

NAGEL GALERIE DRAXLER



ABDULNASSER GHAREM

SOLO EXHIBITION

Opening: Thursday, September 10, 2026, 6 – 10 pm

Exhibition: September 11 – November 14, 2026

Galerie Nagel Draxler Berlin

Weydingerstraße 2/4

10178 Berlin

Exhibition Design by Heimo Zobernig

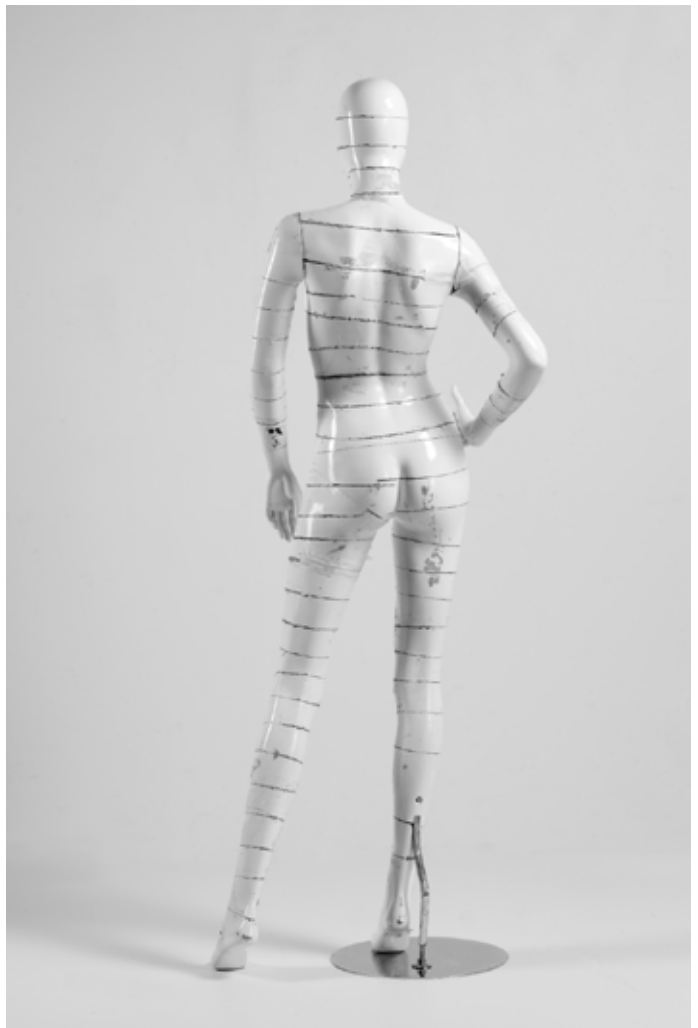


Aniconism, 2015 – 2026

Diasec photographic print, 150 × 200 cm (59.1 × 78.7 in.)

This solo exhibition by Abdunnasser Gharem presents three new projects from 2026: **Aniconism**, **The Unscored Goal**, and **The Image is a Public Menace** (Neon). These works emerge from a shared question: how can an artwork reveal the conditions of power without directly colliding with it? **Aniconism** proposes an aesthetics that operates within the conditions of the existing order, not to challenge it, but to make it visible through what it imposes on appearance.

From this tension emerges a hybrid art that moves beyond the binaries of East and West, self and other, inside and outside, allowing cultural difference to produce new knowledge and meanings.



Aniconism, 2015 - 2026

Number of Parts: 56 / Age Group: Adults / Style: Standing / Gender: Female / Material: Fiberglass Mannequin

Type: Full-Body / Height: 176 cm (69.29 in.) / Shoulder Width: 42 cm (16.54 in.) / Bust: 86 cm (33.86 in.)

Waist: 62 cm (24.41 in.) / Hip: 86 cm (33.86 in.)

