

أثر  
ATHR

Sarah Abu Abdullah  
Curatorial Packet

## Sarah Abu Abdullah | BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Abu-Abdallah's (b.1990 in Qatif, KSA where she lives and works) work challenges the impossible by piecing together improbable elements and connections as a gesture of hope and outlet for new narratives through video, installation, poetry, images and conversations. Initially trained as a painter, Sarah Abu Abdallah was later attracted to the documentary capacities of the camera, as well as the possibilities inherent in video and performance, leading her to create multimedia works. Through references to gender roles and the female experience, Abu Abdallah's explores issues of obscurity and value, probing the social and cultural conditions of contemporary Saudi Arabia.

Abu Abdallah earned a Masters in Digital Media Art Studies at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, USA, and BFA from The College of Art and Design at the University of Sharjah.

Her most recent solo show; *For the Long Time in a Long Time*, Jameel Art Centre (Dubai) & Kunstverein in Hamburg, 2019. Her work has been shown in *Al Obour*, SAC 2019, Jeddah, KSA; *Gwangju Biennial 2018* South Korea; *Do it Arabic*, (2018) Sharjah, UAE; *Fluidity* in Kunstverein (2016) Hamburg, Germany; *Co-Workers* in Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France (2015-16); *Prospectif Cinéma /Filter Bubble* in Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; *Chicago Underground film festival*, USA and *Luma Foundation* (2015), Zurich, Switzerland; *Sharjah Biennial 11* (2013), UAE; *Serpentine Galleries 89plus Marathons*, (2013) London, UK; *Whitechapel Gallery*, London, UK; *Rhizoma* and the 55th Venice Biennale (2013), Italy; amongst others.

She is the recipient of the Sharjah Art Foundation production program grant (2016) in collaboration with Josh Bitelli for their project *To Gaze at Ten Suns Shining*. And a shortlisted artist for Abraaj Group Art Prize in 2017.



