



Coming up at XVA Gallery – *“I SHALL NEVER TIRE OF FINDING AN ESCAPE”* a group exhibition curated by IRIS Art Advisory at XVA Gallery

Join us from the 16th of September – 16th of October 2022 to travel the route for escapism through a stirring photographic journey exhibiting at XVA Gallery.

Curatorial Statement:

During the 1930's, in the aftermath of the great depression, people's lives went through tremendous social and psychological changes. Some were demoralized by hard times, while others lost their will to survive. Young people looked for a way out of the suffering, searching for an escape from their unpredictable, fickle reality. Families stayed home entertaining themselves by playing board games, in the hopes of temporarily forgetting their problems. Many forms of media, such as Magazines, became a form of escapism, where sad news was not mentioned. It was a time where seeing the world through rose-tinted glasses and avoiding the harshness of reality was a must. While many looked for an “escape”, others settled for a form of “escapism”, a coping strategy to tolerate the world's uncertainty. While escape is an ancient word, escapism is a modern one, created in parallel with the evolution of the modern world. The more arduous life became, the more escaping it became a laborious challenge.

“I SHALL NEVER TIRE OF FINDING AN ESCAPE” is a photography group exhibition, which highlights passionate photographers in their search for an escape from our relentless zeitgeist. Today, not unlike the 1930's, when physical escape is not a valid option, escapism is the alternative - often designed to protect oneself, remove the uncertainty, and take us into a safer mental place. Through their lenses and the use of their imagination, they transcend boundaries between story, form and technique. This exhibition explores the idea of escapism from the perspective of four artists: Sarah Brahim, Maitha Hamdan, Menat el Abd and Ammar Al Banna, - narrated under three chapters: From and to the self, Obeyed to essence and finally, Round we spin.

About the Artists:

These ever-real insights are brought to us through the eyes of these four artists:

Sarah Brahim

is a performance and visual artist based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She began studying, choreographing, performing, and teaching all styles of dance as a young person, going on to train at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance. Sarah went on to study the performative and biological body, and from 2017 holds a BS from Oregon Health and Science University and BFA (Hons) from the London Contemporary Dance School. She has participated in performance, residencies, and exhibitions, throughout the United States, Europe, and Arab world. Her work is rooted in

experiences of the body ranging through full physical embodiment, transcendence, and the unseen body. She creates unique physical languages with articulated gestures in order to express and examine themes such as pain in the body, grief, and loss. Through performance, video, photography, textile, installation, and sound, her work explores and embraces the vast conditions of the human experience.

Maitha Hamdan

is a self-taught conceptual artist, born and raised in Ajman. She explores her art through mediums such as performance and art installations. Maitha has found that dealing with fabric and textiles is the foundation of her artwork and performances. They narrate and tell the stories faced within social boundaries and religion. Maitha is also a filmmaker and performer who writes creatively in the Arabic language. A graduate from the Shaikha Salama Bint Hamdan Foundation program's "Salama Emerging Artists Fellowship Program 2019" Cohort 7, and a part of Azyami Program by Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council 2019, Maitha is the Founder and Creative Director of MaithaMedia, a media production company, and the Founder and Fashion Designer of Decencia modest clothing line.

Menat El Abd

is a 27-year-old Egyptian artist based in Dubai. Having a deep love for television and classic movies, she has grown an appreciation of the art form and established her own form of adaption from great films, specifically Egyptian films. In 2017, she established a UAE based brand "Black and White Diary" that focuses solely on creating black and white visuals. With her photography, Menat translates human's emotions through black and white storytelling, through her work she reminds the spectator to pause, and invites them to remember the many different forms of reality. Black and White Diary grew to be a brand that transformed B&W artworks into a unisex urban wear clothing line and a traveling gallery across the UAE. Menat continues to take on creative projects with key establishments and magazines such as Vogue Arabia, Dubai TV, and the Ghurair Foundation. Finally, through hosting workshops with Sony, Menat shares her expertise in photography and documenting UAE's culture through her lens with others.

Ammar Al Banna

(b. Dubai, 1998) is an avid film photographer and a full-time archaeologist. Film photography started for him as an experimental hobby during his years at the Sorbonne Abu Dhabi. And now, with a few years and a lot of rolls later, he still continues to use film photography as a method of creating and documenting art, environment, and the day-to-day routine - thus creating albums of stories and memories, all stored on sheets of film negatives. It initially stemmed from nostalgic connections to old family albums, and today the same process is used in a modern setting - all his photography is on film, in its many forms and sizes. What strives him to pursue this type of photography is the process of producing a photograph; from preparing the camera, capturing a subject, then going to develop the film and finding all the shots you were eagerly waiting for. It is majorly connected to the deep appreciation of the physical aspects put into this type of photography.

About the Curator

Fatima Al Kurdi, a Senior Curator and an Art Advisor at Iris Art Advisory. She has an academic background in Art History and Archeology from Sorbonne Abu Dhabi. Her experience is focused on both Art Market & Art Education. She has worked at the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Art collections

of the Presidential Palace of Abu Dhabi. Today, Fatima continues to work with New York based galleries providing south Asian and middle Eastern artworks to a variety of clientele between UAE, India, and New York. In 2022 she curated three successful exhibitions with Iris Art Advisory: "Versus collective conciseness", "Fractured existence", and "Chill: summer in the city". Fatima also runs a podcast; TART, an Art podcast where she shares her experiences, thoughts, and perception on the Art world, encouraging the public to re-evaluate their opinion on art.

About IRIS Advisory

Iris Art Advisory is a premier art consultancy firm based in the United Arab Emirates, founded by Lateefa Bin Hamoodah and Maryam Al Falasi. The Founders are avid art collectors who both share a common academic background in art history and archeology gained from the Sorbonne Abu Dhabi. Our Founders had a longing for creating a unique and unequalled platform that would cater to the eminent desire of the acquisition of art in the region specifically, and the globe generally. Iris offers an all-encompassing service through our profuse global connections with artists and galleries, with the aim of ensuring the best artworks for our clients. Iris came to life with the strong belief of our distinguished and incomparable 'eye for art'. The founders are driven by discovering new emerging artists globally in addition to established artists to ensure Iris displays access to both primary and secondary markets.

About XVA Gallery

XVA Gallery 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 region's 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 Basel Hong Kong, SH Contemporary, Singapore Art Fair and Abu Dhabi Art, in order to further expose Middle Eastern contemporary art.

XVA Gallery and XVA Art Hotel are located in Dubai's heritage district, now called Al Fahidi Historical Neighborhood. 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.

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