



HALA SCHOUKAIR

the affirmative happiness of a green dot

The Delicate Roots of the World to Come

Inside, a scale of becoming intimate.

Hala Schoukair is a deeply aware observer of the natural world. Where her eye and thoughts alight, she examines, turning then to her own reflections and actions. She notes, 'all is air in the end, like my soul, and divided. I am formed by all these particles, every particle is half hell, half paradise, it flips continuously, what is the air meant to be and what did we put in it.'

There are traces of the muted geometrics and repetitive subtleties found in the work of American abstract expressionist and minimalist painter Agnes Martin, for example, or a concern with the ephemeral in a fine balance with structural stability of material, with process, as in the work of German-born American Eva Hesse. And yet, the particularity of Schoukair is just that, her undeniable attention to repetition containing an irrepressible element of individual chaos, a gentle wildness, the human in the machine, and in this she deviates clearly from a more stringent relation to minimalism, repetition and abstraction. From another angle, there is a kinship with Japanese or Korean calligraphy, the poised sweep of one brushstroke, the moment stretched out from the arm, the connection between 'us and the ultimate spiritual being', but again, Schoukair retains her right to move outside of any boundary.

Her drawings and paintings are alight with movement, and this most recent body of work sees a considerable shift in scale and intention. Her paintings are large, delicate and yet full of presence, if not heavy with weight. The paintings examine the moment of repetition, the gradual and organic build-up of marks creating a larger whole that expresses her connection with nature. This, Schoukair explains, is the moment, the 'not-quite-knowing' how this particular work will emerge. Between the long moment of creation and the snap second of stepping back, is the anticipation of what, exactly, she has done.

Her drawings, yet comprised of marks reminiscent of her paintings, demand an intimate connection. Held up to the light, rows of tiny punched-out dots and sewn lines, occasional and surprising objects drawn directly from the natural world, complex differences and similarities, tell the story of her personal journey with the unique directness of close work on paper. In one, a sewn pink grid emerges as a stable structure, yet confounded by Schoukair's own careful tangling. There are always determined distortions, subtle gifts of confusion.

Taken together, these drawings and paintings show a deep attention to the artist's task, the meditative method through which Schoukair connects, questioning the rules that she perceives from her investigations of her environment. Where the larger works take the viewer towards other worlds, rolling organically and yet almost like data-clouds across the canvas, her drawings give a tantalising glimpse into a more private space, the smaller scale laying open the accretive complexity of her self-appointed work. From the importance of each colour, each stroke of the brush, or each poked, sewn or drawn line, there is a sense of connection to the world, to the daily work of living, attempting to find peace outside of language. In her own words, 'the urge to write melts through the colour or the form...my words

¹ Bennett, J (2010). Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things (Duke University Press, Unites States of America). p.4.

slipping through holes disappearing in the universe'. Intensely detailed and repetitive, each mark, and each larger structure created from those marks, retains an individuality, a trace of the artist's hand, her moment with that mark. This long, attentive moment, outside of language, full of emotion, is the vital force of Schoukair.

unplanned structure building blocks are soft and mutable.

Mutable blocks chains of almost algorithmic data bringing joy, emotion.

*

The eye takes it in files inside until it emerges where confusion wants.

She doesn't know where the thread will go. The containers of memory. The grid.

*

She says, green loves me the shape and the world insects and the flower.

Every so often, an object to remind you of the world something and nothing it is all the same to her eyes when it goes in.

*

Infinitely grand and small,
today an ant carrying food, tomorrow a sun.
You are the world in a leaf, microcosm, fractal, mood.

*

containers of memory slip into my file

I see a flower like I see an insect

you don't know where is the thread.

*

The end of the brush
where I am going
one colour one brush
a not quite meditative
accretive
Iandscape of an inside.

*

I want to ask 'do you think this is how you look inside' a repetition, at almost any scale