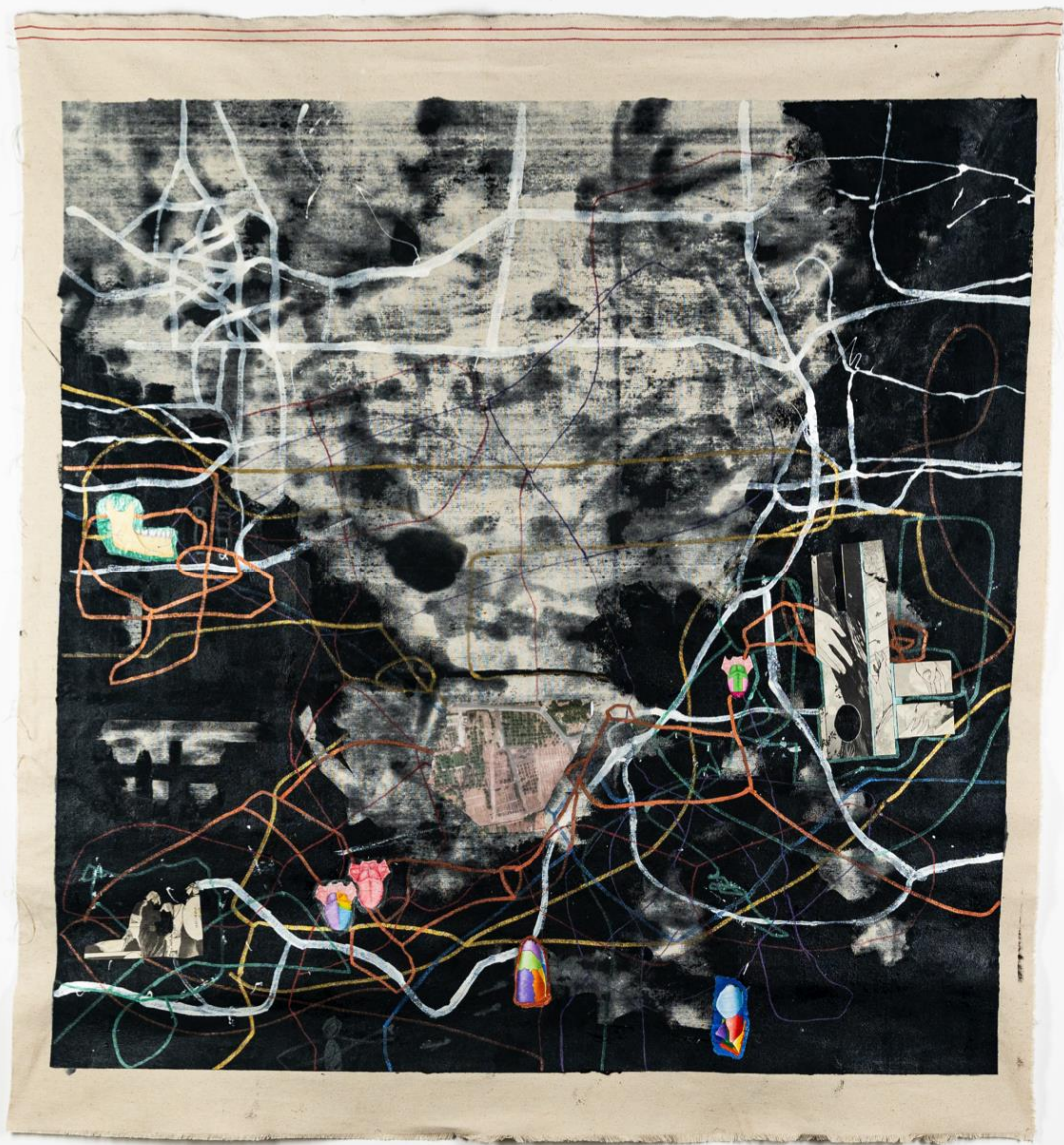
Installation shot of *Karam*, 2019



*Karam, 2019*  
Mixed Media  
120 x 120 cm



Detail shot of *Karam*, 2019



*Capacity*, 2019  
Mixed Media  
117 x 120 cm



Installation shot of *Capacity*, 2019



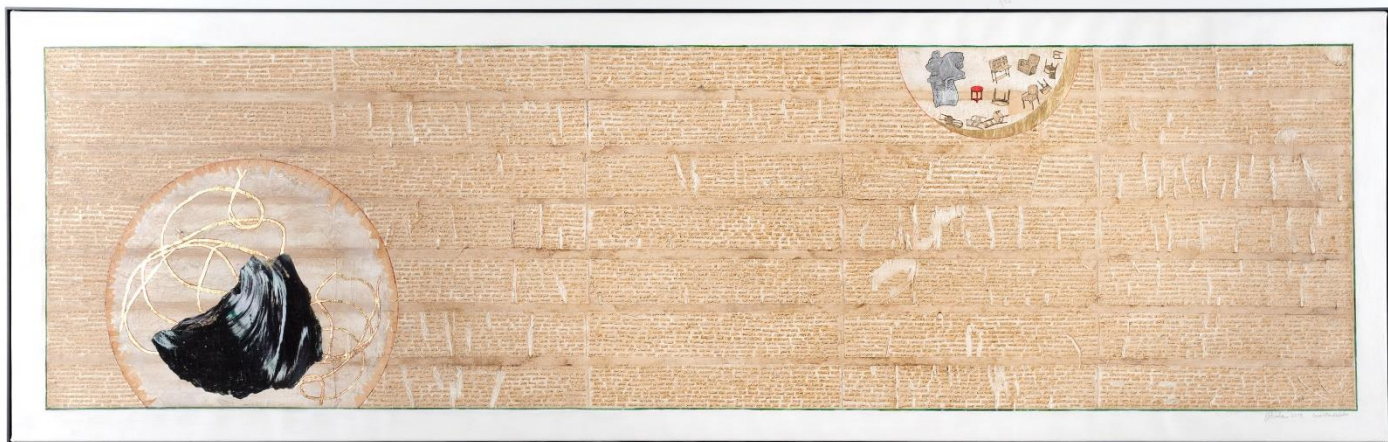
Detail shot of *Capacity*, 2019



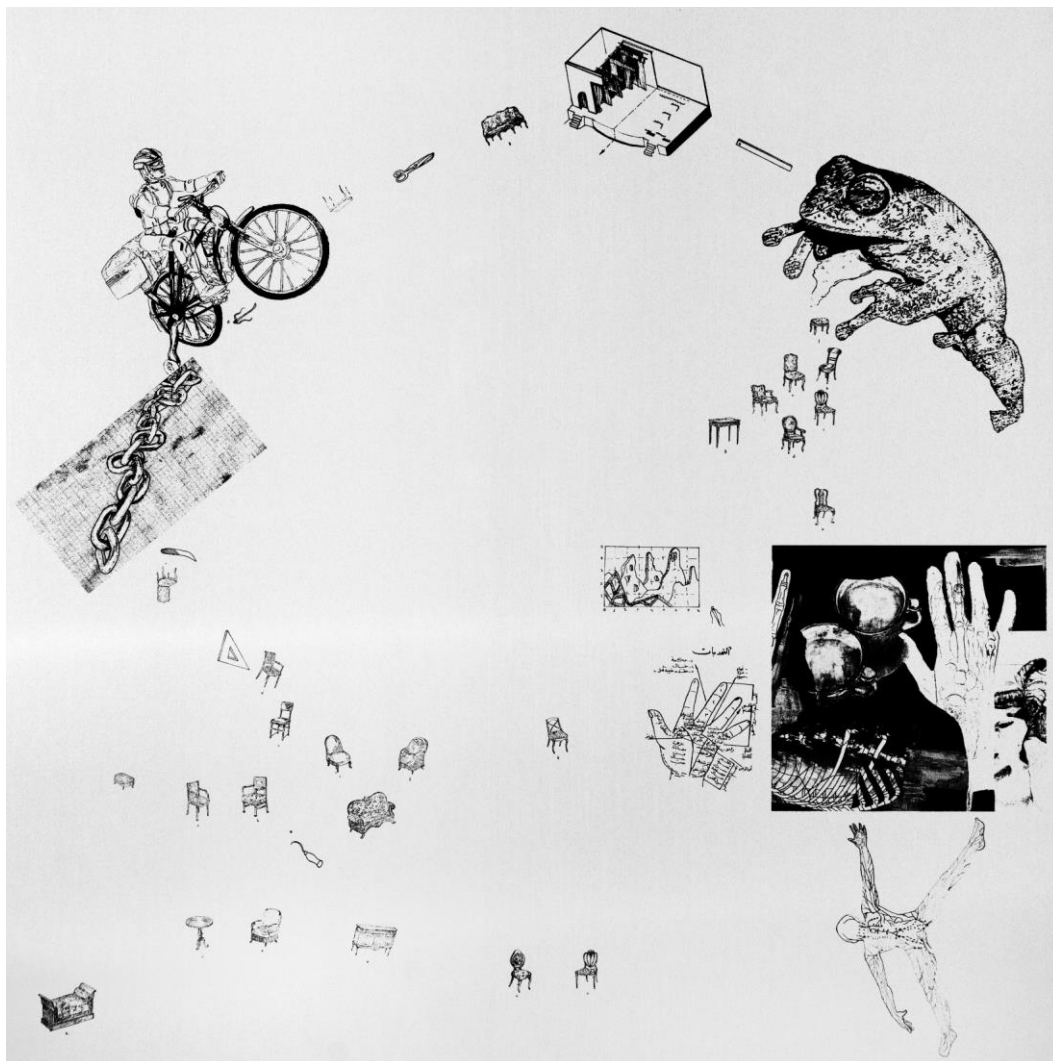
*The House That Ate Them Whole*, 2018  
3-channel video installation  
5 x 4 meter projection  
Duration: 10 minutes

### ***The House That Ate Them Whole***

The House That Ate Them Whole is a 3-channel video relaying the imaginative and surreal narrative. The protagonist of this piece of speculative fiction is a house, which, growing frustrated and bored with the clutter it holds, suddenly forms a gaping and inescapable black hole that swallows up its dwellers. The story of the hungry house is told through