

Maryam Aljanahi

ScandArabian Art



Founder/ Creative Director

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ScandArabian Art TMI

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Founded

- 2025 – Now 'ScandArabian Art' International Platform for Education, Events and Art sales
- 2021 – 2023 'Here I am' Collective
- 2019 - 2020 'Roihu studios' Arts, Performance and Dance studio in Helsinki, Finland

Education

- 2006 - 2008 BA Fine Art (Drawing), RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
- 2004 – 2005 Visual Arts Diploma, TAFE, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
- 2002 – 2003 Introductory Course in Art and Design, Dundee College, Dundee, Scotland

Solo Exhibitions

- 2026 'Origin Story' Kulturhuset Grand, Porvoo, Finland
- 2025 'Retribution', Le Pave D'orsay, Paris, France
- 2024 'Birth of Consciousness' Suomenlinna Cathedral (UNESCO world heritage site), Helsinki, Finland
- 2024 'Dancing Oysters' Solo at Grand Culture House, Porvoo
- 2022 'The sea is calling' Luckan – Center for Finnish-Swedish Culture, Helsinki, Finland
- 2022 'UNTIL' Helsinki Cathedral, Helsinki, Finland
- 2019 'Taking a chance on Love', Le Pave D'orsay, Paris, France
- 2016 'Hummus Reflections', Third Space Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
- 2012 'Premonition', Bin Mattar House Museum, Muharraaq, Bahrain
- 2009 'Army of Mariam', Spring of Culture Festival, El Bareh Gallery, Bahrain
- 2008 'The Unlovely', First Site Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2025 Al Murabaa Art festival, Ajman Museum, Ajman, UAE
- 2025 "YAK" Porvoo artist association 20 years Jubilee, Porvoo, FI
- 2025 "UTOPIA" ONOMA exhibitions, Fiskars village, Copper factory, Fiskars FI
- 2025 'Becoming Many' Myymälä2 Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
- 2024 'Remembering' Group Exhibition, Luckan, Helsinki
- 2024 50th Bahrain Annual Fine Art Exhibition (January – April), National Museum of Bahrain, Bahrain
- 2022 'Baytuna' National Museum of Finland, Publics, Gloria, Museum of Central Finland (Traveling Pop up)
- 2022 'As we gaze upon her' Banat collective, Warehouse421, Abu Dhabi, UAE
- 2021 'To Err is Human', Mänttä XXV Biannual, Finland
- 2020 'Becoming a Target', Myymälä2 Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
- 2020 'Becoming a Target', Casa della Musica di Cervignano del Friuli, Italy
- 2019 'Square' STOA cultural center, Helsinki, Finland
- 2018 'Rasi637' Kouta Gallery - Kouvola Art Museum Poikilo, Kouvola, Finland
- 2018 'KHAHLIL GIBRAN: A Guide for Our Times', Sotheby's, London, UK
- 2018 'Liberty' Gallery Kruetz, Porvoo, Finland

2017	'Femme' Exhibition on Bahraini female artists, UNESCO, Paris
2016	'RCA secret', Royal College Of Art, London, UK
2015	'Göteborg poetry festival', Sweden
2015	'Women On Walls – WOW Unchained' American University Cairo, Cairo, Egypt
2015	'Postlude Vol.1: The Post Oriental Odyssey, The Mine Gallery, Dubai, UAE
2015	'41 st Annual Fine Art Exhibition Bahrain', Bahrain National Theater, Bahrain
2014	'She Views Her Self', Gallery 6 Mandeln, Paris, France
2014	'Women On Walls' Ras Al Ain Gallery, Amman, Jordan
2012	'Bahrain 38th Annual Fine Art Exhibition', Bahrain National Museum, Bahrain 2012
2011	'Spaces and the in-between', Riwaq gallery, Bahrain 2010
2010	'Dekakeen' Manama Souq, Spring of Culture Festival, Bahrain
2010	'The View from Here – 19 Perspectives on feminism', Next Wave Festival, Melbourne, Australia
2010	'As the Land Expands', Riwaq Gallery, Bahrain
2009	'Scattered in a Monument' Elham Arts Festival, Bahrain National Museum, Bahrain
2008	'Humming a New Dysphonia' Blind Side Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

