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Sarah Almehairi Initiates Conversations

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During this pandemic, Abu Dhabi-based artist Sarah Almehairi has been making her mark online with her weekly series of **Artist Talks**. Twice to three times a month, she invites UAE-based artists to present and hosts a discussion of their works in front of a live Zoom audience. Joined by many art enthusiasts across the UAE, from university professors to aspiring artists, these conversations add to the understanding of contemporary art of the region. With the recordings later posted on her [Youtube channel](#), Almehairi's talks are readily available learning opportunities and add an ounce of optimism during a hard-hit season of the art world.

Almehairi is a recent NYU Abu Dhabi alumna, and her practice primarily deals with geometry and abstraction. She made headlines two weeks ago when [Carbon 12](#), a well-known gallery of Dubai's Alserkal Avenue, [announced](#) that she would join their roster of artists. At 22, Almehairi is indeed one of the youngest artists to get gallery representation in the UAE. We asked her about her inspiration and education, and she shared her advice for other young artists in the Emirates.

Global Art Daily: You work with wood and canvas, use abstract shapes, muted colors, and poetic language in your practice. What is your preferred medium to work with?

Sarah Almehairi: I always find myself gravitating towards some form of sculptural work. I like to play with the subtleness of sculpture pushing the limits between what is two and three dimensional. Currently, I am very drawn to process-led work and writing simultaneously when creating. To me, they go hand in hand. Some questions that are driving my current explorations are what is a container? How does an exhaustive process manifest physically? How far can a multiple or replica go before it is unique in and of itself or is each multiple/replica an original?

GAD: What were the highlights of studying Art and Art History at NYU Abu Dhabi? What other training has contributed to your trajectory as an artist?

SA: Being a part of the NYUAD community was the biggest highlight for me. Getting to interact and have interesting conversations with other students from different majors and backgrounds and witnessing these convergences of thought has definitely expanded my approach to my practice as well. On top of that, I have met amazing professors, mentors and now friends that have pushed, challenged, and shaped who I am, and I give a lot of thanks to them.

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Other experiences that have contributed to my trajectory as an artist are exhibitions and programs I have been a part of and the people I have come across through them. Every experience to me is a learning experience. I am still learning. Currently, the [Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship](#) has continued to push me as an artist and constantly question myself and my practice, all while surrendering to the process of creating work. It's unlike anything I've ever been a part of before and continues to help me grow not only as an artist, but as an individual as well. Additionally, starting my own initiative of [Artist Talks](#) has helped me connect more with the community, further conversations and learn and grow with the artists around me.

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GAD: You are one of the youngest, if not the youngest, artist to get represented by a gallery in the UAE. Do you agree that the UAE's art institutions and art market are inclined to support younger generations of artists?

SA: Lately, there has been more of a focus on the youth and with these initiatives came great support. I would hope that the UAE's art institutions and art market are inclined to support all creatives, regardless of age, and shift the categories towards stages in an artist's career rather than age.

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GAD: What advice would you give to young artists in the region looking to advance their careers as professionals?

SA: I am still a young artist early in my career, but some advice that I was given that I have found valuable is to dedicate yourself to your practice, and constantly create work and conversations. Deadlines set by others are not necessary in order for you to work creatively, because the most important are the goals you set for yourself. I would also say to involve yourself in the creative community here and don't be afraid to take initiative and start something of your own as well. The creative space in the UAE is still growing and your contributions can help shape it.

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GAD: If you could have a conversation with any artist today, who would you like to talk to? What would you tell them?

SA: I'm really fascinated by the practice of German artist [Wolfgang Tillmans](#). I would like to have a conversation about the composition of his exhibitions, his use of scale and the way he pushes the boundaries between having abstract and narrative work exist in one space, and within the work itself. These elements interest me and specifically the concept of abstract and narrative as one has been a drive in my practice for a while. I'm still exploring the workings of and around it myself and I'm very intrigued in the way he approaches it in his practice.