

Hashel Al Lamki

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Rodinia, Lyon Biennale

Hashel Al Lamki has produced a multidisciplinary body of work, *Rodinia*, in response to the Lyon Biennale's 'manifesto of fragility', displayed in Lyon's Musee Guimet (Natural History Museum).

*Rodinia: Rodinia translates from Russian into English as "motherland, birthplace" and was the name given to the Neoproterozoic supercontinent that assembled 1.1–0.9 billion years ago and later dispersed.*

Rodinia forms an opportunity for Al Lamki to think through and synthesise the connectedness that he observes between the earth, its ecosystems and mankind. We are in a moment that bears witness to the Holocene Extinction (sixth Mass Extinction) driven by human activity, as year-upon-year species of plant life and animals become extinct.

Rodinia is a multidisciplinary body of work that crosses film, works on canvas, and textile installation. These works see Al Lamki navigate notions of force and fragility, scale, place and space, life cycles and the passing of time as well as the human experiences of uncertainty and anxiety.

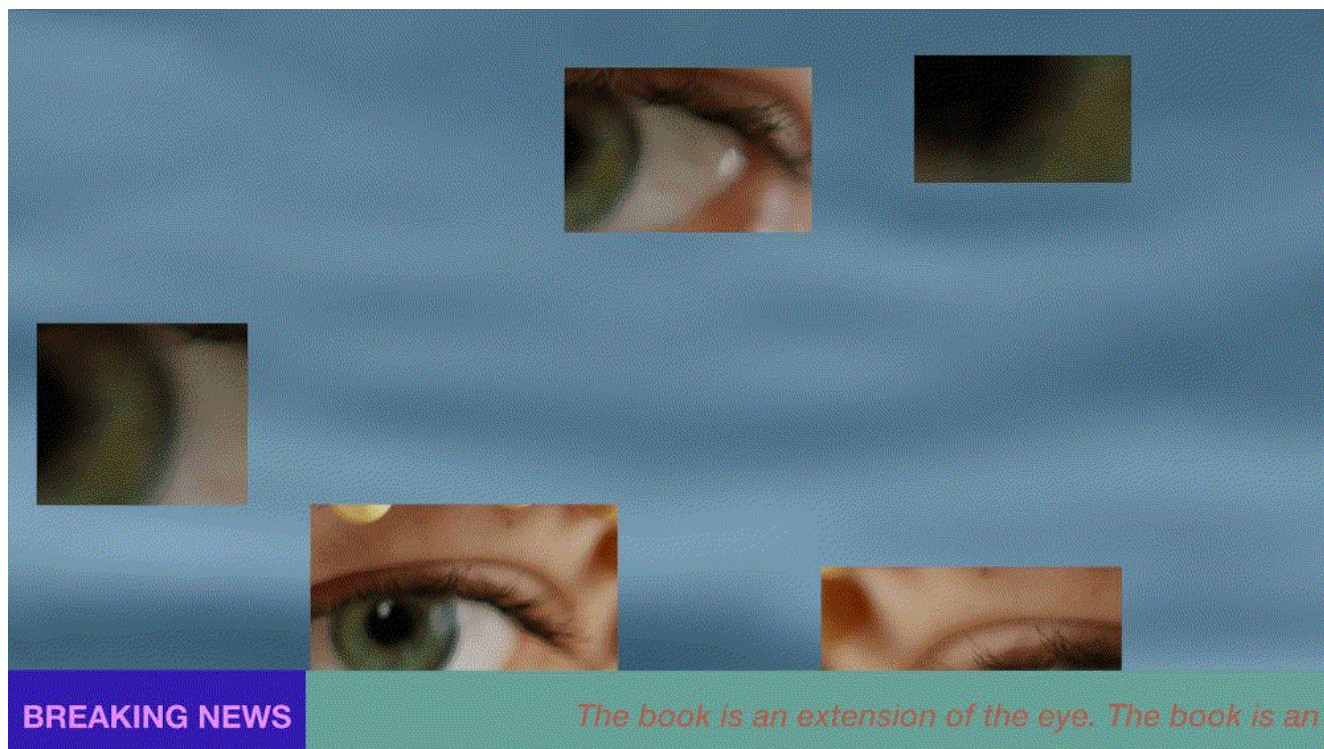




Rodinia is the name of the supercontinent that once covered the surface of the earth in the pre-life period, the context that gave rise to our current existence. In response to the manifesto of Lyon Biennale that foregrounds notions of fragility and complexly layered histories that extend beyond geographies and time, Al Lamki casts his gaze back to the start of time and life to better understand his current context through a multidisciplinary body of work. Rodinia embodies the idea of a vast whole composed of multiple parts. As such, notions of unity and individuality are embodied within the multidisciplinary nature of this body of work. Works enter into dialogue, each enriching and expanding upon the other through multiple mediums and approaches.



