

ART & CULTURE

# Artist to Watch: Alia Ahmad's Colorful Paintings Nod to Al Sadu Weaving and Arabic Calligraphy

The Saudi Arabian talent's palette ranges from earthy and verdant tones to near-neon pinks and oranges

BY VICTORIA WOODCOCK

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Galerie



Alia Ahmad in her studio in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, with a series of works in progress.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

To say that 28-year-old Saudi Arabian artist [Alia Ahmad](#) burst on to the international art scene last spring is true in more ways than one. While her six-figure auction debut at Phillips London in March was swiftly followed by concurrent solo shows in London (with freshly opened gallery Albion Jeune) and Paris (at [White Cube](#)), the paintings themselves explode with vivacious color and pattern.

With titles such as *Reflection of Light of Things After Rain 1* (2023) or simply *Branch 4* (2024), Ahmad's dense and dynamic abstract canvases draw inspiration from her native country, where she lives and works. "Texture, line, and the movement of paint are used in an attempt to capture elements of the Saudi landscape as a whole," she says. A palette ranging from earthy and verdant tones to near-neon pinks and oranges is applied with

Fauvist energy to “reflect the varied topographies, from agricultural patterns to rocky outcrops and stretches of open terrain.”

Although Ahmad initially studied digital culture at London’s King’s College, it was at the Royal College of Art that she turned to painting. “It allowed me to engage with place and memory in a way that felt more personal and intuitive,” says the artist, who became the first from the Arab Gulf region to join [White Cube](#) when she signed with the gallery in September. Her debut solo exhibition at Mason’s Yard, a White Cube location in London, features a series of new paintings that she calls “playful and expressive.” It is on view through April 5.

With nods to Al Sadu weaving and Arabic calligraphy as well as Riyadh’s grid-like infrastructure and contemporary art scene, Ahmad’s oeuvre abounds with references to her home city. “Artists here are finding new ways to connect with heritage and identity, often blending traditional techniques with modern practices,” she says. “The community feels collaborative and supportive; it’s incredibly exciting to be part of it.”

*A version of this article first appeared in print in our 2025 Spring Issue in the section “Artists to Watch.” [Subscribe to the magazine.](#)*

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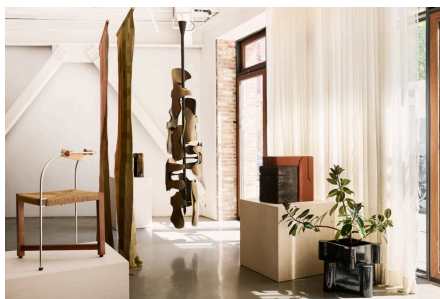
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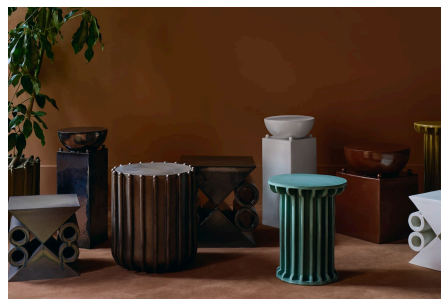
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