

Hypebeast

15 February 2023

These are the People behind Dubai's Leading Art Galleries

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<https://hypebeast.com/2023/2/people-behind-dubais-leading-art-galleries>



Dubai-based, multidisciplinary artist Janna Soueidan visited three art galleries within the city and met up with the curators to get a deeper understanding of its art world.

“The feeling I get when walking into an art gallery is a form of escapism. To me, galleries provide a respite from the noise and chaos of my everyday life, offering me a space of contemplation and introspection,” Soueidan explains. “The second I walk into one, I suddenly feel a sense of inspiration, wonder and joy that I can’t compare to any other experience. It can sometimes be emotional, discovering new artists or pieces that resonate with me on a personal level.”

It’s the feelings evoked and conversations that they create within the spaces that display the emotions, history and storytelling of the artist themselves which hold a place close to her heart. “As an artist myself, I’ve always dreamt of having my work displayed in art galleries and I’ve always wondered about the curatorial process and the role that curators play in creating such a beautiful space,” she says.

Nadine Knotzer – CARBON 12 Gallery

Carbon12 is a contemporary art gallery that was founded in 2008 by Kourosh Nouri and Nadine Knotzer, which marked the beginning of an extensive, international program of artists. Located in Al Serkal Avenue in Dubai, Carbon12 continuously introduces and promotes both well-known and up-and-coming artists to the UAE contemporary art scene. The gallery also engages the public and educational institutions through a variety of contextual activities, such as publications and talks.

How do you go about the artist selection?

Soueidan: What factors do you take into account while curating art pieces for an exhibit?

Knotzer: We do a lot of solo exhibitions and it is important to concentrate on showing a new body of work as their continuous work that will show how they have and continue to evolve. The art I choose is usually cohesive, but it does not mean they have to be similar. This is where placement comes in and I think deciding where each piece goes has a big impact on the overall success of the exhibition, as it can transform the experience.

How do you balance showcasing art and artists of different levels and backgrounds?

Carbon12 was the first gallery in the region to show an international program. It's really important for us to exhibit artists from different cultural backgrounds and build a platform where an artist from the west can coexist with an artist from the Middle East. With this similar mindset, we also like to display emerging artists alongside established ones. We don't focus on one region or one style to represent and we like to educate people on all the different types of art there is in the world and demonstrate how they hold universal meaning.

What strategies do you use to make sure the gallery is engaging and accessible to all audiences?

We have educated a lot of people on contemporary art and a lot of these people also first started collecting their first pieces from our gallery. We've hosted a lot of events, talks and artist collector tours that allow people to take the time to come and meet the artists we represent, along with educating themselves on the art that we display. We've played a really big role in teaching people about the art world and the beauty of it and making them feel welcome to come in and ask questions

"Our gallery has built a lot of bridges between the artists and the art that we show and I think it's really beautiful to highlight how people can connect through our galleries."