

New generation's perspectives

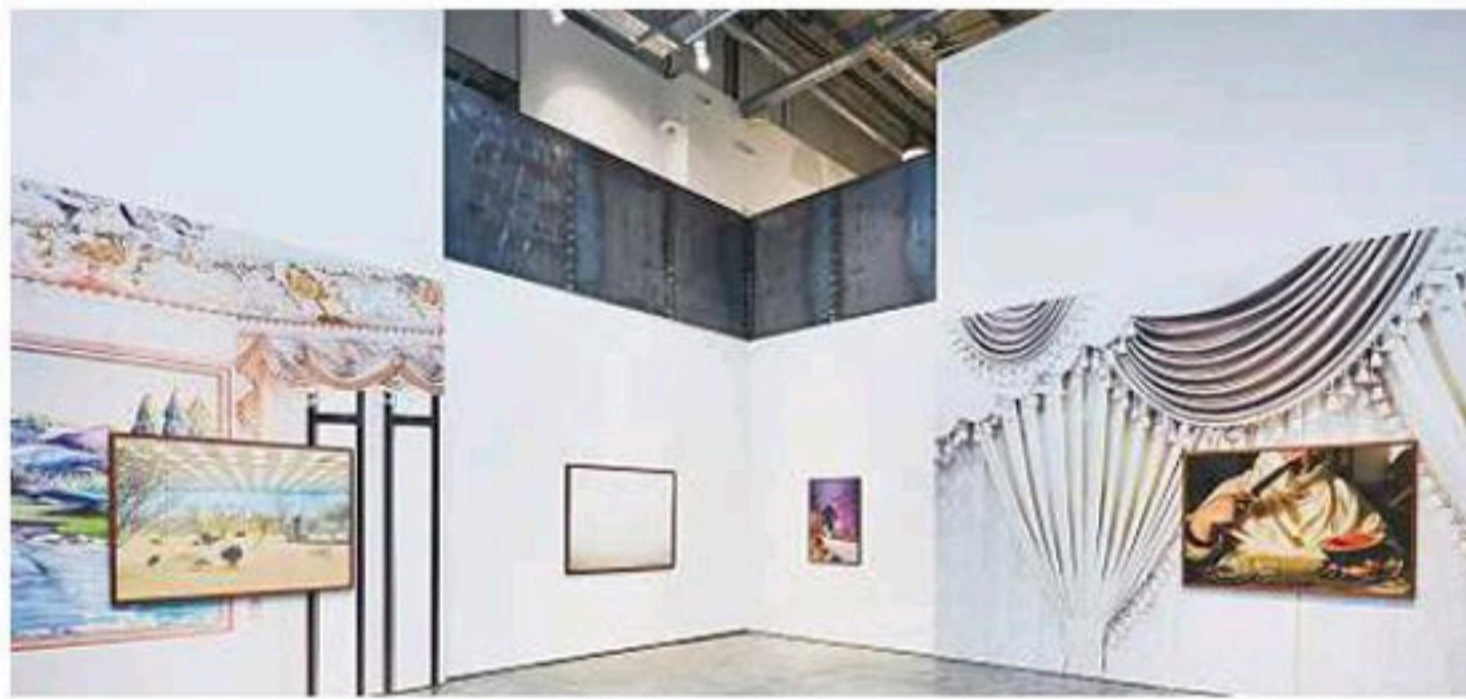
Four galleries in Alserkal Avenue are presenting works by young Emirati artists this season



Sarah Al Mehairi's 'Contained Gesture' (acrylic, paper, gel transfer and graphite on clay pots) at Carbon 12 gallery.