Hashel Al Lamki  
*Dice*, 2020



Moving Image (12-minute film)



## Description

Dice, 2020, Moving Image

“You never know what you’re going to roll”

Conceived during a moment of universal anxiety during the pandemic. Dice is a short film that synthesises the artist’s feelings of anxiety and uncertainty and embodies his attempt to make sense of the patterns and connections that he perceives within the world. The work was commissioned by Abu Dhabi Art in 2020.

In making Dice, Al Lamki attempted to unpack and make sense of the connections that he perceives between multiple spaces - commerce and commodification, body and mind, media and the social world. The artist maintains that everything around him experiences cycles of rise and fall, tension and release. Dice captures these shifts by establishing a rhythm of tension that builds up and erupts in a crescendo before entering into the cycle once more. These ideas manifest in a variety of examples absorbed from human experiences.

The idea of life cycles reoccurs throughout this body of work. Presented in chapters that shift between a frantic and calm pace that the artist likens to the shifts in his own mental state, Dice is an attempt to make sense of fleeting ideas - ugliness/beauty, chaos and the banal. The artist is inspired by mankind’s attempts to make sense of the world through systems and cultural exploration as such he invests his scenes with influences drawn from mythology, philosophy, literature, science, escapism and quantum thinking. He probes at notions of social responsibilities, autonomy, media influence, and cultural specifics. Revealing fleeting moments that contribute to humanity - the built and natural environments, human connectivity, violence, innovation, medicine, commerce, rejuvenation, movement and stillness, prayer, and the digital realm, Dice draws from various modes of image making, and forms a montage of the artist’s own footage, stock imagery as well as collectively generated images absorbed from social media and WhatsApp groups. Al Lamki toys with the viewer’s audio/visual perception - offering the opportunity to engage with both the artist’s soundtrack that combines various cultural approaches to sound and music with a parallel AI generated soundtrack.

Around the central screen which displays Dice a cluster of smaller screens display a backdrop of flesh colour tones continuing the artist’s intention to unite through his output, These screens unfold further footage that casts a gaze towards the future of humanity in the digital age. An AI programme has generated its own footage in response to Al Lamki’s Dice film and hand drawings.

Hashel Al Lamki  
*Pai Gow, 2022*



Video art and immersive sound/music installation

**Description**

Al Lamki has also included *Pai Gow* a piece produced in collaboration with Hong Kong-based artist Drew Cappotto, crafted in response to *Dice*. The video art and immersive sound/music installation form a bridge between the filmic and 2- dimensional works by Al Lamki, providing the viewer with an additional layer of complexity that exists somewhere between the surreal and the knowable. The work employs processed footage and slowly evolving video art as a means of reconstituting its source material into a fluid, living response to Al Lamki's film and paintings. The piece seeks to reconcile the disparate mediums of the artist's digital and physical works.

Hashel Al Lamki  
*Palindrome, 2016*



Textile Installation



### Description

Palindrome: a word, verse, or sentence or a number that reads the same backward or forward.

A performance-based installation produced under the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Emerging Artists Fellowship (SEAF) in 2016. This work explores the effects of time, lifecycles and the relationship between natural elements and manmade constructions.

During the residency programme Al Lamki made his way to the rooftop of his studio. From there, as part of a performance, he unwound an entire roll of silk cloth. The white fabric used as part of ceremonies and social rituals from weddings to navy uniforms. The artist unwound the fabric and invested it with natural pigments before re-rolling and leaving it to react in a time-driven process with the natural elements over a period of 11-months. Exposed to the humidity, rain and arid climate of the UAE the silk took on both structured and organic forms - Al Lamki likens these formations to shifts in lifecycles - as ones mental state becomes more or less structured during various moments in life. Colours have been established through a process of natural alchemy and resemble the tones of the earth much like a map that has been distorted and aged, Al Lamki considers this work as a manuscript of the elements, a materialisation of their trace and a site of generation whereby natural pigment and the forces of nature can collide to create something new. Previously unexhibited, Palindrome takes on new meaning in the site of Lyon, Al Lamki connects the material to shifts in power and commerce, he reflects upon the city's history as the centre of silk production in Europe before the silk revolutions during the 17th and 18th centuries as the workers protested their poor working conditions. The works title, Palindrome, comes from the idea that things are never one sided they are reversible and can be approached from multiple perspectives. At Lyon this work takes on new meaning, it works in dialogue with the circular space which negates a distinct pathway around the exhibition space.