the songs and accounts of witnesses telling about space restrictions and the ways in which the places and spaces we inhabit shape our experiences for better or worse.



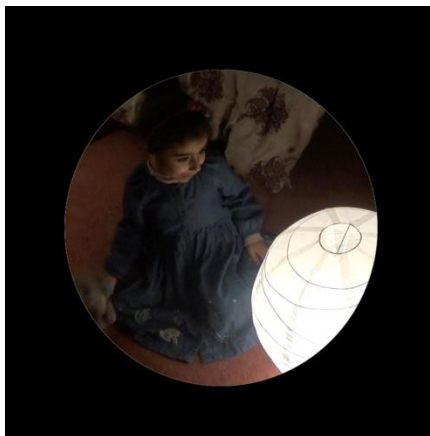
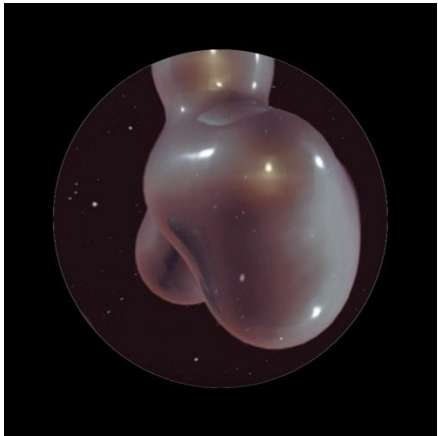
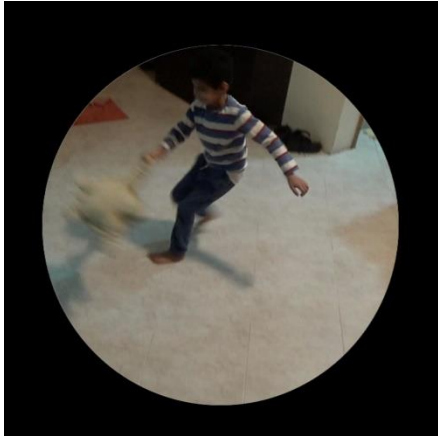
*A Great Year, 2018*  
Paper collage / Paint on canvas  
90 x 160 cm



*Last Year, 2018*  
Print on aluminum  
90 x 90 cm  
Editions of 2

### ***18 Blankets Series***

18 Blankets is an immersive experiential art project through which the artist uses as a vehicle to showcase the absurdity of reconstructing the daily life in the context of domesticity. The ‘unsettling and excellent” of her work – in which her family and friends have contributed to – unravels the “processes” of home – a journey mangled and untangled by the uncanny familiar within private domestic spaces.



