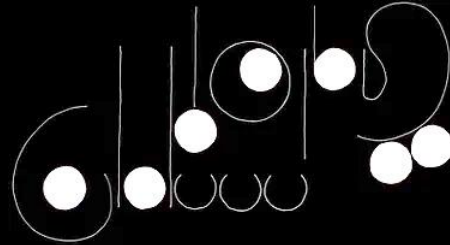




## **A Journey of Self-Discovery: Architect, Artist, and Visionary**

# **Saman Zahawi**

This portfolio reflects Saman Zahawi's lifelong pursuit of merging the tangible and the ethereal, the seen and the unseen. Through his art and architecture, he challenges viewers and collaborators alike to see beyond the surface, to explore the depths of what is possible when creativity meets philosophy, and tradition meets innovation.



October 12, 2024



## Background

Saman Zahawi is a celebrated Iraqi-Canadian artist and architect born in Baghdad in 1967. He has redefined the realm of Arabic calligraphy, creating a unique artistic interpretation that blends profound spirituality with bold philosophical narratives.

His art serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity, employing stark black and white contrasts to explore life's extremes—victory and defeat, life and death, hope and despair. Each of his pieces reveals layers of meanings that invite viewers into a contemplative journey, exploring the deeper dimensions of the human experience.

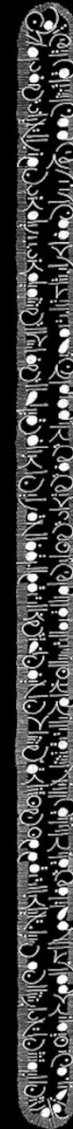




## Artistic Philosophy and Style (1 of 3)

Zahawi's artistic journey is deeply rooted in his heritage and personal philosophy. He re-invents Arabic fonts, transforming them into a medium that represents visual beauty and the rich cultural and spiritual undertones of the Arabic language.

His art reflects a deep engagement with dualities and contradictions, often presenting viewers with two initial dimensions; a composition that invites immediate visual engagement and an underlying layer that offers a deeper, more complex narrative.

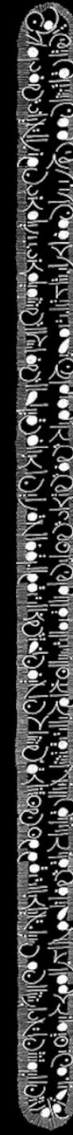




## Artistic Philosophy and Style (2 of 3)

Zahawi uses the black and white extremities to accentuate his themes, creating a powerful visual tension that draws the eye and mind into contemplation. His unique Arabic font, developed entirely through his own artistic explorations, sets his work apart, distinguishing it from traditional calligraphy.

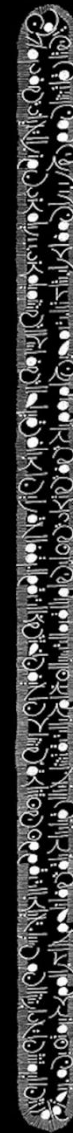
Each artwork is a study in contrast of light and shadow, simplicity and complexity offering viewers a meditative experience that transcends the mere visual.



## Artistic Philosophy and Style (3 of 3)

The philosophy behind Saman's art is deeply rooted in the contemplative and mystical traditions of various spiritual beliefs serving as a profound source of inspiration. Those draws from the essence of a single word or quote, allowing it to unfold into a visual and narrative journey.

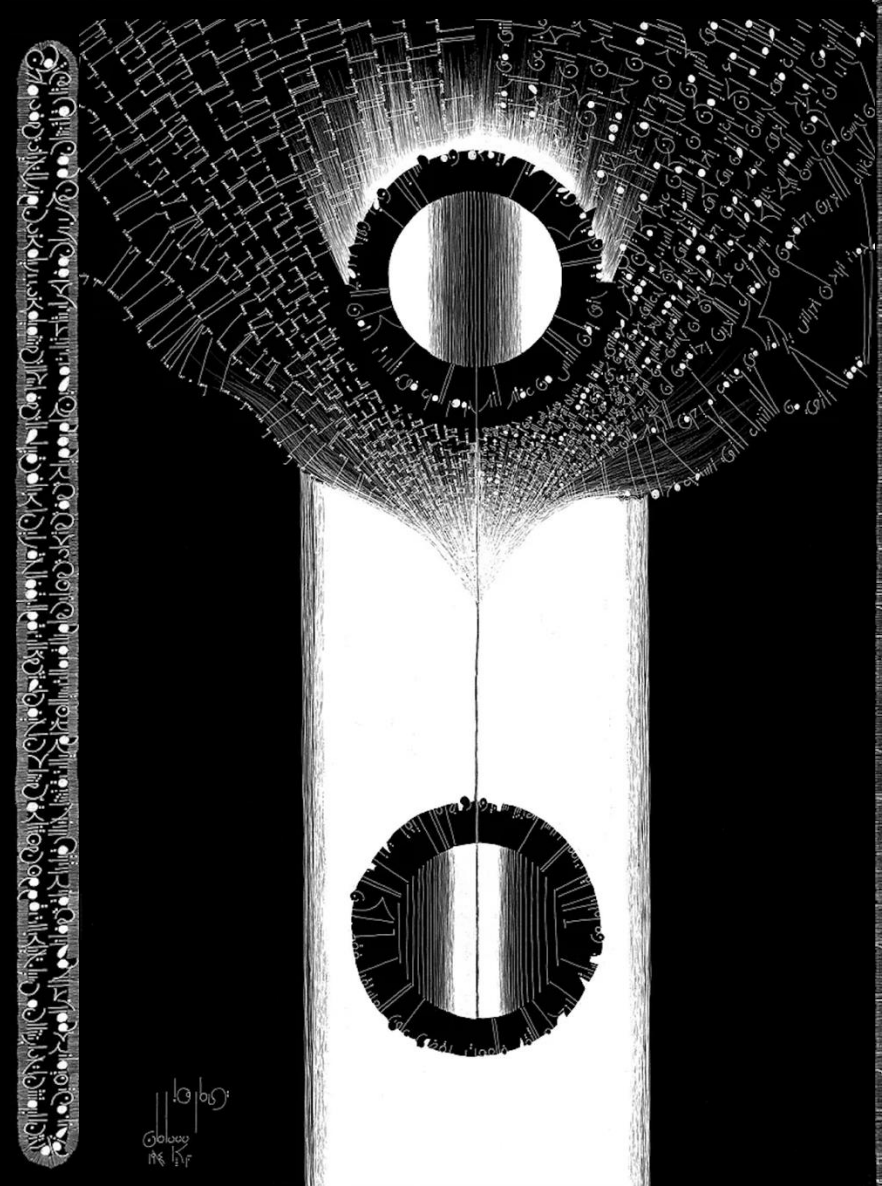
Each piece serves as a meditation on the inherent contrasts and dualities of existence: life and death, light and darkness, stillness and movement. The use of black and white, a signature of Saman's work, symbolizes these extremes, portraying the tension and harmony that exist within the human experience.





## Mediums and Techniques

All of Zahawi's original works are created using black ink on white paper, emphasizing purity, contrast, and the philosophical interplay of extremes.