without words filled with things

seeker of a thoughtful place

*

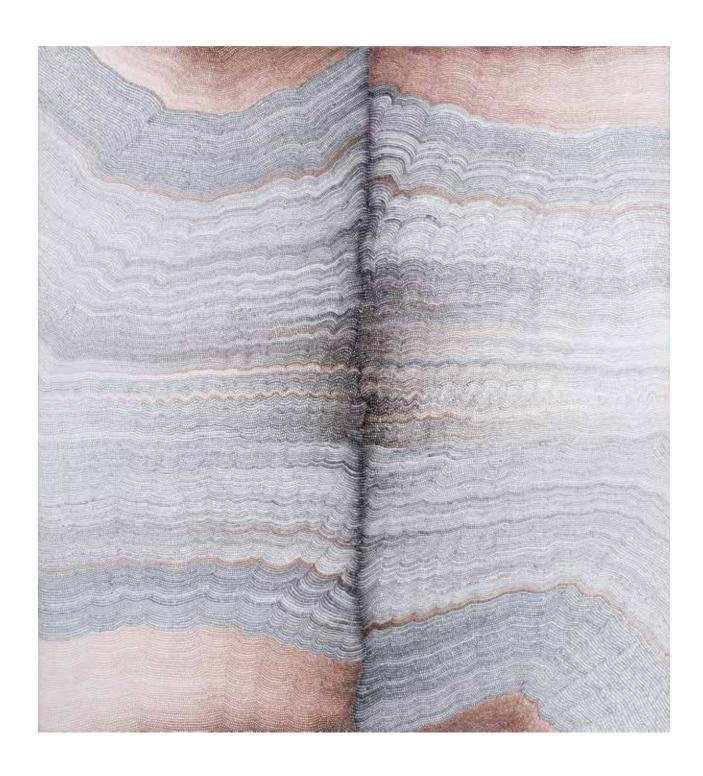
You need the time to unfold the moment (again) alone with nature.
The way out is through the work
long moments without thought.
I want to see the accumulation of dots that small ant working in the large sun walking

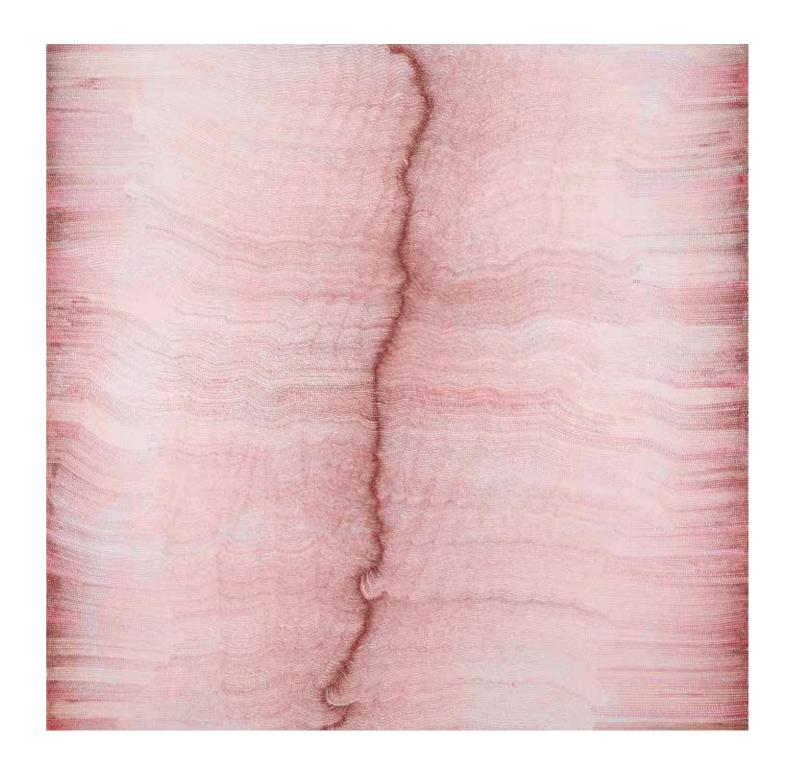
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An epilogue She tells of a joy in the simple crossing of a street

I can work for twelve hours on one painting to entertain myself to enjoy my life.

²Art Breath, interview with Hala Schoukair as part of Art Breath X MENART FAIR (2021).





