

NEW RELEASE 2024

## Muhannad Shono *Works [2014-2024]*

Edited by Nat Muller

Texts by Hala Auji, Nat Muller, Todd Reisz, Alison Sperling

Designed by Mainstudio (Edwin van Gelder)

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**Comprehensive monograph offering the first critical overview of the ground-breaking Saudi artist's oeuvre to date**

*Muhannad Shono Works [2014–2024]* is a comprehensive monograph that offers the first critical overview of the ground-breaking Saudi artist's oeuvre to date. Edited by curator and writer Nat Muller and featuring texts by Islamic art historian Hala Auji, architect and writer Todd Reisz, and scholar of science fiction and eco-criticism Alison Sperling, the book positions Shono as one of Saudi Arabia's most original and daring artistic voices.

A strong conceptual treatment by acclaimed graphic designer Edwin van Gelder (Mainstudio) reflects the evocative imaginary inherent in Shono's work. The designer captures Shono's sculptural conceptualization of space and unexpected use of natural and industrial materials in expressive detail, texture, and contrast, including numerous double-page spreads and an entire chapter printed in silver ink on specialty black paper.

The book's three sections—myth, lines, and regeneration—each demonstrate how the artist's practice resonates with wider issues facing humanity today, what editor Nat Muller describes as a world *"beset by accumulative disaster, from climate catastrophe, perpetual war, and economic disparity to growing (ethno)nationalist populism and resource depletion."*

From the essay by editor **Nat Muller**:

*"In her decolonial reading of Al-Ashirah (2018), Islamic art scholar Hala Auji shows how Shono's treatment of myth and narrative deftly navigates cultural heritage and offers an alternative form of storytelling: one that counters oppression and narrow Euro-Western lenses of interpretation and definitions of identity. Architectural historian Todd Reisz finds commonality in the architectural training he shares with the artist. He reads Shono's work through permutations of the line, Shono's foundational conceptual and aesthetic device. In the final section, Alison Sperling brings*

*her research interests in the Weird, science fiction, and ecology to examine Shono's practice from the perspective of anthropogenic change. Her positioning of his work within an eco-critical and speculative discourse unearths his engagement with petroculture, waste, landscape, and rebirth,"*

Informed by his family's history of migration and an interest in abandoned, uninhabited places, Shono explores notions of non-belonging through a practice structured by speculative and generative narratives. He heightens the tension between the architectural logic of the built environment and that of the natural landscape. Unrestricted by scale, medium, concept, or technology—from an expansive site-specific installation for the Saudi Arabian Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale to intimate, gestural works of ink on paper from his early practice—his work references and disrupts cultural lore, spiritual texts, and mythology.

The most recent pieces in the book extend from a series developed for a spring 2024 exhibition curated by Nat Muller. Here Shono transforms an industrial waste material—over 50,000 kilograms of reclaimed black foundry sand—into potent and at times unsettling sculptures, works on paper, and large-scale installations. Produced at a seismic juncture in the region and the world at large, this series hints at the simultaneous potential for both decay and creation, resonating sharply with topical ecological, social, and political concerns.

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**Muhannad Shono** (b. Riyadh, 1977) is a multi-disciplinary artist, trained in architecture, working across a range of different mediums, from intimate works on paper and site-specific interventions to sculptures and robotic installations. Shono represented Saudi Arabia at the 59th Venice Biennale with *The Teaching Tree* (2022) and is Contemporary Art Curator for the forthcoming 2nd edition of the Islamic Arts Biennale, Jeddah (2025). His participation in biennials and festivals also includes the Sea Art Festival, Busan (2023); Islamic Arts Biennale, Jeddah (2023); Noor Riyadh Festival, Riyadh (2022 and 2023); Lyon Biennale (2022); Diriyah Biennale, Riyadh (2021); and *Desert X*, Al Ula (2020).

He has exhibited in various group and solo shows across the region and internationally, including at Louvre Abu Dhabi (2023); *Parcours*, Art Basel (2022); the British Museum, London (2021 and 2018); GAM Sculpture Garden, Turin (2019); MACBA, Barcelona (2018); Ithra, Dammam (2019); 21.39 Jeddah Arts, Jeddah (2020 and 2017); and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2017). His work is part of collections at the British Museum, London; the Art Jameel Foundation, Dubai; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Ithra Art Centre, Dammam; and Al-Mansouria Foundation, Riyadh.

