

PRESS RELEASE

Ayyam Gallery
 143 New Bond Street
 1st Floor, W1S 2TP, London
 Gallery Hours:

T: +44(0)2074093568
 F: +44(0)2074093162
 Mon-Sat: 10:00am-6:00pm



Sama Alshaibi: *Sand Rushes In*

26 March – 9 May 2015

Opening reception and book signing: Thursday, 26 March at 6.00 pm

Ayyam Gallery is pleased to present *Sand Rushes In*, the forthcoming solo exhibition of United States-based, Palestinian-Iraqi artist Sama Alshaibi. Curated by Isabella Ellaheh Hughes, the exhibition will highlight *Silsila* (2009-present), an ongoing multimedia project by the artist that was shown as part of the Maldives Pavilion of the 2013 Venice Biennale. Alshaibi has recently created new works for the series, including video installations and large-scale photographs. *Sand Rushes In* will also mark the UK launch of the artist’s eponymous monograph, which is edited by the curator and published by Aperture Foundation, New York. A preview for press and invited guests will include an artist talk with the curator and a breakfast reception on Thursday, 26 March at 9:30 am. A book signing open to the public with Alshaibi and Hughes will be held at the opening of the exhibition later in the evening.

Inspired by the nomadic traditions of Bedouins and the writings of fourteenth-century Moroccan explorer Ibn Battuta, *Silsila* (Arabic for ‘chain’ or ‘link’) depicts the artist’s journey through the significant desert areas and bodies of water that connect North Africa and West Asia to the Maldives, an island nation located in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Performing at various sites in North Africa and West Asia, Alshaibi has composed a body of work that describes the desert as a place of enduring paradox. As Alshaibi demonstrates with visual poetics and laden imagery, the desert can serve as the starting point for a broader cultural reading, revealing the mystical and historical importance of such environments, through which the region, even more broadly, the world, can re-imagine an uncertain ecological future.

With a series of photographs and video works in which diverse settings are the backdrops for symbolic performances representing purification, transcendence, and renewal, Alshaibi connects North Africa and West Asia—where water sources are threatened and Bedouin life is disrupted by encroaching environmental and political crises—with the Maldives—where rising waters stand to swallow its coral atolls. In doing so, the artist considers Ibn Battuta’s exploration of culturally linked lands as a means to acquiring knowledge. The evident search for continuity amidst diverse environments that characterised his life’s work can also be identified as the underlying theme of Alshaibi’s own contemplative journey. The artist is shown in sweeping, uninhabited landscapes where her gesturing body becomes a visually anchoring force that seems to move in unison with the shifting surfaces of her surroundings. At certain intervals of the videos, Alshaibi’s spiritually minded gestures are amplified with references to the mystical symbolism of Islamic aesthetics, which is based on growing geometric patterns

and continuous symmetry alluding to infinite, divine creation that surpasses the actions of humankind.

About the Artist

Sama Alshaibi's multimedia work explores spaces of conflict and the power struggles that arise in the aftermath of war and exile. Alshaibi is particularly interested in how such clashes occur between citizens and the state, creating vexing crises that impact the physical and psychic realms of the individual as resources and land, mobility, political agency, and self-affirmation are compromised. Through performance, video, photography, and installation, Alshaibi positions her own body as an allegorical site that makes the byproducts of war visible.

Born in Basra to an Iraqi father and Palestinian mother, Sama Alshaibi is based in Tucson where she is Chair and Associate Professor of Photography and Video Art at the University of Arizona. Alshaibi also holds a BA in Photography from Columbia College and an MFA in Photography, Video, and Media Arts from the University of Colorado. Her works are housed in both public and private collections, including Nadour, Germany; The Barjeel Collection, Sharjah; The Rami Farook Collection, Dubai; and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Tunis, Tunisia. In 2014 Alshaibi was awarded the prestigious Fulbright Scholar Fellowship as part of a residency at the Palestine Museum in Ramallah, where she developed an education program while conducting independent research.

Recently, Alshaibi has featured in solo and group exhibitions at Honolulu Biennial, Hawaii (2014); Photo Shanghai (2014); FotoFest, Houston (2014); the Maldives Pavilion of the Venice Biennale (2013); Venice Art Gallery, Los Angeles (2013); Madrid Palestine Film Festival (2013); University of Southampton (2013); Edge of Arabia, London (2012); Hilger-BROTKunsthalle, Vienna (2012); Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris (2012); Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2012); Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai (2011); and Selma Feriani Gallery, London (2010).

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is recognised as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Middle Eastern artists with an international profile and museum presence. Spaces in Beirut, Dubai, and London have further succeeded in showcasing the work of Middle Eastern artists with the aim of educating a wider audience about the art of this significant region.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibition Dates: 26 March – 9 May 2015

Preview and artist talk for press and invited guests:

Thursday, 26 March at 9:30 am. RSVP by email: london@ayyamgallery.com

Opening Reception and Book Signing open to the public:

Thursday, 26 March from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Location: 143 New Bond Street

1st Floor

W1S 2TP, London

T: +44(0)2074093568

Email: london@ayyamgallery.com

For more information and artwork images, please contact press@ayyamgallery.com or +44 (0) 207 409 3568