*18 Blankets, 2017*

Video

Duration: 7 mins., 29 sec.

Ed. 1/3

## **18 Blankets Series**

Dear Sarah,

The install sounds unsettling and excellent. After we got off the phone I reread *The Argonauts* to find the passage where Maggie Nelson speaks about the 'vindication of domesticity as an ethic.' Nelson's enjoyment of renting apartments in New York made it feasible to let things fall apart around her before simply moving on. This is an ethic of resistance. Resistance to the viscous correctness imparted by the entrenched logics of capitalism and reinforced, often unwittingly at home.

On 16.12.16 at 23:49, you sent me a photo of you shining your new projector onto your bedroom desk, piled high with books, empty cups clothes, cables... This image has stuck with me because it reminds us that the domestic is in process not stasis. But domesticity's process isn't always in plain sight and doesn't always look like decline or messiness although these are both important factors. Process can happen through tactility, relationships or through the slow and painful process of growing-up. What I find so compelling about your version of the 'decline of the domestic' lies not only in strategic chaos, but in the magical and the unknowable. Magical thinking is when you conceal your workings. You've concealed your workings under carpet, behind windows and by casting your siblings as a think-tank in your new video. Their ideas surpass the framework of art production, existing in potential and the unmade. The whole installation unfurls through the minutia of the pedestrian while simultaneously inhabiting the mystical. I can't wait to see the colourful refractions of light bouncing off the kitchenware/screens and playing kaleidoscopic, like candlelight onto walls and visitors.

Wishes,  
Josh Bitelli

*[The conception of the show was not possible without the input of Firas, Zahra, Radhiy, Hassan, Zainab and Saud AbuAbdallah, Ghada Al Hasan along with the advices of Karam Natour, Mohammad AlFaraj, Goldie Poblador, Josh Bitelli, Bruno Zhu, Zamir Suleymanov, Andrew Alexander, Rosanna Puyol, Rasmus Myrup, Ab6al al Dijital and Agustine Zegers on Facebook chat Messenger]*



*Rain*, 2017  
Audio  
Duration: 59 mins., 33 sec.  
Ed. 1/5



Installation shot of *18 Blankets*, 2017  
*Along Came Polyester*, a group  
show, ATHR Jeddah



Top to bottom; left to right:  
*Blanket 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5* from the series *18 Blankets*, 2017  
 Collage, oil paint on wooden frame  
 94 x 30 x 6 cm



*The Delivery Card*, 2016

Part of *A Mystical Staircase* show curated by Francesco Urbano Ragazzi at 63rd 77thsteps

### ***The Delivery Card*, 2016**

Curated by Francesco Urbano Ragazzi in collaboration with 63rd-77th STEPS, “A Mystical Staircase” is a group exhibition in the form of an online tarot deck. Taking its name from an ancient allegory describing the ascension to Knowledge, the project continues the quest for the spiritual dimensions of data consumption that the curatorial duo Francesco Urbano Ragazzi started with *The III Internet Pavilion* (Miltos Manetas) and *The Internet Saga* (Jonas Mekas), respectively on the occasion of the 55th and 56th Venice Biennale.

The instructions are quite simple: formulate a question, then pick a card for your reading. One of the 22 artists invited will share a vision with you. It will be a journey toward the concept of destiny, between chaos magic, Gestalt, and algorithmic casualty; *from mystique to mystification and back again*.

The cards will project you into a metaphysical frequency which transcends consumerism, fashion trends, the archetypes of corporate “occult” powers and the future of humankind. The platform has been designed to hide and incorporate some subliminal sources: from gambling to the Oracle database company graphics, from the lights of Windows to DNA ladders and of course online divination platforms. These tarots will also allude to the rotations of our point of view on moving images, a silent revolution which is happening on our devices. The possibility of writing a *new vertical cinema*.

Now, at your discretion, make a question and pick a card. But remember: the answer is always right and this deck, for your sake, is never wrong.



