

Field for a new crop

At this time of the year, artists, either Emiratis or foreigners, are restless. A group of them are left alone with their tools of painting and brushes, producing new collections, while others select a unique bunch from their photography or any other art they find extraordinary and showcase it at the Bastakiya Art Fair (BAF) - an event that has made Dubai a hub for art and artists. Emirati art is glowing at the BAF 2010, in its fourth edition this year, and is represented by a number of promising Emirati artists such as the sisters Meera and Maitha Al Huraiz. Meera practises an array of arts, including painting, mixed media and photography. Asked if she does it as a career or just for fun, she says: "Well, both actually. Career should be pleasurable at the end and I find so much pleasure in producing art." Regarding her role at the BAF 2010, she says that she will be showcasing at both the Emirati House and XVA galleries. "However this will be my first participation as I didn't take part in any BAF event before," she said. "Being an artist I always look forward to gain international recognition. I also would love to shed light on things that matter."

There are 1 clipping(s) in 2 part(s) with summary available in: English

Published on: 05/03/2010 Name: Gulf News
Section: Weekend Review Country: United Arab Emirates
Page: 14, 15 Language: English
Size: 133 cc, 133 cc Circulation: 120,978
Ad Value: \$9,240.84



Field for a new crop

The 2010 Bastakiya Art Fair promises to be a springboard for emerging talents



Works from several galleries, such as this one from Heritage House (above left), are part of the latest edition of the Bastakiya Art Fair. The event offers young artists such as Maitha Al Huraiz — whose 'Behind Closed Doors' (above right) will be on display — a chance to gain international exposure

By FATMA SALEM
Features Writer

At this time of the year, artists, either Emiratis or foreigners, are restless. A group of them are left alone with their tools of painting and brushes, producing new collections, while others select a unique bunch from their photography or any other art they find extraordinary and showcase it at the Bastakiya Art Fair (BAF) — an event that has made Dubai a hub for art and artists.

Emirati art is glowing at the BAF 2010, in its fourth edition this year, and is represented by a number of promising Emirati artists such as the sisters Meera and Maitha Al Huraiz.

Meera practises an array of arts, including painting, mixed media and photography. Asked if she does it as a career or just for fun, she says: "Well, both actually. Career should be pleasurable at the end and I find so much pleasure in producing art."

Regarding her role at the BAF 2010, she says that she will be showcasing at both the Emirati House and XVA galleries. "However this will be my first participation as I didn't take part in any BAF event before," she said. "Being an artist I always look forward to gain international recognition. I also would love to shed light on things that matter."

What is her impression about the present art movement that the UAE is witnessing? "I think it's commercial. I wish we would encourage art practices rather than art exhibits," she says.

Meera has participated in several shows in the UAE and abroad. She recently participated in *Reflective Mirror*, an exhibition held at the United Nations headquarters in New York. In 2009, her works were on display in shows at Venice that coincided with the Venice Biennale. Besides these, she has been regularly participating in shows at Dubai's galleries since 2008.

Her sister Maitha also practises photography, painting and mixed media. "I wish to pursue other disciplines but that will take a while," she says. Maitha's attachment to art wasn't born all of a sudden but that passion had been growing within her.

"I've always felt that art forms an integral part of my personality. I believe I was born with this passion. I used to draw ever since I was little," she says. "Art to me is exactly like yoga. I do it to relax because I enjoy it. I don't think I will ever make a living out of it. However, I am planning to pursue a career in the creative world but art will always remain an outlet for energy. I have this unexplainable passion, a desire to create things. It makes me euphoric."

At the BAF this year, she will be represented by XVA Gallery. "That's true. I will be participating with XVA Gallery, which is representing me. I will probably display a couple of artworks that are still in the process." This is the second time Maitha is participating. "Indeed, I was part of the student show at the BAF in 2009."

Maitha has shown her artworks in several cities such as Abu Dhabi, Venice, Boston and New York.

Maitha is more drawn to the creativity of the Middle Eastern art and artists. "I admire Takashi Murakami, Connie Imboden, Hayv Kahraman, Ayad Alkadhi, Hassan Hajaj, Farhad Fozouni, Farhad Moshiri, Halim Al Karim. I find myself more into Middle Eastern art. My intention is always to entertain, amuse or provoke."

Asked about her artistic concept in general — any particular philosophy she follows and applies, she replies: "If design follows form, art follows the heart. That I think would define what I do."

Regarding the art scene in the UAE, she says: "There is so much attention on this area lately. But sometimes I think that it is the wrong type of attention, or the wrong type of approach."

Salma Nasib, another Emirati artist, has recently produced a body of work that involves using graphite and charcoal as mediums. She creates drawings on wood surfaces in an abstract and surreal imagery and uses symbols to represent her ideas and notions.

Regarding her early introduction to art, she says: "I've been in love with drawing since I was a child and kept improving my skills through observation and practice."

Most of what I used to draw though was Japanese manga and anime characters as I was influenced by them. Now that I'm studying art at a university, I'm exploring my capabilities and options to promote myself as an emerging artist in the UAE."