Hashel Al Lamki  
*Philtrum*, 2022  
Sculptural  
Installation



Sculptural installation

**Description**

Philtrum comprises six boxed necklaces enclosed in a museum vitrine. Each necklace offers up a single word in scriptive silver lettering that represents a stage of the cycle of growth and development of a human in the womb: Collection, Storage, Processing, Sharing, Transmission, Disposal. The work's title is representative of this cycle. Philtrum is the name for the groove that exists between the human mouth and the nose, a fundamental piece of the puzzle that helps a human to form.

Hashel Al Lamki  
*Rodinia - Five Panel Commission For Lyon Biennale, 2022*





Hashel Al Lamki  
*Rodinia Five Panel Commission For Lyon Biennale, 2022*



Natural pigment oil and oil pastels 200 x 500 cm  
78 3/4 x 196 7/8 in  
X 5 Panels

1. Simbi Nan Dlo
2. L'Chaim
3. Mariposa
4. Ibraheem
5. She Said I Love You, But I Cannot Mother Your Fears

## Description

### *Rodinia - Five Panel Commission For Lyon Biennale*

Extending from the moving image onto the canvas, for the Lyon Biennial Al Lamki has produced five panels, each exploring a distinct theme embodied within Dice, his film. In an effort to evoke a sense of unity and inclusivity across cultures and geographies each title represents a distinct culture or language.

In these five works Al Lamki connects ecological shifts and synergies in the natural world with real-life scenarios. He reflects upon temporality - the passing of day-to-day time in which nothing much seems to change and in parallel the monumental shifts that occur over millennia rendering the lived environment unrecognisable from era to era.

The artist is fascinated by the fragile and complex networks that connect mankind and the earth, the overt and the subliminal. He is fixated upon gradual evolutions in the terrain, geological formations, dual notions the fragility of the earth's ecosystems, the movement of tectonic plates and the subtle shifts in the natural environment that have monumental impacts. Al Lamki relates these connections to those that he observes in the social world around him. The idea of the passing of time, of tenuous connections between man and earth, the finite nature of humanity, force and fragility run throughout these works. Al Lamki builds a bridge between that which he observes in the natural world around him and human behaviour patterns - age-old alchemy that transform herbs into healing homeopathic remedies; the force in the boxing ring that signifies the collision of tectonic plates underneath the earth's surface; the clink of a glass in celebration; and the separation of mother and child (cow and calf) after its last milk to remind us that we, as humanity, are sucking on the last few drops of the earth's scarce resources.

#### 1. Simbi Nan Dlo

In Haitian tradition, 'Simbi' are a family of serpent water spirits who connect God with the natural world. 'Simbi Nan Dlo' emphasises that as the entire world is physically connected through water, it is similarly joined via the interconnection of people and their omnipresent spirit.

This work depicts the Moringa tree which is native to the land where Al Lamki grew up Al Ain and has been inspired by the idea of self-healing and transformation through alchemy as humans derive methods of mark making and homeopathic medicines from plant life.

Attempting to pioneer an entirely sustainable artistic process, Al Lamki's art utilises natural pigments from the MENA region, for this work he wanted to extend his process to explore and incorporate natural pigments used in other cultures. In collaboration with the Ecole du Louvre he embarked upon a process of experimentation with sanguine a reddish chalk that Al Lamki first became familiar with and connected to during his time in Lyon preparing for the Biennial. Sanguine's application and social function has changed over time. It was once used in medicine

as antihemorrhagic agent that promotes homeostasis and was later become harnessed by artists as medium to paint with evidenced at first exhibition on the medium and its historical evolution from medical to use in art, Sanguines, Dessins Francais du Dix-huitieme Siecle, at Galerie Caillieux, Paris.

## 2. L'Chaim

L'Chaim is the Hebrew expression for “to life” and is oft- expressed when toasting health and happiness.