In early 2015, Abdalnasser Gharem found himself in Dubai trying to find a female mannequin. For reasons that would become central to the project, he was unable to obtain such a model in Saudi Arabia.

In **Aniconism**, the mannequin moves through contexts that reveal bureaucracies, morals, expectations, laws, historical understandings, and geographies that push and pull against one another. From the shipping company in Dubai to the studio in Riyadh, then to the drawing rooms in Vienna and the copyist inside the museum. the mannequin reveals the codes and forms of governance that regulate social and gendered life. Through the mannequin's journey across multiple countries, it exposes tensions and contradictions that destabilise simple ideas about where we stand today.

After the shipment of the mannequin from Dubai to Saudi Arabia was refused, the artist was forced to cut it apart and number its pieces so that it could be shipped.

The cutting was an act of violence, but it was also the means that enabled the body to pass. In this sense, the conditions themselves sculpted the mannequin; the cuts, fractures, numbers, and marks became material traces of what actually happened.

Its reassembly by the artists during the drawing class, on the other hand, became an act of care and an attempt to reshape the body and restore it, as far as possible, to its former state after the conditions of passage had forced it to fragment. The mannequin was no longer merely a substitute for the human body, but became a material record of the systems that attempted to regulate its appearance and passage, carrying on its surface the traces of its contact with them.

The absence of a real body also becomes significant here, because that absence makes the mechanisms of representation more visible; precisely because the mannequin is not a living body, it reveals the conditions that determine how a body may appear, be represented, and pass.



Aniconism, 2026
Still from single-channel video

Ghareem asked the copyist Marcela Chiriach, who trained at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, to translate the photograph of the **Aniconism** scene into an oil painting based on Martin Ferdinand Quadal's 1787 painting, *The Life Drawing Room of the Vienna Academy in the St. Anna Building*.

In doing so, the photograph no longer merely documents a memory but enters the official narrative of art history and its institutional memory.

The body that was unable to cross geography intact finally finds a passage into art history through one of its oldest media, through which the body was granted legitimacy in European art: academic painting.

