

Brave Projects

11 February 2025

Nour Malas | Artist

dialogue

By Ayo Shonibare

<https://www.braveprojects.co.uk/dialogue-nour-malas>



One of the most anticipated shows of the season, *Evil Is Banal* by Nour Malas opened last week to critical acclaim at Carbon 12 Gallery. This striking body of work explores the weight of everyday life and the subtle undercurrents of violence through a balance of abstraction and representation. Malas' textured gestures and earthy tones pull viewers into a deeply introspective space, revealing layers of meaning within each canvas. The exhibition's title itself hints at the unsettling familiarity of darkness, how brutality can hide in the mundane, and how beauty and unease often coexist. In these works, Malas weaves together subconscious fragments, some leaning toward the figurative while others dissolve into pure sensation. Her compositions feel both personal and universal, a reflection of collective anxieties and intimate reckonings. It's a show that lingers long after you leave the room, demanding a second look, a deeper read. Read the full interview on our website. Congratulations to Nour Malas and Carbon 12 Gallery on their incredible show, now on view at the gallery. Be sure to visit if you're in Dubai!

Hey Nour! As many across the world patiently awaited your solo show with Carbon 12 Gallery this February, where were you mentally while creating this series of work?

"I'm thrilled to present my upcoming solo show with Carbon12 Gallery, featuring a series of paintings created in the second half of 2024 following my move to New York. Titled *Evil Is Banal*, the exhibition includes works on both canvas and linen that navigate the delicate balance between abstraction and representation. Through gestures and marks, these paintings reflect the weight of everyday life while confronting the underlying violence in our world. The earthy

color palette grounds the work, with some pieces leaning toward the figurative to explore the subconscious and my inner psyche. I'm especially excited to share this body of work with the world, as it is both deeply personal and universally resonant in its exploration of the human condition. These paintings invite reflection on the complexities and shared experiences of our time."

As an artist who studied at prestigious schools and now exhibits at renowned fairs and galleries around the world, what advice would you offer to current students navigating their journey through art universities? Any tips for those preparing for life as artist beyond academia?

"Attending such renowned schools provided me with access to incredible mentors and a wealth of knowledge, not just academically, but introspectively as well. Being surrounded by artists deeply dedicated to their practices was invaluable. One of the most important lessons I learned was to listen thoughtfully and discern what to take in and what to leave out. You'll receive plenty of opinions, but not all of it will align with your practice. The key is identifying the mentors and disciplines that allow you to stay true to who you are as an artist. I'd also say: play, experiment, and don't take everything too seriously. School is a rare opportunity to try, stumble, and discover. Equally important were the friendships I formed. Learning from your peers is an ongoing education that extends well beyond your time in school. Beyond academia, my advice is simple: work. Be in the studio as often as possible, even if some days are just spent reading or observing. The most crucial realization is that you are the only person who can make your practice exist. Consistency, curiosity, and dedication are the foundations that will sustain you as an artist."

The titles of your works are often powerful in their own right, "I Just Need To Hear It Again," "And Where Are We Now?," and "Birth Me, Break Me," to name a few. How do you continue to come up with such evocative titles for your pieces?

"Since my work isn't narrative-based, I see titles as an opportunity to provide a hint of context or set a tone for each piece. I keep an ongoing list of potential titles, regularly adding to it with words from various sources that reflect where I am mentally or emotionally, whether it's a phrase from a book, song lyrics, a fleeting thought, or even text messages from my personal life. While titles may not be essential for everyone, for me, they hold the power to shift how I connect with a work, sometimes even changing how I respond to it!"

What message or emotion do you hope viewers take from your work?

"I hope my work acts as a mirror, albeit a fragmented one, where each person can find reflections of their own experiences or collective stories. I want them to leave with a sense of restlessness but also with a certain recognition, as if, even amidst the chaos or discomfort, there is something deeply human and shared."

I imagine creating work is a deeply personal process, but if you were to collaborate on a piece with any artist in the world, who would it be and why?

"It's such a difficult question, I guess I'll narrow it down by choosing an artist that's living. It would be an honor to collaborate with Joan Snyder. Her visceral, gut spilling work is incredibly powerful. Doesn't hurt to dream!"

You completed your MFA in Sculpture at School of the Art Institute of Chicago and date, you've created works on linen, canvas, paper, and panel. Are there any mediums you haven't yet explored but would like to in the future?

"Coming from a sculpture background and finding myself a painter has been a significant shift for me. Painting has opened up a world of exploration, allowing me to respond to the world with immediacy, often subconsciously, and it has become a core part of my practice. However, I still find myself yearning for the tactile experience of sculpture. In the future, I'd love to explore ceramics, particularly working with clay, perhaps even unfired. I'm eager to discover how I can bring the same sense of immediacy into sculptural form, blending my approaches to both mediums. "