



XVA GALLERY

'Gentle' by Jonathan Gent

10 December 2013 – 31 January 2014

Vernissage: Tuesday 10 December, 2013 from 6-9pm

Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, Bur Dubai

XVA Gallery is pleased to present *Gentle*, an exhibition of new work by Jonathan Gent. Made during an intense period of work in the Cote d'Azur, this new series of paintings on wooden board reflects Gent's impressions of the Mediterranean and his memories of time spent in Dubai in 2008. In his exploration of the city limits of Dubai, Gent became captivated by the simultaneously exhilarating and isolating stillness that exists in the wide-open spaces in the margins of the city. Gent's paintings, which are often deceptively simple, are in fact visual poems that offer a uniquely wry insight into human complexity.

Having studied at the Cheshire School of Art and Edinburgh College of Art respectively, Gent has gone on to exhibit his work internationally in the Middle East, Asia, Europe and the US and complete residencies in London, Dubai and Venezuela. The central grain of Gent's work is inextricably linked to his peripatetic lifestyle. As an artist who is continually in transit, Gent continuously re-evaluates his practice in each new setting he arrives in, conscious that continuous change is vital to the progression of his work. While Gent states that he is "... addicted to fantasy. That's my influence", much of his work deals with the underlying loneliness that is ultimately a part of the human experience.

The visual imagery of Gent's landscapes in works such as *Fireworks as I drive through the desert* is heavily influenced by the artist's fascination with "still" spaces, including those that extend to the sky above us. Despite the skyscrapers and buildings that surround us in the city, there still exist spaces above us that will never be touched, isolated parts of our world that will never have a hand laid upon them. In Gent's minimalist depiction of the desert at night, an explosion of fireworks on the horizon interrupts the black sky, intruding into this isolated space and reaching out from blackness towards the viewer. In its illumination of the night sky, the fireworks and the viewer are "strangers connected like lovers."

The sense of isolation that permeates much of Gent's work virtually evaporates in *Girls With Butterflies*, a central work within "Gentle". Clad in the abaya and gracefully twirling over the painting, Gent's "Girls" are lost within themselves as they dance with butterflies in scenes reminiscent of a Disney-esque innocence in the first stages of blossom. Irrepressibly alive, the artist's minimalistic brushstrokes evoke the grace and fluidity he so admires in women. Celebrating their vibrancy, Gent's "Girls" dance to music that is out of earshot to the viewers' ears but is somehow conjured through their lyrical movements. While consumed within their own world, Gent's "Girls" are simultaneously isolated yet ethereal and empowered.

The title of this exhibition, "Gentle", refers to the change in Gent's life and practice over the past few years. Elaborating on this change, Gent states that since starting a family, "I'm softer now. Children have made me gentle." The artist recently started painting on small-scale wooden boards instead of large-scale canvases, reasoning that the board has a certain gentle intimacy to its touch and smell. His previous experience of being locked into a never-ending battle working against the canvas, which he admits has worked well for him in the past, is no longer a war he wishes to wage. Often painting throughout the night because, "It's too real to paint during the day", stillness reigns and the wooden board "gently whispers back."

Notes to the Editors

About the Artist:

Jonathan Gent was born in 1976. After studying at The Cheshire School of Art and The Edinburgh School of Art respectively, he then worked and lived between France and Los Angeles. He has recently moved from Scotland to the Cote d'Azur in France. Gent's paintings have been exhibited widely throughout the world including Edinburgh's Scottish National Gallery, The Saatchi Gallery, The Freud Museum, and has recently held solo shows in New York, Dubai, Bangkok, Los Angeles, and London. Gent has gained a strong reputation with collectors including Tilda Swinton, Robin Vousden, Rami Farook, Samantha Morton, Aimee Mullins, Simon Hillary, John Papsidera, David and Tia Hoberman. Gent makes paintings and drawings which present an inventive, gnarled vision of human complication.

Born in 1976 in Cheshire England

About the XVA Gallery:

Established in 2003, XVA is one of the leading galleries in the Middle East that specializes in contemporary art from the Arab world, Iran and the Subcontinent. Exhibitions focus on works by the regions foremost artists as well as those emerging onto the scene. The gallery's artists express their different cultural identities and perspectives while challenging the viewer to drop prejudices and borders. XVA Gallery exhibits both locally and internationally; collaborating with galleries and participating in international art fairs, such as Art London, SH Contemporary and Art Basel Hong Kong in order to further expose Middle Eastern contemporary art.

XVA Gallery and XVA Art Hotel are located in Dubai's heritage district Al Fahidi Historical Neighborhood (formerly named Bastakiya). XVA founded and organized the Bastakiya Art Fair from 2007- 2010 as part of its commitment to raising the profile of contemporary art practice in Dubai.

In November 2013 XVA Gallery expanded its operations in Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood to continue its program of curated exhibitions and launch Projects @ XVA Gallery, a series of public programmes and events designed to further engage the public's interest in art

XVA Gallery Contact

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