



United Arab Emirates
Government of Sharjah
Dept. of Culture & Information



ملتقى الشارقة للخط

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SHARJAH CALLIGRAPHY BIENNIAL



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Exhibitions
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WORKING SOME MAGIC

Running from 21–24 March, the fourth edition of Magic of Persia's fundraising event, *Magical Nights*, sees a stellar line-up of artwork submissions.

A tally of 81 works comprise UK-based charity Magic of Persia's (MOP) fundraising auction this year. Divided into two parts – silent and live – the works for sale read like a who's who of the Contemporary Iranian art scene. "We were overwhelmed by submissions," smiles MOP Chairlady Shirley Elghanian. Conducted by Christie's and taking place on 23 March at Dubai's Jumeirah Emirates Towers, the live auction features works by established Iranian artists including Rokni and Ramin Haerizadeh, Kamrooz Aram, Reza Aramesh and Shirin Fakhim. "We've dubbed them the 'usual suspects'; they can raise substantial funds for our organisation, which we then put into residencies, scholarships and other initiatives to support Iran's emerging artists," explains Elghanian. To nurture the careers of struggling artists is precisely what MOP has set out to do since its founding in 2001. "We want to be there for those who are living in Iran under unbelievably strict censorship," adds Elghanian. "Because the event coincides with Art Dubai, this gives them amazing exposure during a time where fellow artists, curators and collectors are also in the city."

For a little over a year, the event's curator Ali Bakhtiari, scouted emerging Iranian artists whose works could be donated to MOP's silent auction. "I visited universities and studios in Iran looking for diversity in style, media and concept," he says. The result? A roster of more than 40 young artists including Farnaz Rabiejah, Omid Salehi, Dana Nehdara, Ali Mousavi and Niki Karimi. "This project allows me to introduce my art to the Middle East all the while supporting MOP's initiatives, which are very much in line with my own beliefs," says UK-based Mousavi. This sentiment was echoed by established painter Kamrooz Aram, who is represented by Dubai-based Green Art Gallery (A13). "There is so much good work that goes unnoticed and artists need to be supported through financial resources and intellectual challenges," he explains.

Lots from the two-part sale were on show at Alserkal Avenue's Salsali Private Museum from 12–22 March in an exhibition which aimed to "capture the spirit that connects all the artists together," says Bakhtiari. "For the layout, we didn't want to destroy the connectivity between the artists, so the works from the live auction are hung in a linear way, while those from the silent one are stacked together in a 'salon' hanging fashion, to mimic the young artists' blossoming energy."

Instead of opting to use his space to showcase his own collection at a pivotal time of year for Dubai's art scene, art patron Ramin Salsali was keen on supporting the MOP charity – a responsibility which he believes others should also take on. "Some Iranians living in the UAE who have the financial resources should also help," insists Salsali. "By offering a space or hosting a dinner, this gives artists a morale boost."

The Magical Nights fundraiser included a Nowruz (Iranian New Year) concert and dinner held at The One and Only Royal Mirage on 22 March and a gala dinner in the presence of HE Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al-Nahyan on 23 March. With funds raised going to various charities, including The Future Centre for Special Needs; Kids Company, London; and Omid Foundations, London/Tehran/Maryland, MOP is very much fulfilling its role in raising awareness of Iranian art on a global scale. "We want to promote and progress our country's art," adds Bakhtiari. "And, more importantly, be a catalyst for change." At time of press and due to strong interest in the works, about 50 per cent of the lots from the silent auction were included in the live sale. Results will be disclosed on 23 March. 



Hesam Rahmani. (Detail) *Happy Anniversary*. 2011. Acrylic on canvas. 150 x 120 cm. Image courtesy the artist.



Ramin Haerizadeh. *Hail Auspicious Spring!* 2012. Collage on canvas. 200 x 100 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai.

Mohammed Qasim Ashfaq. (Detail) *Make Me A Black Hole and I Will Believe You XII*. 2012. Graphite on paper, 100 x 70 cm (approximately 105 x 75 cm framed). Image courtesy the artist and Etemad Gallery, Dubai.



ART DUBAI

ETEMAD
GALLERY

ART DUBAI 2012
STAND B9

EXHIBITING ARTISTS:

MORTEZA AHMADVAND

MOHAMMED QASIM ASHFAQ

MAHMOUD BAKHSHI

HAZEM HARB

SHOREH MEHRAN

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