

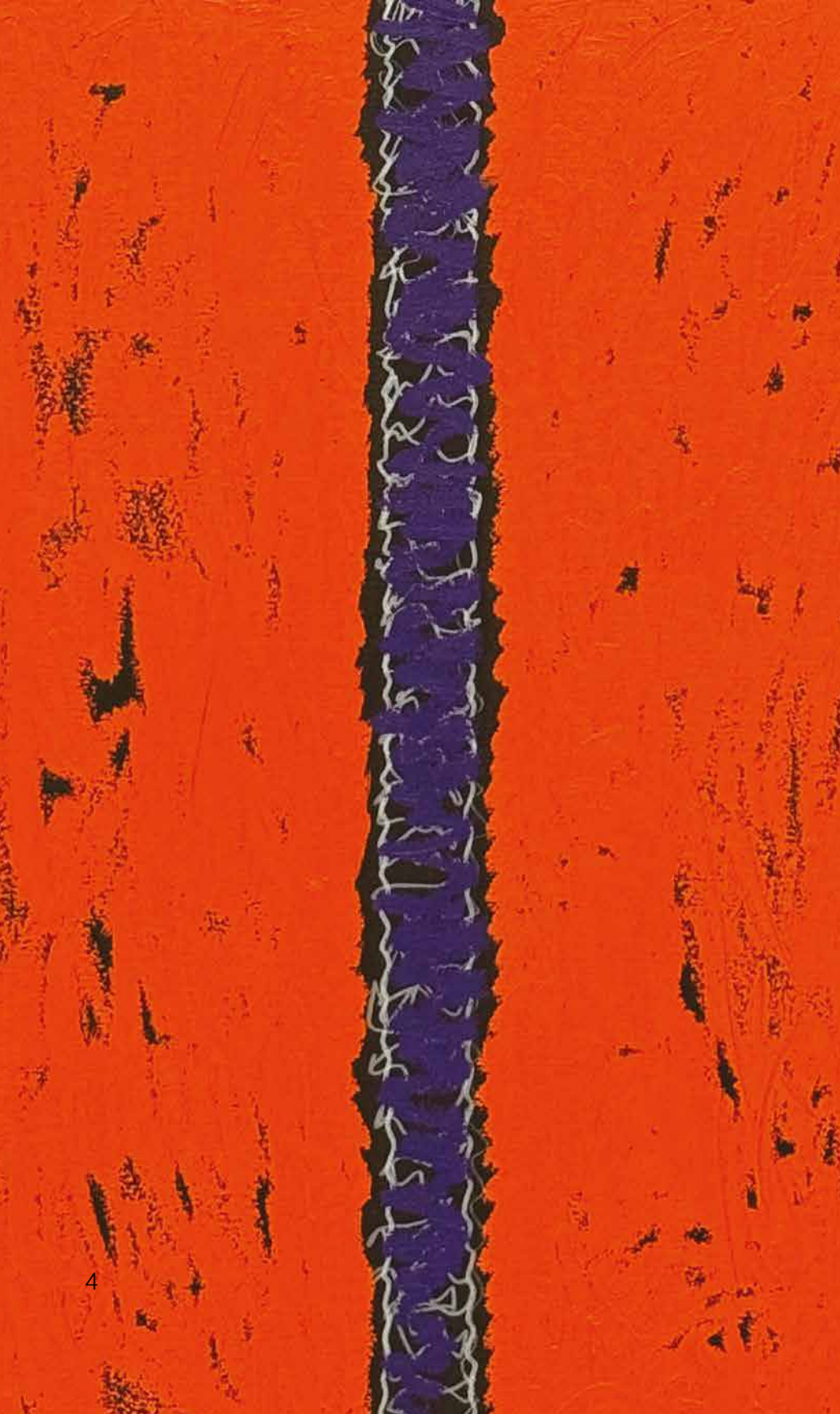


MAYSALOUN FARAJ

Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time
Selected Work 2005-25



CONTEMPORARY ART PLATFORM



MAYSALOUN FARAJ

Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time
Selected Work 2005-25

*For Ayla, Leía, Idris and the future... For the children of Gaza
May your light and courage inspire our world out of its darkness*

Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time
(Selected Works 2005-25)
Maysaloun Faraj
Cap Kuwait • 11 Nov - 11 Dec 2025

© Maysaloun Faraj and Contemporary Art Platform, Kuwait 2025

This publication coincides with the convening of the artist’s first solo exhibition in Kuwait: Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time (Selected Works 2005-25) by London-based Iraqi/American artist Maysaloun Faraj, 11 November to 11 December 2025 at CAP Kuwait, Kuwait.

Copyright for individual texts and images rest with the authors. The right of the contributors to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright Designs and Patents Act of 1988. No part of this publication may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form by any electronic mechanical or other means now known or hereafter invented including photocopying and recording or in any information storage or retrieval system or otherwise without previous written permission by the publisher.

Front cover: Inaam (Love/Nakhla series) (detail) oil on canvas, 81x31cm 2024. Back cover: Azzurrah: The Radiant One, 92x73cm 2018. British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data. A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library. Designed and published by Maysaloun Faraj and CAP Kuwait 2025. Printed in Kuwait 2025.



CONTENTS

Dedication	3
Contents	5
OVERVIEW by CAP Kuwait	7
FOREWORD by Venetia Porter	11
INTRODUCTION by Sophie Kazan	12
THE ARTWORKS	15
- NAKHAL: Resilience, Heritage and Hope • 2024-25	17
- HOME: Where Souls Heal and Hearts Mend • 2020-24	25
- HOMES AWAY FROM HOME: From the River to the Sea • 2023	33
- GEOMETRY OF DREAMS: Shooting Stars, Baghdad to Paris • 2015-18	35
- GEOMETRY OF WORDS: Faith and Sacred Structures • 2016	39
- BIRDS AND HOMELANDS: Love Forsaken • 2012-17	43
- KITES AND DREAMS: Wounds and Wanderings • 2005-09	47
THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS by Maysaloun Faraj: Transcending Time 2025	50
Biography	53
Notes on Contributors’	56



OVERVIEW by CAP KUWAIT

Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time 2005-25

Contemporary Art Platform Kuwait is honoured to present *Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time* (Selected Works 2005-25), the first solo exhibition in Kuwait by acclaimed Iraqi artist Maysaloun Faraj, showcasing a curated selection of works created between 2005 and 2025. This significant exhibition marks two decades of artistic inquiry, resilience, and transformation, offering audiences a rare opportunity to witness the breadth and depth of Faraj’s creative journey. It also affirms the artist’s vital place within both regional and global contemporary art discourses, where personal vision and cultural legacy converge with urgency and grace.

Through *Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time*, Faraj articulates a visual language that is both distinctively personal and profoundly resonant, shaped by diasporic memory, cultural inheritance, and the enduring human impulse to create meaning amid upheaval. Her art navigates a shifting terrain, reflecting a life lived between geographies, and her compositions emerge as meditations on place, identity, and continuity. Drawing on a deep lineage of modern and contemporary art while asserting her own voice, Faraj bridges continents, aesthetics, and philosophies. Her work is at once a continuation and a radical departure, a meditation on identity, time, and

being. The exhibition unfolds chronologically and thematically, offering an intimate map of Faraj’s evolving practice. From her early geometric compositions to her most recent and celebrated *Nakhla* and *HOME* series, Faraj weaves a narrative that is both personal and archetypal, exploring themes of exile and belonging, memory and loss, rootedness and aspiration. The viewer is invited to move through not just artistic phases but lived experience, shaped by global events, internal reckoning, and the ceaseless search for expressive clarity.

Her engagement with the legacy of early twentieth century avant garde is neither imitative nor referential but transformative. The ghost of Kazimir Malevich haunts her minimalist abstractions, particularly in their structural simplicity and formal reduction. However, while Malevich’s *Black Square* sought transcendence through purity and detachment, Faraj’s abstractions remain sensuously tethered to the world, to place, story, and sensation. Her geometry pulses with emotion. Texture, colour, and form become vessels for memory. In her hands, abstraction becomes intimate, not an escape from reality, but a way of grappling with its layers and tensions. Similarly, Faraj’s chromatic sensibilities and organic forms recall the spirit of Henri Matisse,

Maysaloun Faraj at her studio during the making of the *Nakhal* series • 2025

particularly in her middle period, where vivid colour and lyrical shapes evoke beauty and emotional warmth. Yet where Matisse offered joy as balm, Faraj's colour carries complexity. Joy is entwined with displacement, celebration is shadowed by longing. Her palette seduces, but always with a trace of ache, echoing the dualities that underlie much of her work. In this contrast lies her distinctive strength the ability to hold opposites in quiet harmony.

This emotional layering reaches a poignant clarity in her HOME series, developed during the global Covid 19 lockdowns, where "home" emerges as a multidimensional concept. It is at once sanctuary and confinement, presence and absence. Through compact compositions and domestic motifs, Faraj reclaims her immediate environment as a site of creative resistance, transforming the ordinary into the poetic. These works resonate deeply, especially in a region where the concept of "home" is often politically fraught and perpetually renegotiated.

The home becomes not only a physical setting but a psychological landscape, one that speaks to a broader condition of stillness, uncertainty, and introspection shared by many across borders. At the heart of the exhibition lies the monumental Nakhal series, which stands as the culmination of Faraj's ongoing exploration of identity and heritage. The Nakhla, the date palm, appears throughout as both a recurring visual motif and a metaphoric anchor.

A timeless symbol of resilience, fertility, and rootedness in Arab culture, the palm in Faraj's work becomes a deeply personal totem. Each nakhla is imbued with character, solitude, and strength, often emerging from fractured or imagined terrains, reaching upward with quiet dignity. These palms are not just trees. They are witnesses, sentinels, storytellers emblems of survival and continuity that rise above disruption. In this series, Faraj's ability to merge the universal with the particular becomes especially pronounced.

