

Young at ART

At the Farjam Art Camp, kids sketch, explore, listen to stories, and discover the meaning of art through contact with great works of the past



KT photos/Kiran Prasad

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Six-year-old Oliver is busy putting final touches to his silver dagger. "It's from the Safavid Dynasty," he squeals. Shehd, 12, paints golden globes on her smaller dagger. "Mine's from the Ottoman era," she counters. All this is happening at the Farjam Collection's Art Camp at DIFC.

Downstairs, helmets made of papier mache are left for drying as a peacock feather peeps out from each silver headgear. A little distance away, a group of nine- to 12-year-olds make miniature paintings for a storybook inspired by a bright red Arabic book, written in Nakkash Script by artist Ahmed Al Naksh of 16th-century Iran.

These kids are busy making and learning about

carpets and textiles and have just woven their own looms. The art camp combines learning about art with hands on arts and crafts activities. With privileged access to 80 artworks in the space at DIFC's Gate Village, children are exploring art from the past, spanning 2,000 years. Surrounded by a range of outstanding and rare works including calligraphy, paintings, ceramics, textiles, jewellery and arms, they are spending their summer holidays exploring the fascinating world of Islamic art through worksheets, games and craft activities.

Mornings are filled with discovery and fun as kids tour the museum's spectacular collection of Iranian art. Then it's back to the work for hands-on projects that are carefully designed to ensure successful outcomes no matter what the child's age. The children work on individual and collaborative projects, experimenting with painting, sculpture, printmaking, collage and more.

The camp is organised into two age groups — six to nine and nine to 12 years. It runs for four weeks, from July 18 to August 12. Children can participate in any one, two, three or four weeks. The fee is Dh500 per child per week, including all craft materials and activities.

"Programmes for children at this art camp are developed to encourage a deep connection to works of art and artistic expression. Children participate in conversations, sketch in the galleries, and create a variety of individual and collaborative art projects, as well as learn about artistic processes and expressing their ideas," says Rebecca Jarvest, collection and exhibitions coordinator at The Farjam Collection. As a Cambridge graduate and former intern at The Farjam Collection, she's involved in producing content and activities for Art Camp based on the art on view. The camp has support from university students from Oxford, Cambridge and Durham. Draw-

ing on their varied specialities in the arts, these students have contributed their ideas for new and engaging art based activities for children. Durham University has offered research papers written by gifted students to serve as tools in the creation of both exhibition and activity-related content.

Recipient of the Distinguished Patron of the Arts Award, Dr Farjam is passionate about the importance of education in the arts at all levels. His private collection on display has now been transformed into worksheets, games and playful diagraphs and helmets, emerging from the fascinating world of art for young minds.

"The philosophy for Art Camp is to create, explore, and enjoy," says Jarvest, as the kids burst into loud applause downstairs. They have just completed a treasure hunt finding a 1712 AD calligraphy writing cloth.

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