Nasib pursues her career in art seriously and prepares herself for more exposure and opportunities in the future.

At the same time she enjoys what she does and creates art pieces for the sake of creating them.

Asked about her role this year and whether she took part in the last BAF events, she says: "I'll be submitting my recent works that are a part of a series entitled *Hers*. Hopefully I'll get a good exposure and fruitful feedback from the public. I've never taken part before."

Her plans revolve around many things and perhaps the most important, as she puts it, is "learning and sharing my knowledge and experience of the art world with others through teaching".

Nasib showcased her art at various in-



ternational venues such as Dubai, Venice, Boston, New York city and Chicago. Many artists have captured her imagination.

She says: "My recent works are influenced by Audrey Kawasaki and Melissa Haslam in terms of technique and subject. I also admire Blaine Fontana as a mixed-media artist who uses various printmaking techniques in his works."

Regarding her philosophy about art, she says: "We are all authors of our lives... We all interact with each other in one way or another and get influenced by each other's emotions, notions and actions. I'd like to represent these kinds of emotions and thoughts through art and throw out what life has taught me so far in an interesting and different perspective [in the hope that] perhaps it benefits someone else."

The art movement, according to Nasib, is booming. "It will grow dramatically with the rise in Emirati artists collaborating with resident artists. [This growth] will further enhance the UAE as a centre for art not just in the region but in the world. The next generation will pleasantly surprise us all," she says.

American artist Kelly Crosby paints and crafts. "I love being creative. Dubai is a great place to be an artist," she says. Asked if she works as a full-time artist, she replies: "I have a day job of course... I hope to be a full-time artist. But it is also my outlet for fun, relaxation and creativity."

What is her collection for the BAF this year? "I'll be showing my work as an individual artist. I wanted to show some contemporary Islamic art for this particular fair. This is the first year I am participating," Crosby says.

What does she look forward to accomplishing as an artist? "I wish to get more exposure and learn from other artists who have been in the field longer," she says.

Crosby has had the chance to showcase her work in many places. "I've had some



Clockwise from top: A work by American artist Kelly Crosby, an image by Sauce, and 'Metamorphosis' by Meera Al Huraiz

shows in the United States, my home country, but I've also shown my work in art shows in Dubai and Abu Dhabi."

Asked if there is any artist she admires, she says: "There are many indeed, such as Mohammad Ali, a British graffiti artist, Peter Gould, a wonderful graphic designer from Australia and Haj Noorideen, a Chinese calligrapher and watercolour artist. All of them are taking traditional and modern methods of art and blending them beautifully."

Asked if there is an artistic message she would like to convey, she replies: "The message I wish to send is the importance of beauty in life and how that beauty is a reflection of God's love and mercy for hu-

manity. Creating art is just one method of bringing about and celebrating that beauty in the world."

What is her artistic concept? Is there any particular philosophy she follows and applies? "I always listen to my creative voice. I never ever deny the inspiration inside me."

Asked about her opinion of the art movement in the UAE, she says: "The art movement here is wonderful. It's vibrant, young and eclectic. I can definitely see the UAE, and Dubai in particular, as the future art capital of the Middle East."

The Bastakiya Art Fair is on at Dubai from March 15-21, 2010.

On the agenda

The Bastakiya Art Fair 2010, which starts from March 15 and goes on till March 21, is packed with a busy schedule.

Monday March 15

11am: Official opening and press preview (Location: Central Plaza, Bastakiya)

Midday: Performance by Sadek Rahim (Location: Creek Plaza, Bastakiya)

6-8pm: BAF opening reception (Location: Central Plaza, Bastakiya)

Wednesday March 17

6-8pm: Tashkeel reception and Haiti fundraiser (Location: House 67, Bastakiya)

Thursday March 18

10.30-11.30am: Brunch talks chaired by Rose Eisa, with speakers Dr Venetia Porter, Curator at the British Museum and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Director of the Serpentine Gallery, London (Location: XVA Gallery)

Friday March 19

7pm: Book reading by Mohammad Hanif of 'A Case of Exploding Mangoes' and the derived performance, 'The Dictator's Wife' by Nimra Bucha (Location: XVA Gallery)

Saturday March 20

10.30-11.30am: Brunch talks chaired by Rose Eisa with speaker Anna Somers Cocks, Editor-in-Chief of 'The Art Newspaper', and Nour Wali, independent curator (Location: XVA Gallery)

Sunday March 21

6pm: Film screening of 'Our Feelings Took the Pictures: Open Shutters Iraq', directed by Maysoon Pachachi (Location: XVA Gallery)

Monday March 22

10.30-11.30am: Brunch talks chaired by Rose Eisa with artists' panel discussion with artists from Iran and the Arab world (Location: XVA Gallery)

Tuesday March 23

7pm: Film screening of 'Life in the Walled City of Lahore' by Shireen Pasha (Location: XVA Gallery)

Circulation and ad data supplied by:

MediaSource

MEDIAWATCH Middle East