

EXPLORE A LAND AS BIG AS HER SKIN

Please leave in gallery for others to enjoy.

AN INVITATION TO EXPLORE BY LAILA GARZÓN DEGUER, LATINAS IN BRISTOL CIC

It's always exciting to step into someone else's way of seeing the world — to discover stories and ideas through their eyes. Al Solh invites us to do this through realities and perspectives that are not our own.

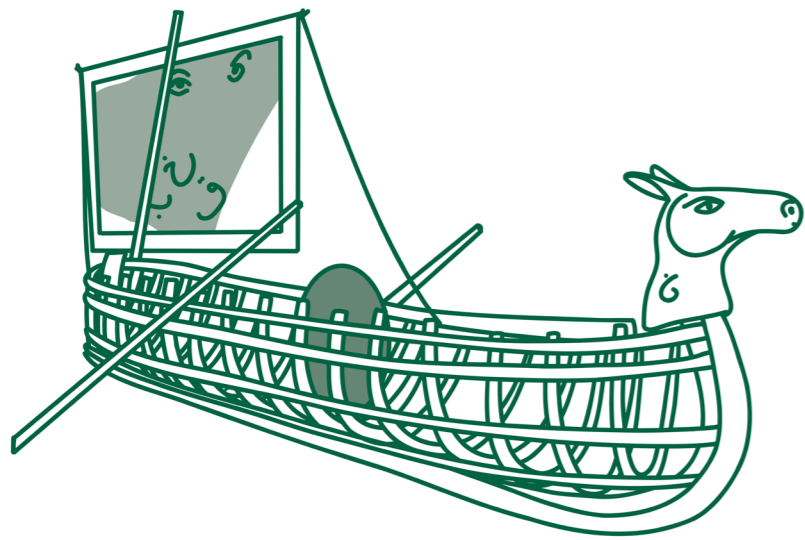
There is a powerful feminine presence at the heart of the exhibition. Al Solh's figures are strong, warrior-like, resilient, and unapologetically natural. Her work brings to mind *Women Who Run with the Wolves* (1989) — a universe of myths and stories about women's desires, adventures, lessons and shared wisdom. I read this book a long time ago, and its many female characters navigating life, surviving and transforming, still live within me. There is that same wild energy here. An energy that refuses to be contained which reminds us of the intuition and ancestral strength women carry within their bodies.

Al Solh paints in bold reds, purples and greens that feel alive and charged with energy. Colour here is not decoration; it's a language. It weaves together shared memories, identity, and personal imagination, where emotion and storytelling move hand in hand. Her tactile, layered surfaces and gestures also tell a fluid and organic story. She works with wood and textiles — honest, grounded materials that can be strong and solid, yet also delicate and vulnerable. In many ways these materials mirror our own journeys as humans and especially as immigrants: resilient, adaptable, sometimes fragile, but always carrying stories within.

Her work resonates deeply with us at Latinas in Bristol. Our cultures are rich in colour, texture, rhythm and diversity. Our hands are tools of memory and resistance. We feel stronger when we create together and learn from one another. There is joy in that collective creativity, but also purpose. Like Al Solh, we see art as a powerful way to challenge silence, question dominant narratives, and give voice to our roots — especially to those stories that have been overlooked or unheard. Her exhibition feels magnetic and fresh, inviting us to return again and again, to discover new layers, new connections and new meanings.

Laila Garzón Deguer is an Argentinian producer and community organiser. She is the founder and Director of Latinas in Bristol CIC, an organisation that works with Latin American women in Bristol to foster integration, strengthen mental health and improve their quality of life. She loves to bring creative ideas to life across radio, TV and live events.

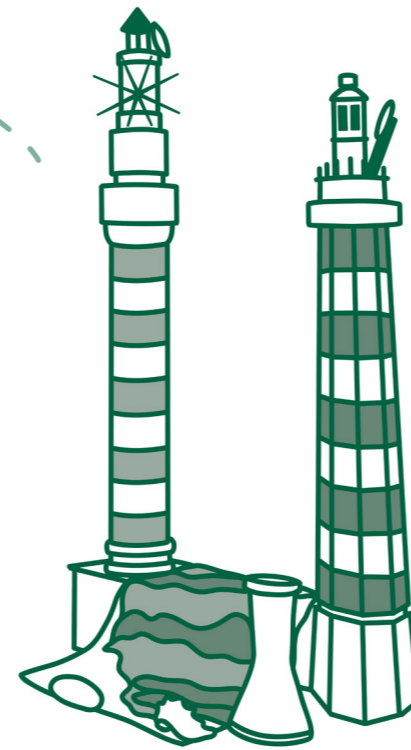
We invite you to engage with Al Solh's artwork and to share your responses with others, enjoying different ways in which to experience the work.



