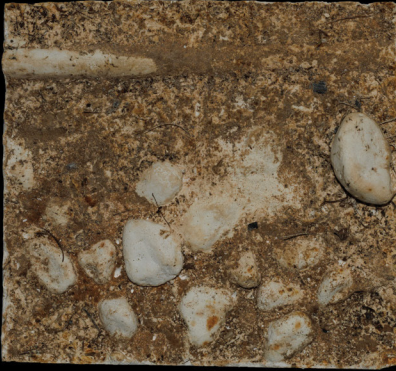


Evident Presence

Abu Dhabi Art, 2023



الجمعية
الوطنية للتصلب
National المتعدد
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

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Foreword

H.E. Dr Fatima Al Kaabi, Vice-Chair of UAE National MS Society Board of Trustees, and Executive Director of Abu Dhabi Bone Marrow Transplant Program (AD-BMT) at Abu Dhabi Stem Cells Center, and Vice-Chair of UAE National MS Society Board of Trustees.

“Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is not just a diagnosis. It is a journey, a life-changing experience, a story waiting to be told. Those living with MS, embody a resilience and strength that remains largely unspoken. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) commissioned a two-part artwork called How is nature constant when the sun never rests, by Maitha Al Omaira which serves as a catalyst for global conversation and fearless questioning. We believe in the potential of art to inspire, to heal, and to create dialogues that can change perspectives and, indeed, change lives. Through art, let us come together to foster a reality where everyone, regardless of their challenges, can find a supportive community eager to listen and learn.”

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02

About the National Multiple Sclerosis Society

Established in 2022 under the Ministry of Community Development, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) is a UAE-based NGO created to better the lives of people living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and their communities in the UAE through education, advocacy and advancing global efforts to finding a cure for MS.

NMSS is governed by a board of trustees, advised by a local and international Strategic Advisory Committee and Medical Advisory Committee, and supported by MS ambassadors and volunteers to ensure that people affected by MS have access to high quality care and get the guidance they need through reliable resources.

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society works with leading national medical institutions and renowned global partners to build a trusted network of healthcare providers and MS-related support organisations. The society aims to raise awareness of MS, create a holistic ecosystem for the MS community in the UAE, and provide support and resources for those affected by MS.

Vision No one continues to suffer from Multiple Sclerosis

Mission To improve the lives of people living with Multiple Sclerosis

Objectives

- Providing support and resources to people living with MS
- Raising awareness and reducing stigma associated with MS
- Driving research and development to advance treatment for MS

03 FAQs

While MS is a complex condition, and there are nuances in symptoms and levels of severity for patients. Below is a list of frequently asked questions that may provide some helpful insights:

1 What is MS?

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body. The disease affects more than 2.8 million people around the world and is caused by damage to myelin – the protective layer of nerve fibres which allow nerves to transmit impulses to and from the brain – in a process called demyelination. In the areas where myelin is lost, hardened scars appear in various areas of the brain and spinal cord.

The name of the resulting condition – Multiple Sclerosis – literally means ‘many scars’. MS can appear at any time and affects patients in differing ways, and symptoms include numbness, tingling, mood changes, memory problems, pain, fatigue, blindness and/or paralysis. These effects may be temporary or long lasting, and patients’ experiences can vary.

2 Can MS be treated? At present there is no cure for MS, however management of the disease includes drug treatments to treat acute inflammatory attacks (or relapses), medications that reduce the risk of further inflammatory relapses (disease modifying therapies) and treatments to slow disease progression.

There are also therapies that alleviate and improve various symptoms. Successful management of MS also includes a healthy diet, exercise, and rehabilitation.

3 Is MS life-threatening? MS itself is rarely fatal, however complications may arise from severe MS, such as chest or bladder infections, or swallowing difficulties. Although the average life expectancy for people with MS is around 5 to 10 years lower than average, this gap appears to be getting smaller all the time, thanks to innovative research programmes around the world.

4 How will MS affect my professional life? There will be implications for both you and your employer following your diagnosis. While you may not be under any legal obligation to inform your employer, it may prove helpful down the line if you can get their advance support. You may need to take time off for medical appointments or treatment sessions, so for most, it does make sense to share with your line manager and HR department.

Some symptoms may require understanding from your employers (such as fatigue), so again, it is worth considering discussing your diagnosis with them.

5 Will it add extra financial burden to me and my family?

In addition to adjusting to the physical and emotional impact of being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, there may be additional financial pressures. As well as the cost of living with the disease, MS may affect patients' ability to work while adding costs related to medical care, rehabilitation, home modifications, and more.

It may help to speak to a financial advisor to help you plan for your future with MS.

6 Can I live normally?

With some adaptations to your daily lifestyle (nutrition and exercise, for example) and the right levels of care and support, many people diagnosed with MS can lead healthy, active, and long lives.

7 I have been experiencing symptoms that may or may not be related to MS, what do I do?

First, and most importantly, it is recommended that you visit a healthcare professional and obtain a full examination as soon as you can. Be as honest as possible, and don't hold anything back. We appreciate that it can be a scary experience, however early detection of MS will help you in the long term.

04

About the Curators

Dirwaza Curatorial Lab is an Abu Dhabi-based creative incubator and projects partner founded by curator Munira Al Sayegh. As a creative incubator, Dirwaza builds communities in the Gulf through non-profit mentorship for multidisciplinary research, archive building, critique, and artistic programming. As a project partner, Dirwaza advises institutions, decision makers, collectors, and businesses. We specialize in cultural projects, manage collections, design exhibitions, and propose bespoke arts-driven programs. Dirwaza's team is working with a growing network of artists, arts professionals, and institutions to participate in a dynamic environment with homegrown ideas.

