THE ART OF THE EMIRATES

الفن في الإمارات

ADMAF
After representing the UAE at the 2013 Venice Biennale with the solo show Walking On Water, Mohammed Kazem made his mark, although he has most certainly been on the UAE art map for a number of years.

Since leaving school at the age of 14, Kazem has tirelessly pursued an artistic career. Having joined the army in his teens, he used his salary to purchase art equipment and spent most of his youth getting involved in any way possible with the art events happening across the region.

Thanks to the teachings of Hassan Sharif, who took Kazem under his wing when he founded his atelier in 1987, Kazem developed his style through working with each discipline. He began with impressionism, and then fused his love of music with art for his now well renowned Scratches series. He later began working on movement, which still plays a large role in his practice today and was successfully distilled in the Venice show.

2013 saw the release of his monograph, which collates some of the last 30 years of his dedicated practice.
DIRECTIONS

COLOUR VIDEO INSTALLATION WITH 2-MINUTE LOOP. OVERALL DIMENSIONS VARIABLE. COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PAVILION OF THE UAE. COMMISSIONED BY THE SALAMA BINT HAMDAN AL NAHYAN FOUNDATION.

How do you remember the art scene when you started out?

Not many people mention that the UAE was giving awards to people to go abroad and study art in the 1970s. I stopped school in 1986 but the first generation all had opportunities to study in Egypt, Iraq and the UK, not only in the arts, but in many different fields. They returned and established institutions in the 1980s such as the Emirates Fine Arts Society.

What has been the biggest impact on the art community in the UAE?

Over the last 10 years, significant changes have happened. Before then, we just used to work and wait for the one event that would happen every three or four years. Now, if you don’t look at your email for one day, you will miss something. I think this started in 2003 when Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi came back and reorganised the Sharjah Biennial and gave it a professional structure. Then all the major institutions that came to Abu Dhabi brought curators who brought galleries and generated growth in the market. Now there is a marked improvement in professional practice.

There are many aspects to your work and it varies from painting, to drawing, to installation and abstract. Are you constantly exploring?

My work has two aspects – objectivity and subjectivity. Since 1992, I have been using it as a tool to raise social, political and environmental issues. For example, I use a GPS and try to give it different meanings. I stopped painting naturally and began investigating with other mediums but I still come with the vision of a painter. I do believe that it is only by practice that you reach new ideas, not only by inspiration. It is through the process of making the work that you acquire ideas. It is through practice.

What is your biggest hope for the future of the UAE art scene?

I hope to change the way of education here. There is a big gap between the viewer and the work and there is little art education. Until now we only have one college in Sharjah. I also think we should seriously pay attention to the national collection. I see many of our important works leaving the UAE. We need to instil a culture of collecting here and I think we should have a central government collection to preserve our work for the generations to come.
DIRECTIONS (CIRCLE)
ALUMINUM AND LED LIGHT.
AN ABU DHABI FESTIVAL
2014 COMMISSION.
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

Mohammed Kazem

SEA ESCAPE
FROM A SERIES OF
36 DIGITAL PRINTS
MOUNTED ON ALUMINIUM.
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

1999-2006

الاتجاهات (الدائرة)
ألمنيوم وإضاءة بنظام (إل إي دي).
بتكليف حصري من مهرجان
أبوظبي 2014.
من المجموعة الخاصة للفنان.

محمد كاظم

MOHAMMED KAZEM