

Artist Statement - Khalid Al Banna

I view the world in layers. Space presents itself to me in geometric terms. My landscape, when atomized, appears in simplified forms – stacks of squares, a whirling of circles, telescoping triangles, trapezoids in transformation. Compositions burst with endless permutations. This processing of space-as-potential is shaped by my studies of Architectural Engineering, the principals of which undergird my entire practice.

Like an architect, I start with a flat surface and gradually build works that are conceptually and materially storied. I draw from mental notes I've taken throughout the day, highlights from the news, dreams and my imagination. The view to me is never stagnant, but one in constant flux, a state of becoming.

My formations, albeit influenced by the principles of design, seek to subvert them. Through my Cubist constructions of elongated angles, unrealistic intersection points, impossible perpendicular lines, I create a realm of fiction in which abstractions abound – it's a process that arises from marrying my two separate yet complimentary vantage points as architect and artist.

My abstractions are recorded in my *Sketchbook* (2014-ongoing) through minimalist outlines or miniature models of my final collages. I create these using scraps of leftover paper laying around my studio from previous works. The *Sketchbook* has become a sort of diary of visions, each page dated and adorned with a moment of inspiration. Unlike an architect's 'floor plan', these formations are bereft of scale, dimension, and any link to space or other physical features. They do not abide by the laws of physics; the grid here cannot hold. Slowly, they puncture through the pages and glide into reality, as I rework them into the rules of the space they occupy, rendered into my final collages of variant sizes.

In my seminal *Black and White* series, the paper is an improvisational site. Each stroke or dash of my ink holds its unique DNA, recounting a different story. In cathartic repetition, the paper is ripped and rearranged into its final form—a mosaic of narratives. By deliberately limiting myself to this monochromatic flat picture plane, I explore a world of limitless potential, springing from the stark aesthetic and conceptual contradictions and tensions between black and white.

After a decade, I sought to challenge my own limits and that of the technique through introducing multicolored textiles, embroidery, crystals, beads and mirrors into my practice. My venture into fabrics is sparked by the mysteries of the material. The sensual folds undulating like dunes into the horizon hold the codes of culture. I use textiles from which women's traditional dresses are made in the UAE. The swathes of fabric rope one into a journey of personal histories and collective celebratory rituals. Laughs and moments of familial intimacy reverberate beyond the surface like waves. When I shred the fabric and attach the fragments methodically into woven webs, the kaleidoscopic formations gush with color, as if confetti. Pink, yellow and red, golden threads and beads hang lavishly in globular collages, eliciting a feeling of meditative motion. By using objects of a bygone period in a contemporary context, I ask questions about cultural fluidity, nostalgia and the place of tradition in a society of rapid transformation.

Although my work processes diverse materials, it's underpinned by technique, process and subject matter, while anchored firmly in the principles of design.