

The **STUDIO VISIT**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION

*A visit to the studio of Emirati artist **Ahmed Al Faresi** in Al Ain reveals his
fascination with history, culture and archaeological discoveries*



Ahmed Al Faresi next to one of his mixed media works

The 37-year-old contemporary artist recently showcased his first solo exhibition at the Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi. Entitled *Ancient Smoke*, the show sought to chart the historical route of frankincense. "I wanted to take viewers back to the Tang Dynasty and the Roman Empire with a projection to the future," he says. "Incense speaks about something that is in the human soul." The artist is also a professor of Information Security at UAE University in Al Ain. Science thus plays an important role in his art. "Art is connected with science and I try to engage the viewer so that they research the subject matter more," says Al Faresi. "I put subliminal messages in my work and that's why I call it 'encrypted art' because I am coming from cryptography. What I use is key words and it is up to you to discover what the artwork is."

In terms of his creative process, Al Faresi usually spends a few hours per day, often when everyone is asleep, working in his studio at home. "I don't think about things actually; it's like I have a radar," he says. "I see the images of things that I have to do. I use the infinity sign to do my drawings because I believe infinity is the source of all patterns in the universe and you cannot speak about infinity without speaking about religion or God. These are the mystical patterns of the universe." Most of Al Faresi's artwork incorporates some kind of antique or artefact. "This place has not been excavated to the max yet," he says. "I have been roaming around Al Ain and often find shards of pottery in the sand. I create the artwork around these antiques," he says. In his recent group showing with *Portrait of a Nation* at Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation (ADMAF) he displayed a work depicting antique guns. "The instant you hit the trigger remembers the

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instant the soul departs from the body and the smoke that leaves the pistol is analogous to the soul that leaves the body taking life and then life goes to another infinite journey with the infinity sign."

In his upcoming exhibition at Showcase Gallery in Dubai Al Faresi will narrate through art a historical fictional account whereby he imagines the Bedouin tribes of Arabia meeting the Shaman Native American tribes. "I am trying to underline the point where we have lost the nomadic instincts that made us human and that made us connect with nature," he adds. "Now we are in a strange state where we are detached from earth. We are not as harmonious as we used to be. I want us to realise that we are leaving a huge chunk of what humanity is. Even if you move on you still need to keep the relationship." And that's what Al Faresi's work is trying to do: rekindle the union between the human soul and nature. ■

Ahmed Al Faresi's exhibition at Showcase Gallery in Ahsakal Avenue runs from 26 September until 7 November. showcaseuae.com