She distills vast themes, including exile, endurance, memory, and legacy, into singular forms that speak across boundaries of language and geography. Her works are neither decorative nor didactic. Rather, they are invitations to pause, to feel, to remember. Each composition becomes an intimate encounter, and each tree becomes a portrait, not of a person, but of a spirit, a rooted presence. What distinguishes Faraj's practice, especially in these later bodies of work, is her unwavering commitment to sincerity and depth. She is an artist who does not shy away from vulnerability, nor from complexity. Her compositions, often textured with subtle materiality, whisper rather than shout. They demand close looking. In doing so, they reward the viewer with revelations. These are revelations about history, about belonging, about what it means to live in the tension between "roots" and "horizons." This tension,

this simultaneous pull between grounding and becoming, serves as the philosophical spine of the exhibition. Faraj's vision, informed by her Iraqi heritage, diasporic experience, and modernist sensibilities, transcends linear narratives. Instead, it proposes a poetics of simultaneity. Past and future, rupture and continuity, sorrow and beauty coexist in the same frame. Her art does not present answers but invites reflection. It is a language of nuance and layering, where the seen and the felt exist side by side.

Ultimately, Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time (Selected Works 2005 - 25) is not just a retrospective. It is a reflection on the enduring power of art to map an inner terrain, to hold space for complexity, and to offer solace, clarity, and connection in turbulent times. Faraj's work speaks to the experience of many, yet always from a place that is unmistakably her own.

Faraj's voice is one of quiet strength, shaped by a lifetime of negotiation between belonging and distance, tradition and transformation. As viewers move through the exhibition, they are not merely observing an artist's evolution. They are invited to journey, to trace time as Faraj has done, with care, with courage, and with an open heart, discovering along the way the profound capacity of art to root us, move us, and expand our sense of what it means to be.



FOREWORD by VENETIA PORTER

Artist, writer, curator and activist Maysaloun Faraj, works with passion, conviction and meticulous care. In a multilayered practice across different media from sculptural ceramics to works on paper, her artistic trajectory now spans close to four decades. Arriving in London from Baghdad in 1982 following her studies in architecture, by 1986, she was already showing her work; first in London and then internationally. At this point she was mostly working in ceramics. Gaining in recognition, her work was included in Salwa Mikdadi's important exhibition *Forces of Change* which opened in Washington in 1994. The true measure of her 'Iraqiness', her intimate connection to Iraqi art and heritage, was not only, at this point, being expressed through the art she was making, but her love for Iraq was to lead to a six-year project culminating in the groundbreaking exhibition 'Strokes of Genius: Contemporary Iraqi Art' in London's Brunei gallery in 2001. For the first time audiences were exposed to the full story of Iraqi art from the work of the early pioneers such as Jewad Selim, whose widow Lorna contributed to the catalogue, to the work of artists such as Dia al-Azzawi, Sadiq Alfraji and many others.¹

Her own signature style, honed during this period, was characterised by a vocabulary that spoke powerfully not only to those precious objects of the past and the symbolism of the designs upon them but through which she could articulate her profound sadness at the

violence wrought upon that heritage during and in the aftermath of the Iraq war of 2003. Works such as *Ahlam Weeping Palms Stolen Childhoods* (2008) were shown to great acclaim in *Boats and Burdens: Kites and Shattered Dreams* at the Aya gallery in 2009.² This way of looking had been exemplified for me by her ceramic sculpture *History in Ruins*, acquired by the British Museum in 2005.

Made in the form of a book, she combined words of prayer with the repeated word *limadha*, 'why?' 'From the land between the two rivers,' she wrote, 'I pick up in my mind's eye the remnants of pages from an ancient past scripted on clay tablets, where man first recorded his deeds and victories and recreate my own. I 'sew' 'them together in an act of healing and hope. I stand them tall and proud, like an open gate, defiant and dignified like our precious date palms, like our people, like our spirit.'

That *limadha*, in regard to Palestine is also always with her: she expressed it in *Bird Symphony* (2016-17) begun during her residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris in 2015 and later where she has painted in meticulous detail panels of *tatreez*, the embroidery that exemplifies what it is to be Palestinian. One of them, *Zahra* (2023), she describes as 'a tribute to the enduring spirit of Palestinian women to memory, legacy, and cultural resilience passed from hand to hand,

stitch to stitch, generation to generation.' Through this work, she expresses solidarity in the face of the current genocidal war engulfing Gaza and its people.

Across the pages of this book, the catalogue of this major exhibition in Kuwait, a story unfolds in which life and art are completely intertwined. At her most prolific during the Covid pandemic, she began, as she says, 'to rediscover my drawing skills', the last time she had drawn so extensively was as an architecture student in Baghdad during the 1970s. *HOME*, a series of works on paper resulted; details of what she saw around her; the rooms of her house, the furniture, a vase of flowers; during 'eased lockdown' the homes of her friends.³ It acts as a diary of that moment when our world was in limbo. Large scale paintings followed, that brilliance of colour, the precision of line evoking stillness. While the exhibition offers the opportunity for the visitor to see the work of Maysaloun Faraj at close quarters, this book will endure as a legacy, an insight into a practice that continues to surprise and delight.

¹ Maysaloun Faraj (ed.), *Iraq Strokes of Genius* (London: Saqi 2019)

² For the catalogue of *Boats and Burdens: Kites and Shattered Dreams* and other catalogues see www.mfaraj.com/press (accessed 19 September 2025)

³ Maysaloun Faraj, *Home Lockdown 2020-22* (London: 2022)

INTRODUCTION by SOPHIE KAZAN MAKHLOUF

“Art is not a thing, it is a way,” wrote Elbert Hubbard in 1908. These words resonate as preparations build for the opening of artist Maysaloun Faraj’s solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Platform (CAP) in Kuwait City. The show spans two decades, from *Kites and Dreams* (2005–09) to her most recent *Nakhal* series (2024–25). *Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time* (Selected Work 2005–25), traces Faraj’s inspirations, interests, and concerns.

Based in London, she has developed a distinctive visual language that engages with her Arab and Islamic heritage, landscape, and the political realities of recent decades. The exhibition opens with *Nakhal* (Palm Trees) (2024–25), a series of vertical canvases, each often depicting a single palm or multiple ones that simulate a grove. Vividly coloured and textured, the palms embody individuality and resilience. “Each palm has its own persona. They often stand in groups, like women standing in solidarity” she reflects. Associated with oases, palms symbolise life, hope, and renewal. Mentioned twenty-two times in the Qur’an, they become for Faraj both spiritual and cultural icons. During the pandemic lockdowns, Faraj turned inward with a series titled *HOME* (2020–22), visually exploring her surroundings, depicting her own home, but also the wider implication as a place ‘Where Souls Heal and Hearts Mend’, where ‘Home’ in her words, is ‘sanctuary and solace’. Active online,

she further encouraged others to embrace creativity as healing. Drawing inspiration from artists near and far, she confronted uncertainty with art as restoration. These works reveal her characteristic optimism, transforming isolation into luminous reflections. From this emerged another body of works titled ‘Homes Away From Home’ (2023), some of which were inspired by Palestinian embroidery as a symbol of resistance, with rich red grounds and intricate patterns, highlighting a tradition that has come to represent both creativity and endurance in times of adversity.

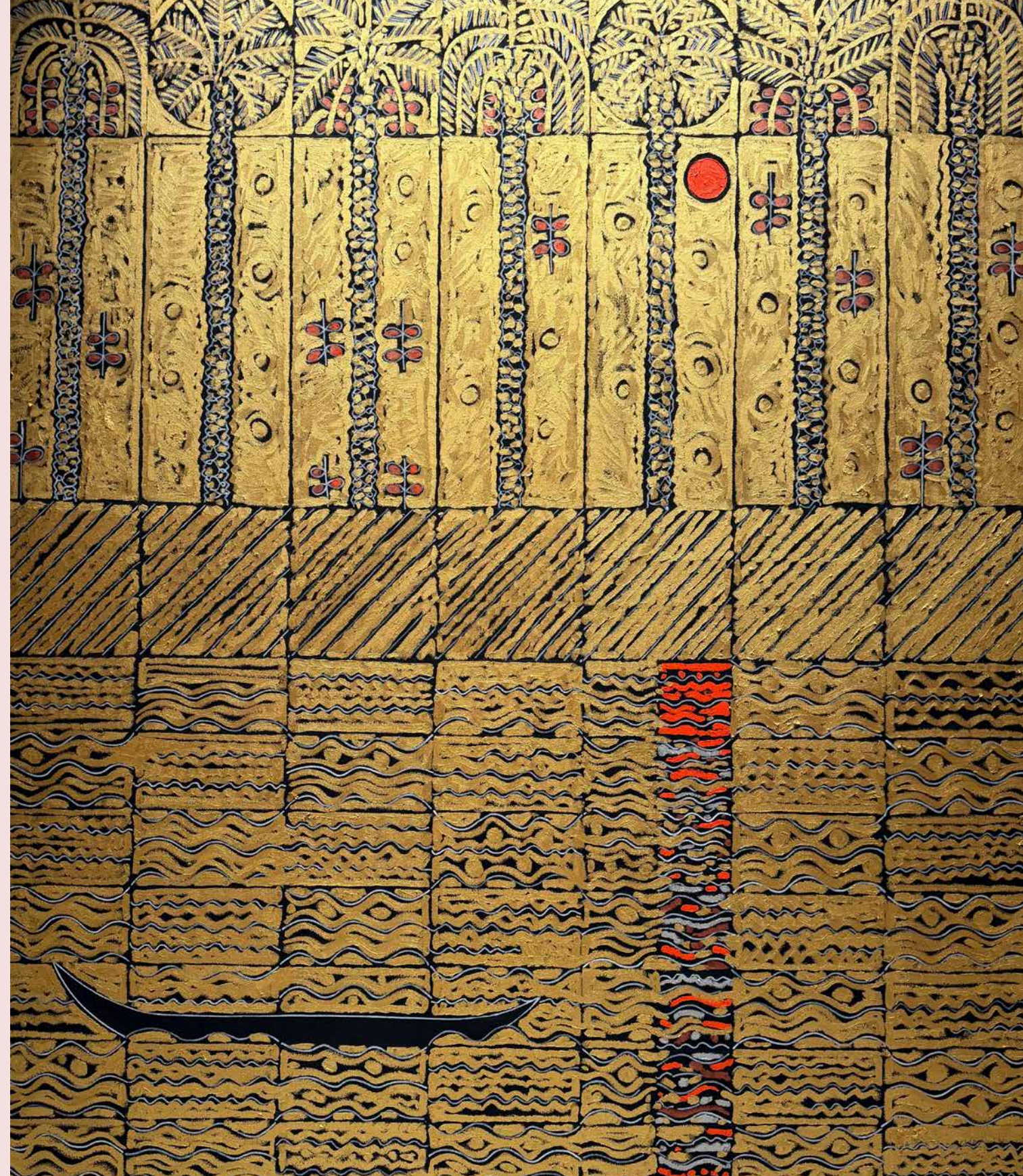
With her *Geometry of Dreams* (2015–18) and *Geometry of Words* (Kufi) (2016), she turned to geometric abstract and Kufic-inspired art. The *Shooting Stars: Baghdad to Paris* (2015–18) series made during her residencies at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, where the legacies of Matisse, Sonia Delaunay, Malevich, and Chagall proved enduring influences. Faraj treasures what she calls the “naivety and raw expression” of Matisse’s work. Colour, line, and graphic form magnetise her audiences, while the intimacy of her compositions reveals glimpses of the artist herself. She also honours Iraqi modernists such as Suad al-Attar, Hamid al-Attar, Dia Azzawi, Rafi al-Nassiri, and important others, whose creativity resonates in her own vibrant shapes and dynamic lines. In her Kufic series, she draws on Qur’anic phrases, which she renders in bold Kufi-inspired blocks of colour, creating order and rhythm.