L'Chaim explores dual notions of force and fragility, collision and unity. In Al Lamki's work it also implies ideas of the finite and fragile nature of life, its cycles and shifts. The work depicts two house flies perched between a Caralluma cactus and a sandy fossil dune rock. Al Lamki mines his personal history and reflects upon the geographies to the east and west of Abu Dhabi and their disparate terrains - the abundant plant life surrounding Jebel Hafeet and the arid sands of the western regions of the UAE. Such sand, the artist contends, goes through a cycle and vast process of transformation. It has been transposed - melted and fused with silica dioxide and then moulded - to form the glasses that one clinks as they toast.

We cheer during moments of celebration and commiseration. The flies, known for their short lifecycle embody this fragility. Historic communities in the UAE have used the Caralluma plant for medicinal purposes while contemporary research suggests that it could have properties that fight against illnesses from cancer to diabetes. A road that connects Al Ain to the edge of the Empty Quarter has been constructed and unfortunately many native plants were destroyed during the construction. The palette of this painting comprises muted blue and earthy tones that give the illusion of a dusty, hazy mirage juxtaposed with the reflective and shimmery house fly.

## 3. Mariposa

“Mariposa” translates from Spanish to English as butterfly.

In chaos theory, the Butterfly Effect is understood as a property of chaotic systems by which small changes in initial conditions can lead to large-scale and unpredictable variation in the future state of the system. The concept is imagined with a butterfly flapping its wings to cause a typhoon. Al Lamki reflects upon the land to the west of Abu Dhabi through this lens reflecting upon the fragility of the ecosystem that contributes to the terrain. A space of ethereal, sandy fossil dunes the artist is preoccupied by the effects of time and pressure upon this land. Forces of nature here are both corrosive and generative, working to form fossil dunes over extended periods of time. Working in synergy, at the top of the fossil dune is a rock and beneath it sand yet through air flow, the rock maintains its pressure upon the sand compressing it into a specific form. A microcosm for the greater social and natural worlds each element is reliant upon and contributes to another.



#### 4. Ibraheem

Far-reaching systems of belief - the Abrahamic religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam as well as the Bahá'í Faith, Samaritanism, Druze, and Rastafari - are united by Ibraheem (Arabic: إِبْرَاهِيمَ, Ibrāhīm) - the Arabic name for the prophet Abraham.

In this work Al Lamki explores dual notions of cohesion and collision, harmony and aggression, spirituality and worldliness. The painting depicts two fighters in the boxing ring and also makes reference to a famous UAE-based fighter, Ibraheem, a champion that shares his name with the prophet. In this work Al Lamki considers the transfer and collision of energies that takes place in the boxing ring. The artist was first exposed to martial arts while living in New York. During the morning he would make his way through public parks and pause to take in groups practicing Capoeira and Tai Chi. Al Lamki was captivated by their purposeful synchronicity. Later, he returned to the UAE and joined the national service program he was introduced to jujitsu a martial art that allowed Al Lamki to connect with his own body as well as external forces. To the artist martial arts embodies multiple aspects - ceremony, dance and aggression that has been harmonised and rendered purposeful and sublime, captured in a palette of fiery tones. Al Lamki depicts a fight where two energies come face-to-face, similar to the collision between two tectonic plates that results in a reordering and reformation of the mountain ranges that surrounded Al Lamki in his youth.

#### 5. She Said, I Love You, But I Cannot Mother Your Fears

The Holocene extinction, otherwise referred to as the sixth mass extinction or Anthropocene extinction, is an ongoing extinction event of species during the present Holocene epoch as a result of human activity.

She Said, I Love You, But I Cannot Mother Your Fears captures a fleeting moment of separation and anxiety. The work depicts a cow and its calf, a mother and child, at the moment when the offspring is about to take its final milk supply before separating from its mother. Al Lamki invests this moment with double meaning. He materialises ever-shifting and unstable human bonds while also illuminating the fragility of the natural world and the scarcity of its resources.

“Mother Earth is suffering” Al Lamki contends. Here the mother is nursing a child that is unwilling to learn, in fear of adapting to the world that surrounds it. It's a moment of separation and a step into the unknown represented in a muted palette of mustard and amethyst hues, devoid of vibrancy and optimism. The parent carries hope - hope that their child will be able to continue along the path that they have set out for them, that they will move forward and face life's challenges yet Al Lamki counters this optimism. The artist captures human anxieties, fear of separation and the vulnerability of a child left alone in the world, he materialises a universal human subject, one hesitant to respond to the problem of climate change.



