

Art Festival Ropes in Loads of Budding Talent

If fringe can be this big, then better be on the fringe. Designed to complement the emirate's annual art spectacle, Art Dubai, the Bastakiya Art Fair (BAF) is leaving no stone unturned to be a major spectacle in itself – albeit for the lesser mortals. Beginning today under the patronage of Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, Dubai's only fringe art event will run until March 21, overlapping Art Dubai – which runs from 17 to 20 – from either side. BAF is an international platform for the budding local and regional artists to showcase their work and get noticed. As well as promoting contemporary Middle Eastern art, BAF – set in Dubai's unique heritage cluster of Al Batakiya, also provides an exclusive preview of Arab culture and architecture. A pet product of Mona Housar, the owner of XVA Gallery, BAF 2010 is promising to be different from previous events in ways more than one.

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"The fun of BAF is coming and getting the unexpected."
 — ROSIE HAYES, CO-DIRECTOR AND FAIR ORGANISER OF BAF

NATION 7



Artist Hadi Baledi looks at his work just after fixing the exhibits. — KT photos by Rahul Gajjar



Artist Polly Becker explaining to a worker how to display the art.

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Shafaat Ahmed

DUBAI — If fringe can be this big, then better be on the fringe.

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The biggest difference this year is the name itself, changed from Creek Art Fair in 2006 to Bastakiya Art Fair. Apart from this, BAF has some new concepts, such as curator spaces.

Rosie Hayes, Co-Director and Fair Organiser of BAF 2010, explains what this new concept means: "In past years, galleries played curator roles apart from hosting the works of artists, but this year we have specially designed curator spaces along with participating galleries and individuals. Also, this year, as part of the same idea, we have



national houses and that's where local people have curated shows which would represent a nationality – so we have, for example an Iraqi House, an Emirati House, a Pakistani House, a Russian House etc. And that's a new concept."

With hundreds of artists, galleries and curators participating, BAF 2010 also promises to be bigger than its predecessors.

"There are hundreds of artists taking part in the festival. We have a group show from XVA which will showcase works by known artists like Haleem Al Karim. We also have new artist like Karen Croft, who is a German artist based in Dubai. So it's fun to showcase her works and other budding talents, who are exhibiting here for the first time," said Hayes.

As Art Dubai hosts only established artists, a need was felt in the artistic circles to build a platform to promote

upcoming talents. BAF not only promotes local talent and helps nurture the atmosphere to develop artists but it also highlights Middle Eastern art – both contemporary and traditional.

There are ample manifestations of BAF's role as a facilitator of the young and rising artists from across the region. The emerging groups to watch out for are: Curator Leo Lefort's bunch of talented Ethiopian artists who have never been represented before. Another curator Brahim Alaoui has brought some North African artists from Morocco and the neighbouring countries to highlight their works.

"The whole platform of BAF is a good example of us nurturing local talents. As a gallery, the XVA who are both participants as well as the organisers, we are helping new artists.

"We have two fantastic young Emirati artists, sisters Maitha and Ameera, who showcased their work at Venice this year. Although they are very young, it's nice to see them being promoted at an early stage of their careers," added Hayes, who also the director of XVA Gallery.

"The fun of BAF is coming and getting the unexpected, because you are exploring exhibitions which are taking place in houses that are normally closed for public," concluded Hayes.

The entry to BAF is free, and apart from having art exhibitions and installations, it also has movie screenings, book readings, performance art and brunch talks by leading art authorities such as Anna Somers Cocks and Hans Ulbrich Obrist.



Katya Traboulsi's creation being installed at the Fair.



A couple takes a look at some of the artwork on display.

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Inside



AL BASTAKIYA
ART FAIR
DUBAI

15-21 March 2010

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ART FAIR
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TODAY**

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