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Alia Ahmad's Abstract Paintings Reflect Saudi Arabia's Ever-Changing Capital

Silvi Naçi

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Alia Ahmad

Hameel - Morning Rain, 2022

Kohn Gallery



sense of magnetism. Born in Saudi Arabia’s capital city, Riyadh — which is located on a desert plateau in the center of the country — Ahmad draws inspiration from her home’s diverse cityscape for her large-scale tableaus.

Weaving into her abstract painting the conversations she’d had with friends and family in her studio, Ahmad imagines a new kind of landscape — one embedded with a sense of community. Creating an introspective purview, Ahmad becomes a conduit for narratives to move through her and onto the canvas, documenting time and communal space. Her memories intertwine with those of her loved ones and become the material, the social fabric, of her work. At Kohn, “من الحلم .. روضة” (A meadow...from a dream)” is a thread connecting Riyadh to Los Angeles.



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The medium of textiles is relevant to Ahmad’s practice not only metaphorically, but conjured visually through small gestures, markings, and dripping paint. Sometimes, the dispersed marks appear to be accents and glyphs in Arabic that resemble the artist’s name; other times, human silhouettes, as seen in *Hameel - Morning Rain* (2022). The composition of *In time, a bloom* (2022), for example, is constructed around a large, undulating, vessel-like shape from which Ahmad constructs space vertically and horizontally. The painting opens and spreads out into black lines that act as platforms through which we as viewers can imagine a vantage point revealing hidden scapes beyond what is seen.



varying opacities of paint, or lack thereof, applied to her linen surfaces, as if Ahmad is building the city up layer by layer. Like Riyadh, her oeuvre is alive, ever-constructing, constantly shifting, morphing, and breathing. ■

Silvi Naçi

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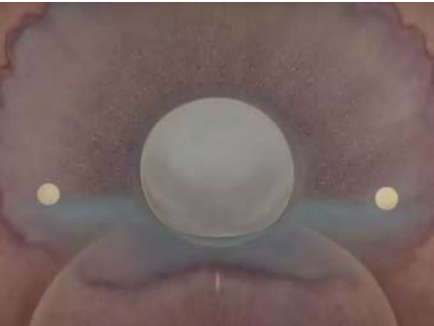


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