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A Line in the Sand

Group Show of Saudi Contemporary Artists

March 17th, 2013

A Line in the Sand

In collaboration with Athr Gallery, ARTSPACE Dubai presents *A Line in the Sand*; a group show of six young and emerging Saudi artists, showing works across a spectrum of various medias, in a Dubai exhibition for the first time, curated by Raneem Farsi and Aya Alireza.

ARTSPACE Dubai will also be launching its Taschen Library on this day.

- Ahmed Angawi
- Musaed Al-Hulis
- Rashed Al-Shashai
- Basma Felemban
- Sara Khoja
- Eyad Maghazel
- Shawish

To draw a line in the sand is a symbolic gesture that denotes a point beyond which one cannot go any further. It is a gesture of daring, a challenge, to test a person's courage and resolve to take the next step. However, at the end of the day, it is but a line in sand, a transitory mark that will fade as it is dissolved by the very sand it is drawn on. It is but a harmless illusion of danger, a line whose substance is more in mind than in matter.

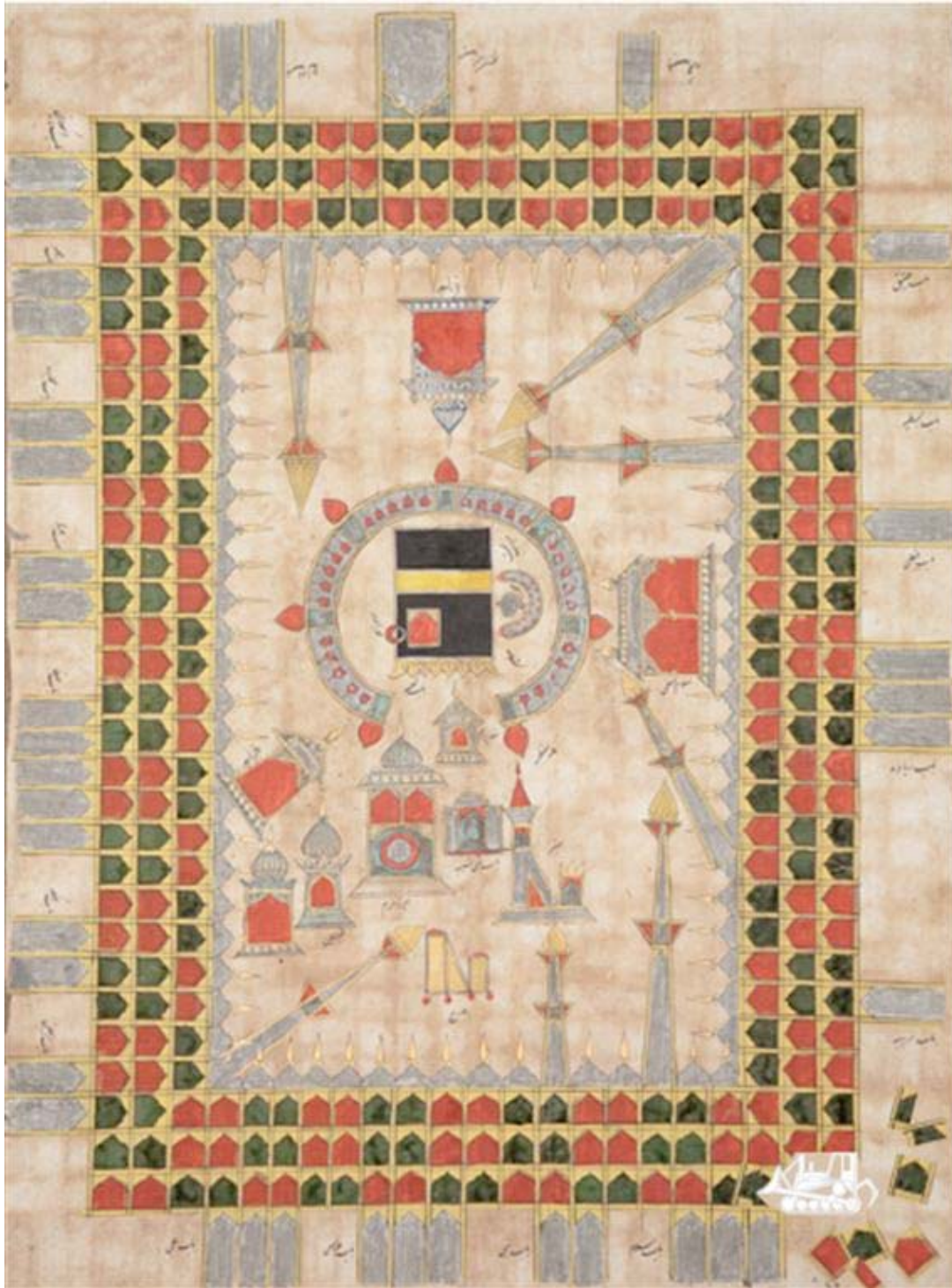
Each of the participating artists is pushing the boundaries, and braving the limitations set by their environment, limitations that are both real; in the form of the everyday obstacles an artist faces, and perceived; in the form of the restrictions imposed upon themselves in their imagination. The latter are the most difficult to overcome.