“Kufic script is the earliest formal script of Arabic calligraphy. It developed in the late 7th century with the rise of Islam, and its angular, geometric form made it ideal for use in early Qur’anic manuscripts, architecture and decoration,” she explains. Kufi’s grid-based construction resonates with her architectural training, where balance and proportion form the basis of design.

Though born in the United States and settled in London for the past 45 years, Faraj’s inspiration remains rooted in the Arab world. She often recalls her formative years in Baghdad, studying architecture at the University of Baghdad in the 1970s. Mentors such as Saleh al-Jumai, Neziha Selim and Faraj Abbu helped shape her early artistic direction and continue to anchor her practice. Faraj is a perfectionist, often working late into the night to refine each detail. Yet her art feels fluid and generous, inviting viewers into radiant worlds of colour and light, describing herself as a “light-maker”. Over two decades, she has created works that respond to loss, memory and identity while offering beauty and hope.

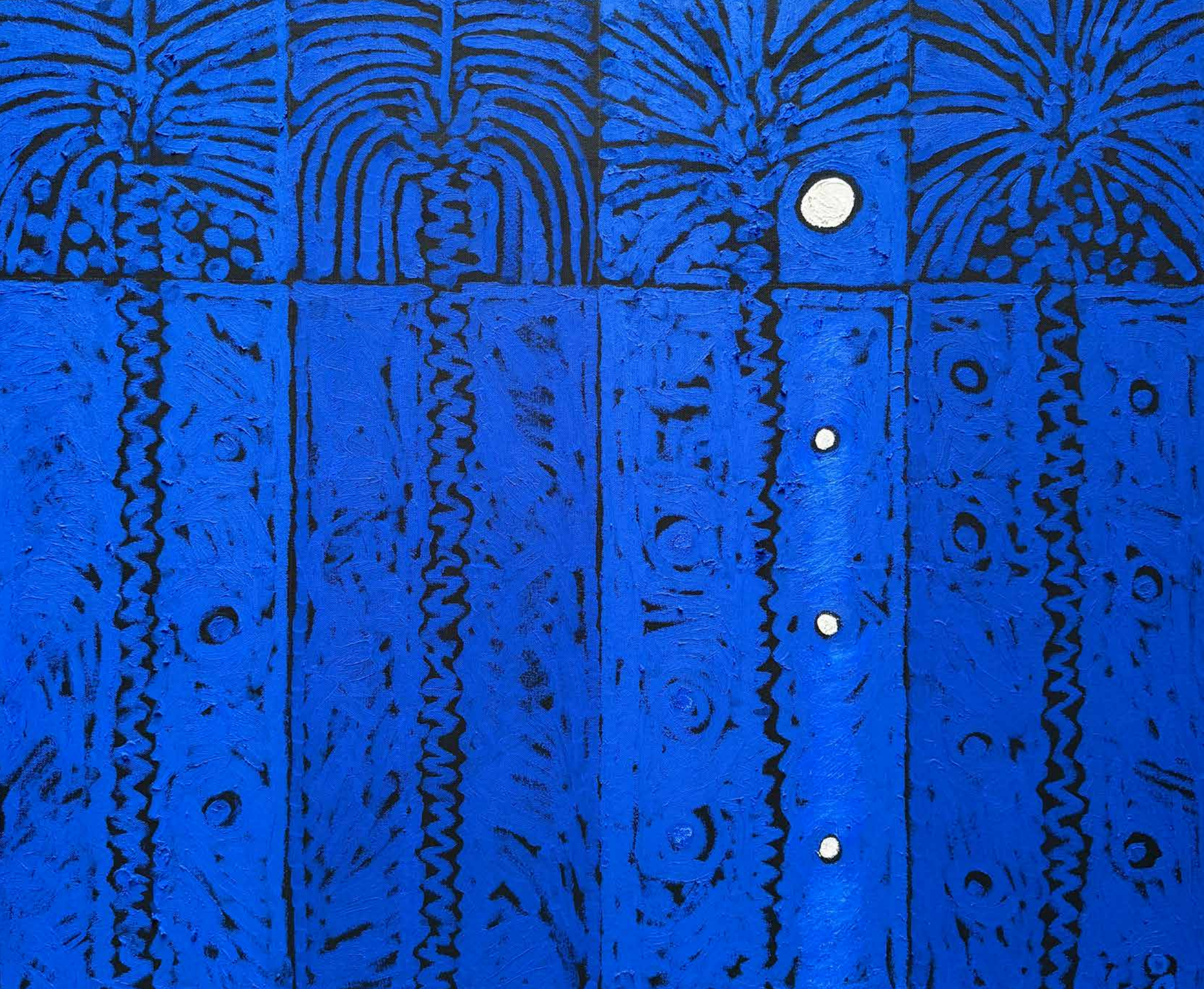
As artists and philosophers continue to ask what art is or should be, Hubbard’s suggestion that “art is a way” finds renewed meaning here. Through her evolving practice, Maysaloun Faraj shares a vision at once intimate and expansive, one that inspires, uplifts, and affirms the human spirit.

Dreams of a Golden City
Oil pigment sticks on canvas
160x140cm
London 2025



The background image is a large-scale wall mural or artwork. It features several tall palm trees with detailed fronds and clusters of coconuts. The trees are drawn in white lines on a dark grey background. The coconuts are represented by small circles and ovals. The artwork is composed of several panels, creating a sense of depth and perspective. The text 'THE ARTWORKS' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

THE ARTWORKS



Resilience, Heritage, and Hope

The date palm or nakhla holds a profound place in the cultural and symbolic lexicon of the Middle East. For centuries, it has stood as a testament to resilience, growth, and the enduring spirit of life in arid landscapes. In her latest work created in London, artist Maysaloun Faraj continues this tradition by intertwining personal memory, collective history, and artistic innovation. Her work transforms the date palm into a universal emblem of endurance and hope, resonating across borders and generations. Faraj’s connection to the date palm is rooted in childhood memories of Baghdad’s rural landscapes. The towering palm symbolizes the resilience of her homeland, especially its women. As she explains,

“She (the datepalm) symbolizes the resilience of Iraqi women, who despite burden upon burden, remain defiant and unyielding just like the date palm.”

Each piece in the Nakhal series is named after a woman, an intimate tribute. Often working in pairs, echoes solidarity and mutual support in celebration of feminine unity and strength. Her visual language is inspired by modernists like Henri Matisse, whose bold colors and organic forms conveyed vitality. Like Matisse, Faraj uses vibrant hues and flowing lines to evoke energy. Yet where Matisse celebrated joy,

Faraj’s palette carries emotional complexity: hope mixed with displacement, beauty edged with sorrow. The symbolism of the date palm extends beyond Iraq. In Christian art, it represents martyrdom and triumph; in Islamic culture, paradise and sustenance. Faraj taps into this shared language, transforming a personal motif into one with global resonance. Her paintings make the local speak universally, giving the nakhla new meaning as a symbol of endurance. In works like Shams and Sabha, the palm is both literal and metaphorical. Faraj describes a dawn sky cradling the nakhla, fronds weathered, trunk upright, presence defiant.

“She is heart and soul, upright against the vast sky, rooted in resilience and reaching for the sun.”

This image elevates the palm into a timeless symbol of strength and longing. Faraj envisions the Nakhal series as a larger narrative: a forest of painted palms, each a “seedling” contributing to cultural preservation and storytelling. The date palm becomes a symbol not only of survival but nurture, memory, and rebirth. The series also touches on ecological and communal concerns. Palms grow in clusters, suggesting strength through togetherness. Faraj uses this to

advocate harmony with nature, one another, and ourselves. Her intricate surfaces give each work tactile intimacy, speaking of care, endurance, and connection. Faraj’s approach aligns with artists like Georgia O’Keeffe and Vincent van Gogh, who transformed natural symbols into meditations on life and identity. Just as O’Keeffe’s flowers or van Gogh’s olive trees transcended representation, Faraj’s palms are silent witnesses to history, metaphors for survival, and vessels of hope. Through Nakhal, she invites viewers into a reflective space where humanity and nature, past and future, personal and universal converge.

