

PRESS RELEASE



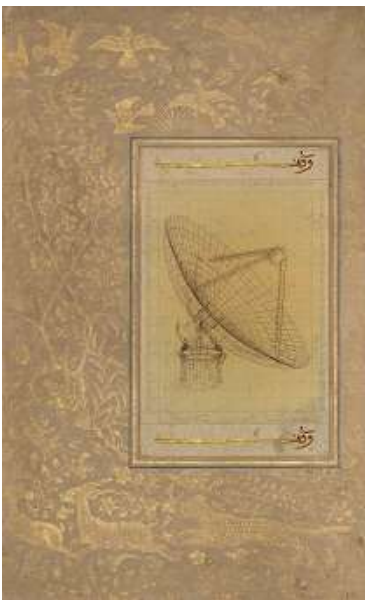
AHMED MATER TO INAUGURATE LAKUM ARTSPACE WITH *PROGNOSIS:1979-2019*

MATER'S FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION IN RIYADH EXPLORES THE KINGDOM'S CULTURE AND GEOGRAPHY OVER FORTY YEARS

EXHIBITION KICK'S OFF LAKUM'S DECEMBER 8 LAUNCH AND HIGHLY ANTICIPATED MISK ART WEEK AND AD-DIRIYAH BIENNALE

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA | November 24, 2021 Lakum Artspace, the multi-functional contemporary 'art space for all' inaugurates its exhibition program with the first ever solo show by physician turned artist, Ahmed Mater. The exhibition draws its inspiration from Mater's forthcoming artist book, which explores his personal biography alongside historical events that occurred in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the greater Middle East, spanning 40 years. *Prognosis:1979-2019* will open on December 8, and be on for two months, featuring the global launch of the book.

The exhibition, curated by New York based Sara Raza, utilizes the term prognosis as a metaphor for the exploration of what might be considered philosophically as an artistic set of predictions or inquiries. It allows one to rethink the ways in which cultural, political and social events have informed one another as part of a complex multifaceted web of history and insight into the practices of contemporary life in the Kingdom in the 21st century. **"With a solid footing in both the medical and art world, Mater has developed a highly respected research-based art practice that combines scientific forensic techniques alongside conceptual fine art tropes to poetically address the changing political and social landscape of the Kingdom,"** says Raza.



Left to right: Illumination, 2021, Mixed Media, 152 x 102; Ahmed Mater in his studio.
Images Courtesy of Ahmed Mater and Lakum Artspace

Prognosis: 1979-2019 will explore different themes in this period through photography, installation, video and works on paper and presents a chronological institutional critique of four decades of new media

practices depicted through new and older works, including cassette tapes, VHS, televisions, CCTV footage and social media to document the journey from the analog to the digital era. Imagined as a compact project, the exhibition is spatially designed to reflect the meandering between history and artistic interpretation, which demonstrates how Mater has employed historical qualities that were defined by both ‘facts’ and ‘fictions.’ The exhibition also includes components of Mater’s personal research materials (articles, publications, drawings and notations) which are presented as both objects and living testimonies and that are grouped by decades: 1979-89, 1990-2000, 2000-10 and 2010-2019. This in turn guides the exhibition with four conceptual themes of Coding, Proxies, Surveillance and Whistleblowing, which have shaped the curatorial and spatial thinking behind the show.

As the first artist officially appointed by the Saudi government in 2013 to document the Holy City of Mecca, Mater’s research on migratory patterns and topology provided another view on the city’s geopolitical and spatial dynamics from an artistic, conceptual, physical and social angle. **Mater says: “After years of research, exploration and investigation, this exhibition is a culmination of forty years of history which hold a special place in my heart and art career. I hope that viewers take in the individuality of each work, but also appreciate the overarching essence through its message.”**

In addition, Mater worked with a classically trained Ottoman *Tazhib* Islamic art illumination painter to create a series of illustrated works that draw from the ancient book of moral fables *Khalila and Dimna*, that came into popularity during the 8th century Abbasid period, also known as the Golden Age of Islam. For these works, Mater replaces the original animal images with symbols featured in his previous works, such as the X-Ray paintings from 2003, that included discarded medical negatives, as well footage from drones and cameras that are inspired by recent geopolitical events and cyber surveillance. These paradoxical works highlight the language of mythology to produce an entangled map of the real, where the fact and fiction, join forces to reveal interpretations of the ‘truths.’

