

Large Print Guide

Dana Awtani

Standing by the Ruins

29 November 2025 to 25 January 2026

This exhibition includes references to conflict, loss and mourning.

If you have been affected by these issues we have signposted related services for support on our public notice board, near the cinema.

This area is often a quiet space with comfortable seating if you would like a place to reflect upon the exhibition.

Visitors are invited to share their thoughts in the comments book, found in the exhibition.

[Starting at the large text panel on your right]

Dana Awartani

Standing by the Ruins

29 November 2025 to 25 January 2026

Dana Awartani is a Palestinian Saudi artist who lives and works between New York and Jeddah. Through her multidisciplinary practice she brings attention to the physical loss of cultural heritage, cataloguing buildings and monuments across the Middle East that have been deliberately destroyed, abandoned due to conflict, erased through violence or lost to modernisation.

The textiles, paintings and installations presented here, reference specific sites that have been destroyed in Palestine and Syria. Consequently, these works remind us of the devastating loss of human life and the erosion of a shared cultural history.

Named after an ongoing series of floor installations and paintings, *Standing by the Ruins* explores themes of loss, remembrance and healing. Each work suggests a shifting relationship with the present and simultaneously with what is absent, rooted within a practice which Awartani describes as being “as much about the story of how it is made as the finished work”.

Throughout, she honours traditional craft techniques – from natural dyeing and darning to adobe building methods – working with skilled artisans and using locally sourced materials in work steeped in historical and visual references from Islamic and Arab art-making traditions.

Dana Awartani (b.1987, Jeddah) is the second artist presenting work in a series of free solo exhibitions supported by the Towner Emerging Artist Fund. This programme highlights exceptional contemporary artists working locally, nationally and internationally.

Standing by the Ruins is presented in collaboration with Arnolfini, Bristol.

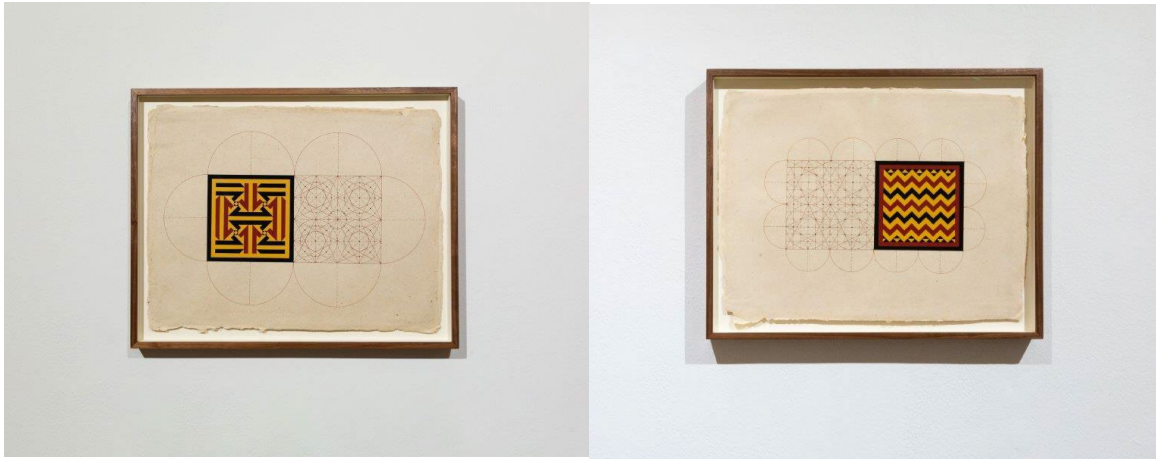
[Return to entrance and work clockwise through the gallery. Here you will find information about the floor-based installation and framed paintings]



In *Standing by the Ruins III* (2025), hundreds of bricks made from compacted earth are presented on the gallery floor in three large squares. The geometric patterns are inspired by intricate floor designs from the Hamam al-Sammara in Gaza, one of the oldest bath houses in the region that was destroyed through bombardment by the Israeli military.

Each brick was made with a collective of craftsmen who work with adobe restoration in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, with whom the artist has been collaborating for many years.

This traditional adobe building technique is found in hot climates across various cultures and regions, where the handmade bricks are dried in the sun. Awartani's installation is made without a binding agent, impregnating the work with a dual sense of strength and fragility.



