

THK GALLERY

ABDUS SALAAM | BIO & CV

Abdus Salaam is a self-taught multi-disciplinary artist from Cape Town, South Africa. Inspired by natural beauty and spirituality, Salaam reveals a sensitivity to three-dimensional spatial expression and the metaphysical connotations inherent in materials. Contemporary in his mystic abstraction, his work is rooted in poetry, calling from a familiar place to a state of peaceful and intensive longing. Moving freely between mediums – from sculpture to painting, video, photographic 'light paintings', poetry, augmented reality, and music – he creates poetic worlds, from the intimate to large-scale installation.

Salaam's Heartwood Series is a meditation on the unseen heart, viewed through the poetic beauty of trees. By focusing on the natural formations within, Salaam refers to both our capacity for abstraction and growth, and our shared malleable form. Just as trees are moved by wind, sun, and the those around them, we too are shaped by the symphony of life that surrounds us.

Using sections of a fallen old growth tree, sliced to reveal the growth rings, Salaam suspends pigments in resin, pouring layer upon layer in a gradient binary of dark and light, like the corresponding seasons of summer and winter that define the life of a tree. Here Salaam employs a brightening toward the centre or 'heartwood', drawing towards the inner void. This moment of sacred stillness – The Space Between – is a reoccurring motif across this practice, most notably in his mystic landscape oil paintings.

Salaam's stone sculptures are inspired by the natural changes of stone over time. Imagining how the elements would shape an object over the course of millennia, he follows the fractures and form of the stone like water, bringing out the natural beauty inherent in the stone. Similarly, his steel sculptures are defined by the process of the sculpture's making. This dance of the real and metaphorical is constant throughout his practice.

Salaam's oriented strand board paintings are a journey of discovery for both the artist and the viewer. Painting with mineral earth pigments which he carefully forages and crushes, these works are meticulously painted, revealing the order inherent in this humble, seemingly disorderly building material. They are moments of visual unity, with each element dependent on every other element for both the narrative of the work, and the fundamental cohesion and structural integrity of the work.

For the artist, each painting is a deeply transformative actuation of sacred monotony, with a single square metre taking up to 400 hours to paint. Inspiring contemplation, they are a poetic reflection of oneness, our interconnectedness, and our dependence on each other.

Drawing on action painting and gestural abstraction, Salaam's thickly layered smeared paintings reveal a spontaneity and a surrender to chance. After days of preparation, Salaam pours up to 15 litres of paint onto a large-scale canvas, and in a focused gesture, creates these works in a single movement as the paint starts to dry. Similarly, Salaam creates 'light paintings', working in the darkroom with chemicals and instinctual gestures in a homage to the origins of photography and intuitive creativity.

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Salaam's work looks beyond tropes of identity and outer struggle, instead focusing on unity and on the expansive spiritual inner realities of beauty, peace and striving, as they relate to nature and our shared human experience: sharing the ecstatic love of being alive and being together.

Salaam is represented by THK Gallery in Cape Town, South Africa.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2022

- *The Space Between*, THK Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- *Soft As Stone*, Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Tomorrows/Today sector, THK Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2021

- *Falls Of Abundance*, Online exclusive, THK Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2019

- *The Ocean of Limitlessness* (Solo) AVA Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2018

- *The Ocean of Limitlessness*, Addis Foto Festival, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- *An Experience – Namibia*, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town, South Africa
- *The Ocean of Limitlessness*, The Castle, Cape Town, South Africa

2017

- *An Experience – Namibia*, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town, South Africa

2016

- *An Experience – Namibia*, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town, South Africa

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021

- *Tell Me Three Things About Yourself*, Jaffer Modern, Cape Town, South Africa

2019

- *Unresolved Category*, Gallery MOMO, Cape Town, South Africa
- *From Behind a Clear Mirror*, Robert Sherwood, Cape Town, South Africa

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GROUP EXHIBITIONS (CONTINUED)

2018

- *Throwing Shapes*, SMITH Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2017

- *The Ocean of Limitlessness*, Amplify Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
- *Mercy (Group)* Amplify Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa