

MAHA MALLUH
STORIES MATTER

Opening: September 4, 2025, 7pm
Duration: September 5 – October 29, 2025

Opening speech by: Rola Al-Ghrait, Director General, National Museum of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh

With the exhibition ***Stories Matter***, Maha Malluh engages with the deep-rooted connection between memory and identity within Saudi Arabian culture. Malluh's works raise questions about the significance of history and culture while reflecting on the profound changes brought about by global modernization. Often working with everyday objects, her work is shaped by the constant transformation of both society and culture.

Artist Statement:

„In *Stories Matter*, I explore the layered terrain of memory, identity, and lived experience within the cultural and historical fabric of Saudi Arabia. Across photography, sculpture, painting, and installation, each series in this exhibition asks: Whose stories endure? What do we choose to remember? And how do objects, images, and routines carry the echoes of a people's history?

At the heart of this exhibition is a commitment to storytelling, not just as narrative, but as presence, as trace, and as resistance. These works do not attempt to tell a singular story. Instead, they invite viewers to witness a constellation of moments, voices, and fragments that together form a deeper cultural mosaic.

The photographic series *Stories Matter* serves as a visual journal of place and time, weaving together personal, historical, and collective threads. Each frame captures fleeting but resonant moments, footsteps in the sand, children at play, birds in mid-flight, that speak to a broader continuity of life in the Kingdom. In juxtaposing archival textures with contemporary imagery, this work reflects on how the past lives within the present, how landscapes and lives evolve, and how memory grounds identity.

In *Trophies*, I shift from image to object, assembling sculptures from everyday materials, domestic tools, industrial remnants and personal mementos. These works challenge traditional notions of what deserves preservation or recognition. Rather than commemorating conquest, these “trophy” honor endurance, labor, and the intimate victories often left undocumented. They are silent witnesses, vessels for unspoken stories embedded in the materiality of daily life.

The *Table of Memory* series reimagines the multiplication tables once printed on the backs of Saudi school notebooks. These abstract paintings use repetition, erasure,

and deconstruction to explore the imprints of education and cultural memory. Here, the rigid grid of the table becomes a metaphor for national standardization, what we are taught to remember, and what we struggle to forget. These works meditate on the tension between collective instruction and personal interpretation, between what is memorized and what is truly understood.

Finally, *Portraits of the Familiar* offers intimate glimpses into the domestic and emotional interiors of Saudi life through two window installations. Framed by weathered wood and worn surfaces, each painted scene opens onto a layered world of tradition, nostalgia, and transformation. The windows, once part of real homes, now function as portals, inviting us to look inward as much as outward, and to consider the unspoken legacies carried by place, gesture, and memory.

Together, these works form an evolving archive of the seen and unseen, the remembered and the overlooked. *Stories Matter* is not only a title, it is a declaration. Through image, object, and space, I seek to honor the textures of a living heritage, where every story, however quiet, leaves its mark.“

Maha Malluh (*1959, Riyadh) lives and works in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Her work has been featured in several international solo and group exhibitions, including: The 57th Venice Biennale, La Biennale di Venezia - Viva Arte Viva, Venice, Italy (2017); Just Des(s)erts, Selma Feriani Gallery, London, UK (2012); Hajj, le Pèlerinage à La Mecque, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France (2014); Champagne Life, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK (2016); Road to Heaven, Selma Feriani Gallery, Art Basel Miami Beach, USA (2018); Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France (2018); Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai, UAE (2018); Art Basel Unlimited, Basel, Switzerland (2022); Dom Museum Wien, Vienna, Austria (2022); AIUla Arts Festival, Saudi Arabia (2025), Art Week Riyadh (2025)

Maha Malluh's works are part of international collections, including the Tate Modern, London, UK; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; the MAK Museum, Vienna, Austria; the UBS Art Collection; Museum Voorlinden in Wassenaar, Netherlands, and the Louvre and Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Since 2012, Malluh's work has been showcased in two solo exhibitions and five group exhibitions at the Krinzinger Gallery. Additionally, her installations *Food for Thought - WORLD MAP*, 2021, and *Food for Thought Almuallaqat*, 2014, were featured at Art Basel Unlimited in 2022 and 2015, respectively.