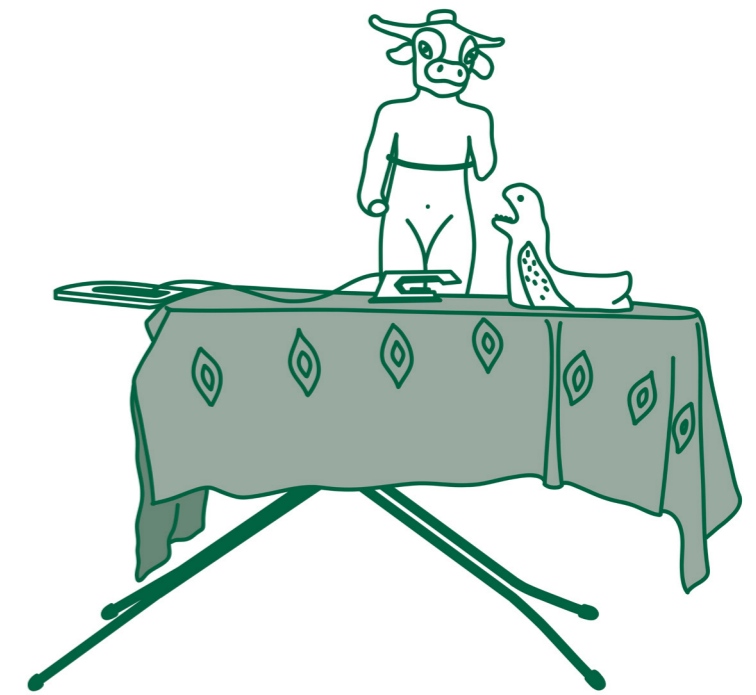
As you stand before this open wooden boat, what personal memories or stories come to mind as you imagine who this vessel might carry? Where has it travelled to? Where else could it go?



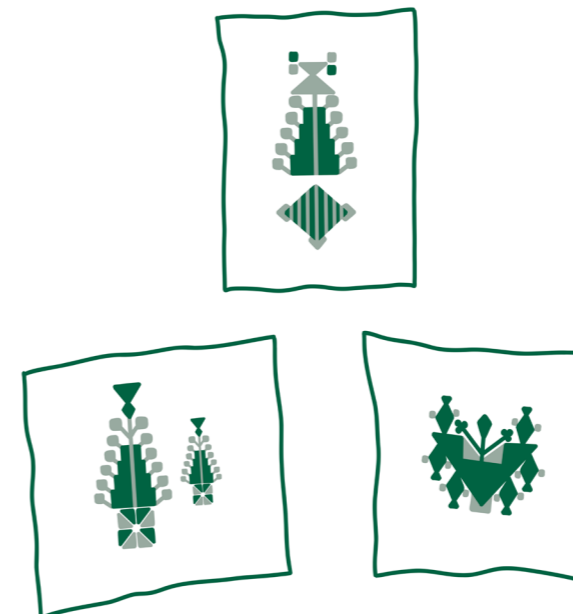
There are many references to music, dance and performance in Al Solh's work such as in ***Flying, clapping, grooving, tasting love***. If this work had a melody, what would it sound like? Can you clap the tempo of the rhythm you imagined?



Elissa's Room retells the legend of Elissa, the Phoenician Princess of Tyre who founds and becomes Queen of Carthage. What do the objects tell you about Elissa's life and journey?



In ***Europa's Bedroom***, Al Solh reimagines the Phoenician myth of Princess Europa who was kidnapped by Zeus. Here, the story is retold through a feminist lens. If you could rewrite a myth, or create a new legend, how would the story be told? You can write and draw your own myth using the tools available in our community workshop.



Each variation of the cypress tree motif in ***Red Cypress Trees*** comes from a different region in Palestine. The tree is a symbol of resistance and hope. If you had a personal symbol of resistance and hope, what would it look like?

MANY VOICES

Many of the works in *A land as big as her skin* give a voice to people who are either displaced by conflict and war, or silenced by oppression. Below are some of the many voices that have collaboratively contributed to Al Solh's work.

The series *I strongly believe in our right to be frivolous* (2012 – present) includes portraits of women from the WOOM collective, a group who give spoken word performances and poetry readings. Al Solh wrote down their stories as quotes or illustrated them in drawings, capturing their unique experiences. The title is taken from a text written by Palestinian poet and author Mahmoud Darwish.

The magazine *Not Only Arabic (NOA)* is a project created by Al Solh with fellow artists, curators and academics. There are currently four editions in circulation – some of which you can read in the exhibition. A fifth edition (in the making) will explore 'lost spaces', an idea that can be understood in

different ways. It could represent a physical space that no longer exists, such as a school, shop or occupied country. For Al Solh 'lost spaces' reflects the act of being forced to leave the places you love.

Many of Al Solh's earlier works (not included in this exhibition) also include collaborations, such as her series of recreated ceremonial tents from the Qajar-era from Iran which have been embroidered by women across the Arab world. In the tent *Mina El Shourouk ila Al Fahmah* (2019) – shown at Arnolfini in 2023 – a sound recording is played through a loudspeaker featuring the voice of Lebanese singer Rima Khcheich, mixed with the voices of two Iranian women. In the recent commission *A night hour, as long as night* for Artes Mundi in Cardiff, Al Solh includes a recording of improvised songs sung by the Oasis One World Choir in multiple languages including Arabic, Swahili, and Welsh.



Explore *A land as big as her skin* can be downloaded on our website or listened to as an audio guide using the QR code.

Please return the materials and this guide after you have explored the exhibition.

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