The establishment of Lakum Artspace builds on Al-Sudairi’s previous experiences of being on the board of Misk Art Institute, which initiated her long-term relationship with Mater, the Institute’s CEO. **“One of Lakum’s main missions is to promote and support art for the local community, and to also highlight Saudi talent on a global platform. We are very proud to be able to present Ahmed Mater’s first solo exhibition in Riyadh, and not just through the exhibition duration, but with the launch of his book, which will be available and archived in our research library for all visitors to experience.”**

With this exhibition, Mater actively challenges perceptions and opens up alternative paths for accessing history, knowledge and meaning through his allegorical art practice. More details on the exhibition opening and Lakum’s launch will be available online.

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Press information and available images can be accessed [here](#)

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Neama A. Al-Sudairi

Al-Sudairi is a cultural engineer and mentor living and working in Riyadh and has been recognized as one of the leading voices of the new arts generation to emerge from Saudi Arabia. Lakum builds on from Al-Sudairi's previous role as the founding director of Alāan Artspace (2012-2017) which was the first unique concept space in Riyadh dedicated to contemporary visual culture, learning, retail and fine dining. Alāan hosted a number of pioneering exhibitions and public programs and notable exhibitions included the acclaimed *Soft Power* featuring leading Saudi artists Manal Al Dowayan, Sarah Abu Abdallah and Sarah Mohanna Al-Abdali (guest curated by former Guggenheim Museum curator Sara Raza), as well as solo shows by printmaker Ehab Mamdouh and performance artist and poet Abdullah Al-Othman among others. Under Al-Sudairi's guidance Alāan also partnered with global institutions including the Swiss furniture company Vitra, the London based arts organization Edge of Arabia for the 55th Venice Biennale's program exhibition "Rhizoma: Generation in Waiting," and leading regional art fair Art Dubai. Al-Sudairi also sits on the board of the Misk Art Institute and was part of the steering committee for Saudi Arabia's official participation in the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale.

About Ahmed Mater

Mater's socially engaged artistic practice is furthered through his involvement in cultural initiatives inside and beyond the Kingdom, including Al-Meftaha Arts Village, Abha; pharan.studio, Jeddah; and as co-founder of the Edge of Arabia collective, which has connected a new generation of Saudi artists with international audiences. From 2017–18, for its inaugural year, he was the CEO of Misk Art Institute, where his tenure included overseeing the first Saudi National Pavilion at the Architecture Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia. In 2016, Mater became the first Saudi artist to hold a solo exhibition in the United States with 'Symbolic Cities: The Work of Ahmed Mater' at the Smithsonian Institution's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC, and since then has had multiple shows around the US and the world. His work is part of major international collections including The British Museum, London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; and Centre Pompidou, Paris. Mater currently lives and works in Riyadh.

About Sara Raza

Raza is an award-winning art curator and writer specializing in global art and visual cultures from the Middle East and North Africa. She lives and works in New York City where she founded the curatorial studio Punk Orientalism and is the 2021-2022 Red Burns Fellow at the New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Master's Program. She was most recently the Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator for the Middle East and North Africa, where she built the collection and organized the exhibition *But a Storm Is Blowing from Paradise* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (2016). Raza has curated exhibitions and projects for international museums, biennials and festivals including the Rubin Museum of Art, New York; Mathaf: Modern Arab Art Museum, Doha, Qatar; the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Saskatchewan, Canada; Maraya Art Center, Sharjah, UAE; the Tashkent Biennale, Uzbekistan; Rhizoma (Generation in Waiting, collateral exhibition) for the 55th Venice Biennale; and the 3rd Baku Public Art Festival, Azerbaijan, among others. Formerly, she was the Head of Education and Public Programs at YARAT, Baku, Azerbaijan; Founding Curator at Alāan Art Space, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and Curator of Public Programs at Tate Modern, London.