

# Art Paper – Carbon 12

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FOUNDING  
DIRECTOR



Carbon 12 was established in 2008, initiating a comprehensive, firmly global, programme of institution-grade artists. Internationally active, Carbon 12 introduces and promotes established and emerging artists to the UAE contemporary art scene, supplementing its six to eight annual exhibitions with diverse activities including publications and talks that engage the public and educational institutions. The playful, organic process that constitutes the creative production of Carbon 12's artist base is facilitated and mirrored by its location in Al Quoz.

# C A R B O N 1 2

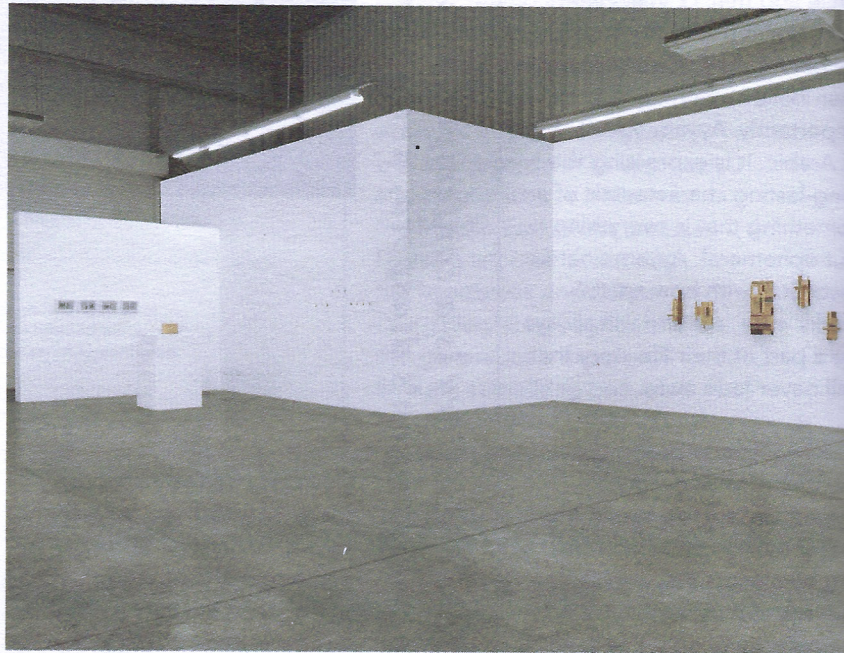
*What did you do before you opened your gallery, Carbon 12, in 2008?*

I am a business graduate and an MBA holder, and I was in a completely different field of work (consulting). I started collecting art around 1995-96.

*Could you tell us about your first exhibition, which acted as a statement for your programme?*

It was a very simple sneak peek, a large (very large) number of artworks from the artists we already represented or planned to be exhibiting. It was a simple

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Sarah Almehairi, *Between*, 2019. Courtesy of Carbon 12

accrochage without any curatorial claim. I recall it very well. It was right after the 2008 financial meltdown. Me and my best friend hung over 30 works and back then the walls were concrete walls. That was an adventure.

*How do you feel about what you've achieved, being present in the UAE at a time*

*when the country was most thirsty for culture?*

It feels amazing! We have achieved something big. In a few days we are opening our 70th exhibition. It wasn't easy to come forward with a curatorial non-regional programme. But today, as you see, after the bubble of Middle Eastern art burst, our artists are doing



Amir Khojasteh, *The Gloomiest Sunset in the World*, 2019. Courtesy of Carbon 12

great and are being sought by an international audience. Our international presence has also been consolidated in the past few years. We are still the only NADA member from the Middle East, and soon we will be past our 40th art fair.

*How would you describe the UAE art scene today and your relationship with it?*

The relationship is great. The November show coincided with our participation in Art Abu Dhabi, and in March we will be taking part in our 11th Art Dubai. The art scene has matured. We are now mainly dealing with collectors willing to educate themselves and genuinely interested in the contemporary practice of our artists.

*Why did you choose the name Carbon 12 for your gallery?*

The name is simply perfect, easy to recall and now a mini-brand by itself. It was about getting to the roots of things, like the fundamental molecule of carbon, essential to any living being, and also one of the most basic instruments to make a drawing (charcoal). The name sticks, and we will keep it. Last year, for the gallery's 10th anniversary, we changed our logo and website, and this new visual identity is also part of the whole maturation process.

*How would you define the identity of your gallery?*

As it stands today, with the represented artists' works and achievements of the past decade. We have promoted and fought for a universal and contemporary practice. The visual language of each and every artist is very clear, respected and relevant. The programme is very comprehensive, and we stayed away from geographical market trends and short-lived practices and trends.

*How would you describe your ideal collector?*

Someone interested in what we truly do, someone acquiring as much knowledge as possible about our artists and someone definitely bitten by at least three artists of the programme. The monetary values are not relevant. Sometimes the quality of the

conversation and the enthusiasm of the collector goes beyond anything. The collector-advocate is the dream collector.

*Which photograph from 2019 best represents your gallery?*

That's not fair to ask. I will send you several and you make the hard choice for us. Definitely an image from the show of Bernhard Buhmann or Elisabeth Wild. The Austrians have been opening the 2019 ball!

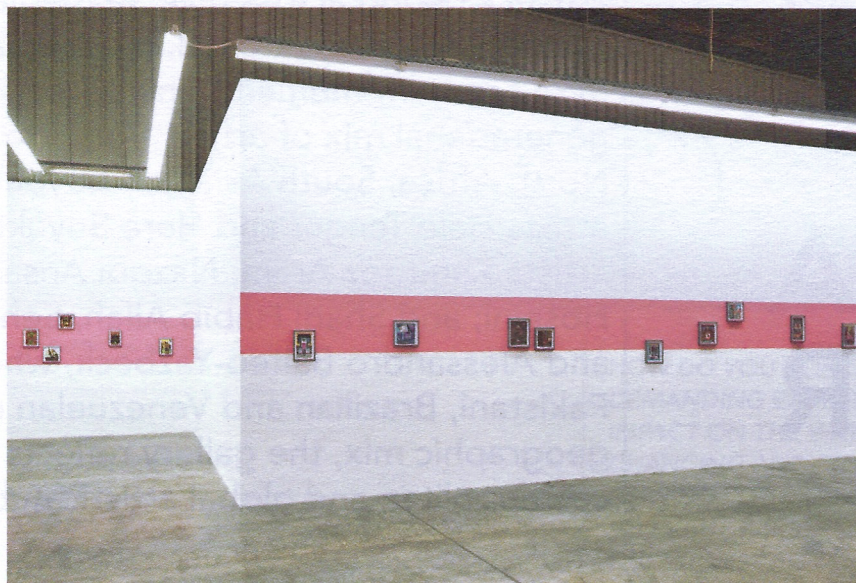
Bernhard Buhmann, *The Chaser, the Ambusher and the Fickle*, 2019. Courtesy of Carbon 12.



*Could you tell us about your programme for 2020?*

The year starts with two very heavy hitters. In January we've got Olaf Breuning for the first time with Woodcut acrylic paintings, and in March André Butzer will amaze us with his brand-new works. For May, a

group show is in the pipeline. In September, Philip Mueller will have his big comeback in Dubai and at Carbon 12, and November will have the very anticipated show of Sara Rahbar.



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Elisabeth Wild, *FANTASÍAS*, 2019. Courtesy of Carbon 12