



## Hadil Moufti's Serialism in Red

Danna Lorch | April 28, 2014



He had a funny look on his face, Oil and charcoal on canvas. Courtesy: Show case Gallery

Hadil Moufti is going through a red period. It's not what you might expect upon hearing that she comes from Saudi Arabia. At the moment, 'Emerging Saudi Artist' is the hottest label to tout in the trend-savvy art world, and political art is all the rage. Refreshingly, Moufti says, "My paintings are not particularly political or focused on Saudi's social issues." She is a graduate of Parson's School of Design (Paris) and grew up as the daughter of a diplomat, shuttled between continents and classrooms as far away as Nigeria and Switzerland.

A solo show, *My universe of imaginary creatures*, just opened at Showcase Gallery on Alserkal Avenue, and features large-scale canvases of various African animals bathed in red — a testament to their primal strength. The gallery's founder, Sharon Harvey, is originally from Zimbabwe and naturally resonated with the themes at play. Elephants and rhinos frequently fall victim to poaching, and Moufti is interested in the juxtaposition of power with vulnerability.

A nearby series of gilded beetles subtly imply that insects — who will run the Earth long after humans have gone — are stronger than even the Big 5. These paintings are solid, but would be stronger if exhibited together with the hauntingly ambiguous *Maryam* series that Moufti began working on in September.

Step into Moufti's Dubai-based Al Fahidi studio and the first thing you'll notice is a messy tray of jam jars, each containing a slightly nuanced shade of red paint. Canvases layered thick with colour are hanging and leaning on every wall, many of them decoupage with old photographs of a dewy tween (Moufti's niece Maryam) in red lipstick and hair rollers.

Laid out on Moufti's desk are hundreds of variations of the same image of Maryam's face, each painstakingly cut from a photograph with nail scissors, a bit like the old fashioned paper dolls that the artist loved to play with as a girl. "The

expression in Maryam's eyes is what draws me to this," Moufti explained. Rather than labelling her use and reuse of the same symbols obsession (a word that carries a psychologically unstable implication), She thinks of her technique as visual Serialism, most recently influenced by the American artist Ellen Gallagher.

Moufti's practice is defined by repetitively using the same character in slightly varied works of art. A particular tree awash with pink blossoms (spotted in Regent's Park in London years ago and then sadly never found again in subsequent visits) has appeared in more than twenty works.

A palate for repetition reappears in the loud music Moufti listens to in the studio while she paints. She admits, "I like listening to remixes of the same song. It's a bit like my interest in Serialism; one version is not enough. I need different variations and rhythms." Lately that has meant Kid Cudi and Crystal Fighters.

• My universe of imaginary creatures runs at [Showcase Gallery on Alserkal Avenue](#) until May 18.

*Danna Lorch is a guest blogger for The Art Blog. This entry is co-hosted on [Danna Writes](#).*

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