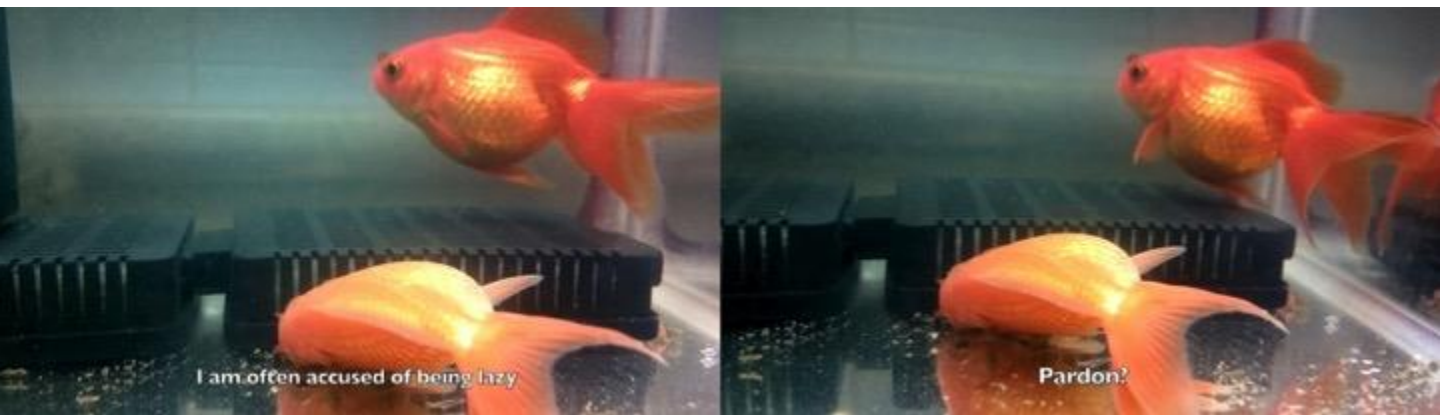
Where are you?

*The Salad Zone*, 2015  
Video Installation  
Duration: 19 min 75 sec  
Ed of 5

### ***The Salad Zone*, 2015**

For abc/art berlin contemporary, Sarah Abu Abdullah will be exhibiting two video works: *The Salad Zone*; *The Turbulence of Sea & Blood*, and four prints: *q-VR 01*, *q-VR 02*, *q-VR 03*, and *q-VR 04*

*The Salad Zone* uses glimpses of multiple narratives including familial domestic tensions, a juvenile dream of going to Japan, one person's tendency to smash TVs in moments of anger, and eating fish. While using scenes from the artist's surroundings and life in Saudi Arabia, like streets or malls, the work does not attempt to provide the whole picture, but instead, takes a rhizomatic approach to story telling, shedding light on shards of the everyday that act as abstracts to an underlying narrative.



*The Salad Zone*, 2015  
Video Installation  
Duration: 19 min 75 sec  
Ed of 5



*The Turbulence of Sea And Blood, 2015*  
Video Installation  
Duration: 15 min 15sec  
Ed of 5

### ***The Turbulence of Sea And Blood, 2015***

Sifting through the absolute, the predefined, constructs of anxiety, and the absurdity of the agreed-upon in a time of excess. How does one place one's coordinates in the physical, metaphysical, and the digital citizenry? It is said that the gravitational forces exerted by the planets affect the circulation of human bodies and emotions as much as they affect the oceans. Youtube and Google image search help to assemble an uncomfortable space for a question spanning practices of compulsion and purification. With this work, most recently shown as part of the Centre Pompidou's The Filter Bubble, the artist uses a rapid overlay of imagery, ranging from the seemingly supernatural to the mundane; scuba divers to iPhone tarot cards; visa applications to unnerving domestic scenes of a cat regurgitating. The film is similar to *The Salad Zone*, in that it extracts slivers from everyday life. However, with this work, there is a further overlay or over saturation of information – a play that draws on contemporary life as a woman in Saudi, an existence that straddles the banal intimacies of home and access to potent imagery and information through the internet and social media.



Still images from *The Turbulence of Sea & Blood*, 2015



From left to right, top to bottom:  
q-VR 01, q-VR 02, q-VR 03, q-VR 04, 2015  
Digital print  
45 x 45 cm  
Edition of 4

Continuing on from *The Turbulence of Sea & Blood* and the question of how, in a hyper-connected world, does one place one's coordinates in the physical, metaphysical, and the digital citizenry. This series draws a mental collage using the everyday, references to virtual reality and old photos of the artist's father in his youth to make up a fictional world through images.



