



## WORLD ART DUBAI

World Art Dubai's seventh edition concluded earlier in April on a very high note. The region's most accessible and affordable retail art fair was running under the theme 'discovering new perspectives' which invited visitors to expand their minds and enjoy an inspiring world of creativity. More than 250 local and international artists and galleries united to display over 2,000 pieces across a range of disciplines. However, one of the most interesting aspects of the fair is the team of curators which is comprised of 3 female curators, all also well-respected artists in their own.

Batool Jafri, artist, curator and art educator, has produced powerful and poignant work on the subject of the human mind and soul, while challenging historical and cultural prejudices that lead to the marginalization of certain segments of society. Her body of work also draws on her experiences of growing up in a Muslim society. She draws the viewer to see beyond the veil and skin of her women and dig deeper and unearth the complex layers that make us. Her art has always been a journey of looking deeper into the human soul; it has been about looking beyond what is on the outside and trying to discover the soul that is lurking beneath the layers and the journey it goes through.

I feel at times due to the onslaught of social media and digitally available art, the audience may slowly be losing the joy of experiencing the art up close. There is a certain beauty in visiting a museum or art gallery and spending time taking it all in, a sort of an aesthetic almost spiritual like experience. It isn't about taking a selfie in front of an artwork but rather enjoying the work for what it is.

A Pakistani artist, Batool was awarded the Emirates Woman of the Year 2018 in the Art & Culture category, and along with her role as an art mentor, she is on the panel of curators for World Art Dubai. Talking about her team she was full of praise and said

"the art fair has given me the opportunity to meet and develop an amazing bond with my co-curators. It is a blessing to have such a good understanding and similar aesthetic when it comes to selection of art and activations. We truly have each other's backs and each of us keep inspiring and pushing the other to dream even bigger for the event".

In discussions about the influence and popularity of World Art Dubai, Batool felt that "WAD is the only fair of its kind in the UAE that provides a platform for emerging talent in the region in an unbiased manner. Not only that, it provides artists with tremendous opportunity to meet local and international galleries and develop collaborations. As far as the popularity is concerned, it is truly an affordable art fair which allows visitors to interact with art in every manner and acquire pieces for their pleasure later on. The carefully curated workshops, talks and attractions are all reasons for its popularity in the region".



As a courtesy of KHALEEJ Times



Petra Kaltenbach, a German fine artist, video artist, graphic designer, energy healer and curator, moved to Dubai in 2004 when the transforming period of this city had just begun. "The process from the old into the new inspired me to select transformation as the core theme of my work." She shares how in all these years she has experienced the magic of the UAE.

"The authentic inner transformation allows humans to step out of the restricted psychological conditioning and mental structures into freedom, expansiveness and peace of the true nature." Petra intertwines her art with technology and has also integrated her healing abilities into art to mediate positive energies to the viewer. In 2018, World Art Dubai honoured her as the best UAE-resident artist, and she was sponsored for one year by Canon.

Since 2019, she has been the curator of World Art Dubai, one of the biggest art shows in the Middle East. Her art is not only playful and profound but also transports transformative thoughts in unusual ways. She even collaborated with the fashion label Roxx Fashion, and we saw her works on a fashion line i.e. wearable art at WAD 2020.

Talking to Petra about the curator's main influence on the fair, she felt that "The main aim of the team of curators is to make art tangible, to involve the visitor, to tear down the wall that often exists between art and viewer. For this very reason, our influence can

be seen in all that is on offer including workshops, to artist talks and our constant effort in initiating art installations / mini-events". Elaborating on the strength of the art fair, she told us that "WAD's strength is clearly in the close contact to the artist and in the promotion of artistic talents. In addition, WAD presents various categories of artists: emerging artists, solo artists and galleries. This means that the presented art not only represents different skill levels, but also varies in price, so that there is something for every budget".

It is my deep concern to improve the quality of the show even further, which means, among other things, to increase the level and quality of the art even more and to help curate the layout of the exhibitor walls.

Samar Kamel is an Egyptian artist, art curator and author known for works that examine cultural attitudes towards women and aim to transform stereotypes through vibrant depictions of the modern woman. Having acquired her curatorial certification from the Sotheby's Institute of Art, Kamel has been the curator for World Art Dubai since 2019. She has also undertaken several curatorial projects in Egypt and the UAE, where she now lives and works.

I would like to take WAD to a whole different level bigger & better, introduce more sculptures, more installations, and make WAD an art festival, when it comes to art, the sky is the limit! - Samar Kamel

While discussing the effect of the pandemic on her work and art Samar felt that "the pandemic has hit everyone deep, but women have different responsibilities. In this case we are talking about an artist and curator, so she has a greater responsibility towards her community since art is a tool to represent and reflect society's issues. For me it felt like an obligation to give people hope and act like a beacon of light amidst these scary times of the pandemic".

Talking about the strength of her team she expressed the opinion that "Though we come from different backgrounds and have different nationalities, yet I strongly believe being female artists, we have had a mutual understanding on the vision for our fair and true team spirit from the very first day and it has only gotten stronger over the years".

On a lighter note, we questioned Samar about the bridge between reality and fantasy as she is both an artist and curator, she told us that "Actually it is true, we swing between two worlds, and being a curator has given me the opportunity to fulfill some of the artistic fantasies through suggestions on different installations, attractions and activations, that sound truly fantastical on paper but once put into action turn into a breathtaking concept. However, I manage to step into reality and administer the fair as a curator and tackle problems when needed".

When asked about whether a curator do his/her job without being an artist, all 3 curators were of the opinion that it's not a necessity but it makes it possible to bring the two worlds together more easily if you are.

While commenting on the future of the art fair, they unanimously declared that it will only get bigger and better with the coming years. Plans are already in motion for the next one and they seem very promising. Looking forward to World Art Dubai 2021.

Photos: World Art Dubai



Batool Jafri



Samar Kamel



Petra Kaltenbach