“The date palm is a bridge, a dialogue between us and the other, a connection between heritage and universal relevance.”

Grounded in authenticity and vulnerability, Faraj’s work transcends visual appeal. It resonates with themes of identity, loss, resilience, and shared humanity. With this series, the nakhla rises anew, rooted in personal and collective experience, bearing the weight of time, and reaching upward with quiet strength.

Faraj reminds us that art, like the date palm, has the power to endure, transform, and connect us all.





22 **Flaming June** • Oil pigment sticks on paper 76x57cm 2025 (2-folds / 3 panels on each side) SideA (left), Side B (right)



Midnight Hour • Oil pigment sticks on paper 58x76cm 2025 (3-folds / 4 panels on each side) Side A (left), Side B (right)



24 **Wafaa, Bassima, Mayassa (Asrar al-Nakheel)** • 100x35cm (each) Oil pigment sticks on canvas 2024



Tala, Muna (Asrar al-Nakheel) • 100x35cm (each) Oil pigment sticks on canvas 2024



HOME LOCKDOWN 2020-24

Where Souls Heal and Hearts Mend

Similar to many artists at the time, Maysaloun Faraj did not have access to her studio due to the Covid pandemic and its subsequent lockdowns. With this, she resorted to making practical art within the means available: small works on paper. The nationwide message to ‘Stay Home Save Lives’ prompted her on a mission: to draw what she was facing, day in, day out; her living space, her HOME.

Never did she imagine the impact this pandemic would have on her art direction, affecting a huge shift in the way she painted in terms of subject, style, technique, size, and medium. What began as a daily exercise in observation quickly became something much deeper, a way to process uncertainty, grief, and stillness.

Prior to this, her residencies at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris instigated a series of large geometric abstract paintings as she indulged in the works of Kazimir Malevich, El Lissitzky, Sonia Delaunay, and distinguished others, all of which were at arm’s length in the vibrant Marais district. She was absorbed in structure, rhythm, and the sublime language of pure form. That moment of freedom and artistic abundance now stood in stark contrast to the imposed limitations of lockdown, which in turn became strangely liberating. It was

time in confinement, however, that would trigger a series of small drawings featuring intimate perspectives of her living space and the objects within. Through direct observation, and with the looming energies of Matisse and Van Gogh this time around, she began rediscovering her drawing skills.

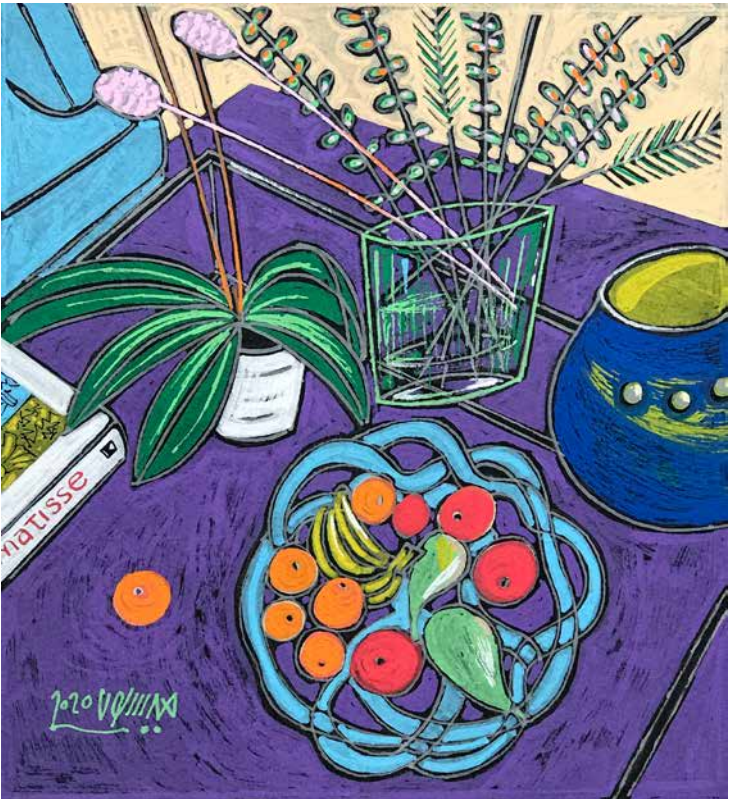
The last time she depicted the world objectively was back in the mid 1970s as a student of architecture at Baghdad University. ‘Free Hand’ and ‘Still Life’ drawing were part of her training. Students would often go beyond the confines of the classroom in a quest to draw the traditional Baghdadi houses that aligned the banks of the River Tigris, and the narrow alleyways of the ancient city. It was a time of formative discovery, and she found those experiences gently resurfacing.

In this process, she reflected deeply on the notion of ‘home’ and its broader implications, not only as a physical dwelling, but as an emotional, spiritual anchor. In between lockdowns, she was able to gain access to her studio. However, she continued to explore the theme of HOME, reinterpreting these timely drawings on a grander scale in a different medium, mainly ‘oil on canvas’ as opposed to ‘acrylic on paper’. With this, she found immense pleasure, peace, and solace in a time

of great uncertainty and global anxiety. What began as survival became transformation. What began as confinement became an unexpected portal for creative expansion. Despite the turmoil of the day, there was an abundance of solidarity, humanity, joy, and beauty across the globe. And Earth, for the first time, seemed at peace. She felt more connected, not only with the present, but also with the past, reliving treasured memories of what was once her home in the heart of the cradle of civilisation.

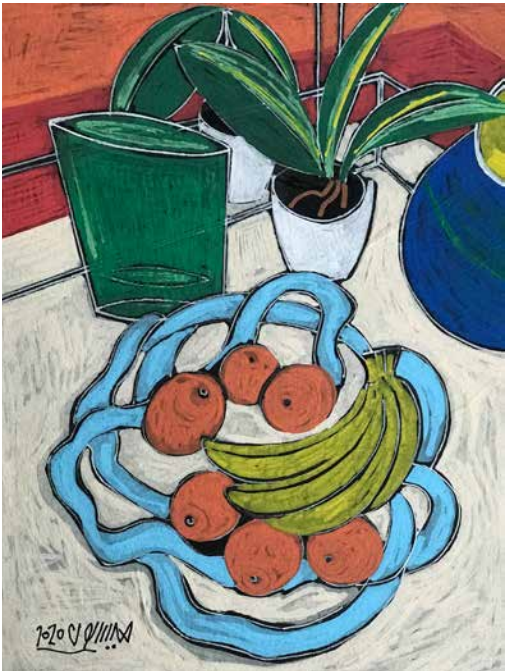
Faraj reflects: "There truly is ‘no place like home’, if one is fortunate enough to have a home. I pray for those who lost their lives or loved ones in such tragic circumstances."

The artworks during this period form a visual diary to chronicle this surreal moment in world history, from her personal point of view. They hold a quiet intensity, a contemplative stillness shaped by forced pause. On reflection, she came to realise that after more than forty years of living in this vibrant city, the HOME series became a visual declaration that she could finally call London... HOME; a place of belonging, resilience, and renewal, where fragments of past and present entwine to affirm identity, and the deep-rooted sense of sanctuary she had long sought.

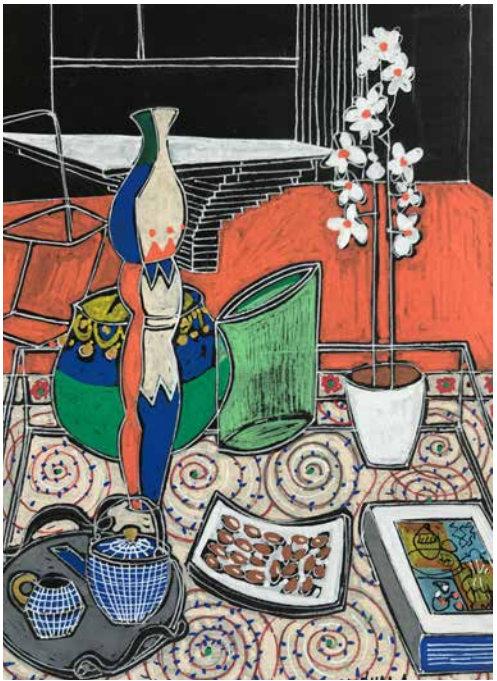




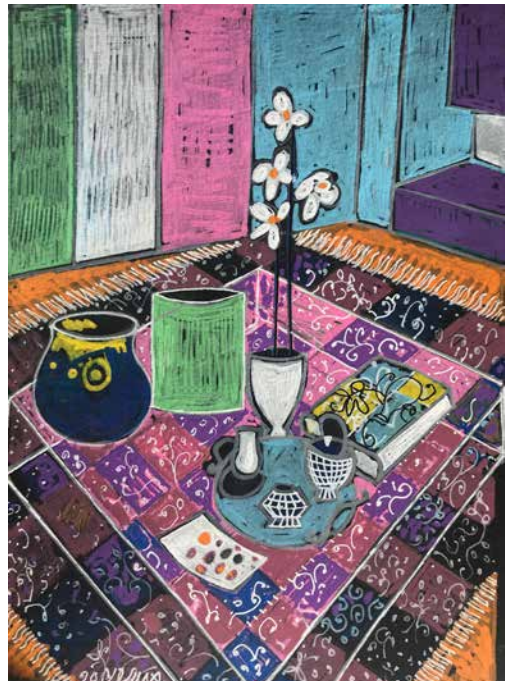
HOME 58 (far left)
Acrylic on paper
24x19cm
2020



