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# Hadil's 'universe of imaginary creatures' attracts Dubai audience



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Saudi artist Hadil Moufti's journey in art dates back to when she was a teenager. She used to travel a lot as her father was a diplomat who was posted in different countries. It was while she was in India that she turned toward art.

Her solo exhibition — My universe of imaginary creatures — is currently running at Showcase Gallery in Al-Serkal Avenue in Dubai. The exhibits illustrate the cosmopolitan sense of the talented artist.

"The exhibition has been attracting different stratum of people," Hadil told Arab News.

Initially, she was more into fashion but her teacher in India who taught her art fueled her interest in it.

"During my days in India, I created a lot of paintings with different scenes of India. I went out with my friends and photographed a variety of expressions on the streets and scenes in Delhi."

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Her work conveys neither political nor social messages. It exists to create intrigue and invite the viewer to a colorful world, where animals journey through fictional landscapes.

“I like fiction and I am not interested in politics. My background has resulted in work that is not relevant to a political or social agenda,” Hadil told Arab News.

“My interest is fantasy and an imaginary world. My paintings are of colorful atmospheres and emotions, somewhere between dreams and realities. The lack of a nation to associate with has driven me to create my own universe, expressing a personal point of view of an illusionary world,” she explained.

When asked about where she draws her inspiration from, she says that she always goes out and shoots photos and brings the faces and expressions of the people she captures to her medium.

Hadil adds that books also give her good ideas for her paintings. Setting art aside, she reads a lot and likes fiction.

“I like French, and English literature, I read a lot and it gives me wonderful ideas for my paintings or drawings,” she said.

“Thinking is done through the act of painting. I enjoy a spontaneous process of painting and drawing, the mixing of colors and playfully experimenting with different materials, textures and objects. I work mainly on a large scale to create a strong impact. My favored means of applying the paint is with my hands. It is a very emotional and physical task,” Hadil said.

Hadil particularly has a liking toward India where she spent her teenage days . She re-visited India five years ago with her children.

When asked about her painting “Indian Earth,” she said it was all about the colors.

She elaborates on the idea behind the painting which is from “The Little Prince,” a children’s book in French. The book illustrates the story of a boy who travels from planet to planet looking for or meeting friends.

And as someone who has lived in many countries throughout her life, she can relate to him and she feels that it symbolizes her.

“I do not have a sense of belonging to any one place or people, so I have similar feelings like that of the little prince,” she said.

Her father, who passed away four years ago, had encouraged her to take up fashion as he felt it would be good for her but she later turned to art, which she was really passionate about.

A lot of her paintings, around 100 of them were inspired by her time in England where she lived for 16 years with her husband and kids.

“We used to live in Hampstead, a quiet area next to a forest, which helped me to paint a lot” she said.

When asked about her favorite place in Saudi Arabia she said that her favorite place in Jeddah is Balad, the old town as she likes its old charm.

The current exhibition, My universe of imaginary creatures, which will run through May 18, mainly showcases her paintings on animals.

Pointing to her work, a collage of scarab beetles, she says “Some people believe that the little insects are symbols of the restoration of life, like the sun that rises after the night. For them it is a popular design for good luck charms.”

Born in Jeddah, Hadil graduated from Parsons School of Design in Paris in 1992 and has lived in Africa, India, and England, and has settled down in the UAE last year with her husband and two children.

She says her support system is her husband who has always

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encouraged her.

“I am happy in Dubai and plan to continue with Sikka Art for a year, to keep on working, painting, and hopefully showing my paintings to the public,” she said when asked about her future plans.

“Dubai is a land of opportunities, we can meet people, artists and important galleries. We can do a lot in Dubai if we work hard ... it’s a young and buzzing city,” says Hadil.

Her studio is based in the Al-Fahidi Historical Neighborhood of Dubai and her works are part of private collections from around the world.

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