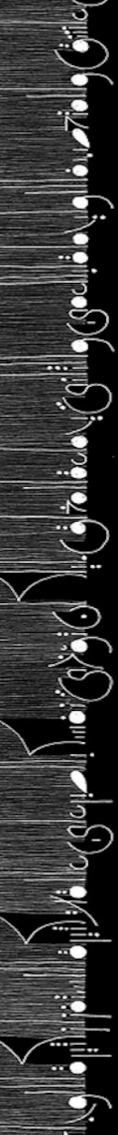
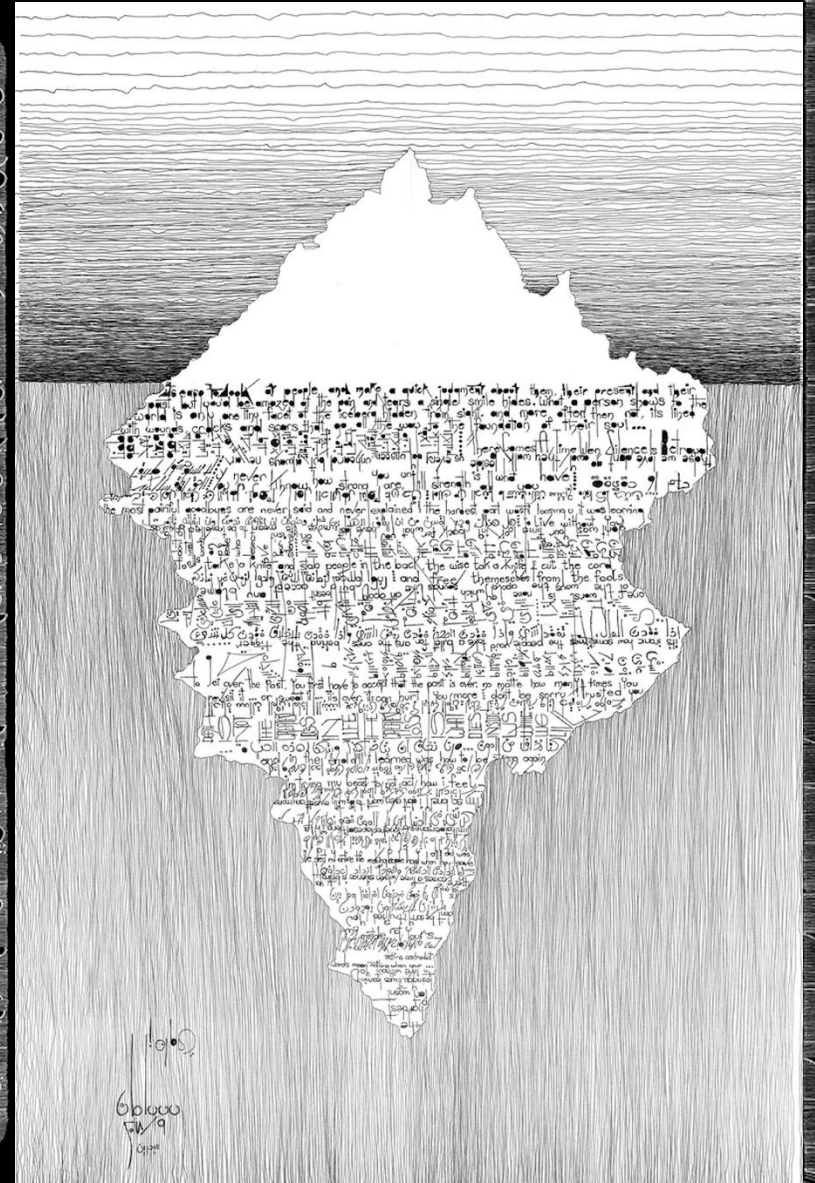




# The Beginning

In 2018, during a business trip that was meant to be simple and straightforward, circumstances quickly became complicated, prompting an extended stay abroad. In a moment of unplanned creativity, Zahawi stumbled upon a stationery shop, where he found large sheets of paper and pens.

To occupy his time, he began sketching and, almost unintentionally, created his first artwork, "The Iceberg." The piece was a reflection of that trip: the visible tip of an iceberg represented the straightforward nature he initially expected, while the tangled mix of fonts and codes beneath symbolized the hidden complexities and unseen challenges, much like those we encounter in life. This marked the unexpected beginning of Zahawi's journey into art.





# Participations and Exhibitions (1 of 4)

## SAMAN AL-ZAHAWI

Iraqi-Canadian artist, born in Baghdad in 1967. He is distinguished for his rephrasing of Arabic calligraphy in distinct artistic forms. Al-Zahawi believes that Arabic calligraphy is an art in itself and is not just written letters. He shows extraordinary skills using his hand freely and spontaneously to reflect a deep love for the Arabic language, its culture and letters.

In addition to being an artist, Al Zahawi is an architect and entrepreneur who has worked extensively in the Middle East and North Africa since 2001. He draws his inspiration from the natural contradictions of gain and loss, triumph and defeat, cultural diversity and struggles, each of which gives meaning to the recipient. All this is reflected in his artwork, in which he sheds light on the stark contradictions that we live in every day. He harnesses the power of black and white to embody the dilemma of extremes, from hope and despair to life and death.

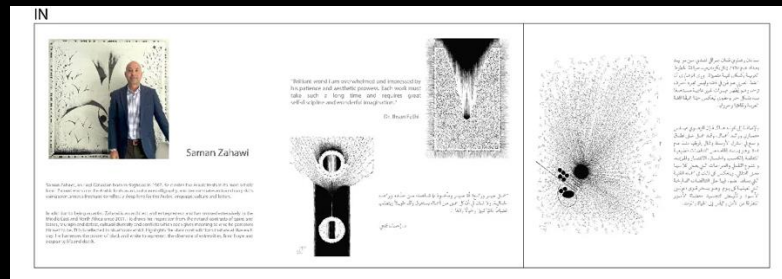


Mere words

102 x 152 cm  
2023

Black ink on high end canson white paper

Like scattered leaves that are drifted away by the wind... like whippers of tender love once soiled... like thoughts of regret and yearning... all and more has become "mere words."





## Participations and Exhibitions (2 of 4)

Zahawi's artwork has been exhibited internationally and regionally, captivating audiences with its depth and unique, personal style of his Arabic script. Each exhibition serves not just as a showcase of art but as an invitation to engage the audience with the deeper, often spiritual, layers embedded in each piece.

From the bustling galleries of the Middle East to serene, contemplative spaces in Italy, his works have resonated with diverse audiences, reflecting the universal and often transcendent themes evident within his art.





## Participations and Exhibitions (3 of 4)

1. September 2022: Orient Gallery – Amman, Jordan. 3 weeks solo exhibition.
2. September 2022: Interview with MBC – Al Arabiya – Amman Jordan (Appendix 1)
3. May 2023: K-Gallery @ Dubai Design District – Dubai, UAE. 4 weeks Joint Exhibition.
4. May 2023: K-Gallery @ Dubai Design District – Dubai, UAE. Workshop (If I could do it, you surely can!).



## Participations and Exhibitions (4 of 4)

5. May 2023: Emarat Al Yom paper article. (Appendix 2)

6. February 2024: Khawla Art and Culture – Abu Dhabi, UAE. 4 week solo exhibition.

7. February 2024: Khawla Art and Culture – Abu Dhabi, UAE. Workshop.

8. April 2024: Salone Del Mobile. Milano – Italy. Joint participation with CITCO. Zahawi's artwork in marble.

9. October 2024: Zahwa Art Gallery. Cairo – Egypt. A two-week solo exhibition.

(Appendix 3)







# Samples of Artwork

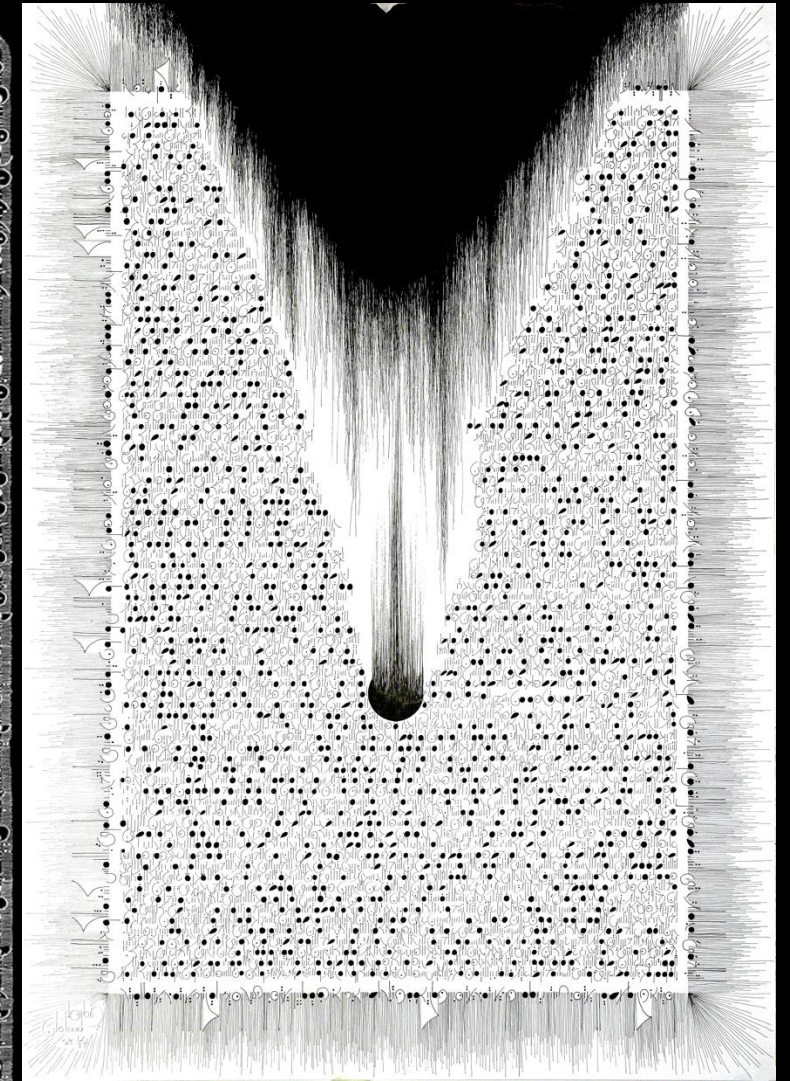


## Samples of Artwork

"The Virus" is a poetic narration expressing the non-destructive nature carried by the coronavirus in the fabric of our lives at that time. The virus appears as a black darkness that disrupts perfection and clouds the clarity of existence. Integrated writings representing the details of our lives split and fade in the midst of this virus, both small and significant at the same time, symbolizing the distortion it imposed on the depth of our reality back then.

