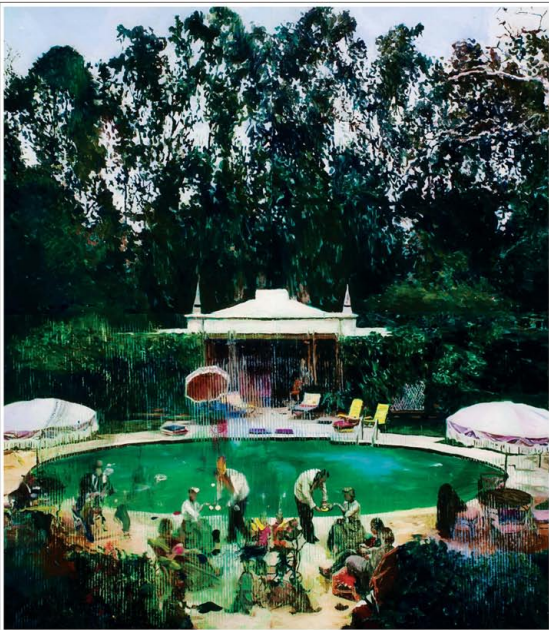


ARTS

Artists, galleries, news, events and more



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THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

Portuguese artist **Gil Heitor Corresao's** paintings of a forgotten, retro-future world enchanted *What's On* when he first showed in Dubai two years ago. We caught up with him for a private viewing, as his new show prepared to open



The last time you showed here we were intrigued by your technique of painting 'backwards' onto Perspex. The process has changed, in that I'm now working to build up layers, like a veil. I apply the paint, remove part of it, then apply it again. When you see it from a distance or on a photograph, it seems almost photorealistic, but when you approach it, you can see all these thin layers of painting. That first show featured 'retro-futuristic' interiors. Some of the images here seem more timeless – was that intentional? Perhaps. As there are more images that are based in nature, they seem more of our time – the natural world can't be dated like an interior, so you can't know when it happened. Mainly they are still from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. For two or three of the paintings, I used photographs by Julius

Shulman as a starting point – he's an American architectural photographer who shot a lot in Hollywood and around Los Angeles in that era. His work is linked to the final phase of Modernism, when progress still seemed possible. The photos are warm, beautiful and suggestive, but in my paintings these elements suffer a 'dislocation', and gain a darker edge. Was the decision to incorporate more landscape a conscious move? Yes. It started bit by bit. I had a show in Portugal last year, called *Wallpaper*, where I used images of trees and forests to create this huge patterned wall. So it was nature, but inside architecture. The works I'm presenting in Dubai are an evolution from that strange mix of the artificial and natural, and reach a point where it is difficult or impossible to say what is natural and what's artificial.



In some of them the 'nature' comes right inside the building...

Well, if you look at photographs from the 1950s and 1960s, there was usually a place inside the Modernistic interior that was left for nature as a decoration – at the walls or windows there was this tree or plant or something. So what I did here is take those elements and let them grow inside the space. Perhaps there was a little bit of it and in the painting it became more and more important, and so the balance between the artificial and the natural became disturbed as if the house or interior was becoming like an interior forest or something. It can have a slightly unsettling effect – the balance shifts slightly... Most of these pictures, they don't have people in them, but there is a kind of life because of the mix of nature – there's something that is growing and it becomes also chaotic. Elsewhere, you've painted circles around the interior. It's intriguing – a little like you're peering through the keyhole.

Most of the paintings in this show are square. I wanted to have a painting without dimensions – I didn't want to be so aware of the limits, or for the viewer to be aware. With a square, everything is equal, so you tend to forget the actual dimensions a little bit. The circle inside the square also has the same effect, but it's heightened by the voyeuristic element – by seeing something that is not meant to be seen, you really concentrate on what you are looking at.

Sep 11 to 14, First Group Theatre, Souk Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, Dhs 250. Tel: (04) 3665546, madinattheatre.com

His gaff, his rules...

A satirical swipe at one of the great English stereotypes, in all his chauvinistic glory, comedian Al Murray's comic creation the Pub Landlord has been wowing the crowds since his first appearance at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1994. Since then, Murray's alter ego has become a firm star of British stage and screen, with a series of acclaimed – and award-winning – shows. His latest, *The Only Way is Epic*, touches down in Dubai for four nights only this month. *What's On* honours the return of the monster Queen fan with a homage to some of his most memorable quotes...



"If we had no rules, where would we be? France! If we had too many rules where would we be? Germany!"

"Pint for the fella – a glass of wine/fruit-based drink for the lady!"

On the Swiss: "They're like a fat girl that will never die because the Austrians, Germans, French and Italians are neighbours."

On the Irish: "They're the sidecar on our motorbike – they're going nowhere without us."

On pub theme nights: "The only theme a pub needs is beer!"

"The trouble with telly these days is that the viewer is not credited with enough intelligence, and the fact I'm back on is proof they know what's good for them."

This last line, on the news that his British Comedy Award-winning TV show *Al Murray's Happy Hour* would be returning for a second season in 2008, could just as well relate to the Landlord's long-awaited return to UAE shores – so why not draw up a stool and join him at the bar this month.

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