



SAMA ALSHAIBI

طرس (*Tterss*)

Ayyam Gallery

15 April-30 May 2025

Dubai

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PRESS RELEASE

Ayyam Gallery is pleased to present *طرس* a solo exhibition featuring Sama Alshaibi's most recent body of work. The exhibition brings together mixed-media collages and video art that reimagine Baghdad's transformation—its peaks, declines, and latent possibilities. Through Alshaibi's work, Baghdad becomes a site of physical presence and alternative visions—one that is "always mediated, annotated, and glimpsed through shifting thresholds." — Sama Alshaibi

Sama Alshaibi's project focuses on the spatial, material, and technological fragments that narrate the story of a place and its people. After a 40-year separation, Alshaibi returns to her homeland on multiple trips between 2021 and 2023. Longing to reorient herself with a city she had once known more through imagination than lived experience, she does so through various layers of mediums and imagery to reconstruct an abstracted and interrupted history and reality. Working with the archives of several architects, including the renowned Iraqi Rifat Chadirji, *طرس*, also draws inspiration from Andreas Huyssen's writings on 'miniatures' of urban reality, using them to frame Baghdad through Alshaibi's lens.

The Arabic title *طرس* evokes the idea of a palimpsest, a concept Alshaibi explores through collages—a medium that mirrors Baghdad's complex and fragmented urban narrative—layering political, historical, and perceptual imprints to capture its contradictions and progression. The superimposed strata of imagery within the collages immerse the city's ruins and infrastructures into a deeper narrative of alienation. Alshaibi interweaves the weight of engraved historical memory with the city's ongoing modernisation, emphasising the tensions and complexities that persist in the aftermath of war.

Using LiDAR technology to scan the urban landscape, Alshaibi built an extensive repertoire of factual measurements, mapping the city's neighbourhoods. Alshaibi's laser-precise data mappings are interwoven with her photographs and archival materials—including vernacular imagery and architectural renderings—to craft compositions that explore the elasticity between imagining and depicting. The bricolage layers temporalities, technologies, and fragmentations, tracing the evolution of a city shaped by imperial interventions, shifting ambitions, and impossible desires.

Through this complex portrayal, Alshaibi constructs a speculative space for understanding historical Arab cities as microcosms of broader global crises, where past and present collide, and modernisation, conflict, exile, and revival intertwine.

About the artist

Situated within natural environments, 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.

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subject of the images, she does not consider the works to be self portraits. By using elements of her experiences, anxieties and curiosities, the artist is able to embody different characters that perform various issues, people and concepts.

Born in Basra to an Iraqi father and a Palestinian mother, Sama Alshaibi is based in the United States where she is Chair and Regents Professor of Photography, Video Art, and Imagining at the University of Arizona, Tucson. Alshaibi holds a BA in Photography from Columbia College and an MFA in Photography, Video, and Media Arts from the University of Colorado. She was a recipient of the Fulbright Scholar Fellowship in 2014 as part of a residency at the Palestine Museum, where she developed an educational program while conducting independent research, as well as the recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship in 2021. Alshaibi has also participated in significant residencies including MacDowell, Bellagio and Artpace.

Recently, Alshaibi has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2023), Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona (2022), Artpace, San Antonio, Texas (2019); Cairo International Biennale (2019); Pen + Brush, New York (2019); Ayyam Gallery, Al Quoz, Dubai (2019, 2018, 2015); Arizona Biennale, Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, USA (2018); American University Museum, Washington (2018, 2017); Beirut Spring Festival, Beirut, Lebanon (2018); Palazzo Granafei- Nervegna, Brindisi (2017); Tuscon Museum of Art, Arizona (2017); Johnson Museum of Art, New York (2017); Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York (2017); Marta Herford Museum, Herford (2017); Museum De Wieger, Deurne (2017); Brentwood Arts Exchange, Maryland (2017); Honolulu Biennial, Honolulu (2017, 2014); Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Arizona (2016); Desai Matta Gallery - the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco (2016); FotoFest, Houston (2016, 2014); Pirineos Sur Festival, Lanuza (2015); Palais De La Culture, Constantine (2015); Ayyam Gallery, London (2015); Arab American National Museum, Dearborn (2015); the Maldives Pavilion of the Venice Biennale (2013); University of Southampton, Southampton (2013); Edge of Arabia, London (2012); HilgerBROTKunsthalle, Vienna (2012); Institut Du Monde Arabe, Paris (2012); Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2012); and Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012).

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Alshaibi's works
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Collection; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Tunis; Light Work Collection, Syracuse; University of Illinois, Chicago; University of Colorado Art Museum, Boulder; The Photo Archive of the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; and the C.N. Gorman Museum at the University of California, Davis.

In 2015, Aperture Foundation published Alshaibi's first monograph, *Sand Rushes In*.

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Installation Views



Selected Works