Shono is the recipient of the 2021-2022 National Cultural Award in Visual Arts, Saudi Arabia. He lives and works in Riyadh and is represented by ATHR Gallery.

#### **Forthcoming Exhibitions**

*Forest Festival of the Arts Okayama: Clear-skies Country*  
International Art Festival  
Okayama, Japan.  
Until 24.11.2024

*Desert X 2025*  
Coachella Valley, California, USA  
08.03.–11.05.2025

Contemporary Art Curator for the 2nd Islamic Arts Biennale  
*And All That Is in Between*  
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia  
25.01–25.05.2025

Brazil (further details will follow)  
2025

## Press images



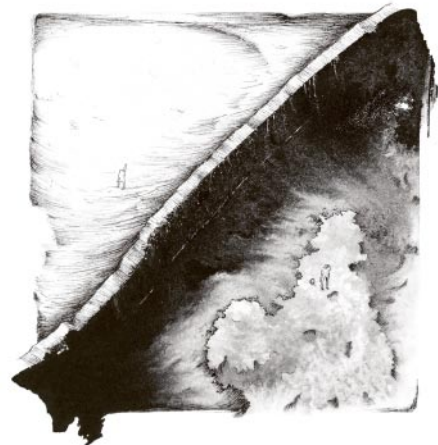
01\_ Heads of the Tribe, 2018. Sculptures of polymer clay, paper, thread stitching. Group show The Clocks Are Striking Thirteen, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, 2018. Courtesy of ATHR Gallery. © Muhannad Shono



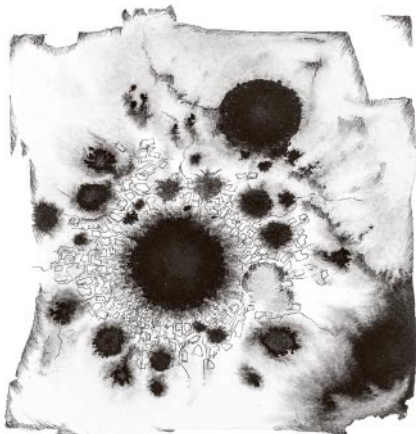
02\_ Heads of the Tribe, 2018. Sculptures of polymer clay, paper, thread stitching. Group show The Clocks Are Striking Thirteen, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, 2018. Courtesy of ATHR Gallery. © Muhannad Shono



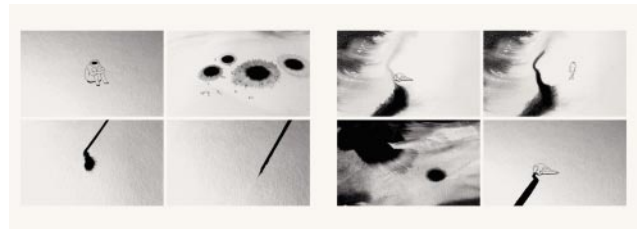
03\_ The Last Garden of Khidr, 2020. Installation of paper, black ink. Group show I Love You Urgently, 7th 21.39 Jeddah Arts, Jeddah. © Muhannad Shono



04\_ 36.2021°N, 37.1343°E, 2016. Part of 14-piece series I'm Sorry from Above. Ink on paper. 57 x 57 cm. Solo show Children of Yam, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, 2016. © Muhannad Shono



05\_ 36.2021°N, 37.1343°E, 2016. Part of 14-piece series I'm Sorry from Above. Ink on paper. 57 x 57 cm. Solo show Children of Yam, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, 2016. © Muhannad Shono



06\_ Children of Yam Film, 2016. Stills from video installation, with music by Mary Rapp, 4:43 minutes. Solo show Children of Yam, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, 2016. © Muhannad Shono



07\_ Letters in Light (Lines we Write), 2023. Installation of polyester thread, light boxes, sound, projection, metal structure. Awwal Bait (First House), 1st Islamic Arts Biennale, Jeddah, 2023. Courtesy of ATHR Gallery. Photo credit: Mohammed Eskandrani. © Muhannad Shono