Within the interplay of black darkness, the virus lurks, but the idea transcends it, connecting to our reality on a deeper level. The black color blends the symbolic aspect of the virus with its actual impact on our lives, depicting the effective similarity between small effects and fundamental changes in our daily lives.

In this painting, art harmonizes with reality, as the image opens windows for contemplation on how small factors can weave their way into the fabric of our lives and change our paths in unimaginable ways, infused with feelings of sadness and reflection on the reality of this changing small world



The Virus

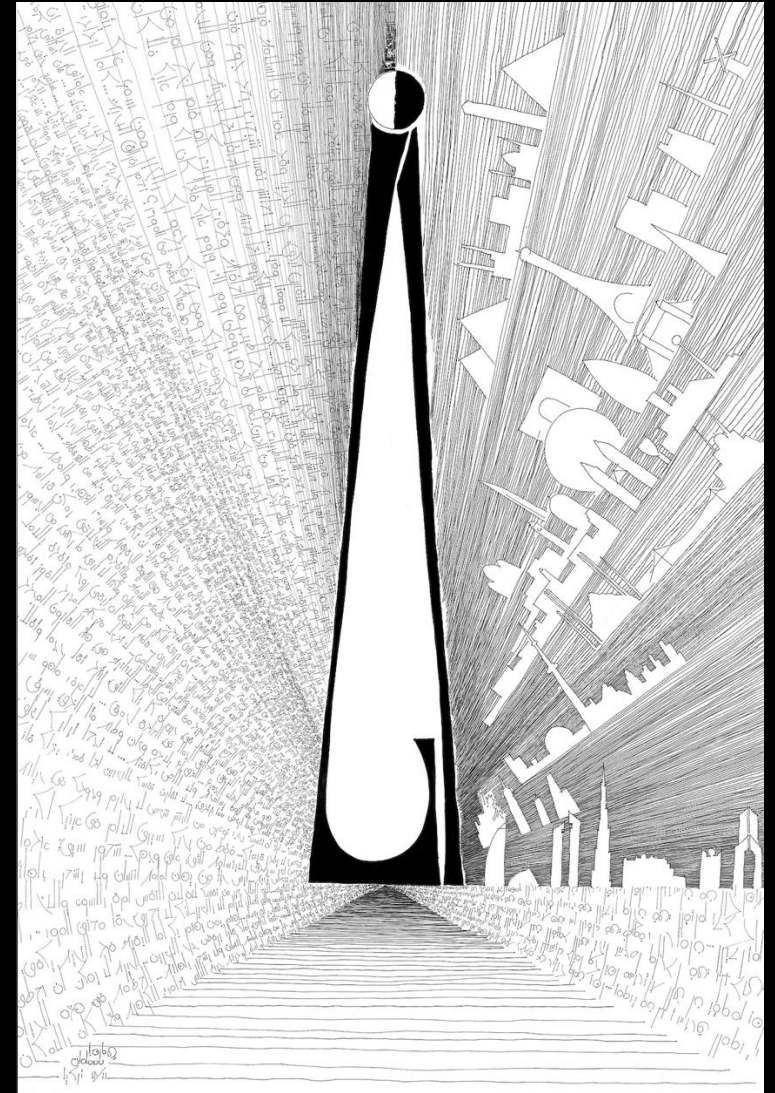


## Samples of Artwork

In this artwork, "Me," this word expands and swells with pride, topped by radiations indicating an unwavering belief that the self surpasses humanity. Stretching to the left of the canvas is a vast array of radiations and expressions symbolizing progress and diverse cultures. On the right side, civic shapes take on various forms, mirroring cultural diversity and global variety.

While many elevate themselves to the center of the world, this artwork harmonizes with the small reality of the individual in the face of this vast universe. The magnified word "Me" appears as a monarch at the center of life, but beneath it reveals the fragility of the illusion, where the individual immerses into their creation to find that they are a small part of this grand display.

In this poetic portrayal, I see "Me" as an unreal ghost that deceives reality, where many overlook the truth of being a small part in the grandeur of this world.



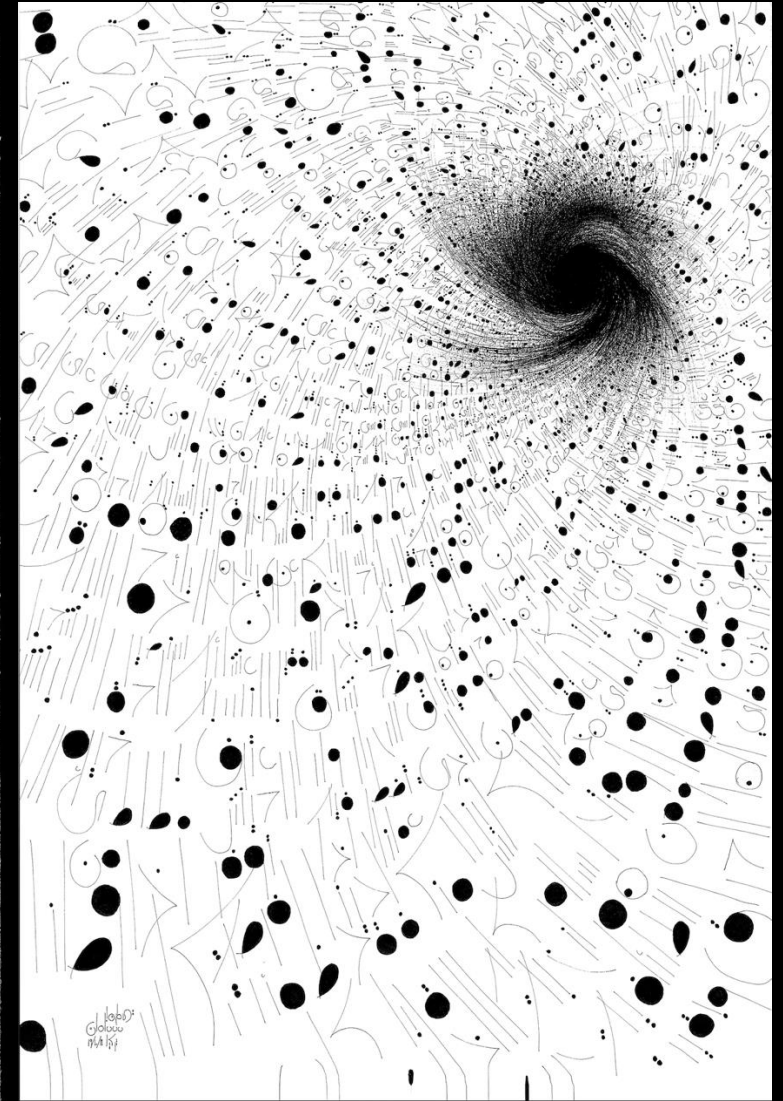


## Samples of Artwork

In this artwork titled "Words," words accelerate aimlessly, converging to form a scene of empty discourse. The abundance and swirling of these words depict a conversation lacking clear meaning, fading into a sea of banality. Here, ink dances soullessly, and the rays inhale an empty breath.

Words without impact scatter like melting snowflakes, creating a masterpiece that narrates the story of silence and emptiness amidst the chaos of incomprehensible chatter. The scattered phrases reflect empty personalities, intertwined in an endless dance, while the radiations of words emerge, indicating the margins of the empty dialogue expressing the lost depth.

