

# THE WORLD OF **SARAH** ALMEHAIRI

*“Showcasing art makes you feel vulnerable because, even if the work isn’t about you, it’s still a product of your physical and mental output”*

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Sarah Almehairi, born in 1998, is a practicing artist from Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, and an Art and Art History major at New York University Abu Dhabi, class of 2019. Almehairi expresses herself in different mediums, including mixed media, sculpture, painting, book art, and fiber art. Her art explores the themes of identity, language, materiality and memory through narrative work as well as abstraction. Almehairi also authors poetry that inspire and are incorporated in her artwork. Her works challenge conventional modes of artistic production and questions the cultural and social constructs of traditional artistic practices. She has worked with Shoofi Art Calendar, interned with Abu Dhabi Art and the NYUAD Art Gallery.

Almehairi has been a part of the 2019 Youth Takeover group show at Jameel Arts Centre, Tashkeel’s 2019 group exhibition “Play”, exhibited at the CultureSummit Abu Dhabi 2018, the 35th Annual Emirates Fine Art Society Exhibition in 2018, and exhibited her final capstone solo show in NYUAD’s Project Space titled “Between”.



**CityPages Magazine: What inspired young Sarah Almehairi to pick up the paintbrush?**

**Sarah Almehairi:** I was always curiously creative as a child, and was busy with activity books and art & crafts projects. My mom encouraged that creative side, and we would create things together whether it be paper dolls or a play house; I loved being a part of creating something from your own two hands individually and sometimes collaboratively as well.

**CPM: Can you take us through your design development steps and which is your favourite so far? And why?**

**SA:** There's several ways I work towards a final piece. A few of my favorite research phases are working through imagery I've taken or sometimes even archive pieces. Another way I develop work is through reading poetry or other artists' writings; it's a great way to generate language and also think through the minds of others allowing for a shift in perspective when needed.

**CPM: Can you describe your studio space, please?**

**SA:** My studio space is quite organized and clean, that's the way I like to work and that can be seen in my practice as well with clean lines, balance, and intentional use of quiet spaces. Along the walls, I like to pin up references of my past work as inspiration as the use of a cycle is present within my practice, having the current piece I'm working on be inspired by the one before and inspiration for the next. I also enjoy having my favorite books around as source material.

**CPM: Where do you get new inspiration from?**

**SA:** I draw inspiration constantly from my immediate environment. Your surroundings are what you're most familiar with and for me, it's about searching deeper and 'unlearning' what you think you know. I also am inspired a lot by writings, specifically poetry, as it intertwines commonly within my practice in various ways.

**CPM: How does your personality translate to your designs?**

**SA:** I'm quite a minimalistic and organized person, which can be seen directly translated into my work. I'd also like to think I'm imaginative as I like to play around with fact and fiction as well in my work. I'm also a quiet person so my pieces are contemplative, not very loud, which allows the viewer to ponder a little longer and make a more lasting impact perhaps.

**CPM: Do you think art is a mirror of the artist?**

**SA:** I believe instead it's an extension of the artist and their thoughts and questions translated physically.

**CPM: Tell me about the mood painted within your latest art series, showcased at Art Dubai 2023.**

**SA:** It's a series of monochromatic paper collages formed from shapes extracted from discarded laser cut boards. The shapes build off one another creating landscapes of their own that are quite whimsical and playful in nature.









**CPM:** You work with wood and canvas, use abstract shapes, muted colors, and poetic language in your practice. What is your preferred medium to work with?

**SA:** I love to work, think and experiment sculpturally but there's also something about working with or on paper that is quite foundational to me.

**CPM:** 'When the Ground Was', your 2022 exhibition, was extremely successful in the UAE. For those who are not familiar, the collective body of work ranged across floor sculptures, made of concrete, and works on paper and canvas installed at varying heights. Are you currently working on similar installations for your upcoming exhibition?

**SA:** Currently I'm developing my paintings, experimenting more with the text within my work and expanding my research in different materials.

**CPM:** With your project 'Rebuild' you presented a series of muted wooden sculptures that explored themes around identity, language, materiality and memory. How was the creative process?

**SA:** It was a very playful process. Taking the series' name into consideration, I was experimenting with placement of the castoff wooden pieces, constantly building, reducing and rebuilding the form again. Funnily enough, it was also a method of working in an attempt to let go of a bit of control in my creative process, working with balance in asymmetry and color play.

**CPM:** What do you hope people feel when they view your art?

**SA:** It depends on the piece, but overall, I like viewers to get a glimpse of the concept, just enough to start creating questions of their own.

**CPM:** Which other great women artists inspire you and why?

**SA:** To name a few, Shaikha Mazrou, Agnes Martin, Rachel Whiteread, Etel Adnan, the poet Gertrude Stein and my fellow Carbon 12 artist Amba Sayal-Bennett. All work with form in their practice to some degree that challenges it as well.

**CPM:** What advice would you give to young artists in the GCC looking to advance their careers as professionals?

**SA:** To truly go for it and commit yourself to the process and practice. Don't get discouraged, always push forward, and let your passion drive you. Don't limit yourself and be in conversation with other creatives that will help you to continue to evolve in your own practice.

**CPM:** What are Sarah Almehairi's artistic plans for 2023 and beyond?

**SA:** To continue developing and evolving my practice in the studio and with new upcoming projects. Each experience pushes my practice forward and in new directions which I'm always excited for.