

Bassam Freiha Art Foundation Unveils New Exhibitions

ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, September 11, 2024 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Bassam Freiha Art Foundation ([BFAF](#)) will open a series of new exhibitions exploring Emirati abstract art, the Orientalist movement, challenging societal norms and monumental sculptures from famed artist Anthony James this October.

Visitors will be able to explore the four exhibitions, held across the Main Gallery, Annex Gallery and Sculpture Garden, and attend events as part of the supporting educational programme from 14 October.



Theodore Frere_Outskirts of Minieh_Egypt

Hour Eternal - Emirati Abstraction

Curated by Dr. Michaela Watrelot, Hour Eternal - Emirati Abstraction will feature 14 Emirati artists who have played a role in shaping contemporary art in the Emirates, with works on loan from the Ministry of Culture, artists' studios and galleries, and private collectors.

Abstract art has evolved significantly over the past two decades, and Hour Eternal will offer an overview of this transformation. As reflected in the exhibition's paradoxical title, the pieces chosen for display all reflect on time's duality, in that it is both fleeting and everlasting. In particular, works deal with the relationship between time, tradition and contemporary identity, and delve into individual experiences felt by the artists while offering an insight into the wider cultural identity of the UAE.

In the late 20th century, much of the movement within the abstract art scene was led by a group of artists dubbed 'the five', consisting of Hassan Sharif and his brother Hussain, Abdullah Al Saadi, Mohammed Kazem and Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim. Of these five, four artists – namely Sharif and his brother, Ibrahim and Kazem – will have works on display, making Eternal Hour essential viewing for abstract art enthusiasts.

Other artists with works on display include Abdul Qader Al Rais, who blends geometric forms, vibrant colors and Arabic calligraphy, and Mona Al Khaja, who incorporates architectural elements and calligraphy into her pieces to reflect on the enduring values of Emirati culture. Salma Al Marri, meanwhile, draws on her childhood memories for textures and materials that evoke the physical landscape of the UAE.

Mohammed Al Qassab uses dots and lines to distill complex forms into their simplest elements, while Abdulrahim Salem has moved away from depicting figurative forms, transforming them in a way that extracts their essence. In a similar vein, Noor Al Suwaidi uses brushstrokes and spontaneous color choices to explore the fluidity of identity, while Najat Makki is known for her works harnessing the principles of color field abstraction to create a visual language that resonates with the rhythms of human experience and the natural world.

Sculptor Shaikha Al Mazrou uses industrial materials to create works that challenge perceptions of space and form, and Khalid Al Banna draws on geometric abstraction, deconstructing and reconstructing shapes to evoke the landscapes and textures of the UAE. The final artist, Ebtisam Abdulaziz, uses her background in mathematics and science to create pieces inspired by geometric forms that delve into themes of identity and social constructs.

Dr. Michaela Watrelot said of the exhibition, "Over the past 20 years, there have been rapid changes to the UAE's cultural and physical landscape, and pioneering artists such as Hassan Sharif and the Five played a significant role in pioneering the use of abstraction as a way to explore the impact of this on the nation's identity.

"To be able to display their works alongside other key figures experimenting with geometry, calligraphy and architecture within the realms of abstraction is monumental, and this would not be possible without the support of the UAE Ministry of Culture, Barjeel Art Foundation, as well as the artists, collectors and galleries who have loaned pieces to Bassam Freiha Art Foundation. I am grateful for their contributions to Hour Eternal, and I look forward to sharing these pieces with the public from October."

Visions of the Orient

A selection of works from the private collection of Bassam Said Freiha, the art foundation's founder, will also go on display from 14 October.

Bassam Said Freiha has been curating his collection of Orientalist art for more than 50 years, and his works cover western depictions of the Orient – present day Turkey, Greece, the Middle East and North Africa – from France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Russia and the UK, with paintings from notable artists including Rudolphe Ernst, Léon Comerre, Paul Leroy and Fabio Fabbi.

These works offer a glimpse into the fascination of the West with the Orient, and while what is

depicted was often vastly different to reality, the inspiration is rooted in a genuine admiration for the landscapes, architecture, and cultures encountered on visits to the Middle East during the 19th Century.

Hour Eternal: Emirati Abstraction and Visions of the Orient will be showcased in BFAF's main gallery.

Boundaries and Lines from Letters by Tarek Elkassouf

In the Annex Gallery, Tarek Elkassouf will present Boundaries, a series of 29 limestone sculptures adorned with 22k gold, as well as the linked exhibition Lines from Letters.

Through Boundaries, Elkassouf invites the viewer to contemplate the intangible barriers that affect our day-to-day lives, such as societal norms and exhibitions, to gain deeper self-awareness. As an artist, he is deeply fascinated with the interaction between what is present and what is not, and the series is a gateway to an exploration of both limitation and liberation.

Parallel exhibition, Lines from Letters, features early concept drawings and writings by Elkassouf to frame the artworks.

Anthony James' Sculpture Garden

BFAF's Sculpture Garden will also feature two sculptures from renowned artist Anthony James.

Most recently hitting the headlines as the first and only visual artist to have work exhibited on all seven continents, James' work is currently on display at galleries in Aspen, Beverly Hills, Singapore, Dubai, London, and New York.

From October, BFAF will continue its educational programming to run alongside the new exhibition with support from the Art Foundation's newly appointed Art Educator and Curatorial Liaison, Emilie Dubois. This will include a series of artist-led workshops, art talks and lectures.

The new exhibition will run between 14 October and mid-February.

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