings of 'amma baad', Al Salem takes a philosophical approach to this phrase, considering how it occupies a liminal space in the present, with its existence predicted on both that which precedes and follows it. Playing with scale and materials, the artist's manipulations of the text seek to challenge and expand our perceptions of time and space. Al Salem invites reflection on our current moment, as well as what might follow 'amma baad', and the agency we have in bringing potential futures into existence.

Artist biography

Nasser Al Salem (b. 1984, Mecca) in his practice challenges the boundaries of the traditional Islamic art of calligraphy, using unconventional mixed media forms to expand its conceptual potential.

Al Salem holds an 'Ijaza' certificate in calligraphy, the highest form of recognition and authorisation to transmit the art form. He received his undergraduate in Architecture at Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca, and currently lives and works in Jeddah. He is co-founder of Al-Hangar, an artist collective based in Jeddah, as well as a member of the National Guild of Calligraphers and an active fellow of Saudi Arabia's Arts and Culture Group.

Al Salem has exhibited internationally in group shows including: *Nomadic Traces: The Journeys of Arabian Scripts*, Warehouse421, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2019); *Out of Place*, Athr Gallery, Jeddah (2019); *The Clocks Are Striking Thirteen*, Athr Gallery, Jeddah (2018); *Epicenter X: Contemporary Saudi Art*, Arab American National Museum, Detroit (2017); *Safar*, 21,39 Jeddah Arts, Jeddah (2017); *Cities Of Convictions*, Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Utah (2017); *Common Grounds*, Villa Stuck Museum, Munich (2015); *Hajj: The Pilgrimage to Mecca*, Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris (2014); *Edge of Arabia: We Need to Talk*, Jeddah (2012); *Hajj*, British Museum, London (2012).

His work is part of the collections of: The British Museum, London; LACMA Museum, Los Angeles; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Guggenheim; The Al-Mansouria Foundation, Jeddah; and Ithra Museum, Dhahran. In 2013, Al Salem was shortlisted for the Jameel Prize at the Victoria & Albert Museum. In 2018, the artist's work was part of The Royal Commission of Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia.

Al Salem was an artist-in-residence at Delfina Foundation in 2014 and 2018.

Curator biography

Maya El Khalil is an independent curator, who for the last decade has been involved in the development of the contemporary art scene in Saudi Arabia. From its inception in 2009 until 2016, she was the Director of Athr contemporary art gallery in Jeddah.

El Khalil is a holder of a bachelor degree in Mechanical Engineering and an MBA from the American University of Beirut. She is currently pursuing an MA in Art and Politics at Goldsmiths University.

Credits

Presented in partnership with **Shubbak Festival** 2019.

With support from **The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture - AFAC** and the **Amma Baad Exhibition Circle**: Sara Binladen and Zahid Zahid; Rayan Fayez and Basma Albakree; Sheikha Alatas Prohaska; Mohammed and Monserrat Tamer; and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Kind thanks to Athr Gallery.



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Social media

#AmmaBaad
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Images and press pack

The exhibition lead-image can be found on this [link](#). Following installation please also find there the documentation images. All image reproduction is conditional on use of captions and credit lines as found in file names.

Delfina Foundation

Founded in 2007, Delfina Foundation is a London-based independent, non-profit foundation dedicated to facilitating artistic exchange and developing creative practice through residencies, partnerships and public programming. Delfina has hosted over 300 artists, curators and writers in residence from around the world, partnering with institutions such as Tate Modern, V&A, ICA, Frieze, Chisenhale and Art Jameel - a major strategic partner. Delfina's board of trustees generously provide 40% of the its annual funding, which is complemented by individual supporters, foundations, public funding and partnerships.

Delfina Foundation's public programme of events and exhibitions fosters critical discourse on the contemporary arts in relation to everyday life. Delfina brings salient issues and common ideas together through recurring thematic programmes such as *The Politics of Food*, *The Public Domain*, *Performance as Process*, and *Collecting as Practice*, the first ever residency programme for collectors alongside artists.