Awards

2012	First Prize in the 38th Bahrain Annual Fine Art Award, Bahrain National Museum, Bahrain
2008	Prize Finalist of '6 Degrees' for 'Human Landscape: The Cult of Personality' Frankston, Art Centre, Melbourne, Australia

International Art Biennials

2013	'A world of your own' Kingdom of Bahrain Pavilion, Venice Biennale, Curator Melissa. Enders Bhatia, Venice, Italy
2009	'Across the Gulf' Curator Dr. Irene Barberis, Brisbane Arc Biennial, Australia

Grants & Scholarships

2026 –	
2027	'Kultur I Skolan' Education in schools fund in collaboration with AKAN, by the Swedish Cultural Foundation, FI
2025	"Starti Rahaa" Business Startup grant, Porvoo City, FI
2025	"Movement and Art" workshop grant in collaboration with African care Ry, Helsinki City, FI
2013	Research, production and travel grant for the Bahrain Pavilion, Venice Biennale, Ministry Of Culture, Bahrain.
2012	Shaikh Ebrahim Center for Culture and Research grant for the exhibition. 'Premonition' at the Bin Mattar House Museum, Bahrain
2008 –	
2009	Scholarship for research, Metasenta Projects, Melbourne, Australia

Publications

2023	"As we gaze upon her" Banat collective in collaboration with Warehouse42, Abu Dhabi
2015	"33 Artists...33 Islands a Kingdom of Art" written by French author and art critic Mr. Renaud Siegmann
2013	"A world of your own" Pavilion of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Venice biennale. Issued by the Ministry of Culture, Kingdom of Bahrain.
2010	"the view from here 19 perspectives on Feminism" Victoria Bennet and Claire Rae
2009	"Across the Gulf" Written and produced by Irene Barberis and Keith Winter

Collections

2019	"Davanti al Trono" Private collection of AG Behbehani, Kuwait
2015	"Voice of Rain" Permanent collection of the Ministry of Culture, Beijing, China
2013	"Victory" Personal collection of her Excellency Shaikha Mai Al Khalifa, Minister of Culture, The Kingdom of Bahrain and a permanent display at the National Theater of Bahrain.
2012	"Freedom from the Muse" Permanent Collection at the National Museum of Bahrain

Presentations / Artist Talks

2023	Culture Current, Artist talk, Yö Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
2023	'Woke or Broke' GAP art summit, Luckan Helsinki
2023	'The Evolution of Identity in an artists practice' Taidekoulu Maa, Suomenlinna, Finland
2022	Children's literature mediation workshop in the Arabic Language, National Museum of Finland, Helsinki, Finland
2022	Children's literature mediation workshop in the Arabic Language, Oodi Library, Helsinki, Finland
2022	Christian Art History in Europe and its influence on the UNTIL Exhibit - Art tour, Helsinki Cathedral, Helsinki, Finland
2021	Podcast interview, Intercult, Helsinki, FI
2019	"Nationalism" Migration Memory Encounters, Museum of Movement, Malmo, Sweden
2015	"Artist Encounters – What it means to be a Gulf Artist" Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar
2014	"The Business of Art in the Arabian Gulf" Third Space Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
2014	"What is Contemporary Art in the Arabian Gulf?" Corner College, Zurich, Switzerland
2010	"What is feminism in western art and how do Middle Eastern feminists incorporate Western ideas into their practice", Royal University for Women, Bahrain.
2010	"Introduction to current Middle Eastern contemporary practices", Macgregor State High School, Brisbane, Australia.
2009	'Differences between Western art history & Middle Eastern art history and its current effects on contemporary art in the Middle East', Riwaq Gallery, Bahrain
2009	'Across the Gulf' Brisbane Arc Biennale, Pecha Kucha, Powerhouse, Brisbane, Australia
2009	'Army of Mariam' Tashkeel, Dubai, UAE