Thus, the painting "Words" manifests as a visual testimony to the lost significance of whispers, where speech draws irregular lines, reflecting conversations that neither understand nor construct.



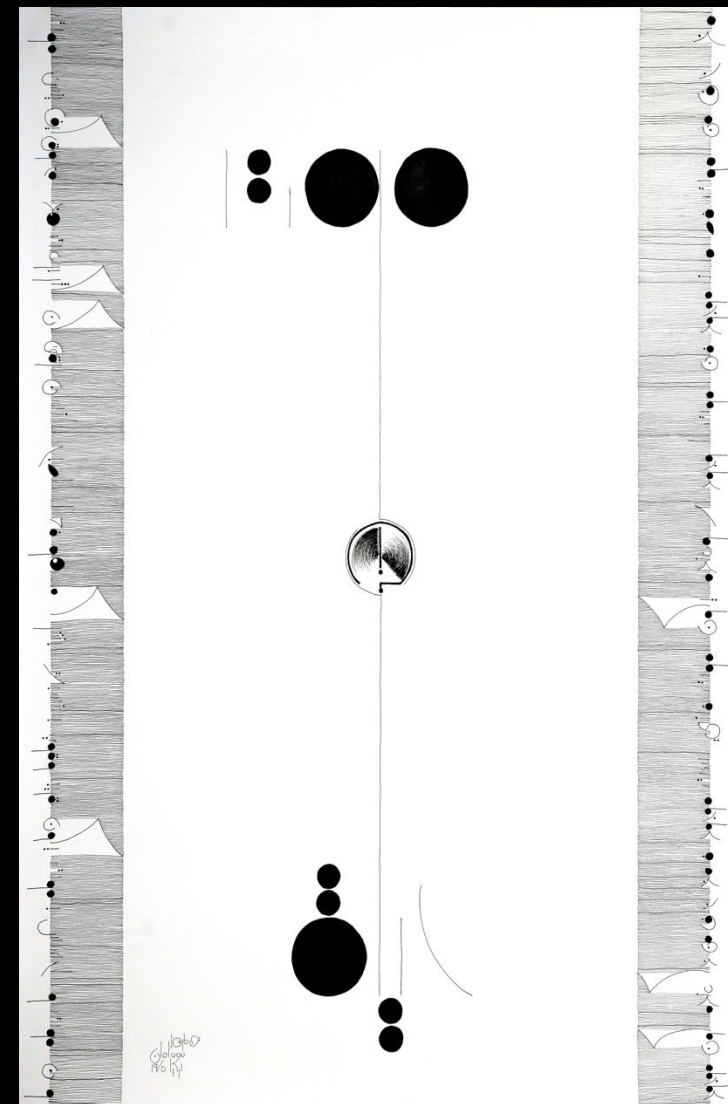
کلمات



## Samples of Artwork

"Death, Life... When and How?" In this distinct artwork, different from the rest, the delicate balance between life and death is manifested in a unique style. This contrast is embodied in the simplicity of lines and minimal external interventions. The word "Death" appears stably and prominently at the top, while the word "Life" reflects simplicity and beauty below, connected by the thin line that unifies them, portraying the harmonious intersection and divergence of life and death.

At the heart of this line, a circle endlessly rotates, within which symbols of questioning and wonder illuminate the meaning of "Life and Death" with an infinite touch. This painting reflects the poetic expression of life's mysteries and alternating surprises between death and life, while the thin line continues to sketch the essence of our daily lives, capable of encountering death at any moment.



موت حیاة، متى وكيف؟

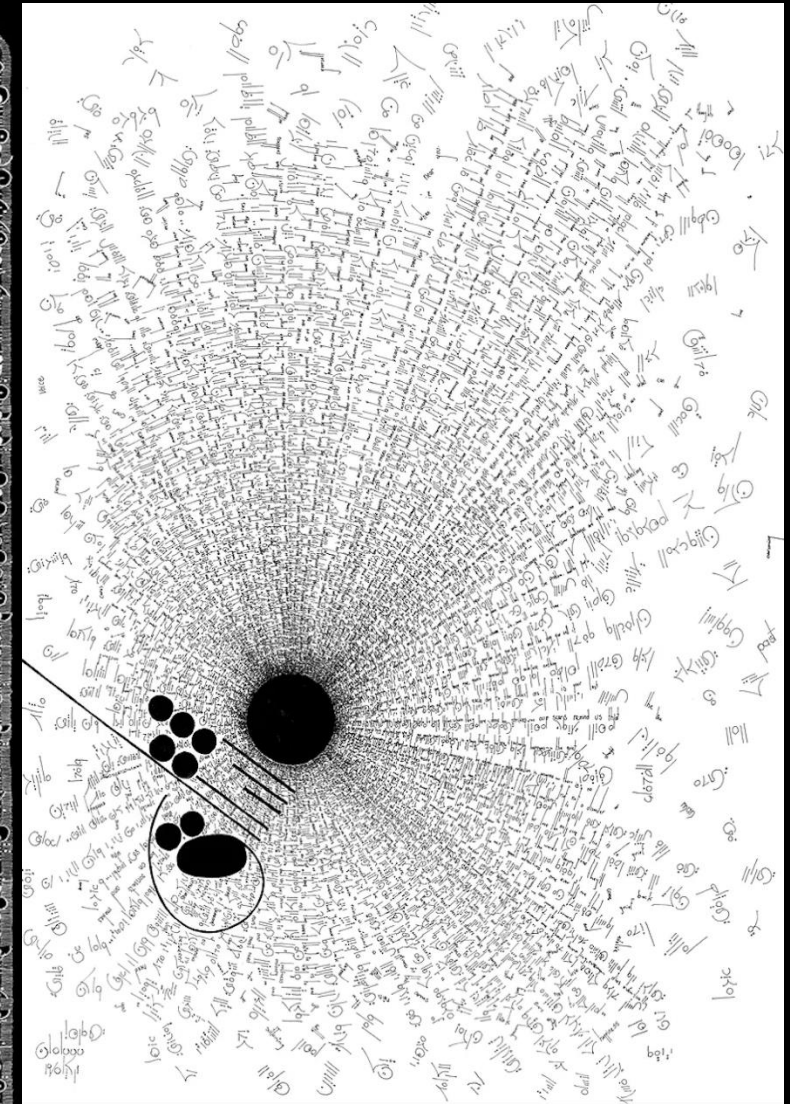


## Samples of Artwork

This artistic piece titled "Yearning" beautifully captures the boundless expressive depth of the word "Yearning." The delicate radiations emanating from the depiction of this word reflect an infinite power of yearning, creating an impact that reaches endlessly. The varied rendering of the word makes it the focal point, with infinite radiations, adding a sense of movement and boundless emotion to the visual experience.

The emanations from "Yearning" extend beyond visual beauty, carrying profound moral depth. These radiations convey nostalgia, love, and a longing for the past and affection, giving them an immeasurable emotional weight. The work takes viewers on a journey into the emotions of yearning, where the expression of the word breathes with the spirit of longing and an unbounded desire for reunion.

It is a piece that intersects visual beauty and emotional depth, evoking palpable feelings and granting the word "Yearning" an unforgettable impact.



