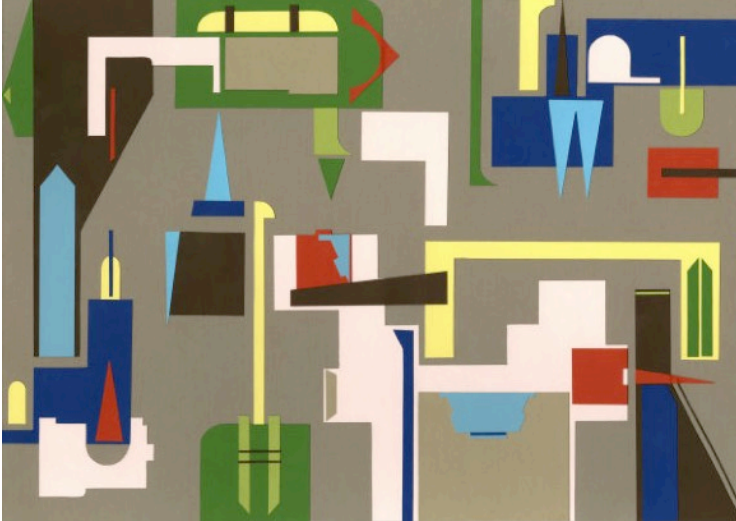


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Carbon 12 art gallery hosts exhibit at New York's The Armory Show

By Muhammad Yusuf

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Carbon 12, the contemporary art gallery offering a selection of works by international artists based in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue, is participating in The Armory Show at Javits Center, New York (Sept. 9 – 12). Its Booth P27 will chart a conversation between the works of artists Sarah Almehairi (b. 1998, UAE) and Gil Heitor Cortesão (b. 1967, Portugal), conveying a dialogue between their bodies of work and highlighting and contrasting their nuances. Both artists place a strong emphasis on compositional characteristics of their art, where intuitive layering and building act as vehicles in realising the work. Almehairi examines the construction of systems upon their destruction. Her sculptural pieces centre around themes of materiality, systems, interrelations and language. Through their material parlance, the differing grains and textures are her tools to compose numerous aspects of an overarching narrative. By contrasting colour against neutral tone, she builds rhythmic substance from muted assemblages of wood.

Almehairi's work also fluctuates between image and poetry, narrative and abstract. Lines and layers are used throughout her pieces as a means of exploring clarity and organisation of collected information from her childhood memories. Through the process, moments unfold, repositioning takes place, order is imposed, and language asserts a structure.

The elements towards telling a story are not so explicit; it investigates the push and pull of concealing and revealing. The artist is interested in how her works create a visual poetry, engaging with form, materiality, and colour, piecing together an innovative language. Her works are read time and time again to suggest a form other than their own – a map, a sentence, a puzzle piece and her continuous searches give access to new pathways. She is a practicing artist from Abu Dhabi and an Art and Art History major from New York University Abu Dhabi, class of 2019. She expresses herself in different mediums, including mixed media, sculpture, painting, book art and fibre art. Her art explores the themes of identity, language, materiality and memory through narrative work as well as abstraction. Al Mehairi also authors poetry, which is incorporated in her artwork.

Her works challenge conventional modes of artistic production and questions the cultural and social constructs of traditional artistic practices.

She has worked with Shoofi Art Calendar and interned with Abu Dhabi Art and the NYUAD Art Gallery. She has also been a part of the 2019 Youth Takeover group show at Jameel Arts Centre, Tashkeel's 2019 group exhibition "Play", has exhibited at the CultureSummit Abu Dhabi 2018, the 35th Annual Emirates Fine Art Society Exhibition in 2018 and presented her final capstone solo show in NYUAD's Project Space titled "Between". She lives and works in Abu Dhabi. Having studied at FBAUL, Lisbon and Licenciatura em Artes Plasticas, Pintura, Cortesão's largely Europe-based exhibitions display his realistic painting technique of architecture, both interiors and exteriors, which exude a tone of

melancholy stillness, as though abandoned, but not forgotten. He disrupts the illusion with explorative paint splatters and surface manipulation of his paintings on plexiglass, investigating possibilities of the spaces he portrays. They act as frontiers to these environments, with explorative paint splashes as a means to disrupt the compositions. Observed from interior or exterior viewpoints, he utilises archival imagery from 60s and 70s interior environments. Through reverse-glass painting, works are caught in the threshold between an image that is immediate, and one that becomes apparent. Cortesão looks to the design aesthetic of the 1960s and 70s, and his spaces are characterised by clean, hard lines. Human presence is generally avoided. There is a muted, dream-like quality that suggests the decline of the utopian promises of the Modernist era.

"I want to get the viewer to feel that they're at a distance, to enter these spaces as if they're in hypnosis," he has said. There is a definite sense of unease that radiates from his works, since they deal with disintegrating environments that were once heralded for being cutting edge.

Now much past their prime, their blossoming cheeks are woebegone and sagging, as they disintegrate. "That which was probably futurist at that time, now seems retro-futurist," Cortesao says, commenting on the march of time. Artworks, which were once oohed and aahed upon, are pared off walls and natural elements overrun interior spaces. It is horror in slow motion.

The unifying concept between the paintings and the sculptural works in the Carbon 12 show lie in their ties to memory. With several subjects and nodes at play, fluctuating between image and poetry, Almehairi's geometric abstractions break down, build and reassemble forms as constant iterations of themselves. In their still ambience, Cortesão's environments form dream-like atmospheres of rumination and reminiscing, navigating spaces void of human presence, abandoned and deserted.

He has exhibited in several institutions including CAM Centro de Arte Moderna and Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian, and is part of the permanent collections of the ARCO Foundation (Madrid), MUDAM (Luxemburg) and Fundacion Pedro Barrie de la Maza (A Coruna), among others. He lives and works in Lisbon. The Armory Show prides itself on being "New York's Art Fair." In 1994, four New York art dealers had the ambitious goal of creating a new art fair to support their artists and attract global attention. They succeeded. The result has been a groundbreaking cultural moment that has become vital to the New York art market and beyond. While much has changed over the years, The Armory Show is a galvanising force in the art world and essential to New York's cultural landscape. Its 2021 edition this month kick-offs New York's fall arts season.