

LAWRIE SHABIBI

ART FOCUS

Established in 2011, Lawrie Shabibi gallery exhibits a prime selection of both emerging and established artists within an impressive warehouse space measuring three thousand square feet in Dubai's Al Quoz district. Gallery director Asmaa Al-Shabibi extends the awareness of UAE contemporary art further via international art fairs, most recently the 'Istanbul Biennale'.

For 2014, highlights for art collectors at Lawrie Shabibi gallery include the solo exhibitions of Nabil Nahas and Asad Fauwell. Drawing inspiration from the struggle of Algerian female freedom fighters, *Claremont* graduate Fauwell creates intricate collages. Nahas, who in 2010 was the subject of a large scale retrospective in Beirut, uses an innovative combination of materials such as rock volcanic pumice.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CURRENT MIDDLE EASTERN ART MARKET?

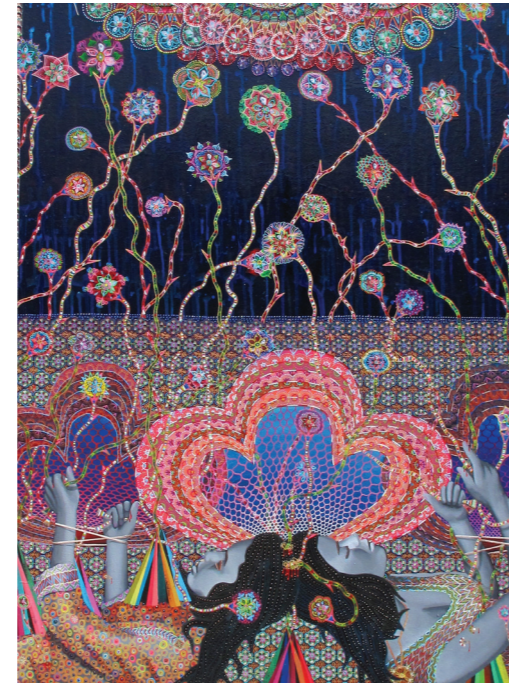
I can really only speak about the market in the UAE and more specifically Dubai. The art market in Dubai saw tremendous growth over the last seven years but I would say now that it has reached a plateau. This is especially true of Iranian art where the hype and speculation has thankfully died down.

There are now a large number of art galleries in relation to the number of art collectors in the city and so there is a lot more competition than there was a few years ago. In terms of taste in the past most collectors were interested only in works of artists from their own countries but this has now changed. I think 2014 is the year when many of us will have to push the boundaries and take more risks so as to avoid the market becoming stale.



TELL US ABOUT THE TWO UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS?

Our next exhibition is a solo exhibition by Nabil Nahas in November. Nahas established himself in New York (before the current heightened interest in contemporary art of the Middle East) as a master of colour, texture and atmosphere. Although thoroughly schooled in Western abstract painting, Nahas takes his inspiration from a diverse range of influences, most significantly nature, and occasionally Islamic art, in particular its abstract geometric and chromatic qualities. Of his many series, those for which he is best known are his thickly encrusted starfish and fractal paintings, built up by layer upon layer of acrylic paint mixed with pumice and finished in vivid colours. In his solo exhibition (his second at our gallery) Nahas will present new works from his fractal series. Nahas's solo will be followed by a solo by Asad Faulwell. Faulwell, in contrast, is one of our youngest and artists and is based in LA, Faulwell works with intricately woven collages to celebrate the largely unsung female freedom fighters who struggled to end French occupation in Algeria between 1954 - 1962. Faulwell features repeated motifs of the women who fought alongside the men to save their country.

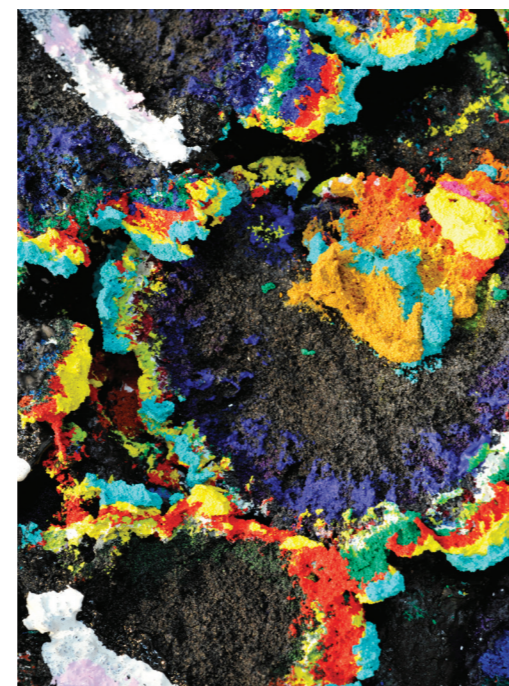


The repetition of the images and the quasi-religious imagery he employs give these works the air of a devotional shrine. Although still young Asad Faulwell is one of our most sought after artists and his work has already featured in many private and public collections including *The Oppenheimer Collection* at *The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art* in Kansas City, *The Rubell Collection* in Miami and *The Franks-Suss Collection* in London.



WHY DO YOU THINK IS THERE SUCH A STRONG INTEREST IN ARTISTS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE MOMENT?

The international presence of Middle Eastern art has grown exponentially over the last eight years or so. Many museums and prestigious institutions are including Middle Eastern artists as part of their collections and programming and there is definitely a lot of interest in what is happening in the Middle East from curators, writers and collectors. Most people are fascinated by the region, because of the complexities of the politics and social issues confronting the region, but would also add that the Middle East has a lot of excellent artists that are fresh and different; and I believe that this is what people are looking for.



Asad Faulwell
'Les Femmes d'Alger 31'
60 inch x 48 inch 2013

Asmaa & William

Nabil Nahas
Detail
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