مشتاق

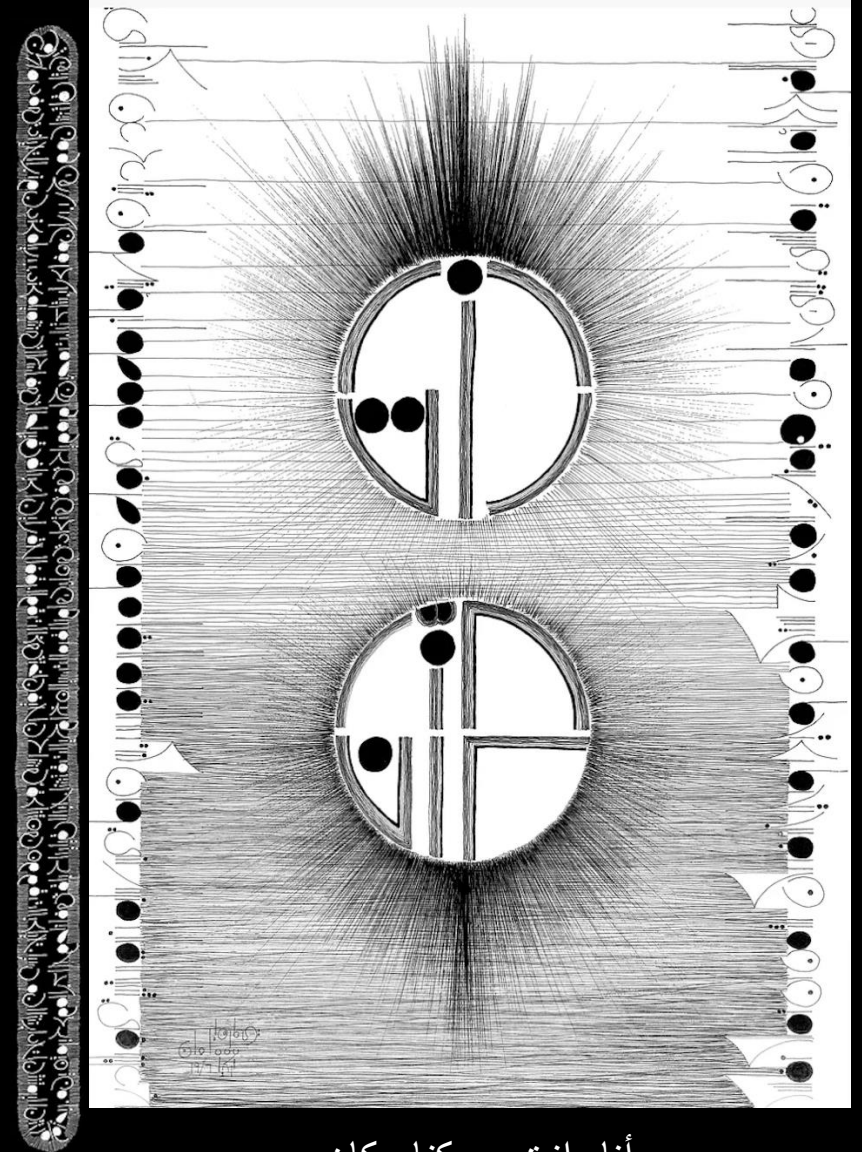


## Samples of Artwork

"I, you... we were, and it was" is an artwork that embodies the tale of intertwined souls in the mazes of time. Between memories of the past and the pain of loss, the words "we were, and it was" are connected in a poignant blend of nostalgia. The image of the beloved individuals, I, and you, flows in the painting's memory like ancient trees dancing with the winds of time.

The threads of the past and loss intertwine to create a moving melody, narrating the story of memories that remain alive despite the transformations of time. Every part of this artwork carries the tone of separation and fading, as the words "we were and it was" dance in the realm of the spirit, living between yesterday's memories and a present immersed in longing.

This artwork captivates viewers with waves of yearning and reflection, laden with the meanings of farewell and a love that remains eternal even in the absence of tangible forms. It is an artistic poem that evokes a time where moments stood still, weaving two lovers in the threads of memories, dancing in the world of "we were and it was," carrying with them the nostalgia of loss and the depth of the soul.



أنا، انت... كنا وكان

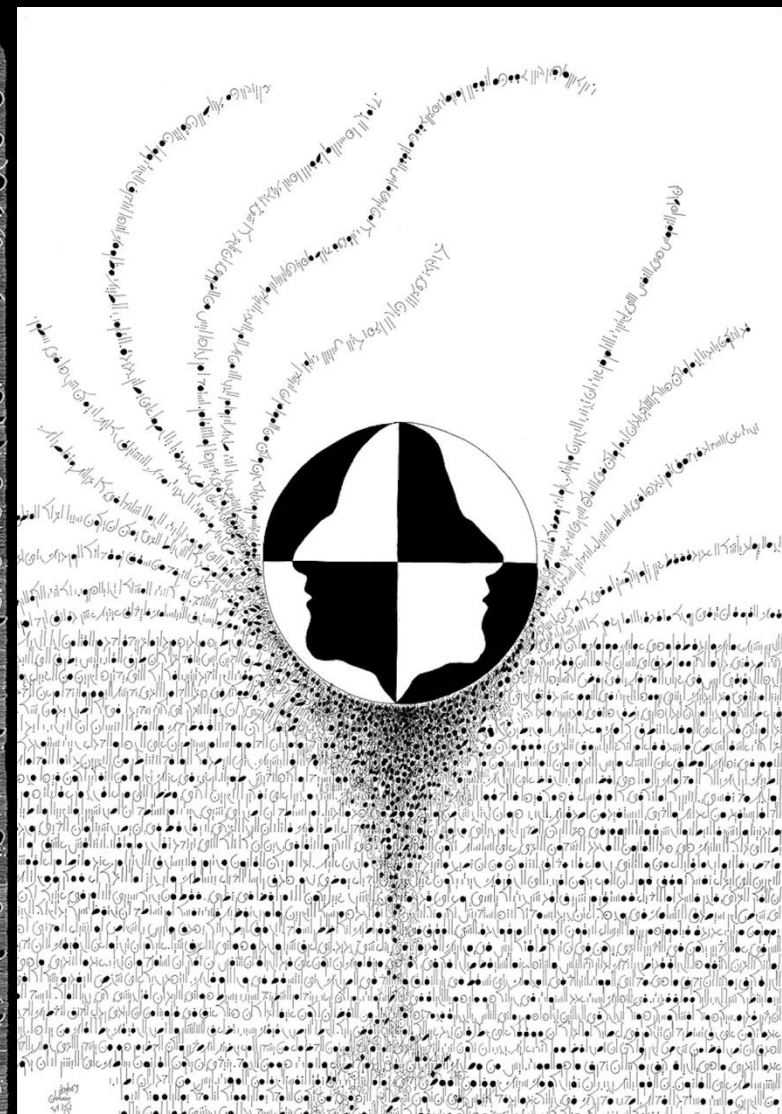


## Samples of Artwork

In the heart of this artwork titled "Faces," diverse masks harmonize and juxtapose simultaneously, revealing the various disguises some people adopt to conceal their individual realities. Represented by stable and falling circles, the masks reflect an unfolding process of exposing unreal faces, intertwined in an artistically contrasting manner.

At the core of the painting, a circle symbolizing our world occupies the center, where the destinies of faces interweave, reflecting the lives of many. The central ball swings, exuding expressions, words, and sayings that scatter endlessly below, laden with life moments falling into the swamp of reality.

This artwork captures the dance of life and ever-changing faces, entwined in a perpetual movement descending towards the swamp of existence. Its formations derive beauty from the descent into the depths, resembling waves flowing in the sea of humanity.