In a series of six framed studies, Awartani creates variations of the Ottoman influenced patterns in natural pigments painted on handmade cotton rag paper sourced from Jaipur in India. Both aspects of the work engage with absence and presence in an “attempt to retain traces of both disappearing architecture and intangible heritage”.

Dana Awartani

Left: Study Drawing 1 from the Standing by the
Ruins III series, 2025

Right: Study Drawing 2 from the Standing by the
Ruins III series, 2025

Gouache and walnut ink on handmade cotton
paper

Private Collection

Dana Awartani

Standing by the Ruins III, 2025

Compressed earth

Loaned courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery

[Continue moving clockwise around the exhibition
towards the next pair of framed paintings]

Dana Awartani

Left: Study Drawing 3 from the Standing by the
Ruins III series, 2025

Right: Study Drawing 4 from the Standing by the
Ruins III series, 2025

Gouache and walnut ink on handmade cotton
paper

Private collection

[Continue moving clockwise around the exhibition
towards the final pair of framed paintings]

Dana Awartani

Left: Study Drawing 5 from the Standing by the
Ruins III series, 2025

Right: Study Drawing 6 from the Standing by the
Ruins III series, 2025

Gouache and walnut ink on handmade cotton
paper

Private Collection

[Continue moving clockwise around the room, past the rear doors towards the final text panel]



In a series of works titled *Let me mend your broken bones* (2023), Awartani continues to address the destruction of cultural heritage across the Middle East. The artworks shown here reference specific locations in Syria that were destroyed between 2012 and 2016.

The accompanying texts list the exact site and time of these traumatic events, the cause and the group claiming responsibility.

Each colourful panel is composed of naturally dyed silk fabrics, handmade in Kerala, which have been stretched over wooden frames. The fabrics are treated with herbs, spices and plants that hold specific medicinal functions in South Asian and Arab cultures such as turmeric, holy basil, henna, jasmine, lotus and pomegranate. The artist tears holes into the fabric; each rupture corresponds to a site of destruction, which is then mended by an expert danner.

Awartani explains “It’s a way for me as an individual to mourn the loss of my own heritage...

the act of repairing something through the act of darning was my own way of mourning that loss”.

Dana Awartani

Let me mend your broken bones 16, 2023

Darning on medicinally dyed silk and paper

Loaned courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery

[From left to right]

Qalaat Salah Ed-Din

Al Haffah, Syria

Destroyed: February 2016

By: Unknown

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Sledgehammer

Saint Takla Monastery

Maaloula, Syria

Destroyed: April 2012

By: Al-Qaeda

Incident Type: Attack

Cause of Destruction: Arson, Vandalism

and Looting

Mar Odisho Church

Tel Tal, Syria

Destroyed: April 2015

By: ISIS

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Explosives

Mausoleum of Imam Nawawi

Nawa-Deraa, Syria

Destroyed: January 2014

By: Jabhat Al Nusra

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Explosives

Mar Giorgis Church

Tel Baz, Syria

Destroyed: March 2015

By: ISIS

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Arson

Mar Yunan Church

Tel Jazira, Syria

Destroyed: December 2015

By: ISIS

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Explosives

Mar Shimon Prusbai Church

Tel Kharita, Syria

Destroyed: February 2015

By: ISIS

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Vandalism

Mar Sleewa Church

Tel Talaa, Syria

Destroyed: December 2015

By: ISIS

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Explosives

Dana Awartani

Let me mend your broken bones 5, 2023

Darning on medicinally dyed silk and paper

Loaned courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery

[From left to right]

Ancient Apamea

Apamea, Syria

Destroyed: March 2012

By: Syrian Civil War

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Bombing

Tetrapylon

Palmyra, Syria

Destroyed: May 2015

By: ISIS

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Bombing

Uwais al-Qarni Mosque

Raqqa, Syria

Destroyed: May 2014

By: ISIS

Incident Type: Cultural Cleansing

Cause of Destruction: Bombing

The Bab al-Nasri area

Aleppo, Syria

Destroyed: July 2014

By: Syrian civil war

Incident Type: Destruction

Cause of Destruction: Fire and Shelling