

# Art is not an office job, says Emirati artist

Kelly Clarke/Staff Reporter / 8 March 2015

***Emirati artist Shaikha Al Mazrou says her works address rather general and formal questions, thus her origins and nationality are not shaping the work.***



From campaigning for women's suffrage to equal representation in politics, International Women's Day has celebrated the social, economic and political impact women have had on the world we live in. Even His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, was once quoted as saying: "We have moved beyond the phase of empowering women. Indeed, we are empowering society itself through its women."

## ***What is your earliest memory of actively involving yourself in art?***

I think we need to separate two aspects of "getting involved" in art. I created artworks as a child, but it can be considered more as a form of discovering the world. The preparation for my career as a practicing artist and the possibilities of efficiently expressing myself as an artist started more around my undergraduate years.

## ***When did your passion turn into a serious career in art?***

Art was always something I wanted to pursue. During my undergraduate years, I realised it was no longer just a hobby, or simply a profession for me; it was much more a vocation.

## ***When are you at your most creative?***

I have always felt that art is not an “office job”. There are no fixed schedules or timings and limitations of the creative spirit. Sometimes I get inspired before going to sleep, or I have a new idea when watching a play in a theatre or reading a book. Even when I am under pressure a good idea might come about.

***Where does the inspiration for exhibitions come from? Does it differ from project to project?***

In most cases I don't work for the exhibition, I am just actively creating new works and when there is an invitation for an exhibition I choose from artworks I have created, and maybe add some new ones. However, some projects, such as residencies or commissions might require me to consider the final presentation right from the beginning.

***Please describe your latest exhibition in a few words.***

It's not a description as such, but my latest exhibition is a public sculpture, and it was a completely new experience of interacting with the public. I love the fact that it is “public” as it means it's not just limited to the eyes of your usual art-loving gallery-goer.

***What materials make up your palette as an artist?***

As a sculptor I have endless possibilities. I don't like to restrict myself with one material or medium.

***Do you always introduce personal experiences into your work? If so, why?***

I am concentrating more on universal and formalistic questions. Of course, there is always some subjectivity and implicitly also my personal experiences, but I am striving to address more general questions.

***Where is your a favourite/most inspirational place to work (either geographically or physically)?***

As a sculptor the studio facilitates my way of expression, but it does not limit me of getting inspired and working even at home or at the college of Fine Art here, where I teach.

***You've recently joined Lawrie Shabibi gallery in Dubai. Art in the UAE is still gaining momentum here. How are people in the Middle East reacting to your work, especially given that you, yourself, are Emirati?***

As I mentioned before, my works in most of the cases address rather general and formal questions, thus my origins and nationality are not shaping the work, or is not reflected in the work.

***Why did you choose to exhibit here and how does exhibiting in the Middle East differ to other parts of the world?***

The art in the region is a fertile ground, however, I embrace every opportunity to exhibit internationally. Today, being part of Lawrie Shabibi gallery is not only exhibiting in Dubai, but the gallery representation allows me to grow and provides me further possibilities also towards the global art scene.

***Do you think artists are ‘born artists’?***

As Picasso once said: “Every child is born an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.”

***What’s in the pipeline for Shaikha Al Mazrou?***

I am showcasing in Art Dubai at Lawrie Shabibi. On the other hand, I am preparing for another show at Ductac, and working on new projects too.

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