*Saudi Automobile*, 2011  
Color video LCD with sound,  
scrap car and pink paint  
Duration: 10 minutes (looped)

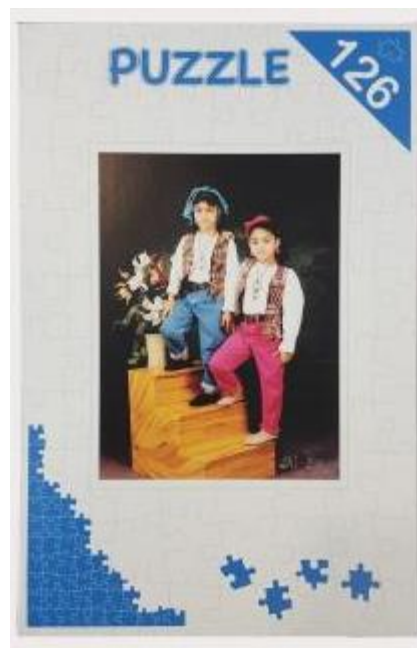


### *Saudi Automobile*, 2011

Strewn across the bays of an unremarkable car park is the beaten-up carcass of a vehicle. It appears to have been abandoned, until a woman emerges. She picks up a brush and begins to paint the shell with long, gentle strokes in saccharine pink. This act of ownership, along with the stereotypically feminine colour chosen, seems to be a knowing nod to the only nation in the world that prohibits women from driving.

The composition of the short film is simple, shot by a single camera positioned on a tripod. We observe as the artist circles the vehicle, periodically stepping back to admire her handiwork. As she sets down her brush, she signals not only that her work is done here, but also that it has been a futile act. Independence remains out of reach. In a final act of resignation, she pointedly climbs into the passenger seat.

