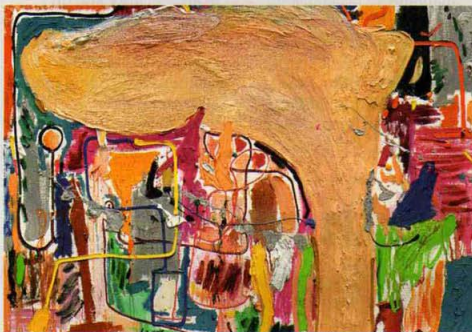


Five minutes with... André Butzer

We catch up with the weird and wonderful German artist on the eve of his first Dubai show



You employ lots of very bold colour in your work. What's that about?

I am trying to save and carefully store the history of colour on canvas. My paintings are comparable to upload servers that preserve this history for future generations ready for download. Also, colour is about its own virtuality; it's there, visible as real and clean or dirty stuff, and at the same time it's not really there. It's a complicated projection comparable to pure light.

This exhibition features work that is both broadly figurative and more abstract...

All my work is abstract, even if you see recognisable things like figures on them, as you can see mostly in my earlier works. These figures legitimise what I am painting today or tomorrow, but it has always been abstract right from the beginning. The figures did symbolise this path from an unknown beginning, with the end finishing with the actual beginning. This is what I call abstraction.

What are your artistic influences?

My art is mostly influenced by European art like the Italian Renaissance or Paul Cézanne. My wish though is to see it as part of a more global history of the image of all past and future times in general. Also, I would like people to see it as part of the history of outer space art.

This is the first time you have shown in Dubai. Do you have any impressions or expectations of the local art scene?

I hope the local art scene will show up at my show and I hope they will like it and never forget me afterwards. I imagine these artists as being strong and wise defenders of their holy version of a long history on this messed-up planet.

How would you describe your work in three words?

André, go home!

Mar 14 to Apr 20, Warehouse D37, Al Serkal Avenue, Al Quoz 1, Dubai.
Tel: (050) 4644392. www.carbon12dubai.com

Another view

There's more than one international art showcase happening this month. Sharjah shows us what it's made of

March's visual arts calendar isn't all about Art Dubai – it also kicks off the two-month cultural extravaganza that is the Sharjah Biennial. This year's outing marks the 10th anniversary of the event and promises to be its most ambitious yet. Curated by Suzanne Cotter, the curator of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi project *Plot For A Biennial*, as the event has been titled, will feature more than 65 specially commissioned works alongside existing pieces and projects. The event will roll out over the course of the eight-week programme in locations as diverse as the city's cultural quarter, with its concentration of museums and traditional architecture, to the Sharjah cricket stadium.

Alongside the multimedia exhibition programme is a line-up of seven short films by international film-makers from Brazil and the US to Lebanon

and Iran, each of which was commissioned by the Sharjah Biennial. A further, curated film programme, as well as those for music and performance, and a biennial-long series of talks, lectures and additional events will also be taking place. If you've never quite managed to make it any further into Sharjah than its airport and those handy Air Arabia flights (and let's be honest, many of us in its neighbouring emirates haven't), this would be a fine time to break that particular fast.

Art Dubai may get most of the headlines, but the Sharjah Biennial is one of the oldest contemporary art initiatives in the Middle East – and one of the most cutting-edge. Nearly 75,000 people made the trip to the ninth edition in 2009, *What's On* included. We were duly impressed by the calibre of what was on display and from what we've seen already, 2011 is unlikely to disappoint. They don't call it the "cultural emirate" for nothing, you know.

Mar 16 to May 16. www.sharjahart.org/biennial



Open sesame!

The March art madness continues with a round of exhibitions and happenings across Dubai. Worthy of special mention is the Al Serkal Gallery Night set to take place in the city's industrial art quarter, Al Quoz, on March 14. If you haven't made your way to visit it yet, now's your chance – half a dozen or more of the emirate's top galleries all concentrated in one workable (and walkable) area, all throwing open their doors for an evening of art and entertainment. Some, such as Syrian specialists Ayyam Gallery, offer visitors the chance to view existing shows (in this case, its epic *Selections from the Samawi Collection*). Others, including recent Al Serkal settlers Green Art Gallery – set to launch its ambitious video installation, *Balloons on the Sea*, by Turkish artist Hale Tenger – and relative old-timers Carbon 12 will be taking the opportunity to open new shows.

More exciting still is the news that that night will also see the launch of new galleries in Al Serkal, including Tehran-based Gallery Etamad's first opening in Dubai (see Five to see).