Acrylic on canvas | 148x162 cm | 2024 Acrylic on canvas | 149x152 cm | 2024





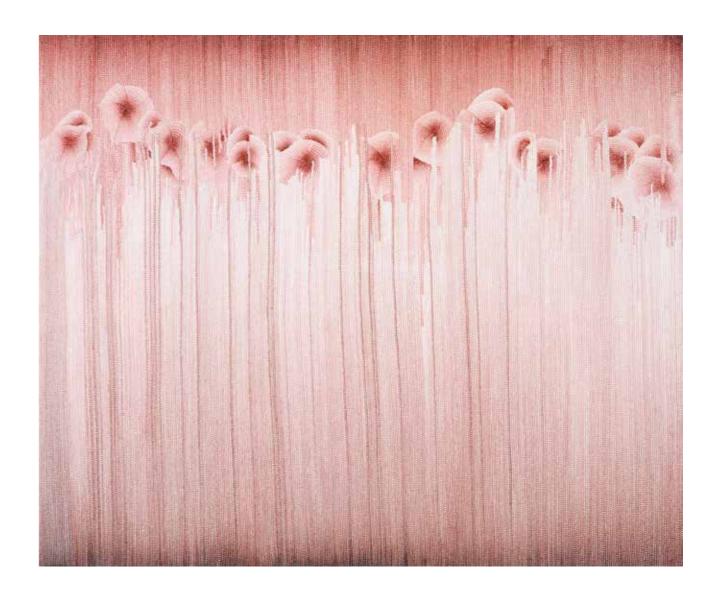






Acrylic on canvas | 102x143 cm | 2023 Acrylic on canvas | 105x146 cm | 2023



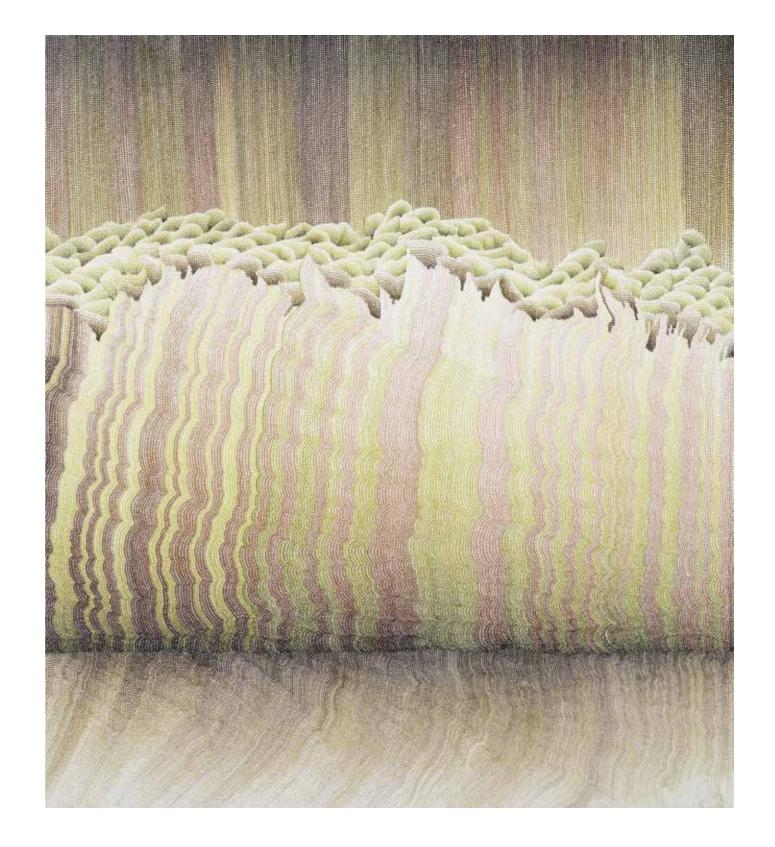


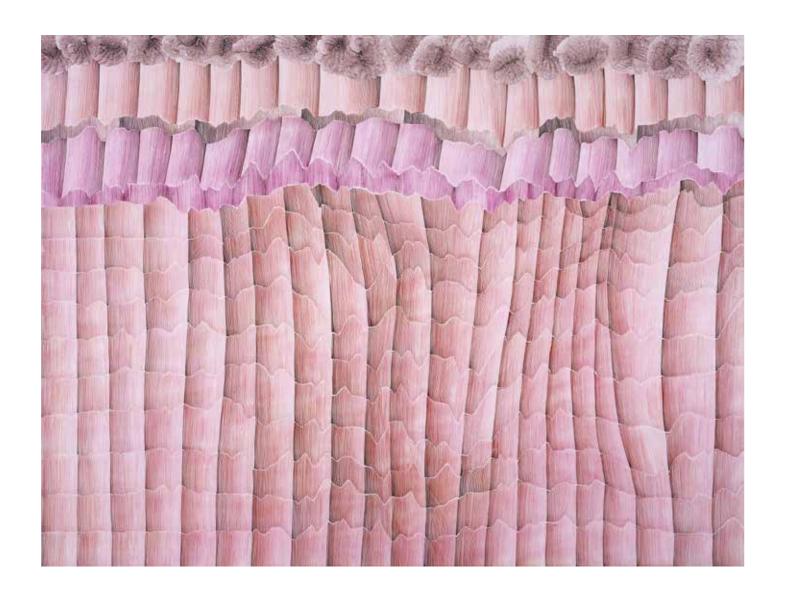
Acrylic on canvas | 109x143 cm | 2023 Acrylic on canvas | 149x124 cm | 2024



