

Press Release

Shift

Dana Awartani, Reem al-Nasser and Zahra Al-Ghamdi

1 July - 2 September 2017

Private View: 30 June, 6.30pm-8.30pm

Exhibition Open: Tues-Sat, 11am-6pm, FREE

The Mosaic Rooms, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0S



Dana Awartani, *I went away and forgot you. A while ago I remembered. I remembered I'd forgotten you. I was dreaming.* Video, 2017.

The Mosaic Rooms presents the UK debut of three young female artists from Saudi Arabia. In *Shift*, **Dana Awartani, Zahrah Al-Ghamdi** and **Reem Al-Nasser** respond to their experiences of accelerated change in their country, in the built environment of their cities and in domestic spaces. Caught between a future driven by globalisation and rapid urban development, and a past at risk of erasure, the artists consider their own position, and reflect on what is important to them as individuals and as part of the wider collective.

Dana Awartani presents *I went away and forgot you. A while ago I remembered. I remembered I'd forgotten you. I was dreaming.* A film shows a light filled room in an abandoned house, with what appears to be a traditional Islamic tiled floor. The patterned floor is an intricate installation of hand dyed sand and as we watch the artist steps into frame to sweep it away. The sand work will be recreated by Awartani on the floor of the gallery. The work reflects on the impact of urban development in Jeddah, and what the artist views as a social obsession with progress at a cost of losing what is left behind.

Zahrah Al-Ghamdi's *Cell of the City* is a large wall based installation, built on site by the artist for the exhibition. Made of sand, clay and cloth, the structure's rough surface will naturally alter over the period of its display. Al-Ghamdi's sculpture is informed by her own experiences of growing up in the traditional architecture of South-West Saudi Arabia. The work attempts to embody the contemporary loss of these regional styles. Al-Ghamdi will also perform live, constructing the installation *Inanimate Village* in the Great Court at The British Museum on the 2 July as part of Shubbak Festival.

Reem Al-Nasser's *The Silver Plate* is a resonant work that attempts to simulate an experience of fear and anxiety. The three part multimedia installation represents the past (an audio piece) the present (dual screen video installation), and the future (a printed booklet). A largescale video installation contrasts two opposing states of celebration and domestic chores, it alludes to the artist's own experiences as a Saudi woman in Jizan and the effects of cultural practices on an individual and a community. The piece articulates the process of addressing the past, to be able to move forward in personal and collective lives.

This exhibition will give an insight into some of the exciting art practices currently emerging on the young contemporary Saudi Arabian art scene. All three artists exhibited earlier this year at 21,39, the national art platform in Jeddah, which drew international attention. *Shift* will be the first exhibition of their work in the UK. The exhibition also demonstrates the importance of art as a space which these young artists are using to start conversations on contemporary circumstances and issues, and to look towards the future.

Shift is presented in association with Shubbak Festival, the biennial festival of Arab art and culture.

About the artists

Dana Awartani studied at Central St Martins and The Prince's School of Traditional Arts. Her work has been exhibited in Saudi Arabia, the Venice Biennale, San Francisco and the Kochi Biennale. Awartani uses traditional craft techniques to produce contemporary multi-media works.

Zahrah Al-Ghamdi is based in Saudi Arabia. Her work explores memory and the past in traditional architecture. Al-Ghamdi's work has been exhibited in Saudi Arabia, Dubai and the UK. She was awarded her PhD at Coventry University, UK and teaches art at the King Abdulaziz University.

Reem Al-Nasser is from Jizan in Saudi Arabia. Her work is informed by personal experience and close observation of the themes of movement and mobility and cultural change. She has exhibited in Saudi Arabia including at 21,39 earlier this year.

Notes to Editors

- For interview requests contact press@mosaicrooms.org or call 0207 370 9990
- Visits to the artists during construction of the floor and wall works can be made by arrangement, limited spaces available.
- The artists will be in conversation with Vassilis Oikonomopoulos (Assistant Curator, Collections International Art Tate Modern) at The Mosaic Rooms on Saturday 1 July.
- The performance of Zahrah Al-Ghamdi at the British Museum was jointly commissioned with Shubbak Festival. It has been generously supported by individual donors Faisal Tamer and Sara Alireza.
- A public programme of talks and events will accompany the exhibition.
- The Mosaic Rooms are a leading London-based non-profit cultural organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting contemporary culture from and about the Arab world. They provide an international platform for the arts, particularly new work, and create opportunities for collaboration and professional development between artists, collectives and organisations from the Arab world and the UK. They do this through free contemporary art exhibitions, multidisciplinary events, artist residencies and their engagement programme. They work in partnership with national and international organisations to disseminate their programme to the widest possible audience. The Mosaic Rooms is run by Rachael Jarvis, Director. The Mosaic Rooms form part of the A.M. Qattan Foundation.
- The Mosaic Rooms are situated on the corner of the Cromwell and Earl's Court Road in Kensington, London.
- Visit www.mosaicrooms.org