HOME 34 (left)
Acrylic on paper
24x18cm
2020



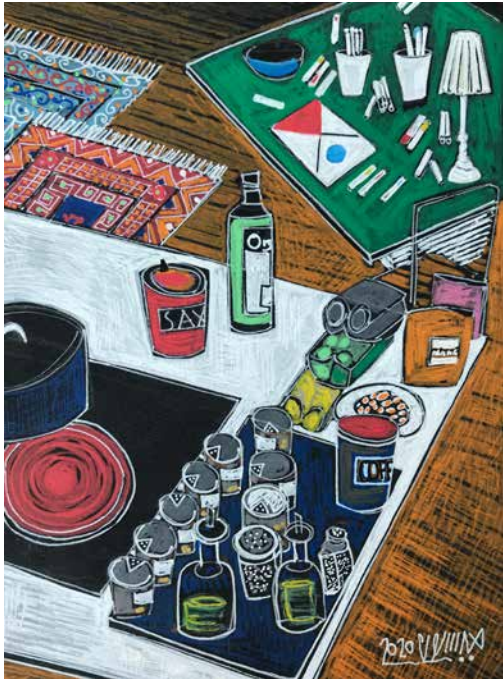
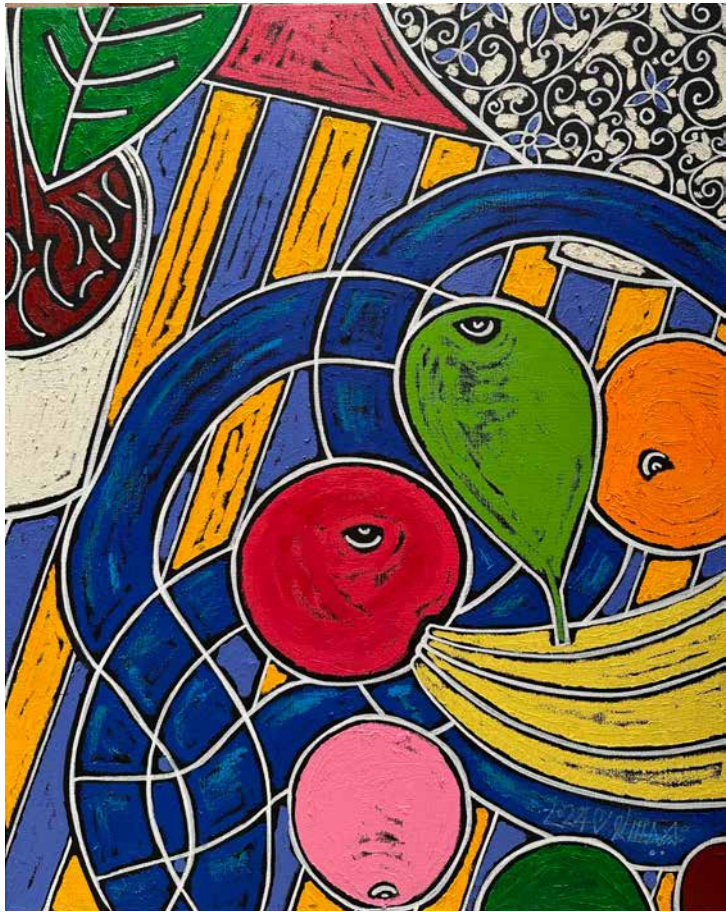
HOME 16 (far left)
Acrylic on paper
25x18cm
2020



HOME 01 (left)
Acrylic on paper
24x18cm
2020

The Pink Jar from Beirut
Oil pigment on canvas
160x140cm
2024







From the River to the Sea

Part of the wider HOME series, initiated during the global lockdown, was Homes Away from Home; an intimate body of works that delves deeply into the layered and evolving meanings of home, a concept profoundly redefined during that period of global stillness, isolation, and introspection. This series embodies her belief that home is not just a fixed geographical location, but rather “a spiritual, emotional, and cultural nexus where multiple identities, memories, affiliations, and histories converge, overlap, and coexist.”

In this ongoing exploration, Faraj is moved by the idea that within a single home lives a multitude of homes, each shaped by lived experience, heritage, love, struggle, and longing. “These inner homes carry fragments of different places and people, cherished and mourned, remembered and reimagined,” she explains. Through this work, she sought to give voice to the invisible threads that tether us to places of belonging, both real and remembered, near and far. One of the most poignant expressions of this notion is the painting *Zahra: To Gaza With Love*, “a tribute and a prayer, offered in solidarity, tenderness, and unwavering remembrance.” The work draws inspiration from traditional Palestinian embroidery or *Tatreez*, reinterpreted through a contemporary lens in oils on canvas. The

intricate surface, layered with rhythmic motifs and saturated colour, embodies a symbolic language that speaks of rootedness, resilience, and continuity. It honours Gaza, its grief and endurance, its cultural richness and undying spirit, and by extension, speaks to all those who live away from their ancestral lands, carrying home in the folds of memory and the quiet corners of the heart.

“Within the walls of my home and the core of my being, Gaza lives, as do sacred echoes of people and places that have touched our lives and contributed to shaping who we are,” she reflects. In *My Home Are Many Homes* celebrates the beauty and complexity of this layered belonging. “It is a call to embrace plurality, and to reaffirm our collective, interconnected humanity, one expressed through love, remembrance, and the deeply human art of home making.”

Zahra, for example, is also a tribute to the enduring spirit of Palestinian women, to memory, legacy, and cultural resilience passed from hand to hand, stitch to stitch, generation to generation. “Drawing inspiration from the *Qabbah* of a ceremonial thobe, I translated its embroidered form into painted language, building textured layers with measured, rhythmic precision.” At the heart of the

composition lies the eight-petalled flower motif, a powerful symbol long embedded in Palestinian embroidery, evoking beauty, strength, and rootedness. *Zahra*, meaning “flower” in Arabic, becomes both title and metaphor. “It honours the layered identity of the feminine, delicate yet unyielding, ornamental yet defiant. It stands as a visual offering, a quiet act of resistance, and a deeply personal expression of solidarity.”

As with much of her practice, these works exist at the intersection of disciplines, where painting meets textile, architecture meets memory, and cultural narrative transforms into contemporary reflection. In this convergence, inherited motifs are reimagined not only as aesthetic elements, but as vessels for identity, displacement, and belonging.

“In this profoundly challenging moment in world history, I join millions of voices around the globe in calling for justice and an end to the oppression carried out by Israel. I stand in unwavering solidarity with the people of Palestine, for none of us can be free until Palestine is free. Together with the many good people of our world, I raise both my voice and my art in the enduring chant: From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!”



GEOMETRY OF DREAMS 2015-18

Shooting Stars: Baghdad to Paris

Maysaloun Faraj’s residencies at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris in 2015, 2017, and 2018 marked a deeply formative chapter in her artistic evolution, both personally and conceptually. Immersed in the city’s celebrated artistic pulse and intellectual history, Faraj discovered in Paris not merely a geographical setting but a fertile ground for introspection and innovation.

It was here, in an environment that thrives on cultural diversity and exchange, that she deepened her engagement with geometric abstraction, a visual language she had long embraced but now explored with renewed urgency and expanded nuance. The legacy of Paris, a city that has nurtured countless artistic movements, allowed Faraj to revisit and internalize the philosophies of early twentieth century abstractionists.

Her work from this period reflects a refined dialogue with the ideas and aesthetics of Kazimir Malevich, El Lissitzky, Sonia Delaunay, and Josef Albers. In their varied approaches she found an intellectual kinship, a shared affinity for clarity, precision, and spiritual inquiry through form and color. Yet her own practice extended beyond homage. Through distillation and reduction, she shaped elemental geometries that were serene yet charged,

imbued with a sensibility at once personal and political. As she succinctly observes, abstraction for her is “an ideal realm for harmony and order.” In an era defined by conflict and disintegration, Faraj’s return to structure and radiant color was not escapist but radically hopeful. Her compositions, meticulously balanced and chromatically vibrant, sought not only aesthetic resolution but also emotional clarity.

“In the face of colossal destructive forces, my need to counter shadow with light is urgent. My color choices are designed to exude nurturing light and renewed energy,” she explains.

These words reveal the paradox at the heart of her practice: abstraction, often considered cool and detached, becomes in her hands an expressive act of resilience, resistance, and restoration.

Paris itself, often referred to as the City of Lights, served as a resonant backdrop for these inquiries. Beyond its physical brilliance, the city offered conceptual illumination, a space for reflection on the impermanence of life. At the Cité Internationale des Arts, where artists from across the globe lived and worked side by side, Faraj encountered a microcosm of humanity. It was, in her

words, a place of “potent, ever changing, and unique” relationships. These fleeting bonds, lived intensely and then dispersed, became metaphors for transience.

“As time passes, everyone moves away and our time comes to an end, just as everything comes to an end,” she reflects.

This meditation on impermanence recurs in her metaphor of the shooting star: brilliant, ephemeral, unforgettable. She links this to the legacy of Arabic astronomy, recalling that of the thousands of stars visible to the eye, many bear Arabic names.

By incorporating titles such as Achernar, Ain, and Adhil, she anchors her abstraction within a broader cultural and scientific heritage, weaving together the cosmic and the historical.

In this way, geometry and stars converge in her art to form a lyrical visual language. Her paintings are more than formal compositions; they are meditative spaces reflecting memory, migration, and identity. They echo a life lived between the USA, Baghdad, London and Paris, between tradition and modernity, between rootedness and displacement. Light filled and contemplative, they hold both the weight of history and the hope of renewal.

In Moonlight We Dreamt • Acrylic on canvas 45x55cm 2017



Rooftops & Dreams II • Acrylic on canvas 30x40cm 2017



Rooftops & Dreams I • Acrylic on canvas 30x40cm 2017

Faith and Sacred Structure

This body of work is a luminous meditation on faith, born of profound personal loss and a search for solace. On 16 November 2015, Faraj's mother, Fatima al Khayatt (God bless her soul) passed away after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. This loss led to a body of work deeply rooted in prayer, remembrance, and an unbroken dialogue with the unseen. These works are offerings: visual prayers, acts of love, and attempts to reach across. At first glance, the viewer is struck by geometric precision and vivid chromatic contrasts.