Acrylic on canvas | 148x226 cm | 2024

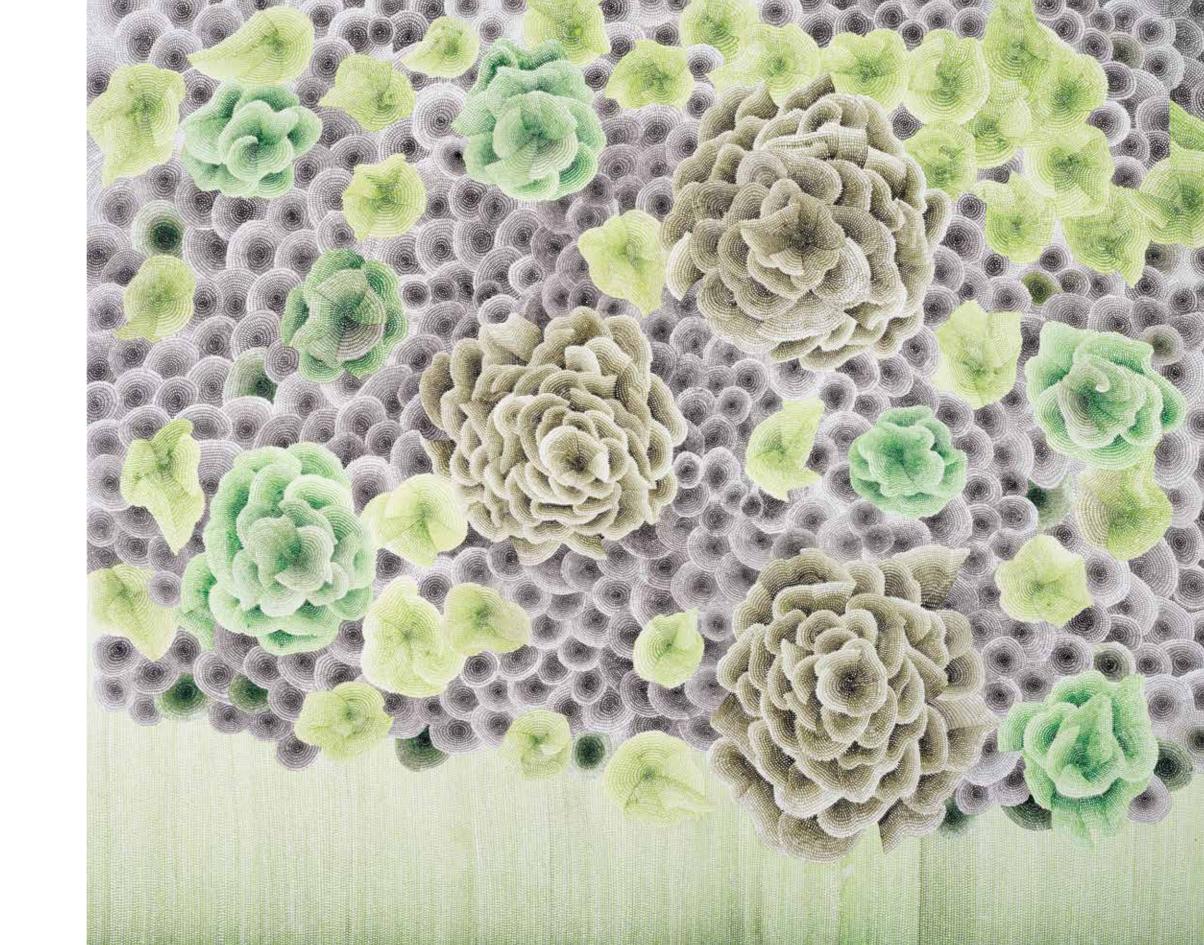




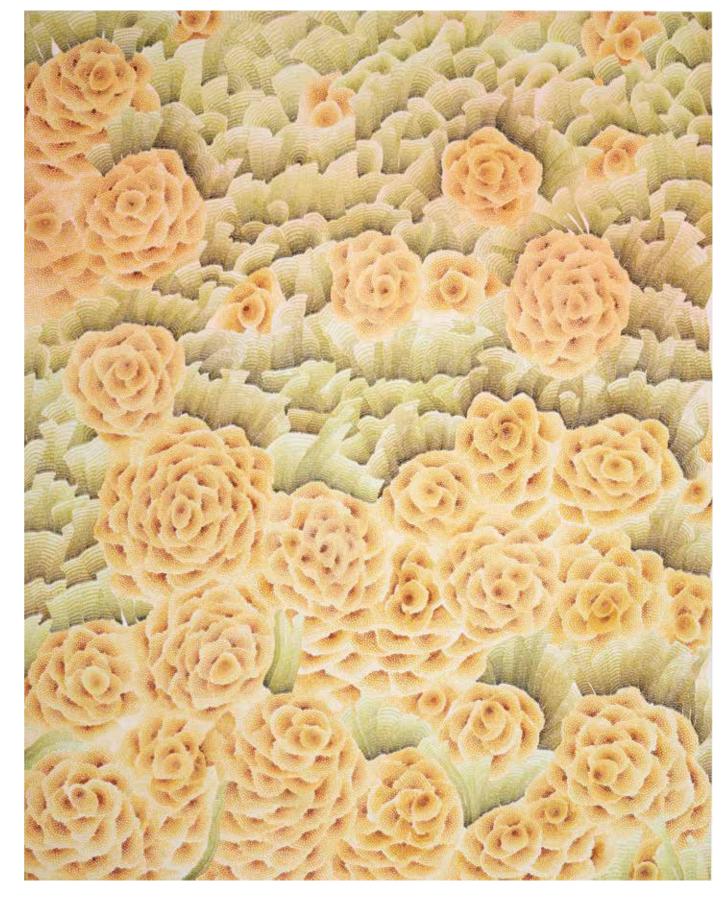




Acrylic on canvas | 150x114 cm | 2024 Acrylic on canvas | 147x104 cm | 2021

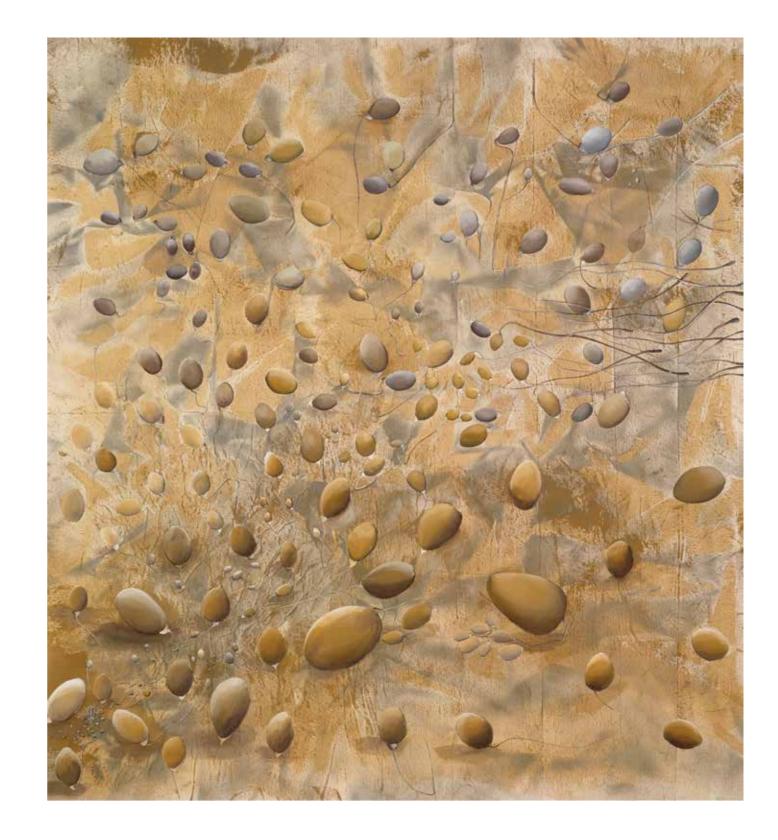


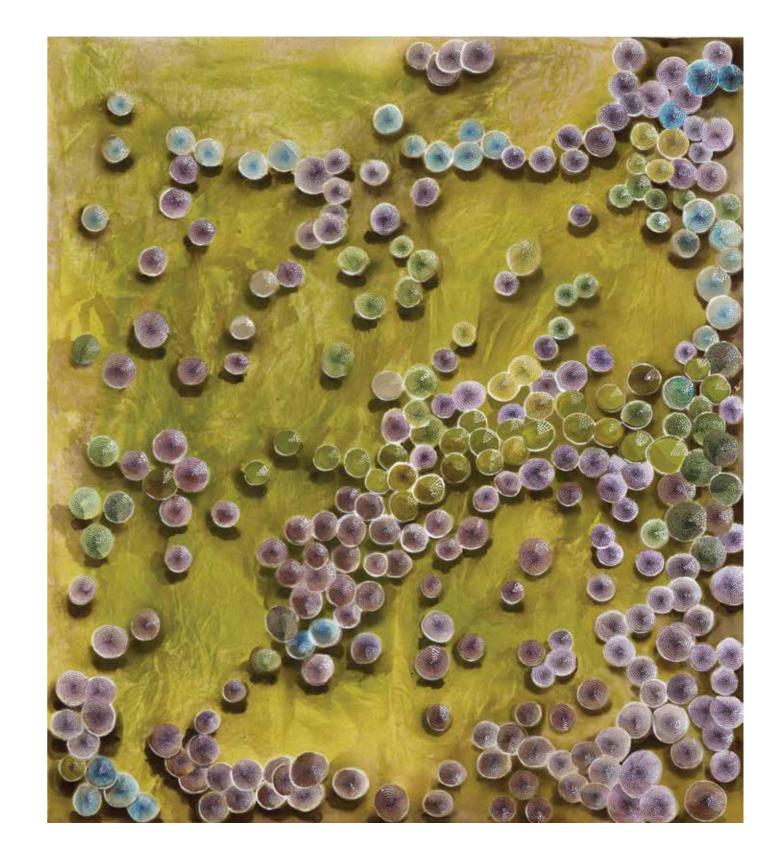
























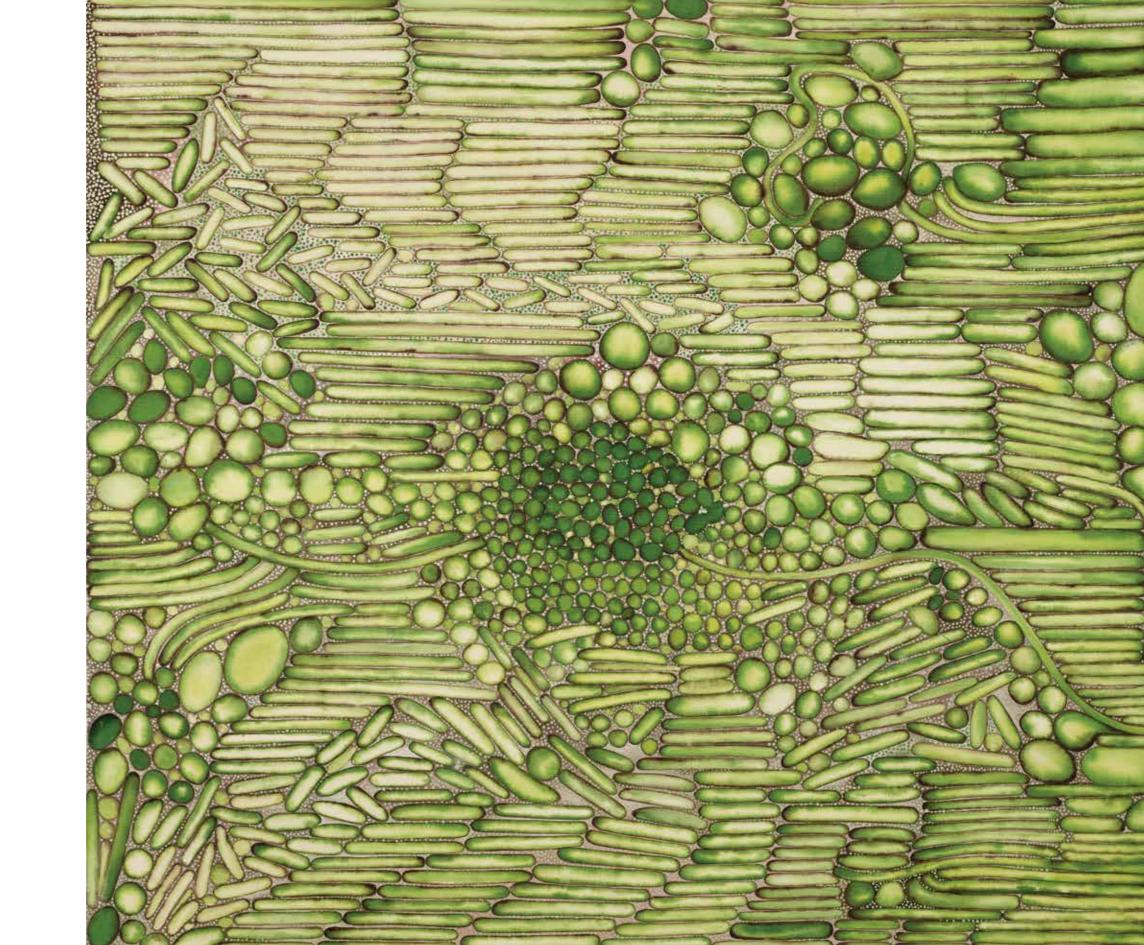






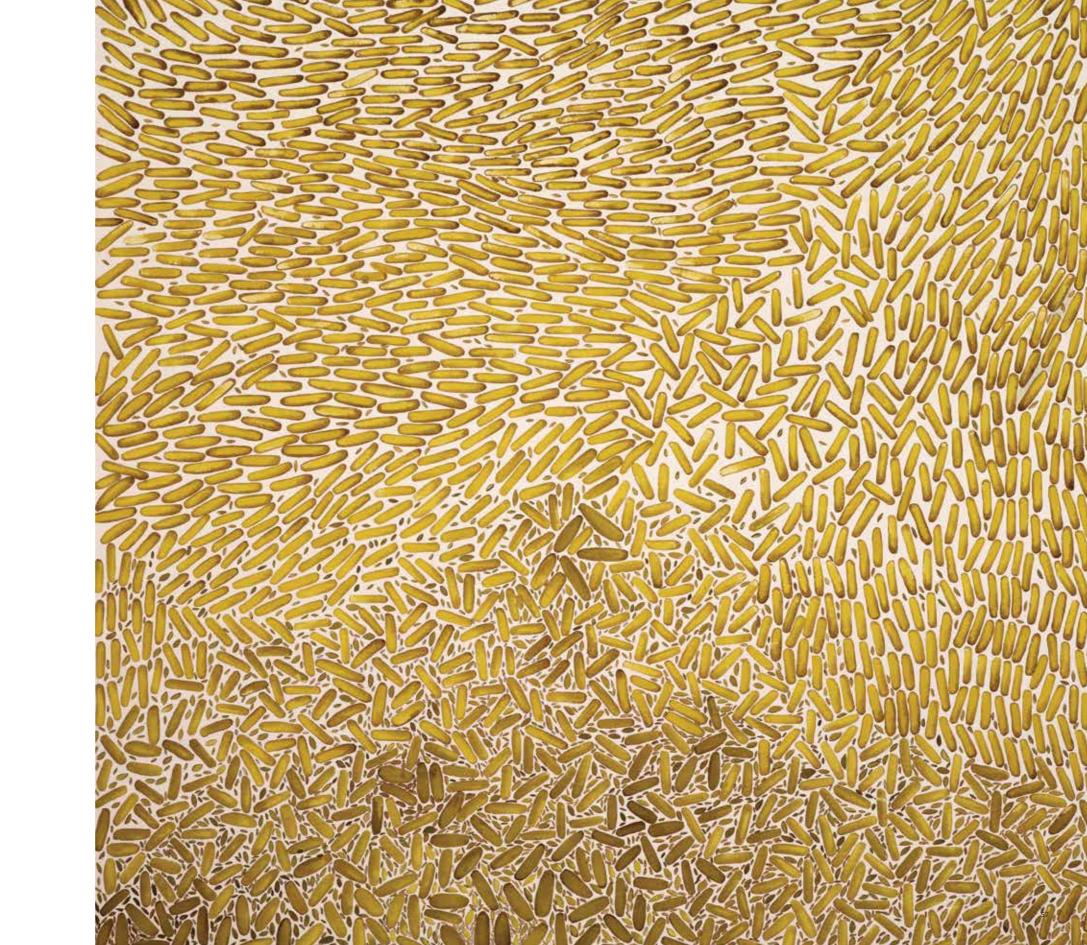






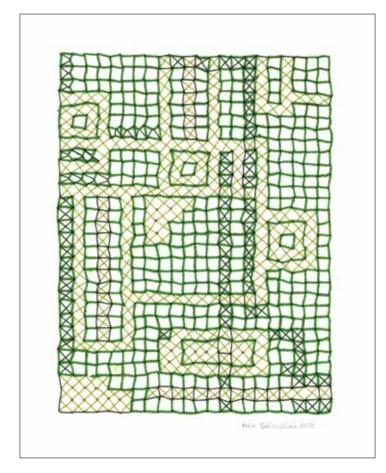


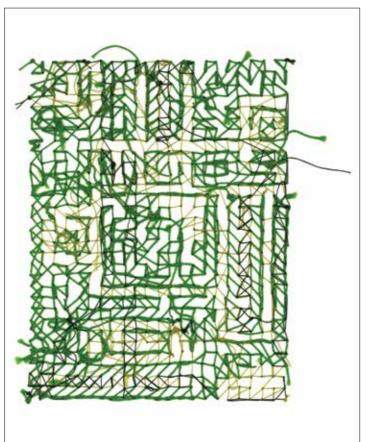


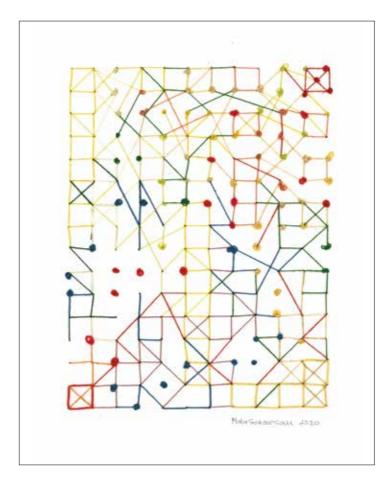