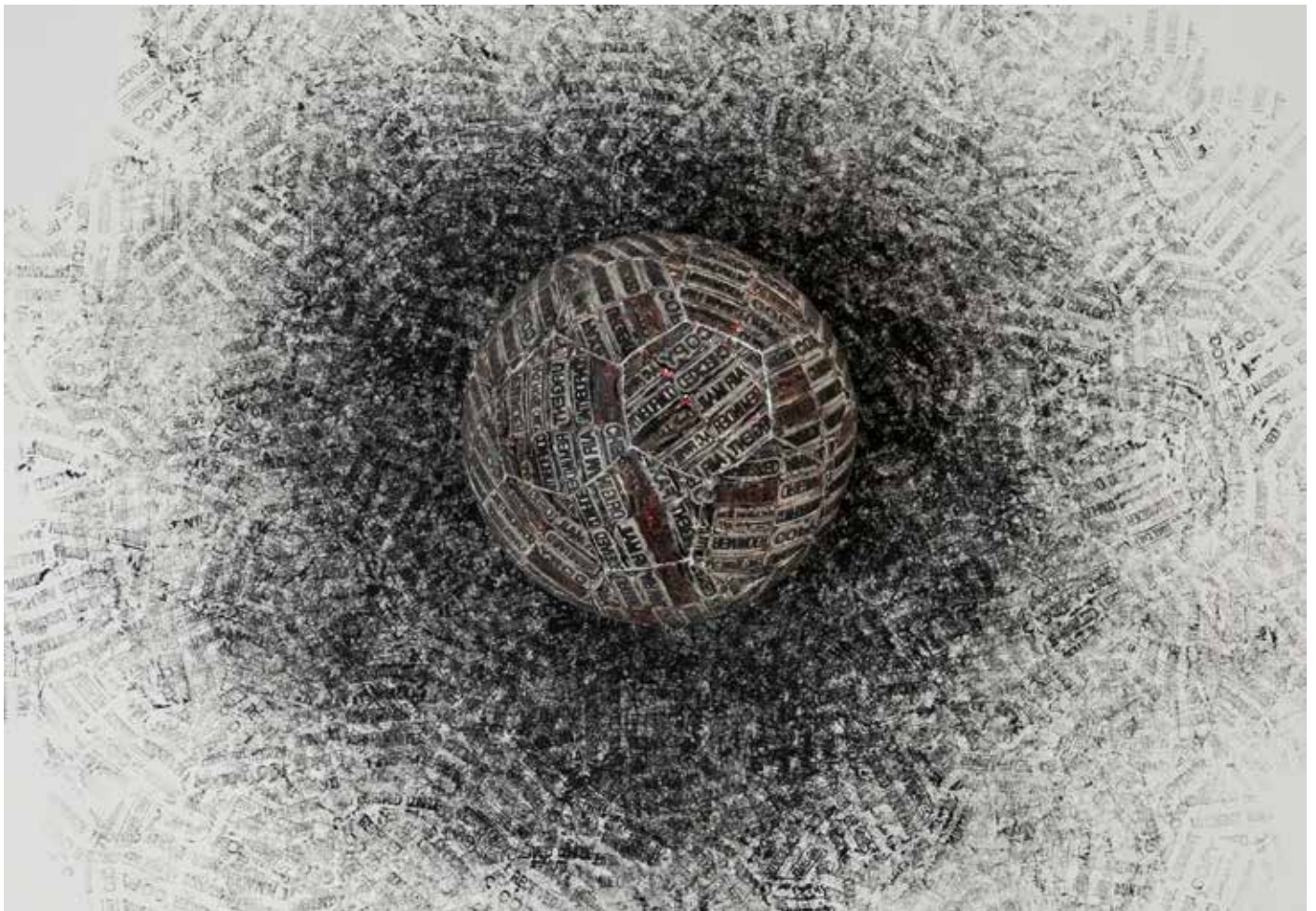
But this representation is not without a price; every possibility of being seen comes at a cost, and that cost reveals the conditions, restrictions, and negotiations a body must pass through in order to become visible.

This statement draws in part on Nato Thompson's essay *The Moth and the Mannequin*, written on Abdulnasser Ghareem's **Aniconism, 2026**.

The Unscored Goal, 2026

What happens when an image becomes a threat, and what happens when power needs an image of its own? The image occupies a contradictory position: it may be prohibited as a threat, or it may cross borders as capital and a tool of influence. In football, power does not need to create the audience; it enters the scene where the audience already exists and inherits its emotion: love, belonging, memory, and loyalty, in pursuit of global visibility.

What unites these practices is a growing concern that sport has come to grant authoritarian regimes a form of soft power; a power that strengthens their repressive grip domestically and expands their influence abroad, through sovereign wealth funds and major corporations, taking advantage of football's immense popularity.



THE UNSCORED GOAL , 2026

Football covered with official rubber stamps

Diameter: approximately 21.6–22.3 cm Weight: 410–450 g Pressure: 0.6–1.1 atmospheres

These investments form part of a broader strategy for managing public image and expanding influence beyond national borders.

Within this framework, one of the tools takes the form of "Character References," endorsements issued by iconic sporting figures who lend their credibility and popular appeal to entities or narratives that extend beyond sport itself.

The greater the investment in visibility, the greater the possibility of exposure. From here, the work poses its central question: has the intended goal actually been achieved, or have these investments revealed what they sought to conceal? The ball materially embodies this tension; the bureaucratic stamps cover its surface and transform it from a tool for scoring a goal into a surface that may obscure the goal itself.



THE UNSCORED GOAL , 2026

Ink impressions on Bamboo (Sumi) paper, produced by kicking a football covered with official rubber stamps and coated in ink onto the paper
303 × 100 cm, (119.3 × 39.4 in).