Yet beneath this modernist aesthetic lies a profound engagement with the sacred, expressed through Kufic script, one of the earliest and most architectonic forms of Arabic calligraphy, intimately bound to the Qur'an and early Islamic art. For Faraj, this script became a language of solace and connection, its bold geometry a vessel for grief, love, and faith.

Unlike the purely abstract gestures of twentieth century Western modernism, the forms in Faraj's work are not arbitrary. They are meaningful words, meticulously constructed, each shaped with intention and reverence. Her art does not merely invite observation; it calls for contemplation and reflection. In the wake of her mother's passing, these paintings became sites of silent communion, where

language bridged earthly sorrow and divine presence. Kufic script, known for its austere rectilinear beauty, was originally used to inscribe the Word of God onto parchment and sacred architecture. By invoking this script, Faraj draws from a lineage where writing is more than language, it is spiritual architecture, a visible expression of the divine. The painting transcends surface and design to become a place of metaphysical inquiry and healing, where the sacred is encountered. The structured grid recalls illuminated Qur'anic manuscripts, while her intervention reimagines the script in a personal and contemporary context, shaped by memory, loss, and enduring love.

Color in Faraj's work carries theological and emotional weight. Bold contrasts and harmonic balances mirror the spectrum of spiritual experience: moments of stillness and ecstasy, clarity and longing, sorrow and transcendence. Circular diacritical forms punctuate the composition with rhythm and breath, guiding the eye and spirit through the work like the melodic cadence of Qur'anic recitation. These elements evoke not only the structure of language but also the pulse of devotion, a visual dhikr echoing with remembrance. While her practice resonates with the Hurufiyya movement, the postcolonial wave of Arab artists who explored the Arabic letter as

symbol and form, Faraj follows a distinctive and faithful path. Where many dissolved legibility in pursuit of abstraction, she preserves the integrity of the written word, allowing meaning and form to coexist. This reflects her reverence for the sacred text and her connection to cultural memory. Through this clarity, Faraj offers a space where faith, heritage, and devotion intertwine.

Here, script becomes structure, a visual architecture that shelters meaning and offers sanctuary. Just as early Islamic architects wove calligraphy into the very fabric of mosques and madrasas, Faraj constructs an inner sanctuary for reflection and remembrance. The viewer stands before it not only as a spectator but as a participant, a reader, a mourner, a seeker. Through seeing and reading, the painting becomes a space of intimate communion, between artist and mother, between the earthly and the divine.

Ultimately, this body of work is a testament to Maysaloun Faraj's enduring exploration of the intersection of art, language, and spirituality. It is a deeply personal act of devotion, shaped by love, loss, and unshakable faith, a space where the sacred is not only depicted but lived, remembered, and eternally present.





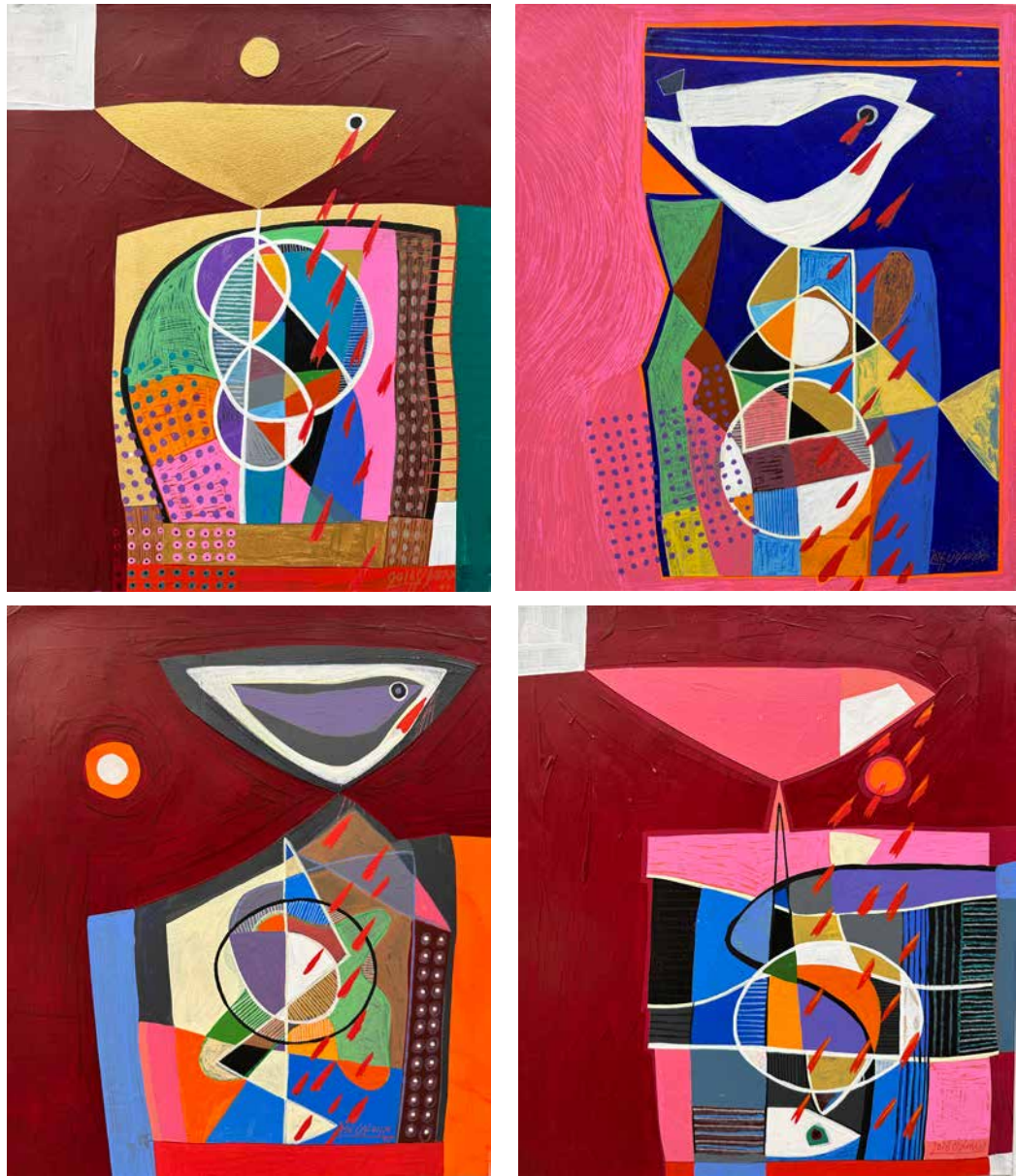
Noor Ala Noor (Kufi Series G 1, 2, 3) • Acrylic on paper 21x22cm 2016



AIRahman AIRahim (Kufi Series A1)
Acrylic on paper
21x22cm
2016



AIRahman AIRahim (Kufi Series A18)
Acrylic on paper
21x22cm
2016



Love Forsaken

Bird Symphony is a deeply evocative series of drawings created during Faraj’s residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, from August to December 2015. Through this collection, Faraj responds to the harrowing realities of mass migration, a crisis that continues to define our times. Her work confronts the human cost of wars and displacement, often carried out under the banners of “Freedom and Democracy” or “Religion”.

These drawings serve as both lament and searing critique, shedding light on the plight of those forced to abandon homes, communities, and loved ones in search of safety. Birds, long regarded as symbols of freedom and migration, mirror the fragile and perilous journeys undertaken by people fleeing violence and instability. Faraj captures the duality of their experience, hearts burdened by grief, yet carrying the tenuous hope of a life left behind.

Through masterful use of line and form, she evokes the weight of despair alongside the resilience of the human spirit, crafting a narrative that is universal yet deeply intimate. Drawing from her personal connection to displacement and broader historical contexts, Faraj imbues the series with authenticity, transforming it into a powerful meditation on

loss, memory, and survival. Yet, she resists portraying her subjects as mere victims. Instead, her drawings affirm their enduring humanity and strength in the face of exile. Bird Symphony compels viewers to confront the harsh truths of global inequality and its devastating impact on ordinary lives, while also offering profound empathy and solidarity. This is not only a reflection on the tragedy of displacement but a testament to the resilience and dignity of those who carry with them fragments of a world left behind.

Flying Without Wings is a series of paintings that began in 2014 in response to the war on Gaza and Israel’s ongoing land, air, and sea blockade. Thousands of civilians, mostly children, were injured or killed. In many cases, evacuation warnings came moments before deadly raids. One such method, the so-called “knock on the roof,” involved firing a warning missile before dropping a bomb.

With virtually no time to flee, many died trying to escape. The notion of being warned to leave, when leaving is impossible, is both absurd and cruel. Distraught, I envisioned a trapped bird allowed to flee only after its wings are severed. What chance does it have? Flying Without Wings was born. My anger demanded more than canvas. I needed

to slash into something. Wood became the medium, shaped, carved, sanded, and pierced in a cathartic release. Colour, in effect light, is inevitable in my work, even in darkness. The wingless birds, though colourful, symbolize perseverance in adversity. The bird, somehow managing to grow wings, flies with its roots, land, culture, home, and memory. This process is as painful as tearing out one’s own heart. The struggle for freedom continues.

As the world witnesses a genocide of the Palestinian people, it is not the so-called “leaders of the free world” but the good peoples of our world who unite in demanding justice. No one is free until Palestine is free. In my work, the bird, which somehow manages to grow wings and attempts to fly, carries with it its roots, land, culture, homes and memories, in a process reminiscent of the excruciating ripping out of one’s heart.

The struggle for freedom continues. And while the world is witnessing a genocide of the Palestinian people, unlike the so called ‘leaders of the free world’, the good peoples of our world, unite in their call for justice and an end to oppression and genocide. No one is free until Palestine is free.