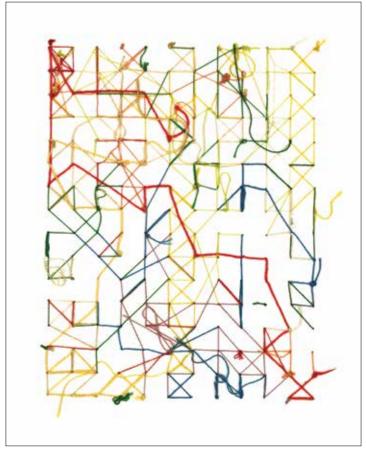




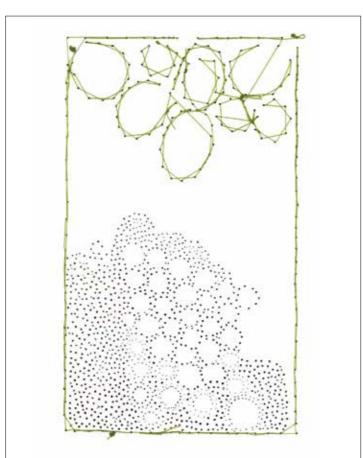


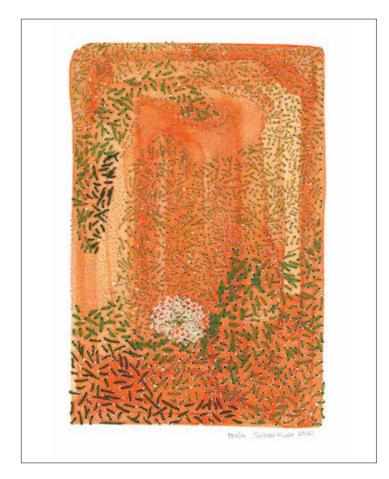




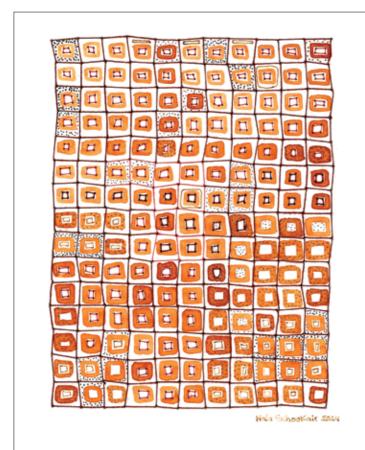


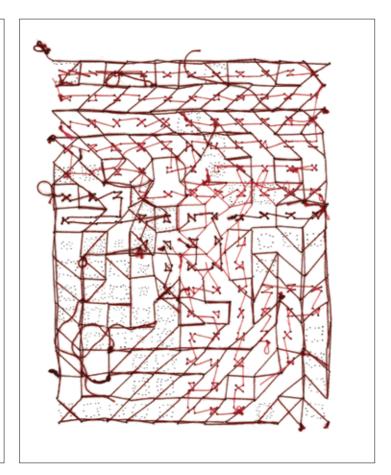


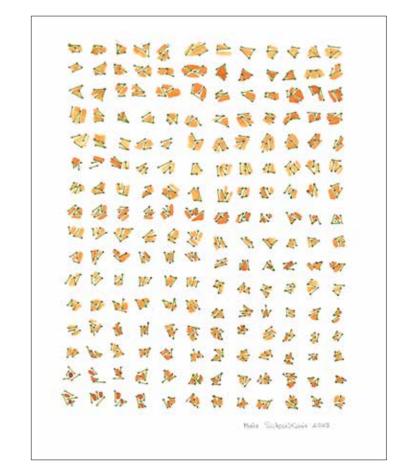


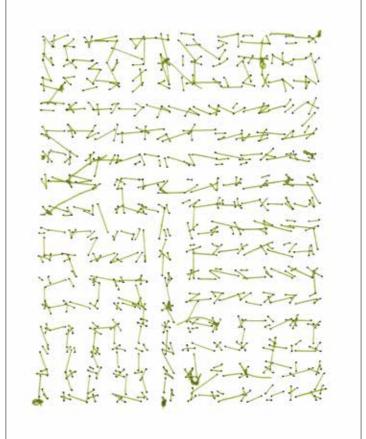




































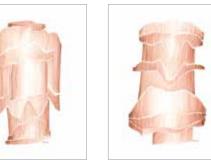


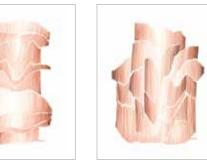




















































Acrylic on carton | 30.5x23 cm each | 2024

