

Spike Island

PRESS RELEASE
NOUR JAOUDA

Saturday 27 September to Sunday 11 January 2026



Spike Island is proud to present the first institutional solo exhibition by Libyan artist Nour Jaouda (b.1997, Libya). Jaouda's new commission at Spike Island will be her most ambitious to date and continues her ongoing exploration of the fluidity of cultural identity.

Jaouda's multi-layered textile works traverse the languages of painting, sculpture and installation to produce 'landscapes of memory'. The forms, colours and motifs within her intricately textured surfaces gesture towards different encounters across time and space, drawing on the artist's childhood in Libya and experiences of living between Cairo and London. Organic and geometric forms reveal themselves within her layered topographies, evoking images both real and imagined: spectral presences and absences within the shadows of memory.

Each work is intimately hand-crafted through a slow, meditative process. Jaouda begins by treating and dyeing her fabrics with earthy, saturated pigments, a process through which the physicality of her materials is altered and colours come to life. Then comes a process of *décollage*, or cutting out, which Jaouda describes as 'a radical and poetic strategy that is as much destructive as it is constructive; where the act of undoing and unbuilding becomes an addition rather than negation to the work.' Rebuilding layer upon layer, the fragments are reassembled into sculptural tapestries. For Jaouda, this process of material construction and deconstruction mirrors the rooting and uprooting of the self within her migratory

existence. As she elaborates: ‘cultural identity is formed through a constant process of becoming.’

Jaouda’s new installation for Spike Island takes inspiration from the ‘Khayamiya’, an intricately patterned textile that is created through the ancient craft of appliqué and applied to the interior of tents. Functioning as both ornament and shelter, the ‘Khayamiya’ tent often serves as a temporary ‘third space’, erected within Cairo’s dense urban areas for moments of gathering, such as funerals, Ramadan rituals and Eid celebrations. For Jaouda, the intimate tent-like environment she creates within Spike Island’s monumental gallery is also a memorial space, where viewers are invited to come together, sit and reflect. Drawing on memories of botanical landscapes, sewn onto the tent are deconstructed shapes of indigenous plants and trees that have once been uprooted. Within this sheltered retreat, Jaouda constructs a space to mourn an absent landscape.

The appliqué process is realised in collaboration with master craftsmen from Cairo’s historic Chariah-el-Khayamia, or ‘the street of the tent-makers’. Interpreting drawings developed by Jaouda, the designs are hand-embroidered by a team of craftspeople onto the artist’s primed and hand-dyed textiles. An additional layer of appliqué realised by Jaouda completes the work, constituting over 12 metres of intricate design.

Throughout the installation, deconstructed chairs cast in bronze serve as symbolic objects, holding smaller textile pieces recalling Islamic prayer mats. These sculptures reference the everyday presence of chairs found outside stores or homes in Cairo, as well as their symbolic role in ‘protecting’ or ‘guarding’ a space. They embody social and political agency, offering a commentary on resilience and transformation.

This project straddles personal narratives and social histories, exploring ideas of movement, rootedness and the artist’s own complex sense of cultural identity. It delves into the transitory nature of belonging, while examining the spiritual tension between preservation and decay. Creating shelter within this context transcends a physical structure – it becomes a sacred act of hospitality.

The exhibition is produced with generous support from Foundation Foundation, The Elephant Trust and the Nour Jaouda Commissioning Circle: Alia Al-Senussi, Maria Sukkar, Lukas Zueger-Knecht and those who wish to remain anonymous.

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For press enquiries please contact Isabel Davies at isabel@sam-talbot.com and Gwyneth Tambe-Green at gwyneth@sam-talbot.com

ABOUT SPIKE ISLAND

- Spike Island supports, produces and presents contemporary art and culture across an 80,000 square foot former industrial building in Bristol. Its diverse artistic programme includes free major exhibitions, events and engagement activities taking place on-site and online. Championing outstanding work by emerging and underrepresented local, national and international artists, the programme enhances access to contemporary art for audiences from all backgrounds.
- Alongside its public offer, Spike Island directly supports artists through new commissions, over 70 subsidised studios, and sector leading artist development opportunities that widen access to its programme and facilities. Its Exhibition Services business supports the bespoke production and installation of artists' film and video throughout the UK and internationally. Spike Island is home to a dynamic community of hundreds of artists and creative businesses, working in flexible, affordable workspaces, alongside UWE Bristol's Fine Art department, Spike Print Studio, and café bar Emmeline. www.spikeisland.org.uk

IMAGE CAPTION

- Nour Jaouda, *If the olive trees knew* (detail), 2024, dyed fabric, steel, 250 x 300 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Union Pacific.