**Spectrum, 2020**

**150 x 150 cm**

**Enamel on Aluminium**

Our predisposition towards certain colours is often a reflection of our emotive state at a particular moment in time. Additionally, our reaction to a certain event or situation may be influenced by the colours that we experienced surrounding that moment. For example, your decision to wear certain colours on a particular day, may be influenced by the environment or your state of mind, which in turn, affects your reaction to other colours that you perceive.

Each of Rashid Al Khalifa’s 'Spectrums' present the opportunity for the viewer to experience the work and develop a personal reaction to them. As Spectrum transitions from one colour to another, its identity is in turn, altered. Each work is dependent on its placement within the surrounding environment, the emotional state of the viewer, and of course the mind of the artist, who purposely selects and combines colours. Through these endless possibilities of colour combinations that each resonate a different feeling, sensation or thought process, Spectrum is, in a sense, the mediator, prompting a dialogue between the viewer and the artist.

**Rashid Al Khalifa**

**Biography**

Born in 1952 in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Rashid Al Khalifa held his first solo exhibition at the Dilmun Hotel, Bahrain, in 1970 when he was just 16 years old, and then moved to the UK in 1972 to study at the Hastings College of Arts and Technology in Sussex. After returning to Bahrain in 1978, inspired by Europe's greatest Impressionist masters, he began his own renditions of his country's landscapes, producing a series of atmospheric paintings of the desert, sea, and historical sites. These works were first presented at the Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., USA, and at the Sheraton Hotel, Bahrain, in 1982. Rashid developed his painting by responding to certain movements and styles such as geometric abstraction, hard-edge painting and colour field work.

The artist's vital decision to merge elements of his figurative and landscape works in the late 1980s was an entirely conscious one. He was driven by a greater sense of individuality, which emulated the ambiance and aura of his own surroundings. His female figures became barely decipherable, as hints of fabric, suggestions of limbs and movement, and cascades of hair all dispersed into the melding colours of the land.

Rashid's further transformation of his work in the early 1990s denotes his desire to contain and redirect his previously gestural and fleeting mark making. Gradually becoming more controlled, his imagery began incorporating more decorative elements. This series of works were first presented in 1996 in solo exhibitions at the De Caliet Gallery in Milan, Italy, and the El Kato Kayyel Gallery, Milan, Italy, as well as at the Shuman Arts Organisation in Jordan in 1997.

During this time, Rashid also experimented with a shapelier backdrop, forming a triangular prism with three canvases. And while he appreciated its three-dimensionality, which allowed the work to stand unsupported so viewers could look from all angles, he was unsatisfied with the result. Further investigations and an unintentional discovery resulted in his characteristically 'convex canvas' which emerged towards the end of the 1990s.

Beginning in 2000, this new canvas became the mainstay on which the artist merged all his imagery - landscape, figurative and abstract expressionism - into his own colour field language. From 2006 onwards, along with his continued application of bright and vivid colour schemes, his practice adopted a conceptual framework. Organic shapes and unusual patterns swirled together, allowing for the emergence of animate and abstract imagery.

By 2009, his work underwent a definitive change, where the formerly bold lines and distinct forms of the late '90s became a synthesis of colour and gesture. Broad sweeps of colour met with blended paint and thick impasto which was then scratched and scraped to reveal the remnant hues and imagery beneath the surface.

Employing the convex surface for over a decade, Rashid methodically and continually developed his style with a far more minimalistic approach. In 2010, an important solo exhibition at the Bahrain National Museum entitled 'Convex: A New Perspective', showcased a decade of his work, presenting his journey with this newfound form and its influential role on his style and practice. Along with his earlier painterly works, he introduced a new series of lacquer paint, fabric and glue complementing the curvature of the canvas. Rashid manipulated these materials to open up opportunities for light to fall differently on each surface, thereby emphasizing his multilayered relief technique. The scale of his canvas became grander and the imagery itself, darker and more intense in nature, imparted far greater dramatic effects. In essence, this 'new perspective' intimated the changes in the physicality of Rashid's work and ran parallel to his personal growth. His ongoing experimentation signified his need and openness for innovation and renewal.

In this phase, Rashid began to consider and equate, to an even greater extent, the susceptibility, mechanics and geometric processes involved in certain aspects of the designs and architecture he visualized in Bahrain's ever-changing landscapes. He quickly began to incorporate these findings into his practice. The incandescent, smooth lacquer surfaces seen in much of his 2010-2011 work demonstrates his affinity for symmetry and balance in form and purpose. By late 2011, Rashid took this further by experimenting with chrome which allowed him to paint over, manipulate and warp reflections of his environment. This body of work was showcased in solo exhibitions the following year at the Bahrain Financial Harbour, Manama (2012), Beirut Art Fair, Lebanon (2012) and Abu Dhabi Art, UAE (2012).

In May 2015 the artist officially participated in the 56th Venice Biennale, in both the 'Nomi/Names' joint exhibition and a collateral event, 'The Eye of the Thunderstorm: Effervescent Practices from the Arab World', commissioned by the Contemporary Practices Journal. This was followed with his participation in an Arab delegation of artists to Brazil for the TRIO Biennial dedicated to three-dimensional art. Around this time Rashid's convex surfaces took on textured layers of aluminium, which he manipulated or excised to reveal layering underneath. In doing so, he abandoned the painterly style of previous years to allow for a pristine and symmetrical facade. These structural features, as well as his move towards minimalism, directed his new focus on elemental forms of design and their receptiveness to light and consequent shadows. In 2018, the artist presented a solo show at Ayyam Gallery in Dubai, UAE, entitled 'Hybrids', which showcased this transition with a selection of works created between 2015-2017. In the same year, this fresh and innovative approach defined his 'Parametrics' series of large-scale installations that premiered, to international acclaim, in a major solo exhibition entitled 'Penumbra: Textured Shadow, Coloured Light' at the Saatchi Gallery in London. In 2019, Rashid Al Khalifa exhibited a selection of his parametrics and mobile columns in an exhibition entitled ‘Transverse Wave’, at the Me Collector’s Room, Berlin. Featuring the work of Mary Bauermeister and composer Simon Stockhausen, the exhibition explored the relationship between the constructive elements and principles of their respective works.

Rashid Al Khalifa's latest work continues to explore the myriad dynamics of light and colours that are characteristic to Bahrain's geographical and cultural diversity. His current interests lie in the interaction of these properties to further inform his bold interpretations of his cultural heritage. Through splendidly commanding structures, comprising meticulous forms and complex designs, Rashid's art practice stands as a contemporary tribute to traditional Middle Eastern design and architecture.