## About Hashel Al Lamki

### B. 1986

Emirati painter and multi-disciplinary artist, Hashel Al Lamki's art unpacks the relationship between humankind and their habitat, the wild and constructed.

Born in the shadow of the monumental Jebel Hafeet mountain in Al Ain, Al Lamki bore witness to the complex social and spatial dynamics that followed exponential development in the Gulf. Al Ain's Bedouin culture and distinct social values, its archaeological sites and rugged terrain formed a stark contrast to the rapid industrial and architectural growth that Al Lamki observed in the neighbouring Emirates.

In 2011 Al Lamki received his BFA from Parsons School of Design The New School, New York City. He went on to contribute to several philanthropic collaborative projects in Central and North America. Al Lamki worked in disaster-stricken Guatemala and Haiti and within low social income communities in the US, his cultural projects were united by a focus upon sustainable practices and social cohesion. After seven years in New York Al Lamki went on to live between Amsterdam, Netherlands and Taos, New Mexico where he immersed himself in solution-finding for post-consumerism waste.

Upon returning to Abu Dhabi in 2014 Al Lamki was awarded the Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship. Post-fellowship, in 2018, he joined forces with artists in the UAE that shared a common cause. Together they established a community centred around contemporary art in the Emirates, Bait 15. The artist-run gallery space provided a space for local artists to engage in critical dialogue.

These interdisciplinary and cross-cultural experiences have contributed to Al Lamki's artistic practice conceptually and technically. His paintings and sculptural works are concerned with the legacies of the landscapes that surrounded him in Al Ain and beyond, the breathtaking and the banal.

Al Lamki's approach follows Edward T. Hall's suggestion that the relationship between man and the cultural dimension is dialogical and "one in which both man and his environment participate in moulding each other". Al Lamki's compositions charter towering mountain ranges, pristine golf courses and architectural feats. They survey shifts in the ecosystem as much as they divulge changes in the social world, tracing intersecting stories of human migration, climate change, colonisation and evolution. Al Lamki refuses the separation of man and nature, his practice underscores the dependency of mankind on natural resources and their subsequent responsibility for the environmental catastrophe that looms. His approach to art fuses social innovation, sustainability, and environmental consciousness. Inspired by scientific methodologies and local artisanal processes, Al Lamki's palette comprises freshly formed pigments derived from natural resources in the MENA region. Through this process of alchemy, Al Lamki articulates the fragility and scarcity of these elements as well as their immense natural powers.

Al Lamki insists that community engagement remains central to his practice. He regularly engages local artisans and practitioners in his processes in order to feedback into local economies and unite seemingly disparate individuals and institutions.

## About Tabari Artspace

### A Bridge Between Worlds

For the last two decades, Tabari Artspace gallery has played a vital role in connecting international audiences and institutions to the modern and contemporary art of the MENA region.

Grounded in the notion that art has the capacity to dismantle borders, foster new ways of knowing and stimulate cross-cultural understanding, Tabari Artspace gallery forms a bridge between worlds, a platform pioneering a diverse roster of exhibitions at the intersection of the local and the global.

### Programming

Over twenty years Tabari Artspace has chartered the evolution of MENA art from the modern masters that gave rise to the scene to the dynamic emerging and established artists producing today. Our represented artists from the MENA region and its diaspora are conceptually engaged with issues pertinent to the human condition and united through fine art quality. Advanced by an all-women team, Tabari Artspace foregrounds female figures and marginalised perspectives in contemporary art.

Our approach to presentation transcends the rigidity of the white cube space. In dialogue with our artists, we diffuse their artistic explorations into immersive and unexpected environments that establish new modes of engagement with art. The cultural ecosystem in the UAE has been central to the Tabari Artspace trajectory as such the gallery strives to contribute to the region's cultural vision through the identification and advancement of Gulf talent. Tabari Artspace commits to the representation of artists originating from and taking root in the GCC, as well as international practitioners that cast their gaze towards it.

### Community

Community engagement and wider social access to MENA art are at the core of Tabari Artspace's missions. Physical programming is supplemented by digital counterparts, talks, publishing, workshops, and community events. The Tabari Artspace international residency programme encourages the artists of the region to expand their practice amid new contexts.



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Tabari Artspace LTD.  
The Gate Village Building 3 Podium Level Dubai  
International Financial Centre

P.O. Box 506759, Dubai, UAE  
Tel: +971 4 323 0820

[info@tabariartspace.com](mailto:info@tabariartspace.com)  
[www.tabariartspace.com](http://www.tabariartspace.com)