KITES AND DREAMS 2005-09

Wounds and Wanderings

This body of work was first exhibited in 2009 as part of *Boats and Burdens: Kites and Shattered Dreams*, a landmark exhibition held at Aya Gallery, London. The presentation took place during a period of increasing global attention towards art from or inspired by the Middle East, reflected in the rising interest of collectors, curators, institutions, and art markets in the Gulf and across the West. Yet while the timing aligned with this broader wave of recognition, the exhibition stood apart as a reflection of a far deeper and more enduring artistic journey.

Inaugurated by Venetia Porter, Senior Curator of the Modern Middle East at the British Museum, the exhibition not only captured the moment but also reaffirmed Maysaloun Faraj's longstanding presence and vision. Long before Middle Eastern art became a fashionable category in the global art world, Faraj had already carved out a distinctive path, rooted in authenticity, cultural memory, and creative innovation.

Her work had been quietly and powerfully building bridges across borders, drawing admiration from audiences who connected with its universal humanity and layered meanings. The selection featured builds upon the lyrical, evocative narratives that

define Faraj's multifaceted practice, spanning painting and ceramic sculpture. For many encountering her oeuvre for the first time, the show offered a compelling introduction to her interplay between two dimensional and three dimensional form. For those familiar with seminal works such as *History in Ruins* (from *Word into Art*) or *Ancient Land* (from *Iraq's Past Speaks to the Present* at the British Museum), the exhibition revealed greater depth and breadth in her visual language.

While many artists of Middle Eastern descent working in the diaspora explore themes of identity and memory, Faraj's work has always stood apart for its layered accessibility and resonance. Her art speaks with a clarity that transcends borders, while remaining rich with symbolic detail and cultural integrity. Whether viewed through a personal, spiritual, or political lens, her pieces offer space for contemplation and connection.

At its heart, Faraj's work maintains a dialogue with her native Iraq, a land both eternal and ever changing, fragile yet resilient. Even as Iraq has endured immense turmoil, her art avoids direct polemic, channelling the emotional weight of history into a language of beauty, hope, and reflection. In contrast to much of the Western art landscape, which

often overlooks the lived realities of Iraq, Faraj's work presents a poignant, morally grounded, and aesthetically refined response. Crimson, gemlike motifs recur throughout her compositions, evoking resilience, endurance, and a timeless connection to human stories. Light and shadow dance across her surfaces, reflecting the coexistence of suffering and strength, rupture and repair.

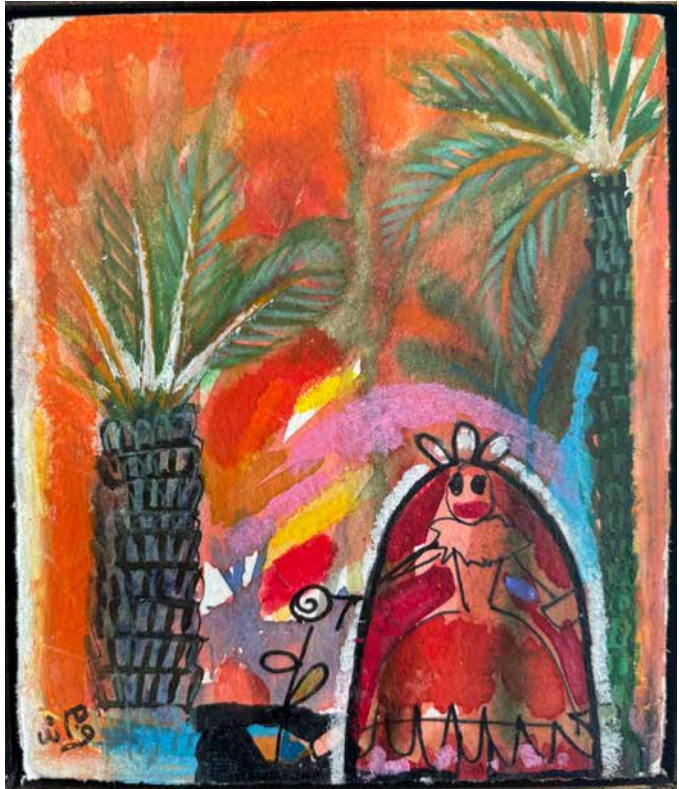
Through intricate geometries, radiant colours, and flowing script, she invites viewers into a world that is at once deeply personal and universally resonant. Working from her base in London, Faraj offers a singular perspective shaped by distance, memory, and the emotional landscapes of exile and belonging. Her art transforms the pain of absence and the persistence of faith into something quietly monumental. Rather than dwell in despair, she chooses to illuminate and offer pathways toward healing and understanding.

Ultimately, *Boats and Burdens: Kites and Shattered Dreams* marked a significant moment in Faraj's artistic journey and reaffirmed her enduring relevance and contribution to global contemporary art. Her work continues to affirm the power of art to witness, to transcend, and to heal.

Ahlam *Weeping Palms Stolen Childhoods* • Oil on canvas 60x70cm 2008



Um Saadi *Weeping Palms Stolen Childhoods* • Watercolour on paper 17x14cm 2004



Dolls & Dreams *Weeping Palms Stolen Childhoods* • Watercolour on paper 17x14cm 2004

THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS BY MAYSALOUN FARAJ 2025

Transcending Time

Spanning two transformative decades, my evolving body of work is both richly diverse and profoundly cohesive, a reflection of my deep attunement to the emotional and cultural currents shaping our world. From my most recent series Nakhal (2024-25), through HOME Lockdown (2020-24), Shooting Stars (2015-18), Flying Without Wings, Homeland, and Maryam (2012-17), to Geometry of Words (2016) and reaching back to Weeping Palms: Kites and Shattered Dreams (2005-09), this unfolding trajectory marks a continuous artistic dedication to narrative, inquiry, and transformation.

Each series speaks in its own distinct visual language, unique in palette, form, and emotional tone, yet together they form an ongoing meditation on the themes that lie at the heart of my life and vision. Identity, heritage, resilience, and hope emerge not as fixed or repetitive motifs but as evolving forces that shift and reshape themselves in response to my lived experience and the wider sociopolitical landscape.

These works carry the weight of loss and exile, remembrance and longing, love and defiance, crafting a visual chronicle of a life lived between worlds, and a world often suspended in uncertainty. At the core of my practice lies

a deeply embedded architectural sensibility, shaped by my formal training in architecture. This foundation is evident not only in the clarity of form and structural coherence throughout the work but also in the conceptual framework that supports and gives meaning to it. My compositions are charged with spatial awareness, an interplay of geometry, balance, proportion, and void, offering a sculptural presence and dynamic tension that is at once grounded and transcendent.

Whether intimate in scale or monumental in impact, whether leaning towards the figurative or the abstract, each work carries the resonance of personal truth while simultaneously opening itself to collective memory and universal reflection. The creative act becomes a dialogue between past and present, between memory and imagination, offering a space where personal experience can intersect with shared history.

Through these works, I express my unwavering belief in the power of art as a vessel for healing and connection, and as a vital tool for storytelling, remembrance, and spiritual resilience. Together, these series weave a layered tapestry that traces the path of my artistic journey and the shifting emotional landscape of our times. It is my hope that

they stand as enduring expressions of hope and humanity, rooted in the past yet always reaching forward, bearing witness, holding space, and offering transformation through beauty and truth. My art seeks to bridge distances, temporal, cultural, and emotional, creating a space in which viewers can encounter their own histories, reflect on shared vulnerabilities, and experience renewal.

Each work also embodies a meditation on impermanence and continuity, acknowledging the fragility of human experience while affirming its enduring potential. Through light, color, texture, and form, I explore the tension between memory and imagination, presence and absence, grounding and transcendence.

In this way, my work becomes not simply a record of what has been, but an invocation of what might yet come to be, a testament to the persistence of creativity, the enduring spirit of life, and the luminous potential that arises from love, memory, and resilience. In these pieces, the personal becomes universal, the private transforms into a shared reflection, and art emerges as a living vessel for hope, witness, and renewal.



Sarab Weeping Palms Stolen Childhoods • Oil on canvas 90x110cm 2008



Maysaloun Faraj at her studio preparing for her Nakhal series, London 2025

BIOGRAPHY

Maysaloun Faraj is a London-based painter, ceramist, and sculptor with a BSc in Architecture. Born in the USA, she spent her formative years in Los Angeles (1955–1968) before moving to Baghdad in the 1970s, followed by settling in London in 1982, with intermittent periods in Paris, including residencies at the Al-Mansouria Foundation: Cité International des Arts in 2015/17/18.

These diverse cultural experiences profoundly shaped her artistic output. Her work is distinguished by an aesthetic informed by architectural discipline, creating a web of references that bridge East and West, ancient and contemporary, public and deeply personal. Often reflecting on themes of spirituality and the transience of human existence, Faraj employs a visual vocabulary rooted in vibrant colour and basic geometric forms, striving for harmony and order.

Beyond her art, Faraj has played a pivotal role in advancing modern art from the Middle East. She curated the first international showcase of contemporary and modern Iraqi art, which toured the UK and USA from 2000 to 2003.

She is also the editor of the seminal publication *Strokes of Genius: Contemporary Iraqi Art* (Saqi Books, 2001). In 2002 she co-founded Aya Gallery in London with her husband, the distinguished architect Ali

Mousawi. The gallery operated until 2010 as a critical platform for promoting art from Iraq and the Middle East, after which it was turned into a studio from where she works today. In 2008, she served as a judge for the inaugural Arab Art and Culture Award in the UK.

“My art resonates and evolves in a fusion of East and West, tradition and modernity. The story I want to share is my challenge as an artist, a woman, a Muslim and an American-born Iraqi living outside the motherland.”