About the Artist

Hala Schoukair (b. Beirut, 1957) received her master's degree in Cinematographic Studies from the Sorbonne University, Paris, and has been painting and exhibiting her work since her graduation in 1981.

Recently, Hala's work was part of the ARABOFUTURS exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris (October 2024 - January 2025). She has also participated in the Abu Dhabi Art Fair in November 2024 and 2023, and had a solo exhibition, represented by Gallery Bessiere, at Art Paris 2022. Her previous solo shows included You Promised Me Spring (2017), and Grains of Light (2014), both of which were held at Agial Art Gallery in Beirut.

Recent group exhibitions included Intimate Garden Scene by Ashkal Alwan at Sursock Museum, Beirut (2023 - 2024), as well as the museum's 32nd Salon D'Automne (2016). She has also participated in the Morgenröte, aurora borealis and Levantin: Into your solar plexus at the Knusthalle Bern in Switzerland (2015), as well as the Continuity and Change: Islamic Tradition in Contemporary Art at the Williamsburg Art and Historical Center in New York (2007).

Hala's work became part of the permanent collection of LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) in 2024, and the Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, IL, in 2023.

Hala moved from New York to Lebanon in 2019, and currently lives in the town of Ras El Metn, where she has established The Saloua Raouda Choucair Foundation, which commemorates her mother's art and legacy.





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