BY JYOTI KALSI | Special to Gulf News

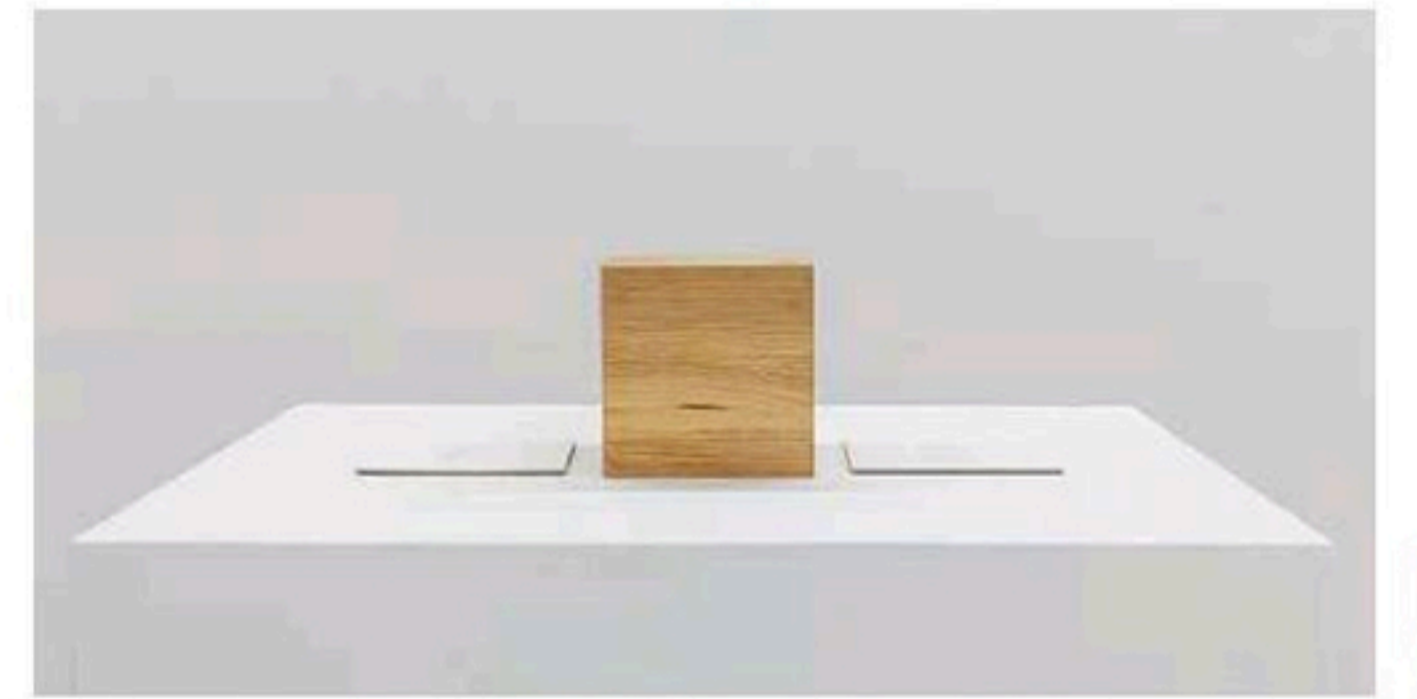
As the UAE makes its place on the global art map, young Emirati artists are making their presence felt in the local and international art scene. We highlight three young Emirati women artists whose works are currently being presented by various galleries in Alserkal Avenue



Farah Al Qasimi's 'Arrival' installation view at The Third Line Gallery.



A piece by Afra Al Dhaheri from the 'Preserving Impatience' series in glass at Green Art Gallery.



Sarah Al Mehairi's A Near Mystical Meditative Practice, a handmade book at Carbon 12 gallery.

Farah Al Qasimi



Farah Al Qasimi studied photography and music at Yale University in 2012 and received her MFA from the Yale School of Art in 2017. She lives and works between New York and Dubai and is currently a critic at the Rhode Island School of Design. She is interested in examining post-colonial structures of power, gender and taste in the Gulf Arab states. Her third solo show at The Third Line gallery, 'Arrival', includes her first feature film, *Umm Al Naar* (Mother of Fire) along with a series of related photographs.