Teacher / Instructor

Now	Art tutor AKAN folkakademi, Porvoo, Finland
2026	"Movement and Art" African Care Ry, Helsinki, FI
2025	Life Model figure drawing course, Kulturhuset Grand, Porvoo, FI
2024	Tutor at Africa Care, Dance and Draw, Helsinki, Finland
2021	
2023	Freelance drawing teacher, HIV Point, Helsinki, Finland
2020	'Colour theory', Africa Care, Helsinki, Finland
2015	'Mentorship program – Artist Encounters', Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, Qatar
2015	'Mathaf Education: Idea development' Qatar Academy, Doha, Qatar
2015	'Life Drawing', Redbull Creative Space, Amwaj, Bahrain
2014	'Contemporary Drawing', Anamil Gallery, Bahrain
2012	'Drawing for adults', Ministry of Culture, Bahrain
2012	'Drawing for children', Ministry of Culture, Bahrain
2010	Teacher Intensive Drawing Workshop, Riwaq Gallery, Bahrain
2010	Studio Assistant and Ceramic Painting Instructor, Studio Ceramic, Bahrain

Membership with Artist Associations

PVAA	Porvoo Visual Artists Association
SKJL	Suomen Kuvataidejärjestöjen Liito, Finland
Catalysti	Transcultural Artist Association of Finland
GAP	Global Art Point Finland
BAS	Bahrain Art society
BCAS	Bahrain Contemporary Art society

Artist Statement

My artistic practice engages deeply with the intersections between Western art historical discourse and contemporary Arab visual culture, situating the body as a nuanced site of paradox, resistance, and cultural negotiation. My work critically examines the complicated legacy of colonial influence and historical strategies of identity reconstruction prevalent among immigrant and diasporic communities. This has been realised as the practice of name-changing during my career; framing name-changing as both an act of assimilation and a gesture of defiance.

Central to my work is an exploration of the aesthetics of displacement and memory prevalent within contemporary Arab art, explicitly addressing themes of migration and fragmented identity. Concurrently, my contemporary pieces have introduced a tension by embodying apparent ideals of aesthetic purity and formal beauty. Yet beneath their visual harmony, these works consistently challenge canonical norms by integrating narratives of migration, faith, hybrid identity, and belonging. This intentional layering critiques both personal hybridity and the broader political landscape regarding visibility and erasure experienced by Arab migrant identities within Western contexts.

2025 saw the establishment of my contemporary art business ScandArabian Art. This creative practice and company emerges through this lived background to create site responsive, spatial-design installations. Bringing contemporary art to new and reimagined locations. Rather than narrating individual identity within spaces, this practice distills it. Through reduced compositions, symbolic forms, and a controlled visual language, the installations translate individual festival experience into atmospheric collective immersive spatial interactions. Guided by my instinctual creative responses to spatial design and decades of experience, ScandArabian Art brings atmosphere into stillness, togetherness to individual experiences within space.

Biography

ScandArabian Art founder Maryam Aljanahi (formerly Meri Helmi Särkkä and Mariam Haji) is a Bahraini multi-disciplinary artist based in Porvoo, Finland. Specializing in spatial design installation, sculpture, video, and painting, she has represented Bahrain at the Venice Biennale in 2013 after winning Bahrain's Dana Award in 2012 under the artist name Mariam Haji. Her debut as "Meri Helmi Särkkä" in 2022 at Helsinki Cathedral marked her as Finland's first Arab artist to exhibit large-scale paintings there. In 2024, she showcased her work at Bahrain National Museum and Suomenlinna Cathedral, a UNESCO site. Now working under the name Maryam Aljanahi she leads international artist talks, including at Finland's National Museum, Mathaf Museum in Qatar, and in China. Her work "Victory" is permanently displayed at Bahrain's National Theatre.

