



Shadi Al-Atallah, *Sketchbook Study* (detail), 2025. Digital artwork, 728 x 1299 px.
Courtesy of the Artist and Elizabeth Xi Bauer, London.

COBRA

Shadi Al-Atallah

Elizabeth Xi Bauer, Deptford

28th November 2025 – 24th January 2026

Private View: 27th November 2025

Elizabeth Xi Bauer is pleased to present **COBRA**, an exhibition of new works by **Shadi Al-Atallah**, a London-based Saudi artist known for emotionally charged figurative paintings that inhabit liminal spaces between intimacy and conflict. While themes of identity, queerness, and spirituality remain central to his practice, *COBRA* marks a striking transformation—shifting from the painterly to the immersive, from the singular image to a multi-sensory world of video, sound, object, and light.

Al-Atallah's figures—often genderless, fragmented, or in states of transformation—resist binary readings and evoke a terrain of contradictions. Drawing on religious mythology, literature, science, and gender theory, his visual language returns to the body: naked, unbound, and in motion.

At the centre of *COBRA* are three large-scale video projections cast onto suspended curtains of fabric that curve and ripple through the gallery like the body of a serpent. These moving images draw from Al-Atallah's research into archival footage of queer men and

transfeminine people in Saudi Arabia dancing together—intimate, spontaneous gestures of joy, affection, and defiance. The footage, sourced from digital archives, speaks to lost histories and fragile forms of visibility. The exhibition title takes its name from the online alias *COBRA*, belonging to one of those featured in the footage, whom Al-Atallah later discovered, through comments online, had passed away.

In *COBRA*, these fragments of digital memory are heavily reworked and abstracted—transformed into a sensuous chiaroscuro of light and shadow that recalls the expressive brushwork of his paintings. “Although the show is honouring and reinterpreting, haunting is a very important element as well,” the artist explains. “I wanted it to feel like stepping into a portal where time is warped.” The degraded quality of the video and sound underscores this temporal dislocation, evoking what the artist calls a “resurrection of lost digital ghosts.” This sentiment anchors the exhibition’s conceptual stakes, inviting audiences to engage with histories that are both personal and political. These pieces resurrect forgotten images of queer intimacy and transform them into collective memory and embodied presence.

The projections are accompanied by a constellation of sculptural objects—a chair stacked with folded thobes perched on a tile; a stiffened traditional male Arab garment illuminated from within; and a speaker stand with a balloon machine blowing against a drum. These uncanny assemblages act as physical interruptions in the space, guiding movement and framing visibility. Nearby, a new series of acrylic paintings on canvas extends the exhibition’s visual and emotional vocabulary, returning to the body in motion and echoing themes of disappearance and resistance.

Together, the works in *COBRA* form an immersive installation that dissolves the boundaries between painting, cinema, and performance. Al-Atallah’s world-building invites viewers to inhabit a space where queer histories are simultaneously resurrected and reimagined, and where intimacy and erasure coexist as acts of resistance.

This exhibition is curated by Maria do Carmo M. P. de Pontes.

Notes to Editors

Shadi Al-Atallah (born 1994 in Khobar, Saudi Arabia) lives and works in London, UK.

Graduating with an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art London in 2021, Al-Atallah also holds a BA in illustration from the University of Arts London.

Al-Atallah has been a speaker in several artist talks including *Insights: Beyond Gender*, at the Tate Modern, London, in 2018 to more recently *Contemporary Art Talks*, at Goldsmiths University, London earlier this year. Al-Atallah’s works have been featured across various publications including *The Black Recovery Stories* by The New York Times Style Magazine, in 2021 and in the anthology by Oneworld Publication, *Black Futures*, in 2020.

A participant in various projects and commissions, Al-Atallah's works have been included in *CommuneEAST x Selfridges* project and *Intersect at Cambridge University Queens' Art Festival*; in 2019. In 2018 his works were part of *LDN WMN*, a Tate Collective public commission. Additionally in 2018, Al-Atallah was commissioned by musician Kanye West to produce the cover art for his album *XCXY*.

Al-Atallah's works have been displayed in group exhibitions worldwide including, Perrotin, Hong Kong; Blank Projects, Cape Town, South Africa; CFHILL, Stockholm, Sweden; Guts Gallery, London; Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London; Steve Turner Gallery, Los Angeles; Andrew Kreps, New York, USA, and Kasmin Gallery, New York, among others. In 2018, Al-Atallah debuted his first solo exhibition *Roadblocks at Cob Gallery*, London. Since, the artist has exhibited in various solo exhibitions including, *Fuck I'm Stuck*, at J Hammond Projects, London; *Fistfight*, at Guts Gallery, London; *Rapture*, at Steve Turner Gallery, Los Angeles; and earlier this year *Hole*, at Niru Ratnam Gallery, London.

Exhibiting in institutional exhibitions, Al-Atallah's works were displayed in *I'm Not Afraid Of Ghosts*, at the Palazzo Tiepolo Passi, Italy, in 2024. In 2023, the artists exhibited in *Unruly Bodies*, at Goldsmiths CCA, London, and *Dreaming of Home*, at The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York.

Al-Atallah's works are in the collection of LYRA Art Foundation.

COBRA is Al-Atallah's first solo exhibition with Elizabeth Xi Bauer after participating in the Group exhibition *Summer Show*, earlier this year.

Shadi Al-Atallah: COBRA will run from 28th November 2025 – 24th January 2026, at Elizabeth Xi Bauer's Deptford location, open Wednesday through to Sunday, 12 – 6 pm or by appointment. A Private View will be held on 27th November 2025, 6 – 8 pm.

Gallery locations:

20-22 Exmouth Market, London, EC1R 4QE

Fuel Tank, 8-12 Creekside, London, SE8 3DX

For further information, press inquiries, or to schedule a visit, contact Paige Ashley at paige@lizxib.com

A Dropbox with additional press material can be found here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/5lkop7umgqrtx83y26m8z/AHkpwiaHi-jE5QijVnEWYJg?rlkey=7dod929ijm75z01r6cwhrz37w&st=ie3zi91q&dl=0>

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ELIZABETH Xi BAUER

Image credit: Shadi Al-Atallah, *Sketchbook Study* (detail), 2025. Digital artwork, 728 x 1299 px. Courtesy of the Artist and Elizabeth Xi Bauer, London.