The film focuses on Umm Al Naar, an ancient djinn from Ras Al Khaimah invented by the artist, who appears on a fictional reality TV show called *The Future* to reminisce about the changes she has seen in the region. She nostalgically recalls the old way of life in the UAE.

Why did you choose a female djinn as the central character?

Farah Al Qasimi: Djinn are part of our oral history that is gradually fading, and I find it amusing that most of the evil djinns are female, so I liked the idea of a character that is supposed to be malignant but turns out to be just misunderstood. This film is about progress and forward momentum, so I wanted a character who has been around for a long time, seen many changes and feels left behind by the progress.

What is the film's message?

The film talks about how we need to build our own ideas of progress and success. I specifically used the example of museums because today we have renowned western cultural institutions in the UAE, which symbolise cultural progress and give us a new sense of legitimacy as a cultural capital, but we should also celebrate our old museums like the National Museum of Ras Al Khaimah that are telling important regional histories from a local perspective and context as *Umm Al Naar* points out.

('Arrival' will run at The Third Line gallery until November 23.)

Afra Al Dhaheri



Afra Al Dhaheri was born in Abu Dhabi in 1988. She graduated from The Salama Bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship, in partnership with the Rhode Island School of Design, US in 2014, and obtained her MFA in painting from Rhode Island School of Design in 2017. She is the co-founder of BAIT 15, an artist-run studio and exhibition space in Abu Dhabi, and developed a pop-up art collective project across alternative spaces called ARTwec. She teaches Visual Arts at Zayed University, Abu Dhabi. She is participating in a group show, 'Avoid Bad Dreams', at Green Art Gallery.

Why did you choose glass as your medium?

Afra Al Dhaheri: These works examine the idea of time and how we experience it today as opposed to in the past, by freezing certain moments. Glass was the ideal medium because you have to work fast with poured glass and you cannot completely control the end result, which reflects our struggle with time in our fast-paced life and rapidly changing environment.

What is the idea behind the series, 'Preserving Impatience'?

Being away in the US made me more conscious of the amazing pace of change in the UAE and the lack of time to process our experiences and store the memories. This series is based on my childhood memory of being scolded by my grandmother for my impatience, when I poured hot tea into a porcelain cup too fast and it cracked.

As I poured molten glass into these teacups, they cracked but the glass quickly cooled and solidified around them. The cracks visible underneath the smooth exterior reflect our inner anxieties as we try to deal with the changing world around us. It is about freezing a moment that reminds me of my impatience and the need to slow down.

('Avoid Bad Dreams' will run at Green Art Gallery until November 2.)

Sarah Al Mehairi



Sarah Al Mehairi was born in Abu Dhabi in 1998 and graduated from New York University Abu Dhabi. She is presenting her first solo show, 'Between', at Carbon 12 gallery.

Why did you choose the title 'Between'?

Sarah Al Mehairi: Because my work lies between narrative and abstraction, poetry and image, between different mediums, colours, themes and concepts.

What are your inspirations?

I am inspired by American minimalist artist Agnes Martin's writings, her muted palette and the way she used grids, lines and layers to map her thoughts and memories.

Another inspiration is a visit long ago to Tennessee, US, which is connected to my family's history through my maternal grandparents.

I have used various media and techniques to access those remote memories and create some structure from the fragments of thoughts and feelings associated with the place. My acrylic paintings on raw canvas depict slivers of memories such as catching fireflies, picking blueberries, or riding a tractor.

What is your favourite medium?

I like wood and fabric because of their organic feel. In my 'Building Blocks' series, I have used wood scrap to create layered arrangements hand-painted with lines that map my thoughts and feelings.

My embroidered works on fabric include studies of colour, texture, and cross-stitch patterns, as well as colour-coded texts, each colour representing a theme in my writing.

('Between' will run at Carbon 12 gallery until November 3.)

Jyoti Kalsi is a Dubai-based arts enthusiast.