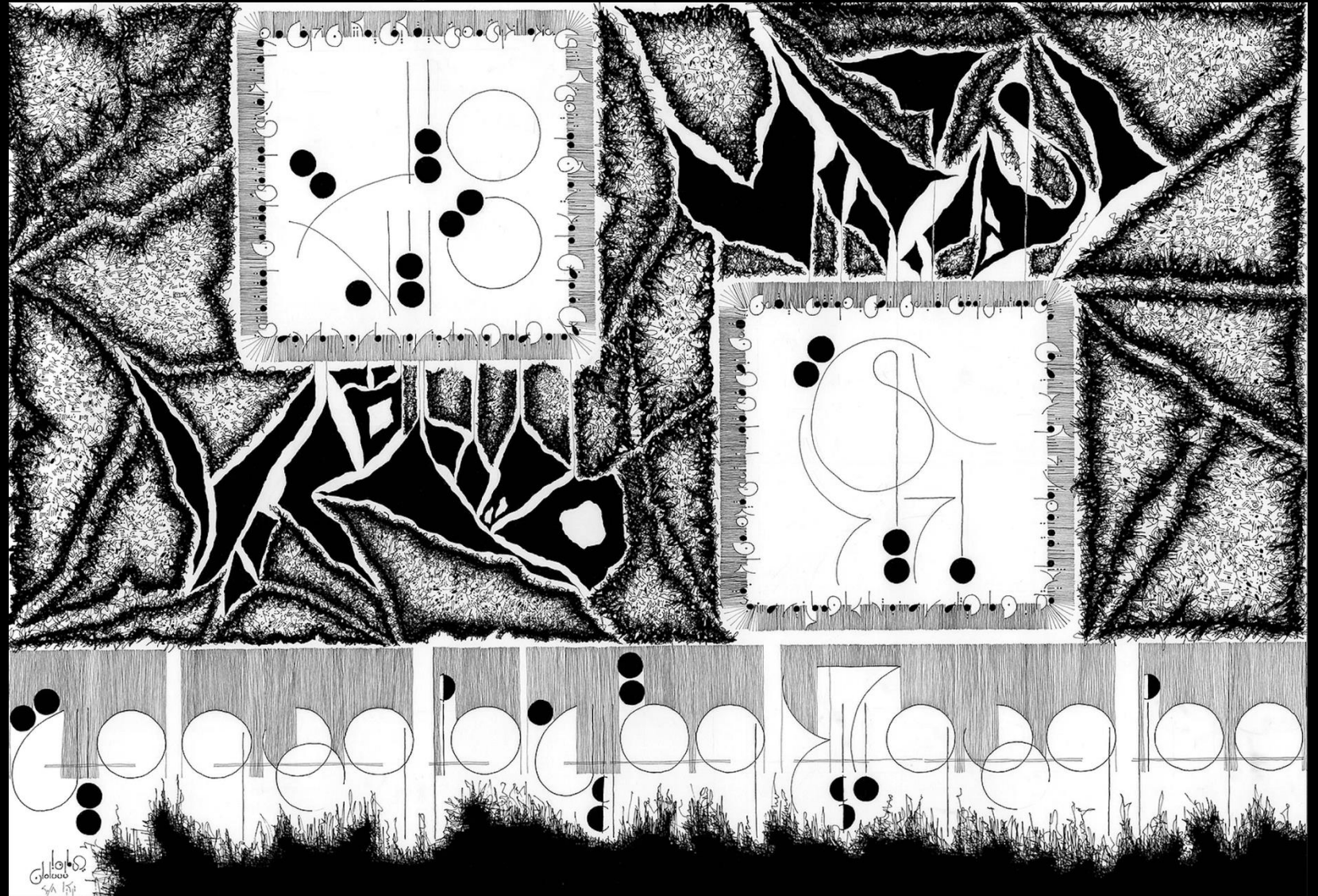
وجوه



## Samples of Artwork

"Alive in Distance, Dead in Proximity" is an art piece that delves deep into the poignant aspects of life. In this artwork, the painful dimensions of emotional and spiritual distance reveal how one can be alive in a distant sense, yet spiritually dead.

Meanwhile, memories and the impact of the past persist strongly within our daily lives. It's not merely an artistic composition but a narrative of loss and reflection on the value of the present before it becomes the past.



حي بعيد، ميت قريب

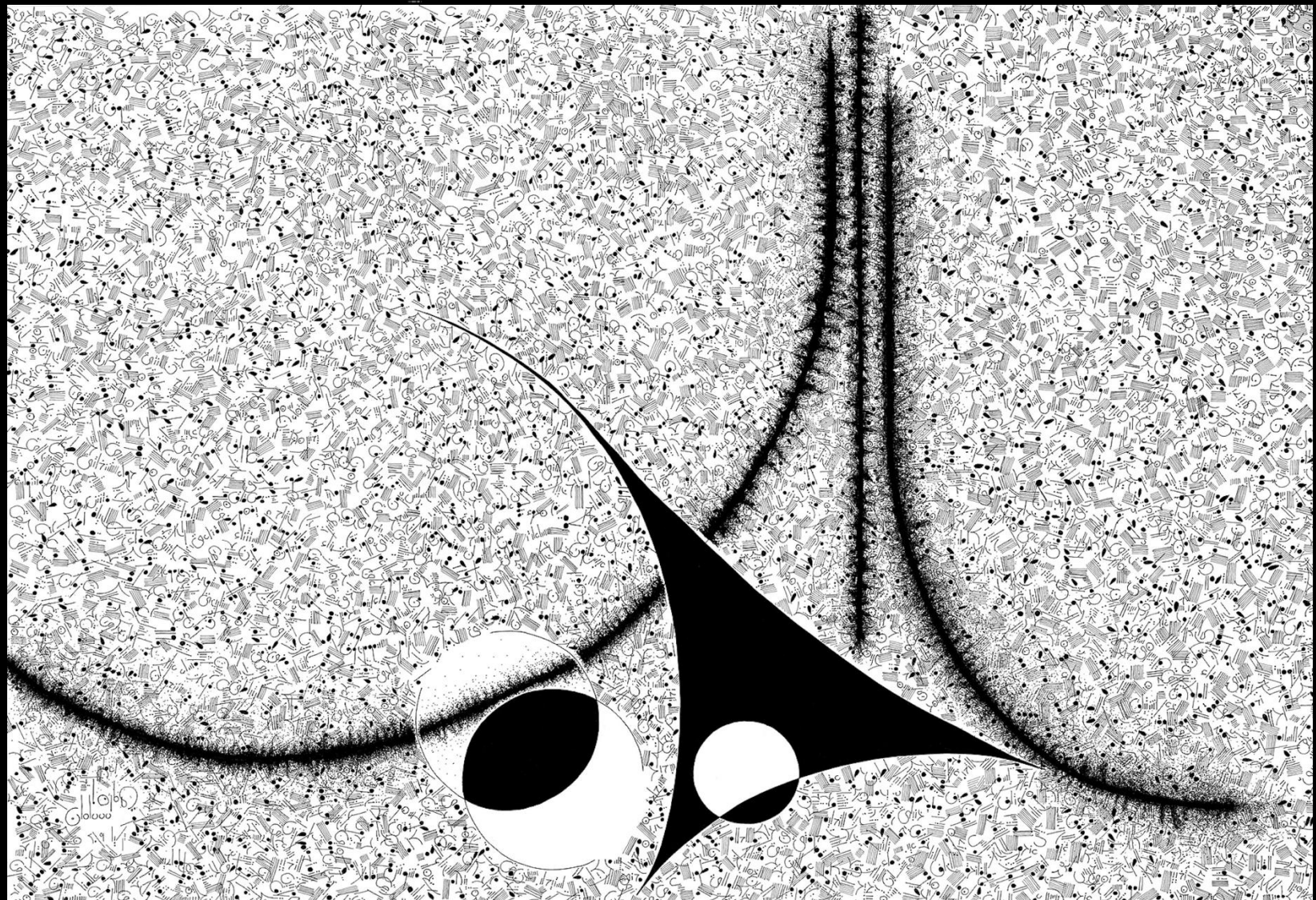


## Samples of Artwork

"Ignorance" is a poetic painting that expresses the interweaving of scattered words against an infinite backdrop, reflecting the whisper of ignorance entangled in contradictory vocabulary. The word "ignorance" stands out at the heart of the painting, where its letters vary between graceful flow and conflicting roughness, symbolizing the inherent contradictory nature of ignorance itself.

The broken background of words reflects the chaos and asymmetry carried by ignorance, illustrating the disparity between thoughts and knowledge. Thorn-like characters represent the challenges of understanding and obstacles imposed by ignorance, while some characters appear beautifully, serving as a reminder of the beauty that can be achieved through learning and comprehension.

This painting silently speaks to us about the impact of ignorance in our society, where understanding is blurred, and knowledge is conflicting. Yet, at the same time, learning can unite beauty and challenges in an attempt to overcome this complex reality.