These young artists are conquering these mental obstacles, and stepping over the line in the sand. Their works are a confrontation of themselves in their attempts to conceptualize ideas and notions that are dearest to their hearts and at the forefronts of their minds, be they personal, spiritual, social or political, with the sole purpose of dissolving the barriers that separate us via a universal form of communication.

A Line in the Sand does not just reveal artists overcoming barriers. There are two sides to every barrier, as there are two faces to every coin. The exhibition seeks to flip the coin, as the artists themselves not only step over the line, but draw it; The artists aim to challenge and engage the visitors in turn, not merely to view the works, but in fact to interpret them, for only with this two-way exchange can communication and dialogue succeed, and barriers truly dissolved.

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Ahmed Angawi, an artist from Mecca tackles the issue of the holy city's parody of transformation with his work *21st Century Manuscript*. Blurring the boundaries between the past and present in an astoundingly detailed reproduction of a medieval depiction of the Ka'ba, Angawi makes one slight alteration; a stroke of irony that challenges the viewer to spot the difference.



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Musaed Al-Hulis's *The Sleep of the Wicked* is a dark work of caution against corruption and immorality, prompting the viewer to always heed the consequences of their actions, and reminding one that life is ephemeral and that our deeds define our future in the unknown hereafter.



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Basma Felemban's *Sidana* uses the pattern in Islamic art as a metaphor for a journey of self-exploration; to question how can we separate who we truly are at the core, from who we have been shaped to be? Once stripped of all the trappings of life; our history, education, culture, experiences, what is left? These 'ornaments' build continuously with our every waking hour, as a pattern can spread continuously, but we must remember that there is always a core, a starting point, the purest state in which God made us and delivered us into this world. I believe that from the moment we are born, we spend the rest of our lives searching for this purest self, a search disguised as all of our relentless attempts to be happy, but all we are really doing is trying to find ourselves.



Shaweesh, pseudonym for an active member of the Riyadh street art scene presents black and white photographic works that at first glance appear documentary or archival in nature, but upon a second of reflection, the viewer notices that they have been satirically photo shopped to perfection. *The Last Jedi Master* is a tribute to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and *Captain America* is a caustic commentary on the cult of the American hero.



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Sara Khoja's *The Hood* is a staged photographic triptych, depicting a man, seemingly bound and helpless by invisible chains. However, all he wears is a hawk hood, the most important tool used in falconry to keep the raptor in a calm state. This work explores a neo-type of slavery. The hood represents the tools that are used in this day and age to keep human beings in control, and at the mercy of others.



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Rashed Al-Shashai's *The View* is a commentary on the systematic filtering of information by the media. The work first appears as window shutters with lights flickering from behind them, drawing the viewer's curiosity. However, even as one approaches, the scene beyond the shutters remains unclear, fulfilling the shutters' function and purpose, and the only indication of what is beyond is the faint sound of an anchorman presenting the news.



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Eyad Maghazel's *Lock and Key* is a candid exploration of a remarkably closed-off society, where there is very little public life and people's entire lives are spent within the seclusion of their dwellings. This work is a cheeky temptation to peep like a Tom into the privacy of people's homes, to discover what goes on behind closed doors. Will mysteries be revealed? Will illusions be shattered? Or will the viewer walk away disappointed?