

ANTHOLOGY OF ARTISTRY

THE ONGOING EXHIBITION AT THE FARJAM COLLECTION "NUJOOM: CONSTELLATIONS OF ARAB ART" SHOWCASES THE WORKS OF SOME OF THE FOREMOST MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ARAB ARTISTS, PROVIDING A RINGSIDE PERSPECTIVE OF MODERN ARAB ART

by Indrani Mishra



For the lover of art, the Farjam Collection at the DIFC is a must-see. Showcasing the private collection of Dr Farhad Farjam, the gallery brings in a huge variety of artworks from across the world which Dr Farjam, an avid aficionado of art, has collected over the years. No doubt, each of the collections displayed reflects the seasoned taste of a serious art collector.

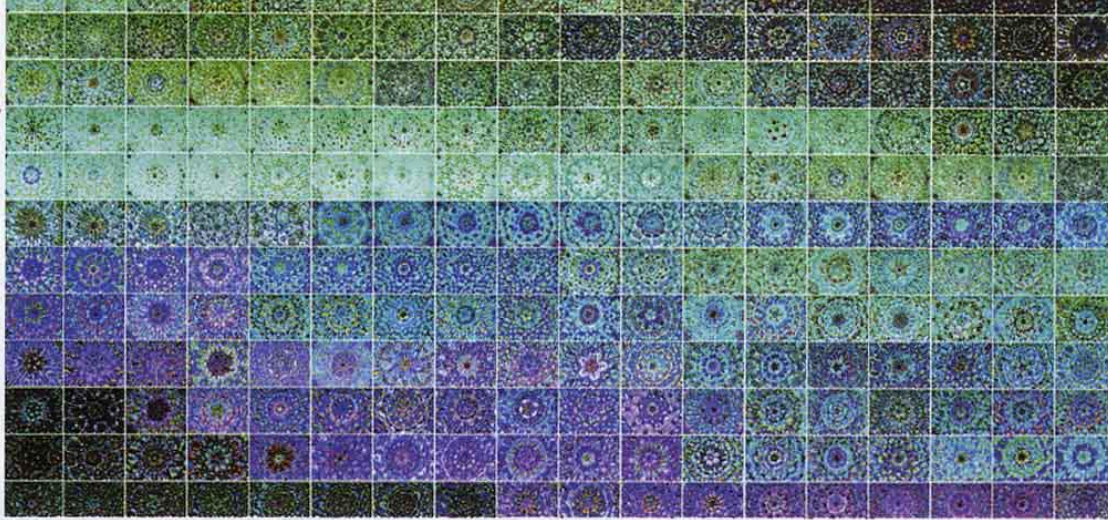
The latest collection to be displayed at the Farjam Collection is "Nujoom: Constellations of Arab Art" that gives a ringside view of Arab modern art that has evolved in the last century. The exhibition showcases the works of some of the foremost modern and contemporary Arab artists who have explored some of the defining styles and techniques in art. The collection, which consists of about 40 artworks, demonstrates the timelessness and the universal resonance of Middle Eastern art.

The Nujoom collection is a fusion of tradition, innovation and style influences from across the globe. The collection mainly consists of the three styles of expression that have marked the recent history of the region, namely, figurative expression, conceptual expression and the variation of calligraphy.

From installation and modern-day graffiti to paintings, sculptures and photography, the collection encompasses a wide range of media. Each piece tells a different story, making up a narrative that is as complicated as well as vibrant as the history of the region. In spite of the plural perspectives, the artists have focused on the commonalities of the region that emerge in their artworks.

"Destination X" by Ayman Baalbaki.

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"Kaleidoscope" by Lara Baladi which is a compilation of countless computerised images that creates a visual expression of infinity



Artwork by Emirati artist Abdul Qader Al Raes

The collection includes works of some of the renowned names of the Arab artistic world like Mahmoud Said, Nja Mahdaoui, Mona Hatoum and Youssef Nabil, alongside young and emerging artists such as Lamia Naji and Emirati artist Maitha Huaraz. The most striking part of the exhibition is the installation named "Destination X," strategically placed at the entrance of the gallery. Made by Lebanese artist Ayman Baalbaki, the installation

has a small car overloaded with all kinds of personal belongings and household items that paints a poignant picture of displacement and refugee crisis. Balbaki draws inspiration from his experience as a refugee to create a work that speaks of despair as well as hope. There is an underlying humour in the way the artist has loaded the small car with an excessive pile of personal belongings, but at the same time beautifully projects the irony of the life of a refugee. The bundle of clothes loaded on top of the car strikingly depicts chaos and anxiety — all tied up.

The works of well-known UAE artist, Abdul Qader Al Rais, is also part of the collection. He captures the almost-vanished life of the UAE in his work of realism. In another work, he uses abstract calligraphic forms complemented with vibrant colours, which give out an ethereal quality to it. His signature use of small floating squares appears even in the most realistic of his paintings.

Equally capturing is the work of Emirati artist Lamya Gargash who with her work "Familial Series" focuses on what is left behind in a country that is so very committed to the future. Gargash's work, which

was also displayed at the 2009 Venice Biennial, is a compilation of photographs of varied interiors of the one-star hotels in the UAE.

Nujoom includes several monumentally large pieces, including the impressive "Kaleidoscope" by Lara Baladi. This work is basically a compilation of countless computerised images and shows intricate shapes and colours. Through her work, the artist creates a visual expression of infinity, pointing to the saturation of visual information that characterises the modern era. The work also questions what inspires awe in us today.

Also included in the exhibition is the work of Lebanese-born artist Mona Hatoum. A Palestinian, famed for her large-scale installations, she is represented by her powerful piece titled "Over My Dead Body," a large billboard banner on which a miniature toy soldier ascends the artist's profile. With her work she explores the vulnerability and resistance of our bodies to certain situation, while giving an anti-war message at the same time.

With the vast variety of artworks, Nujoom is a unique compilation that gives a vivid picture of the region's artistic landscape.