



## Exhibition 1:

Dana Awartani, Monir FarmanFarmian, Zarina Hashmi, Nasreen Mohammadi

Curated by: Mohammed Rashid Al-Thani

May 4, 2017 - August 30, 2017

Institute of Arab and Islamic Art

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EXHIBITION 1 seeks to examine how architecture and its geometries enters an artist's consciousness, their vocabularies, and, in turn, their work.

With upbringings in Saudi Arabia, Iran, India and Pakistan, the artists in EXHIBITION 1 share the experience of living with Islamic architecture despite originating from vastly different places and environments and leading vastly different lives. How do we respond to the spaces we have experienced and how does that compare to the way we remember them? When memories are recollected, how are they told? How much do history, nostalgia, self-exile and solitude impact the way we visualize our memories? How and when do we share them?

Whilst the buildings that make up our architectural heritage often remain untouched throughout time, our individual personalities shape the way we perceive them, resulting in a diverse range of expressions. This exhibition explores these artists' relationship to geometry within their respective vocabulary.

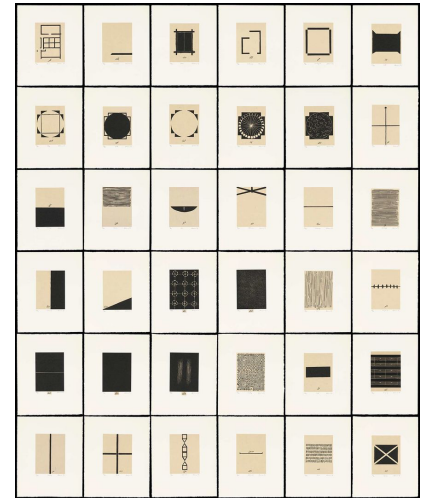
Dana and Monir often start their drawings with the sacred teachings of Islamic geometry, the point and the circle. These dimensions eventually evolve into complex layers of shapes and forms creating profound, and individual aesthetics.

Dana delves into her professional training in traditional Islamic geometry, turning it over and exploring it from within, resulting in contemporary conceptual works that discuss specific historical narratives.

Conversely, provoked by her experience of Iranian architecture, Monir gives the aesthetics of her work "infinite possibilities," elevating traditional geometry to a distinctive visual style while engaging vigorously with Western geometric abstraction. Both artists "transform geometric works that are deeply tied to architecture into an independent surface."<sup>1</sup>

Zarina and Nasreen, on the other hand, continuously challenge the Islamic perception of geometry through the minimal content of their work. Zarina's relationship to architecture is captured through her sensibility for space and geometry, where minimal gestures are evoked by a sense of nostalgia. She does not embrace Minimalism, nor does she reject it, she engages with abstraction in a contemporary manner.

Challenging Suprematism, Nasreen approaches her work with delicate intricacy, reducing images and forms into lines that create rhythmic patterns. Although seemingly parallel to Minimalism and Constructivism, her discipline remains secular, resulting in an independent vocabulary within geometric abstraction. The contemplative nature of their works is achieved through what is best described by the artist as the "maximum of the minimum."



## Mission

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The Institute of Arab and Islamic Art (IAIA) is an independent, non-profit center that promotes and advances the artistic and cultural dialogue between New York City and the Arab and Islamic worlds. Through outreach programs, a multidisciplinary exhibition space, a knowledge-building facility, residency program and an emphasis on collaborations with cultural organizations around the globe, IAIA provides a convivial, welcoming environment to learn about and engage with an often over-simplified culture.

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