

.ART domain

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carbon12.art - the first gallery at Alserkal, Dubai

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<https://art.art/blog/carbon12art-the-first-gallery-at-alserkal-dubai>



The Carbon 12 gallery (www.carbon12.art), founded in 2008 by Kourosh Nouri and Nadine Knotzer in Dubai, boasts a robust international program showcasing top-tier artists. With a global reach, Carbon 12 consistently introduces and supports both established and emerging artists, enriching the UAE contemporary art scene. In addition to its 5-7 annual exhibitions, the gallery actively engages the public through diverse activities, including publications and talks.

Nestled within the industrial enclave of Alserkal Avenue in Al Quoz, Dubai, Carbon 12's creative production mirrors its playful, organic process, surrounded by a thriving arts and culture district.

Collaborating with Macaulay & Co, Vancouver, and Fierman, New York, Carbon 12 has unveiled DIANA, a cooperative exhibition space at 127 Henry Street in Chinatown, New York. DIANA hosts rotating exhibitions curated by the founding partners, as well as guest galleries and independent curators. Exhibitions at DIANA, spanning up to two months, offer a platform for sustained engagement with critics, collectors, curators, and artists, both local and international, making it a significant player in the New York art scene.

.ART interviewed Carbon 12 Gallery's founders, Kourosh Nouri and Nadine Knotzer, delving into the gallery's naming, its program, and its prominent location at Alserkal Avenue in Dubai.

Let's talk a bit about the gallery's history: how and when was it launched? Who are the artists you are working with? What's your focus?

We're a classical contemporary art gallery. We were the first gallery in the country to start an international program. It was important for us to build this platform in the country and in the wider region in order to have exchange between artists from the region and with artists from the West, and put them at the same level.

It's important for us to really push the visual language and not nationalities and to build a broader understanding of visual art.

We do push for institutional presence, which is harder coming out of this region. We do a lot of publications. We do a lot of one on one education, considering we're still in a growing art market.

Which art fairs do you participate in?

We participate in Art Dubai, a local fair. We are the only NADA member from the region. Now we do the fair in Miami. We switched to Armory for a while, now we might go back to NADA. We've done fairs like Artissima, Brussels, and Cologne. To be honest, our focus is more and more on this part of the world. We do have a strong relationship with the US, considering that we have

a separate project space there. It's called DIANA. We opened it one and a half years ago. I would say a big part of our focus outside of the region is in the US.

Can you tell me a little bit more about DIANA?

It's located on the Lower East Side on Henry Street. We founded it with two of our colleagues David Fierman, who is the gallerist on the Lower East Side, and Sarah Macaulay, who is a Canadian gallerist primarily working with Indigenous artists. Long story short, we thought it's interesting that the three of us founded the space where we more or less run our program from that space, but obviously on a much smaller scale. But then obviously, being present in New York is important both for us and for our artists. Having an exchange with colleagues who think alike, with artists who think alike. It's interesting to introduce artists to our market here and then show them in the US and then take things further from there. We've also done collaborations with other galleries. For example, currently we are having a collaboration with Sanatorium gallery from Istanbul. DIANA's focus is more about an exchange between colleagues and artists.

And what are the roots of the name of the gallery?

We were very straightforward and very new at that point. None of us worked in the gallery before. And we don't come from institutions either. So there was no point in putting our names forward. Therefore, it was interesting to have something so elemental, something so organically basic. There is nothing more fundamentally organic and related to art than carbon. When wood burns, it turns into charcoal and you draw with it. Then there are two of us, and there is a duality about it. You go from charcoal to diamond. We have a comprehensive roster of artists who do their best contemporary practices with us, and sometimes local artists, sometimes completely non-regional artists. This is what makes the program interesting and then in retrospect, the name Carbon 12 is even more legitimate as it was initially.

Why did you go for .ART domain? Why not .com? You are a commercial gallery, after all.

We found out about the .ART domain zone and straightaway jumped on it. It makes sense. If you see .ART, there's not a big question, whether the page you are about to enter is probably very much about art. And why not have the art industry get that stamp to it? The moment we saw it, we took a very quick decision and we immediately switched to .ART. It was also a lucky coincidence because when we turned 10, we wanted to rework the identity and to get everything up to date. It was the best thing that could have happened. Obviously carbon12.art – there is nothing better than that. The idea of maybe one day having the whole art world switching to .ART would be fantastic.

You're located in Alserkal Avenue. How does it work for you?

Amazing. We were the first gallery here. There was no Alserkal Avenue when we moved here. I would say we are the founding member gallery. From there it all developed. We have the whole community here. It's a great homegrown project that shows how the art world can move things around. It's the only project in the country that grew naturally. We were lucky to open a gallery in a space that is owned by such wonderful people that actually care for the arts and started to develop this further. It's a great example of how the art world can actually build an entire district.