

'Brave ones' of Pakistani art rewarded with show in Dubai

Fatma Shah loves art. She also loves Pakistan. So it made sense to her to embrace her two passions in a single event, and has created a showcase for Pakistani artists who are rising above the troubles in their home country. The emirate does not have a gallery committed to Pakistani art, Ms Shah said. Art from the country "occasionally makes its way here in drips and drabs", she said, but only a handful of artists exhibit in the UAE. She and a friend, Rolla Khadduri, are setting up their exhibition in conjunction with the Bastakiya Art Fair this week. The fair at Bastakiya runs concurrently with the emirate's annual cultural highlight, Art Dubai, and will showcase contemporary art until Monday. Ms Shah, a former finance worker from Lahore who now lives in Jumeirah, said she and Ms Khadduri received half of the funding to stage the show from Abraaj Capital, a Dubai-based investment firm. They contributed the other half themselves. Five Pakistani artists will be in Dubai to participate in the Bastakiya show: the writer Mohammed Hanif, whose first novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* was shortlisted for the 2008 Guardian First Book Award; the actress Nimra Bucha, who has performed in plays written by her husband, Hanif; the filmmaker Shireen Pasha, who is widely acclaimed for her treatment of social issues in her documentaries and dramas; the author HM Nakvi, whose novel *Home Boy* will be launched at the event; and the academic Mohammed Sayed, an professor at the National Academy of the Performing Arts in Karachi. The Bastakiya exhibition is entitled *Jadeed* the Urdu and Arabic word for modern. Tomorrow, Thursday, Hanif will read from *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. His wife, Bucha will then perform an excerpt from Hanif's play, *The Dictator's Wife*. On Friday, Pasha will screen her 1991 documentary, *Life in the Walled City of Lahore*.

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Women fund outlet for artists still working in troubled country

Anealla Safdar

DUBAI // Fatma Shah loves art. She also loves Pakistan.

So it made sense to her to embrace her two passions in a single event, and has created a showcase for Pakistani artists who are rising above the troubles in their home country.

"These are the brave ones who are still in Pakistan and yet they are able to think creatively," Ms Shah said of the artists she will present to a Dubai audience.

The exhibition, while promoting a positive image of Pakistan, does not ignore the turmoil in the country, Ms Shah said.

"The situation is very disturbing; of course it is. When you speak to people, of course you get affected, but life has to go on."

The emirate does not have a gallery committed to Pakistani art, Ms Shah said. Art from the country "occasionally makes its way here in drips and drabs", she said, but only a handful of artists exhibit in the UAE.

She and a friend, Rolla Khadduri,

are setting up their exhibition in conjunction with the Bastakiya Art Fair this week.

"These are young Pakistani artists that people in the UAE have probably not seen before," Ms Shah said. "It's very significant and relevant to the environment of Pakistan today. Rather than being more decorative; it's meaningful."

The fair at Bastakiya runs concurrently with the emirate's annual cultural highlight, Art Dubai, and will showcase contemporary art until Monday.

Ms Shah, a former finance worker from Lahore who now lives in Jumeirah, said she and Ms Khadduri received half of the funding to stage the show from Abraaj Capital, a Dubai-based investment firm. They contributed the other half themselves.

Ms Khadduri, a native of Lebanon, has a passion for all things Pakistani, having lived there before relocating to Dubai.

"It's wonderful to have representation from so many different Pakistani artists, urban and rural," she said.

"It is of a positive nature that this is coming out of Pakistan and you will really hear their voices come through. It's very moving."

Five Pakistani artists will be in Dubai to participate in the Bastakiya show: the writer Muham-

med Hanif, whose first novel *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* was shortlisted for the 2008 Guardian First Book Award; the actress Nimra Bucha, who has performed in plays written by her husband, Hanif; the filmmaker Shireen Pasha, who is widely acclaimed for her treatment of social issues in her documentaries and dramas; the author HM Nakvi, whose novel *Home Boy* will be launched at the event; and the academic Mohammed Sayed, an professor at the National Academy of the Performing Arts in Karachi.

The Bastakiya exhibition is entitled *Jadeed* - the Urdu and Arabic word for modern.

Tomorrow, Thursday, Hanif will read from *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. His wife, Bucha will then perform an excerpt from Hanif's play, *The Dictator's Wife*.

On Friday, Pasha will screen her 1991 documentary, *Life in the Walled City of Lahore*.

"It will be so creative and dynamic," Ms Shah said. "You can see how it is represented in their work."

Twenty-four works will be offered for sale by contemporary artists, including Usman Saeed and Saba Qizilbash, during the event.

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