الجهل



## Sample of Sketches

غزة





## Sample of Sketches

۵۱





## Sample of Sketches

انسان

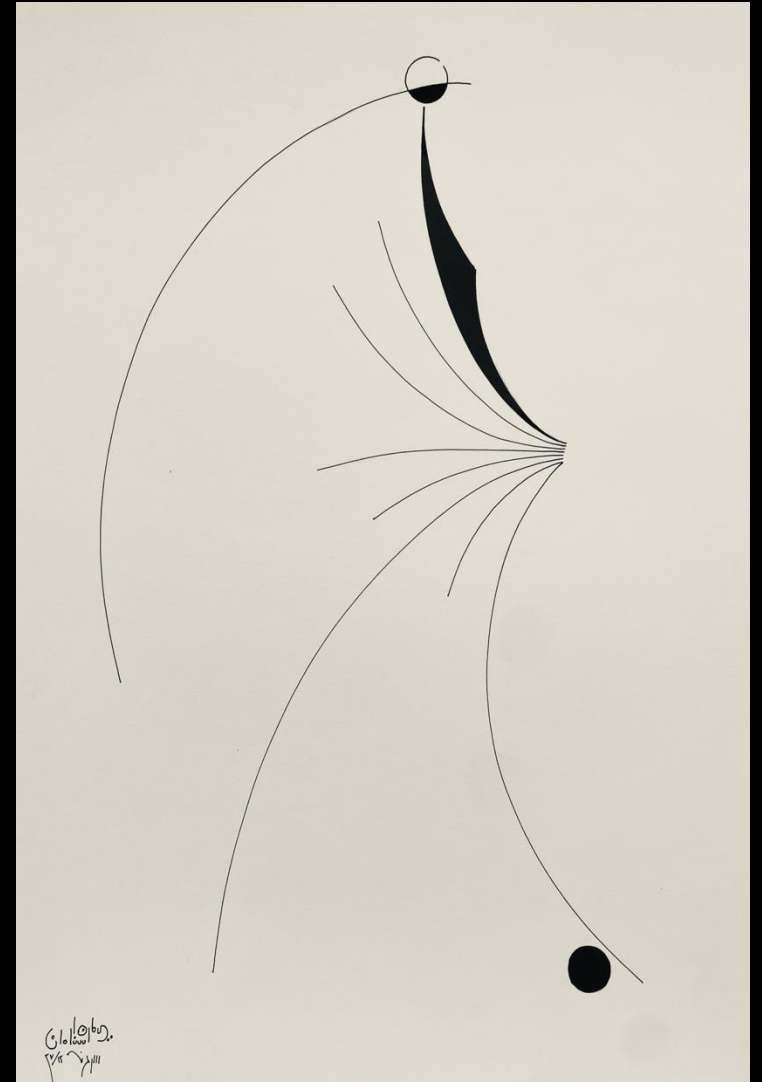


۱۶/۲/۱۴۰۱  
سید الهام



## Sample of Sketches

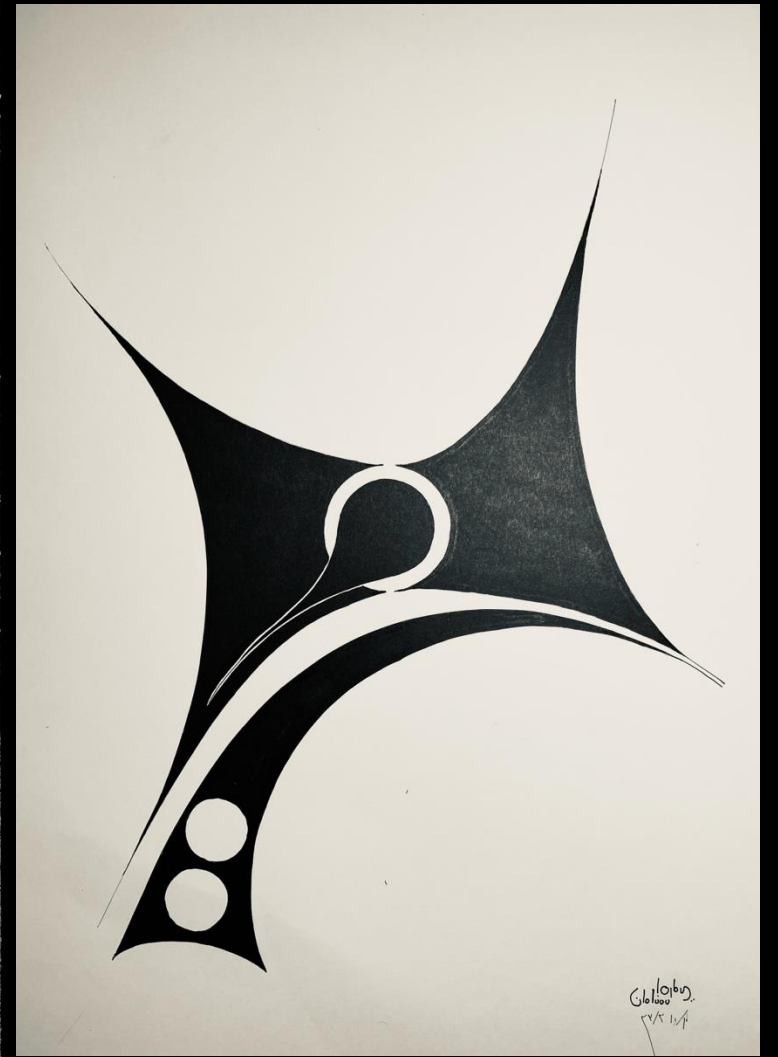
احسان





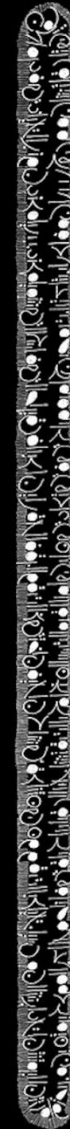
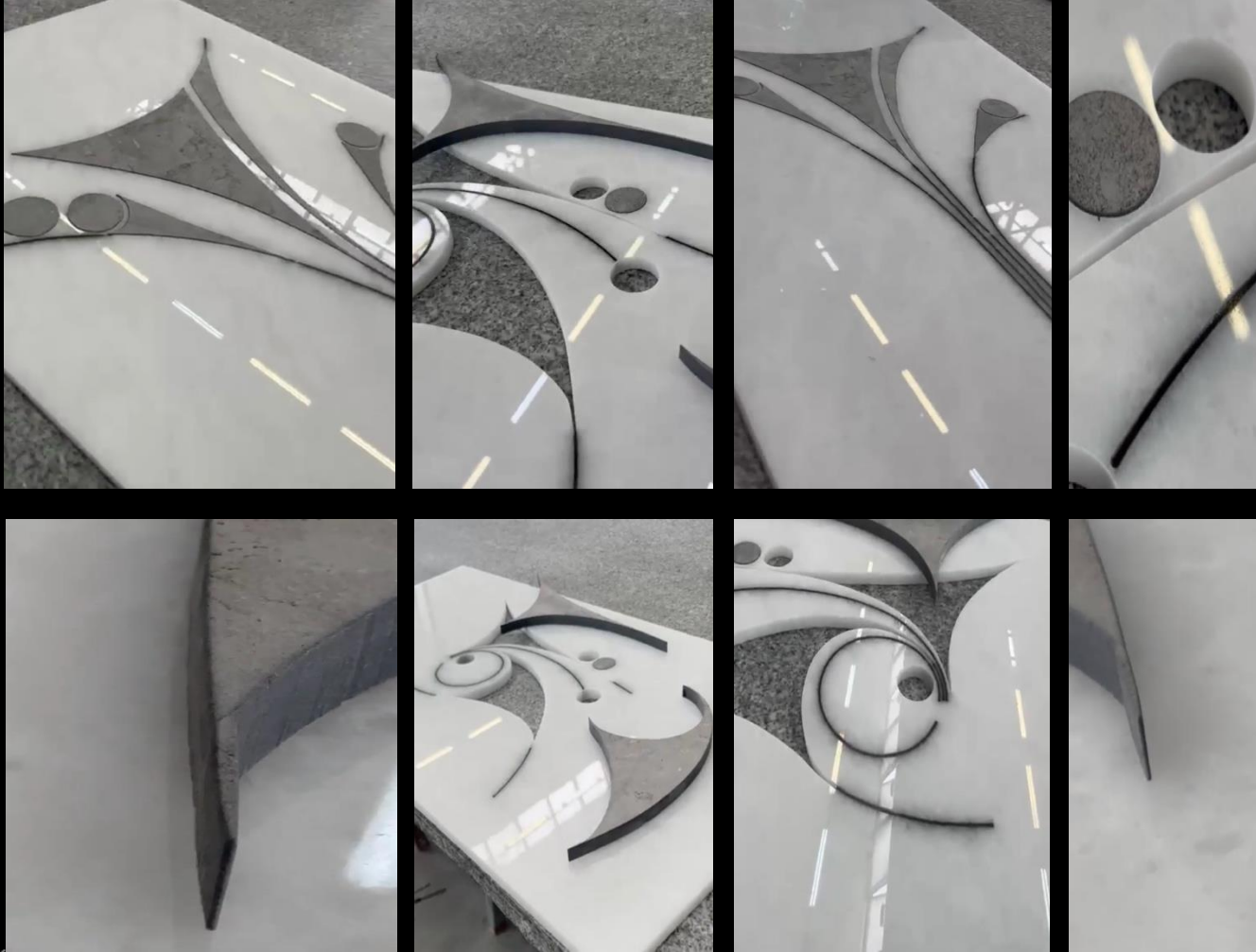
## Sample of Sketches

عودة





## Artwork in Marble



Extended the artistic expression into the medium of marble, transforming the calligraphic and visual compositions into marble.