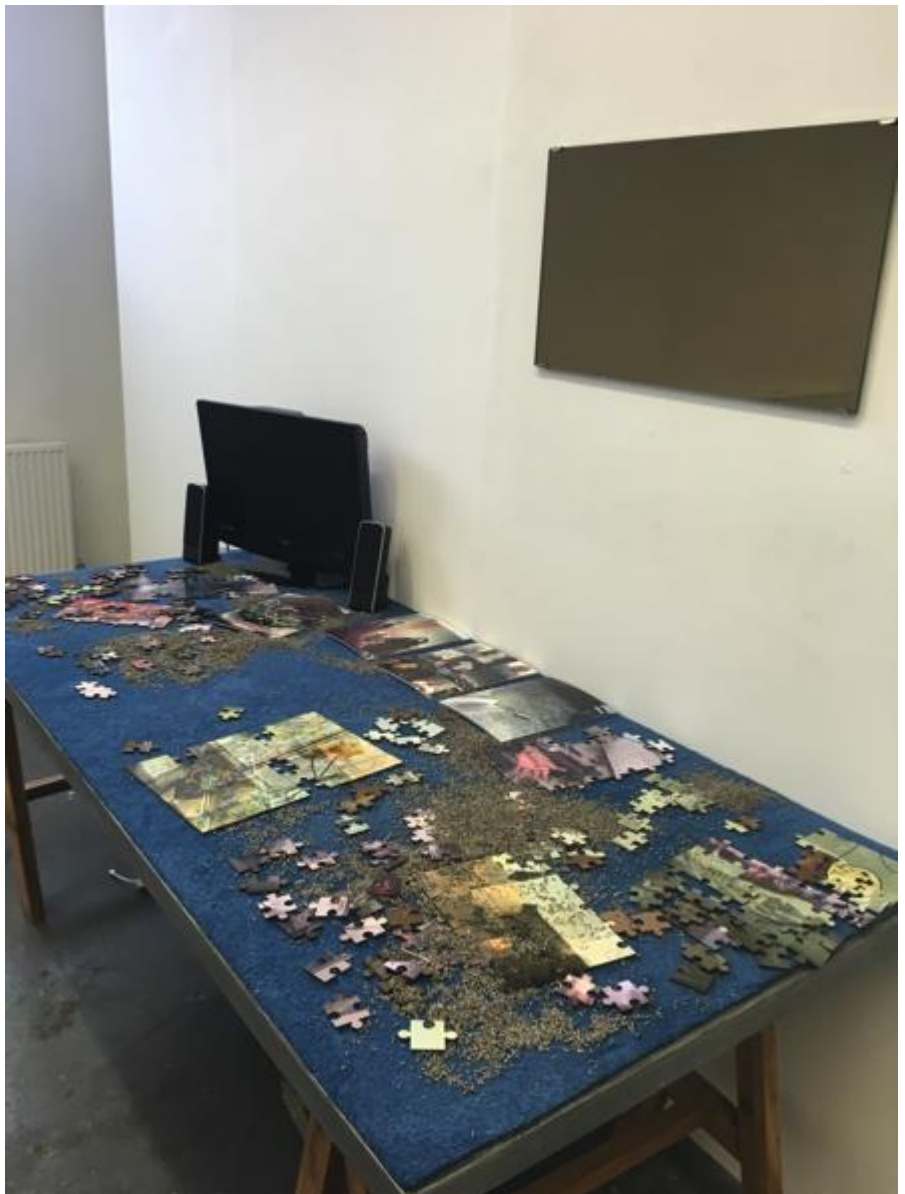
## Other Works



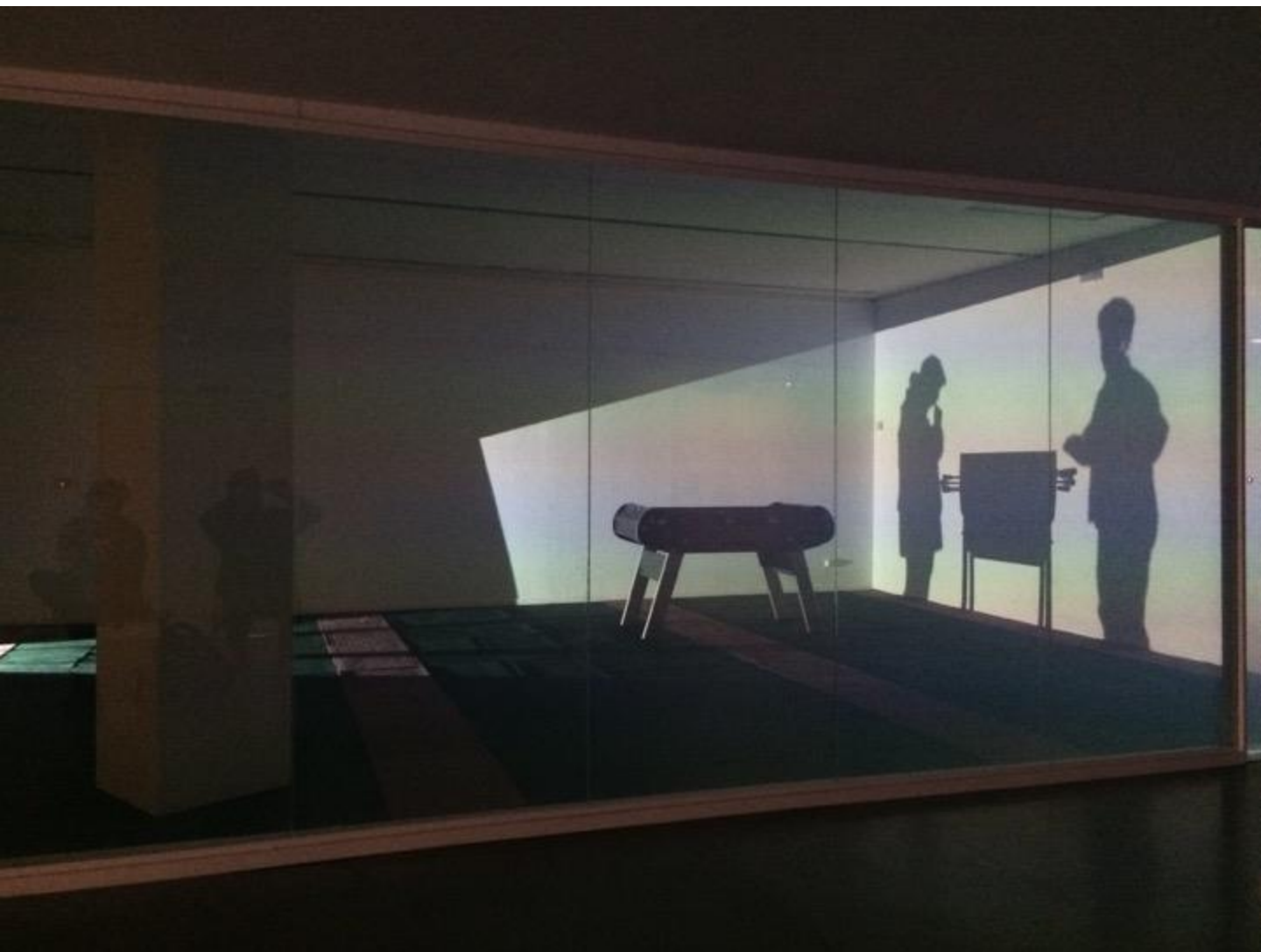
*Zainab and Sarah Posing for Al Eid from the series Sanabises, 2017*  
Puzzle pieces (2mm cardboard and with a glossy coated image surface)  
26 x 24.5 cm  
Ed. 1/3



*This Time with FEELing*, 2016  
Installation  
Residency at the White Building  
Hackney Wick in London



*This Time with FEELing*, 2016  
Installation  
Residency at the White Building  
Hackney Wick in London



Installation shot *Co-Workers*, a group exhibition 2015, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris for 89 Plus



*To Gaze at Ten Suns Shining 2015*  
An installation project with Josh Bitelli at  
POOL, Hamburg



