

A DIVINE ART



Through her art Zarah Hussain incorporates Islamic geometry as a way to express spirituality and abstract notions of love, music and beauty. Jennifer Copley meets the artist in London

“I think... I *think* I'm the first person that's ever done digital Islamic art in this way. I think I am. I don't think anyone has animated the patterns before the way that I have done,” explains Zarah Hussain. I am speaking to the artist at London's Barbican, in front of her sculpture, *Numina*, exhibited from 1 October 2015 – 26 January 2016, one of the first pieces in a new commissioning programme that sees artists respond to the Barbican's public spaces. It was made in collaboration with the Guildhall School of Music &

Drama. *Numina* is large and otherworldly; an unexpected discovery to be made in the Brutalist building's dark maze-like alcoves. Changing patterns of digitally mapped shapes are projected onto a sculptural grid, against an electronic soundscape. The effect is stunning: a gentle kaleidoscopic blooming of interlacing geometric forms in electric colours. Both celebratory and meditative, the piece has a transformative effect. Hussain explains that “*Numina*” means divinity, “the idea is that the geometric pattern allows a meditative state, an ability to distance yourself from the everyday concerns of life and then allow yourself to go into a higher or ‘mindful’ place. It