Her work is held in notable private and public collections worldwide, including the British Museum (UK), Mathaf Modern (Doha Qatar), Rotterdam Wereld Museum (Netherlands), National Museum for Women in the Arts (USA), Jordan National Museum (Amman), Barjeel Art Foundation (UAE), Al-Mansouria Foundation (Paris), Aga Khan Foundation (Canada) and esteemed private collections including Hussain Ali Harba (Turin Italy), Ibrahimi and Ali Husri (Jordan), the late Basil al-Rahim (London), Hamad Abdulla & Nasser al-Khori (Houston & Doha) and important others. Faraj’s contributions to the art world have established her as a key figure in the global narrative of Middle Eastern modern art.

Maysaloun Faraj continues to live and work in London, a city she has considered her home for over four decades.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025	Roots and Horizons: T/Racing Time, Contemporary Art Platform, Kuwait, Kuwait
2022	HOME Lockdown 2020-22, Galerie Mark Hachem, Le Marais, Paris, France
2018	Shooting Stars: Baghdad A Paris, Cité International des Arts, Paris, France
2009	Boats and Burdens: Kites and Shattered Dreams, Aya Gallery, London, UK
1995	Once Upon a Culture, SOAS (School of Oriental & African Studies), London, UK
1994	Oriental Delight, Trocadero, London, UK
1992	Sisters in Harmony, River Gardens, London, UK
1991	Faith, Argile Gallery, London, UK
1990	Ya Rab, Rochan Gallery, Motcomb Street, London, UK
1989	Home Sweet Home, The Artist's Studio, Baghdad, Iraq
1987	Nostalgia, The Artist's Studio, London, UK
1985	Vibrations from My Past, Espace 2000, Paris, France

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025	Silla: All That is Left to You, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah, UAE
2024	The Sky Above Gaza: Imagine, almarkhiya Gallery, Doha, Qatar
2020/1	Art in Isolation: Creativity in the Time of Covid, Middle East Institute, Washington USA
2018	Mapping the Art of the Arab World, Selections Publishing, Dubai Brussels
2017/8	Resident Artist, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
2016	Abu Dhabi Art, Ayyam Gallery, Abu Dhabi, UAE
2015	Resident Artist, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
2014	Get Acquainted, Sharjah Calligraphy Biennial, Sixth Edition, Sharjah, UAE
2010	One Thousand and One Nights, William Paterson University, New Jersey, USA
2009	The Recessionists (British Art and Art from the Middle East), Somerset, UK
-	Creativity vs Destruction: Stories of Iraqi Art, Reel Iraq, Roxy Art House, Edinburgh
2008	Iraq's Past Speaks to the Present, British Museum, London, UK
-	Word into Art, British Museum, London, UK and DIFC, Dubai, UAE
2006	Occupied Space: Art for Palestine, Palestine Solidarity & Qattan Foundation, London, UK
2004	Seed Body & Soul: Artists Against Depleted Uranium, Earls Court, London, UK
2003	Cities of Iraq: Samarra to Baghdad (Islamic Culture in Focus), British Museum, London
-	Diversity in Harmony, University of Michigan, Dearborn, USA
-	Before After Now: Visions of Iraq, Deluxe Gallery, Hoxton Square, London, UK
2002	Islamic World Painting Biennale, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran
-	Calligraphy, Beit al-Quran, Manama, Bahrain
-	Master Strokes, October Gallery, London UK
2001	Contemporary Arab Art, Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
2000/3	Strokes of Genius: Contemporary Iraqi Art, Tour UK & USA: Brunei Gallery London; Exeter University, Exeter; Hotbath Galleries, Bath; Grinnell College, Iowa; DePaul University, Chicago, USA

2000	Arab Cultures: Young Worlds, British Museum, London, UK
1999	Artists for Human Rights, Durban, South Africa
-	Dialogue of the Present, Tour London, Brighton and Brunell, UK
1998	20th Anniversary of Egee Art, Soni Gallery, London, UK
1997	Homage to Jewad Selim, Kufa Gallery, London, UK
-	Art in Hammersmith, Riverside Studios, London, UK
-	Breaking Down the Boundaries, Pits Hanger Gallery, London, UK
1996	Eastern & Icelandic Art: William Morris Centenary, Wimbledon Library, London, UK
1995	Arabian Eyes: Arab Women Art, Bait al-Sirkal, Ministry of Culture & Information, Sharjah
1994	Forces of Change; Artists from the Arab World National Museum for Women in Arts: Tour Washington, Chicago, California, USA
-	Culture & Continuity, Midlands Art Centre, Birmingham, UK
1992	Out of Iraq, Camden Lock Market, London, UK
-	Arab Womens' Art Festival, Rose Issa and Kufa Gallery, London, UK
1988	Baghdad International Biennale, formerly Saddam Art Centre, Baghdad, Iraq
-	126th Annual Society of Women Artists, Westminster Central Hall, London, UK
1986	Contemporary Arab Art: Arab States League, Mall Galleries, London, UK

SELECTED PUBLIC & PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

-	Mathaf Modern, Doha, Qatar
-	The British Museum, London, UK
-	The National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington, USA
-	Rotterdam Werldmuseum, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
-	Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE
-	Al-Mansouria Foundation, Paris, France
-	United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
-	Center for Arab American Studies, Michigan, USA
-	Jeddeh International Airport, Jeddeh, Saudi Arabia
-	The Agha Khan Foundation, Toronto, Canada and London, UK
-	HRH Prince of Wales, London, UK
-	The late Sir Wilfred Thesiger, London, UK
-	Hussain Ali Harba, Turin, Italy and Baghdad, Iraq
-	Mark Hachem, Paris, France
-	Ali Husri, Amman, Jordan
-	Ibrahimi, Amman, Jordan
-	Dia Azzawi, London, UK
-	Abdul Majid Briesh, London, UK
-	Hamad Al Abdulla and Nasser Al Khor, Doha, Qatar
-	And distinguished others

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Venetia Porter



Venetia Porter is the former Senior Curator for Islamic and Contemporary Middle East art at the British Museum where she is currently Honorary Research Fellow. Born and brought up in Beirut, she studied Arabic and Persian and Islamic Art at the University of Oxford, and her PhD from the University of Durham is on the history and architecture of Medieval Yemen. She was the lead curator for the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World which opened in 2018.

At the British Museum she was responsible for building a significant collection of works mostly on paper by artists of the Middle East. Her research and publications range from Yemeni history through Arabic inscriptions and amulets to contemporary art.

Her exhibitions, in London and elsewhere accompanied by catalogues, include Word into Art (2006, Dubai 2008), Hajj: journey to the heart of Islam (2012), Reflections: contemporary art of the Middle East and North Africa, (2021) and Artists making books: poetry to politics (2023), Amakin, 21,39 Jeddah Arts, 9th edition, (Jeddah and Dhahran 2022), Maqam: Hashel Al Lamki, (Abu Dhabi 2023). Her other focus has been honouring her mother’s legacy in Thea Porter Bohemian Chic with Laura McLaws Helms (2015) and Thea Porter’s scrapbook (Unicorn Press 2019). Archiving Gaza in the present: Culture, Memory and Erasure, co-edited with Dina Matar is published by Saqi books in 2025.

Sophie Kazan Makhlouf



Sophie Kazan Makhlouf is an art communications specialist, writer and curator. She is Honorary Fellow at the University of Leicester’s School of Museum Studies and Associate Professor at the University of Notre Dame (USA) London campus. She has lectured at Falmouth University, UK, and Zayed University, UAE, on architectural history, British Modernism and Islamic Geometry. Her career spans public affairs, communications and arts administration.

She began at Fleishman Hillard PR and later led a non-profit network in Brussels, consulting for international organisations including WHO Europe. At Saqi Books, she created the marketing department, developing events and coverage for award-winning publications on South West Asian, North African, African and diasporic communities.

In the UAE, Sophie worked with the Emirates Foundation, first in Communications, then in Arts & Culture, collaborating with artists, filmmakers, poets and curators. She contributes to journals including Canvas, Markaz Review, Tribe, Harpers Bazaar Art, Museum Worlds and Open Arts Journal. Her book The Development of an Art History in the UAE was published by Anthem Press in 2024. Her curatorial projects include The World Around Me (2012), Exchange Gallery, Penzance, exploring the techniques of artists on the autism spectrum.



© MAYSALOUN FARAJ AND CONTEMPORARY ART PLATFORM, KUWAIT 2025



Roots & Horizons: T/Racing Time (Selected Works 2005-25) is the first solo-exhibition by Maysaloun Faraj in Kuwait. CAP Kuwait is proud to present a curated selection of works made over the past 20 years. In this evocative presentation, Maysaloun Faraj draws upon a profound lineage of modern and contemporary art, while forging a singular language that reflects her deeply personal and cultural narratives. This sweeping retrospective, spanning two decades of artistic evolution, invites viewers to journey through the artist's exploration of identity, transformation, and the human condition, culminating in her most recent Nakhal series and the acclaimed HOME series. She works in a variety of mediums including drawing, painting, ceramics and sculpture. Her long-standing fascination with colour, order and harmony, led to relentless experimentation with varied artistic styles, informed by careful reflection on complex issues, rooted in universal themes such as love, loss, spirituality and the transience of human existence.

With 40 colour reproductions and insightful contributions from both Venetia Porter and Sophie Kazan, this publication seeks to shed light on two decades of profound art making, reflecting challenging times in world history.

Maysaloun Faraj is a London-based painter, ceramist, and sculptor with a BSc in Architecture from the University of Baghdad (1978). Born in the United States to Iraqi parents, she spent her early years in Los Angeles (1955–1968) before moving to Baghdad in the 1970s, and later settled in London (1982) until the present with intermittent periods in Paris. These diverse cultural experiences have profoundly shaped her artistic vision. Her work is represented in significant public and private collections worldwide.

INFO@MFARAJ.COM WWW.MFARAJ.COM @MAYSALOUNFARAJ