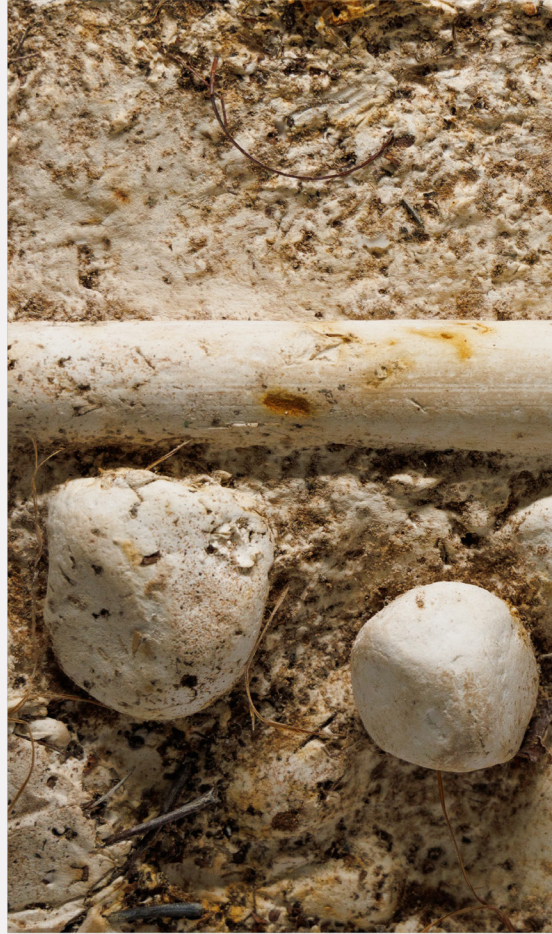


05

About the project

Evident Presence

Evident Presence is an art project presented by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) at Abu Dhabi Art 2023, dedicated to shedding light on the journey of individuals living with multiple sclerosis (MS). The commissioned artist for this project is Maitha Al Omaria. The artist was prompted to explore memory, renewal and the integration of the emotional body. These themes unpack the complexities of the body, highlight its intricacies and points of connection in an attempt to understand how the body reacts to stored memory and to the surrounding environment in a way that further shapes one's own physical, mental and emotional reality.





Close up of Maitha Al
Omaira's work



The commissioned artwork takes into consideration material that mimics the body, in its strength and fragility, integrating and focusing on new forms for these materials. By embracing the concepts of connectivity and visibility, Maitha Al Omaira was invited to challenge the preconceived notions surrounding Multiple Sclerosis by highlighting the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's vision and inviting the viewers to see the world through the lens of repair and renewal. These building blocks mimic the natural state of growth in the bonds of the bodies we inhabit and the spaces we share.

06

About the Artwork

How is nature constant when the sun never rests?



How is nature constant when the sun never rests, by Maitha Al Omaira is a two part installation commissioned by The National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Al Omaira responds to themes dedicated to shedding light on the journey of individuals living with multiple sclerosis (MS). Taking from this reality, the work further aims to unpack relevant themes that highlight the complexities of the body in its intricacies and points of connection, mirroring forms found in the nervous system—drawing out a map that uncovers and bridges. The work connects the cycle of change in nature with that of the human body. Through casting different parts of the ground, the artist creates building blocks that store memory of a surrounding environment. The alginate casts uniquely capture different stages and parts of the artist's neighboring nature, of local flora and fauna. The artist uses natural materials such as alginate to cast the ground and proceeds to recast the negative space with plaster. The physical scans of the ground pick up the stories and the traces left behind, on this shared body. Al Omaira freezes

these motions within the casts as a means to confront these realities through renegotiating perspectives. Additionally, through the video, the artist works by emotionally experimenting with nature and questioning its norms to introduce an atypical view of the sky by looking at it downwards. The installation is built to connect the casts and film as a reflection of nature's consistency of change. These building blocks mimic the natural state of growth in the bonds of the bodies we inhabit and the spaces we share.

07

About the Artist

Maitha Al Omaira

Maitha Al Omaira is a multidisciplinary artist born in Abu Dhabi, UAE in 1999. Her creative practice revolves around the interplay of light, time, and nature, with a particular emphasis on poetry. Through her work, she delves into the realms of the unseen, forging new definitions that allow space for different yet captivating interpretations of life and time.

Maitha's artistic process begins with the act of observation, immersing herself in her surroundings. From there, she weaves together new theories, crafting unique perspectives rooted in her keen observations. Unconstrained by the limitations of any single medium, she employs a variety of tools and techniques to explore and express these theories.

She is the recipient of the 2021 ADMAF Visual Arts Award, and Salama Bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship 2022. Her most recent exhibitions include: Time & Identity, Al Safa Art & Design Library, Portrait of a Nation II, Manarat Al Saadiyat, and AlQouz Festival, Al Serkal Avenue.



Acknowledgements / Thank you

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For more information about the **National Multiple Sclerosis Society** and its mission

Visit

Website: <https://www.nationalmssociety.ae>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nmssocietyuae/>

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/nmssocietyuae>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/@nationalmssociety>

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For more information about **Dirwaza Curatorial Lab** and the project

Visit

Website: <https://www.dirwazalab.com/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/dirwazalab/>

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Improve the lives of people with multiple sclerosis living in the UAE through providing support, raising awareness, advancing research all while working towards finding a cure for MS.

Ma'an - Multiple Sclerosis Program

(<https://fundraise.maan.gov.ae/en/campaigns/multiple-sclerosis-programe>)