08\_ The Silent Press, 2019. Installation of pigment and paper scrolls. Solo show The Silence is Still Talking, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, 2019. Courtesy of ATHR Gallery. Photo credit: Mohammed Eskandrani. © Muhannad Shono



09\_ The First and Last Word, 2019. Pigment on paper. Solo show The Silence is Still Talking, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, 2019. Courtesy of ATHR Gallery. Photo credit: Mohammed Eskandrani. © Muhannad Shono



10\_ I See You Brightest in the Dark, 2022. Installation of polyester thread, light box, sound, projection, metal structure. Group show We Dream of New Horizons, 2nd Noor Riyadh Festival, Riyadh, 2022. Photo credit: Artur Weber. © Muhannad Shono



11\_ Seedlings, 2024. Drawing. Carbon transfer on paper. 35.5 x 25.5 cm. Solo exhibition The Ground Day Breaks, ATHR Gallery, Riyadh, 2024. Photo credit: Artur Weber. © Muhannad Shono



12\_ UThe Lost Words, 2019. Charcoal pigment on black tape. Solo show The Silence is Still Talking, ATHR Gallery, Jeddah, 2019. Courtesy of ATHR Gallery. Photo credit: Mohammed Eskandrani. © Muhannad Shono





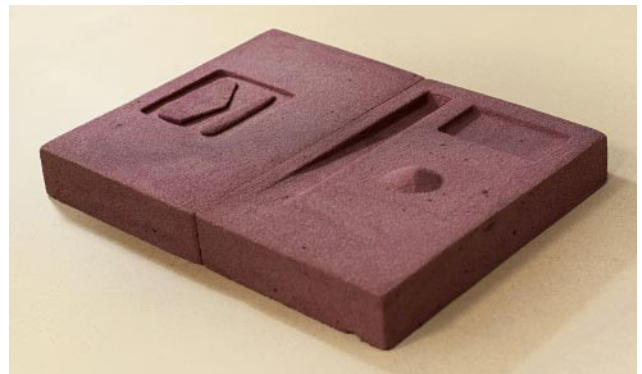
13\_ The Lost Path, 2020. Site-specific installation of 65,000 recycled PVC pipes. Group show Desert X AIUla, AIUla, 2020. © Muhannad Shono



14\_ On This Sacred Day, 2022. Site specific installation at Mabiti AIUla's palm grove of reclaimed foundry sand, burning palm matter. AIUla Art Residency open studios, AIUla, 2022. Photo credit: Artur Weber. © Muhannad Shono



15\_ The Teaching Tree, 2022. Site-specific installation of palm fronds, pigment, pneumatics, metal structure. The Teaching Tree, National Pavilion of Saudi Arabia, 59th Venice Biennale, Venice, 2022. Courtesy of the Saudi Ministry of Culture. Photo credit: Samuele Cherubini. © Muhannad Shono



16\_ Book of Sand, 2020. Installation of sand, resin, video projection. 40 x 30 x 5 cm. Photo credit: Artur Weber. © Muhannad Shono



17\_ The Ground Day Breaks, 2024. Installation of 2,000 handcrafted sculptures. Reclaimed sand, resin. 17 x 17 m. Solo exhibition, ATHR Gallery, Riyadh, 2024. Photo credit: Artur Weber. © Muhannad Shono



18\_ From the Land, 2024. Series of sculptures. Reclaimed sand, gum arabic, resin. Variable dimensions. Solo exhibition The Ground Day Breaks, ATHR Gallery, Riyadh, 2024. Photo credit: Artur Weber. © Muhannad Shono



19\_ A Promise of Breaking, 2024. Carbon transfer on paper. 56 x 112 cm. Solo exhibition The Ground Day Breaks, ATHR Gallery, Riyadh, 2024. Photo credit: Artur Weber. © Muhannad Shono



20\_ What Remains, 2024. Sculptural intervention. Reclaimed sand on carbon paper. Variable dimensions. Solo exhibition The Ground Day Breaks, ATHR Gallery, Riyadh, 2024. Photo credit: Artur Weber. © Muhannad Shono