

ALAA ITANI

A Momentum for the Horizon

23 September – 04 November, 2026

A Momentum for the Horizon is a visual meditation on the horizon as both boundary and promise, a visible line that remains perpetually distant. Bringing together reverse glass paintings of horizons, blurred landscapes, and moving cloud formations, Alaa Itani explores landscape as acts of temporal displacement.

Itani's relationship to landscapes is informed in part by his work as a researcher and archivist, through which he has closely encountered the work of Arab modernist painters. Among them is Lebanese artist Rafic Charaf (1932-2003), whose landscapes hold particular resonance. In the years surrounding the onset of the Lebanese Civil War, Charaf painted landscapes recalling his native Bekaa from his studio in Beirut. Removed from direct observation and filtered through memory, these landscapes became increasingly abstracted: less depictions of specific places than images suspended between recollection, distance, and the conditions of their present.

Itani's works enter into dialogue with this history across a distance of nearly fifty years. Rather than quoting Charaf or returning to his landscapes directly, he taps into a similar temporal threshold. Itani started this series in October 2023 a week before the tragic events. Landscape is not treated as a backdrop against which an event unfolds, but as a perceptual and temporal condition in itself. Across two generations and two distinct historical moments, ***A Momentum for the Horizon*** (2023) appears to precede, anticipate, or register something that has not yet fully arrived. Across the smaller works, clouds appear at different stages of becoming, barely forming, gathering at a distance, or assuming more defined shapes, as though forecasting a change still to come.

This sense of instability is embedded in Itani's process. Working with reverse glass painting, he applies ink to the glass before selectively wiping and erasing areas of the painted surface. Clouds, air, and expanses of sky emerge through these acts of subtraction, allowing unobstructed light to pass through what has been removed. At once transparent and obstructive, physically present yet visually elusive. Light travels through the transparencies, casting shadows and producing doubles of the painted image, appearing faded, partial, or momentarily displaced. The landscapes are not tied to specific locations or viewpoints. Instead, Itani approaches the horizon as a recurring condition: something perceived but never reached.

Artist Biography

Alaa Itani (b. 1996) is a Lebanese visual artist, researcher and archivist based in Beirut. Working across painting, drawing, and printmaking, his practice explores the relationships between perception, history, language, and systems of knowledge. His works often emerge at the threshold between representation and abstraction, taking the form of imagined landscapes, atmospheres—unstable spaces. Arab and Islamic intellectual and cultural histories inform his practice, not through the quotation of established visual motifs, but through an engagement with the epistemologies and modes of thought that have shaped visual and literary forms of expression. His background in theatre shapes his approach to composition, particularly through an interest in staging, silence, crescendo, atmosphere, and the temporal unfolding of an image.

His work has been exhibited at numerous institutions, including the Fondation Boghossian, Brussels; Fondation Taylor, Paris; Liverpool Arab Art Festival, Liverpool; Beirut Museum of Art (BeMA), Beirut; Beirut Printmaking Studio x Arab Image Foundation, Beirut; British Council Lebanon, Beirut; Galerie Tanit, Beirut; Galerie Janine Rubeiz, Beirut; no/mad utopia, Beirut and Cologne. He has participated in artist residencies and programmes including the Cité internationale des arts, Paris; Temporary Art Platform x Hospitalfield in Arbroath, Scotland; the Boghossian Foundation Residency, Brussels; CATAPULT.visual'arts programme, Beirut; Beirut Printmaking Studio, Beirut. In 2022, he was awarded the Boghossian Foundation Prize for Visual Arts. He holds a BFA in Plastic Arts from the Lebanese University (2022).