

Sara Naim
From the Perspective of Language
13 March – 31 May 2026

The Third Line is pleased to present *From the Perspective of Language*, Sara Naim's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery and her first public presentation of paintings. Produced intermittently between 2023 and 2026, the large-scale works move between figuration and abstraction to examine boundaries and the limits of representation through arrangements of symbolically charged imagery. The exhibition is accompanied by a new video performance, *Mother Practices Her Tongue* (2026), which abstracts the Arabic language into gestures and sounds that no longer produce coherent meaning. Together, the paintings and video extend Naim's ongoing investigation into how meaning is constructed through inherited systems such as language, symbols, and ideology.



Sara Naim, *Skin 1*, 2023, Oil on Canvas, 160 x 225 cm

Gallery 1 presents a series of fragmented paintings that explore boundaries at individual, social, and national scales. Naim investigates these boundaries through multiple lenses—from quantum mechanics, which challenges fixed notions of objects, to biological forms like flora, grains, and skin, which shed, pollinate, and traverse landscapes, to symbols of inclusion and exclusion such as religion and patrol dogs.

Originating from her interest in body tattoos as markers of belief systems, the series treats skin as both subject and medium, with the canvas functioning as a porous surface onto which images are layered. Set against blocks of color or gradients sourced from Mac desktop backgrounds, images appear digitally “dragged and dropped” and arranged through association rather than linear logic. By leaving space for

interpretation, the paintings invite viewers to actively construct meaning—a process reflecting Kant’s idea that understanding arises not from objects themselves but through engagement.

Gallery 2 is occupied by the video work *Mother Practices Her Tongue* (2026). Continuing the minimal aesthetic of Naim’s earlier video performances, the work features the artist framed like a photographic portrait. The video explores how language shapes relationships to place, and the roles intuition and gesture play alongside the formal logic of language. Naim practices forming Arabic letters and sounds with her mouth, addressing the camera directly. Repeated out of sequence and in isolated units, these letters dissolve into abstract, guttural sounds, losing semantic clarity while retaining affect. Repetition operates as disruption—a glitch in communication—exposing language as a symbolic system onto which meaning is imposed rather than inherently contained. The video considers language as a bodily, sonic, and symbolic system that, like the painted images in Gallery 1, becomes an interface through which experience is mediated.

Moving between image and speech, surface and body, *From the Perspective of Language* asks how meaning is constructed and imposed, and where intuition and affect persist beyond formal systems of representation.

About Sara Naim

Sara Naim's practice is inherently multidisciplinary: photographs are sculptural, sculptures painterly, and paintings reference photography. She investigates how meaning is constructed through inherited frameworks such as language, symbols, and ideologies, and how these paradigms shape our understanding of self and world.

She often employs technological glitches as metaphors for the limits of language and its inability to capture intuition. This reflects a broader inquiry into how we explain ourselves through representation and symbols rather than lived experience.

Sara frequently questions the assumption that proximity produces clarity, proposing instead that closeness leads to abstraction. This tension between distance and intimacy—often materialised through pixelation and scale—mirrors her relationship with her homeland, Syria, which was inaccessible to her for 15 years.

At its core, her work examines how rigid notions of separateness operate across individual, social, and national frameworks. Natural motifs, particularly flowers, recur as a way of linking personal ancestry to wider geopolitical conditions. By tracing how people and plants take root across borders, her work unsettles the idea of fixed political and bodily boundaries.

Her selected solo shows include *Rose Tinted*, The Third Line, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and *Volt Eastbourne*, Eastbourne, UK (2022); *Building Blocks*, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2019); *Reaction*, Parafin, London, UK (2018); *Heartstrings Collapse*, The Third Line, Dubai, UAE (2016); *Heartstrings*, Hayward Gallery Concrete, London, UK (2016), and *When The Lights Went Off We Saw*, Pavilion Dubai, UAE.

Selected group shows include Taoyuan International Art Award, Taiwan (2023); *There Goes the Neighbourhood*, Indigo + Madder, London, UK (2022); Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London, UK (2022); *Jeddah Photo 2022*, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (2022); *Portrait of a Nation II*, Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation (ADMAF), Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (2022); *Science Fictions*, Centre Photographique Rouen, Normandie, France (2019), *Contemporary Photography from the Arab World*, Katzen Arts Center, American University Museum, Washington D.C., USA (2018); *Artificial Impressions*, Stedelijk Museum Breda, Breda, Netherlands (2018); *Chambre 10*, Sans Titre, Paris, France; *Secular Icons in an Age of Moral Uncertainty*, Parafin, London, UK (2017).

About The Third Line

Founded in 2005, The Third Line is a Dubai-based gallery that represents contemporary artists locally, regionally, and internationally. With 20 years of dedicated commitment to the arts, it has become a pioneering platform for established talent and emerging voices from the region and its diaspora, building a dynamic program that explores the diversity of practices in the region.

In addition to its exhibitions, The Third Line engages in the production of art publications in English and Arabic and hosts numerous non-profit, alternative programs that add to the discourse on art, film, music, and literature in the region.

Represented artists include: Abbas Akhavan, Ala Ebtekar, Amir H. Fallah, Anuar Khalifi, Bady Dalloul, Farah Al Qasimi, Farhad Moshiri, Fouad Elkoury, Hassan Hajjaj, Hayv Kahraman, Huda Lutfi, Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Jordan Nassar, Kamran Samimi, Laleh Khorramian, Lamya Gargash,

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Nima Nabavi, Poursan Jinchu, Rana Begum, Sahand Hesamiyan, Sara Naim, Sarah Awad, Shirin Aliabadi, Slavs and Tatars, Sophia Al-Maria, Tarek Al-Ghoussein, Vian Sora, yasiin bey, and Youssef Nabil.

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