*To Gaze at Ten Suns Shining 2015*  
An installation project with Josh Bitelli at  
POOL, Hamburg



*Out To Lunch, 2014*

Video Installation

Duration: 9 minutes 54 seconds



## سعودية تتأمل في الحياة الخليجية المعاصرة: " لأول مرة منذ زمن بعيد"

افتتح مركز جميل للفنون، متحف الفن المعاصر في دبي، اليوم المعرض الخاص بالفنانة السعودية سارة أبو عبدالله، تحت عنوان "لأول مرة منذ زمن بعيد"، بالتعاون مع كونستفيري هامبورغ، ألمانيا. ويستمر المعرض حتى 11 أبريل 2020.

تعمل الفنانة السعودية سارة أبو عبدالله من خلال وسائط متنوعة؛ الفيلم، التركيب الفني، الرسم، والكتابة. ويبحث عمل الفنانة في الحياة الخليجية المعاصرة، وكيف أسهم الإنترنت وقنوات التواصل الرقمية في صياغة فهمنا واهتماماتنا تجاه العالم، خاصة بالتدفق المستمر للصور وصياغة الشخصيات الوهمية عبر الإنترنت، ومعمارية الحيز المحلي، وثقافة البوب في الخليج. يعكس المعرض بحثاً معاصراً عن الذات والانتماء، وتتساءل سارة فيه عن الكيفية التي يمكننا بها التنقل في المساحات العامة والخاصة بينما نتفاوض على أطر لكل منها، من خلال رؤية تتأثر، على سبيل المثال لا الحصر، بتجربتها كفنانة في المجتمع السعودي.



## ARAB NEWS

# Four Saudi artists show their work at traveling exhibition



"Mornings of Hope" by Sarah Abu Abdallah. (Supplied)

Updated 01  
December 2019

SARAH  
ALSUHAIMI

December 01, 2019  
05:15

- Unique global biennale has visited 43 cities in 23 countries, concluding in Riyadh

Four Saudi artists have been showcasing their work at a unique traveling biennale that has visited 43 cities in 23 countries, and concludes this week in Riyadh.



## بحث في الحياة

حكاية إبداعات المرأة لم تتوقف عند حدود ما قدمته الفنانات الأربع، وإنما امتدت في دبي، لتشمل أيضاً مركز فن جميل بمنطقة الجدايف، الذي ما إن تلج من بوابته الضخمة، حتى تواجهك جدارية معلقة، تحمل توقيع الفنانة السعودية سارة أبو عبد الله، التي تعودت في أعمالها على البحث في الحياة الخليجية المعاصرة، وكيف أسهمت التكنولوجيا بكل أشكالها في صياغة مفهوم هذه الحياة، ونظرة المجتمعات الخليجية إلى العالم.

وبرغم أنها المرة الأولى التي تطل فيها سارة على الملأ في دبي، عبر معرض خاص يحمل عنوان «لأول مرة منذ زمن بعيد»، فإن أعمالها، لا سيما الجدارية منها، تبدو لافتة، تدعوك إلى التوقف أمامها طويلاً والتمعن في تفاصيلها، ومحاولة قراءتها، برغم هيمنة اللون الأسود عليها، إذ تحمل الكثير من التفاصيل، وتسعى إلى البوح عن طبيعة الاهتمامات، ونوعية الثقافات التي تسود في حياتنا حالياً، في ظل استمرار تدفق المعلومات والصور من كل حذب وصوب.

## مركز جميل للفنون يقدم معرض " لأول مرة منذ زمن بعيد" للفنانة سارة أبو عبدالله



مركز جميل للفنون يقدم معرض " لأول مرة منذ زمن بعيد" للفنانة سارة أبو عبدالله

🕒 الأربعاء، 18 كانون الأول (ديسمبر) 2019 - 12:41



افتتح [مركز جميل للفنون](#)، متحف الفن المعاصر في دبي، المعرض الخاص بالفنانة السعودية سارة أبو عبدالله، تحت عنوان "لأول مرة منذ زمن بعيد"، بالتعاون مع كونستيفرين هامبورغ، ألمانيا. يستمر المعرض حتى 11 أبريل 2020.

تعمل الفنانة السعودية سارة أبو عبدالله من خلال وسائط متنوعة؛ الفيلم، التركيب الفني، الرسم، والكتابة. ويبحث عمل الفنانة في الحياة الخليجية المعاصرة، وكيف أسهم الإنترنت وقنوات التواصل الرقمية في صياغة فهمنا واهتماماتنا تجاه العالم، خاصةً بالتدفق المستمر للصور وصياغة الشخصيات الوهمية عبر الإنترنت، ومعمارية الحيز المحلي، وثقافة البوب في الخليج. يعكس