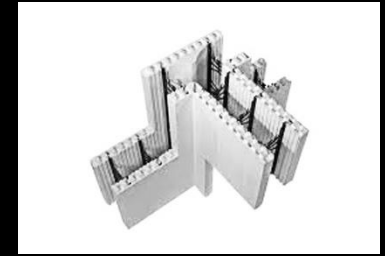
This exploration opens new possibilities for integrating Saman's art into interior spaces and architectural facades, bridging the gap between fine art and functional design.



# Architectural Engineer and Entrepreneur

Beyond his artistic achievements, Saman Zahawi is an accomplished architect and entrepreneur with extensive experience across the Middle East and North Africa. Since 2001, he has led groundbreaking projects in non-conventional building systems, construction technologies, and infrastructure innovation. His expertise extends to technical sales, marketing strategies, and business development, making him a sought-after figure in the construction industry.

As the founder of Zahawi Group, Zahawi has leveraged his architectural expertise to drive innovation and operational excellence. He has been instrumental in introducing avant-garde construction methods that redefine industry standards, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity much as he does in his art. His professional journey is marked by a commitment to creating value and fostering growth, whether through pioneering architectural solutions or crafting thought-provoking art.





## A Harmonious Duality: Art and Architecture

Zahawi's dual careers as an architect and artist are deeply intertwined, each informing the other. His background in architectural engineering provides a structural precision to his art, while his artistic sensibilities bring a unique, humanistic dimension to his architectural projects.

This harmony between form and meaning, structure and soul, defines his work, setting him apart as a creative force that transcends conventional boundaries.





# Appendix

Appendix 1:

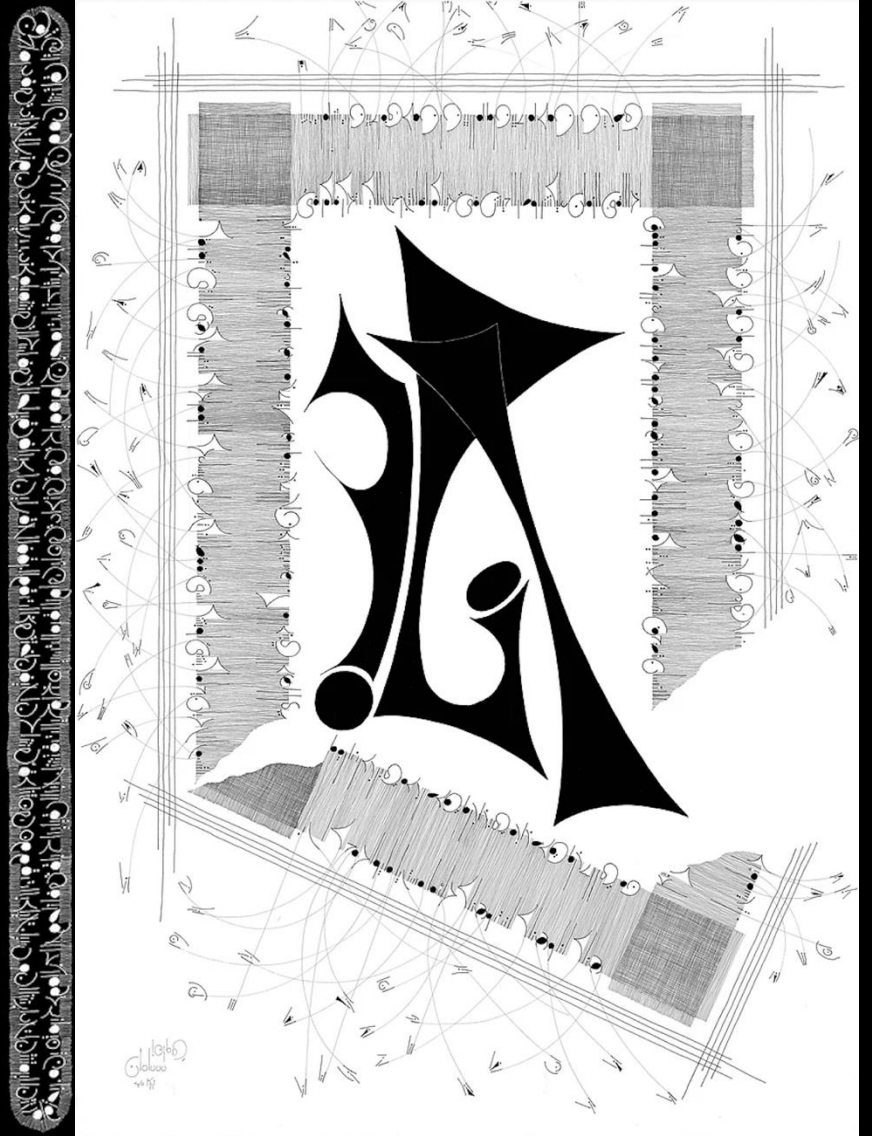
<https://fb.watch/fBEq1NoGKI/>

Appendix 2:

<https://www.emaratalyoun.com/life/culture/2023-05-08-1.1745371?ot=ot.AMPPageLayout>

Appendix 3 (Marble)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C5yxsLeCpHT/>





## Contact Information

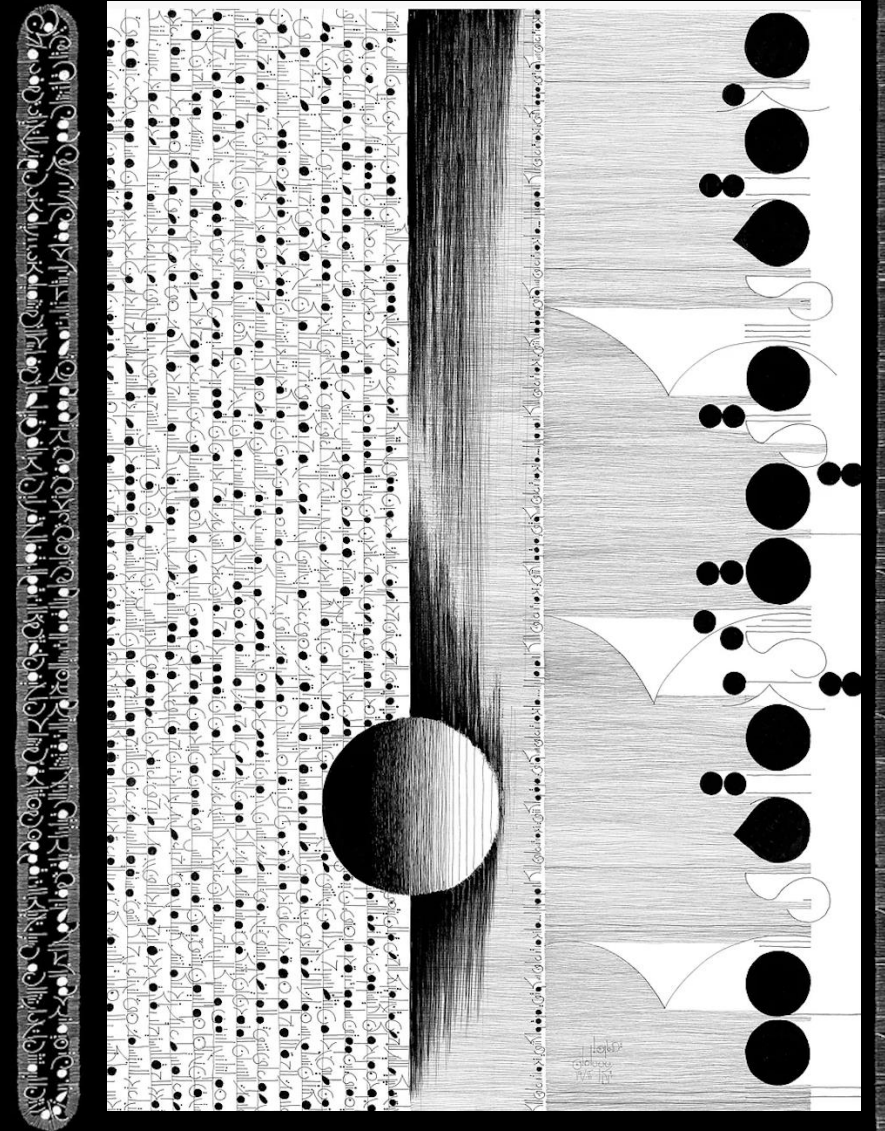
Saman Zahawi

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**Live what you love**







**Live what you love**  
**Thank you!**