GM: Describe your space to us.

Kourosh Nouri (K): A playful white cube! The space was planned around our artists’ practices so that we can set perfect exhibitions. It’s definitely our contemporary art palace! The space is generous, has its own specific smell (and for certain shows smells like wood and oil paint), luminous, the beautiful high ceiling (11m), plenty of indirect daylight, and there is so much volume. The location (Alserkal Ave.) is in the middle of Dubai, in the industrial zone of Al Quoz. I recall in 2009 when we moved here, Carbon 12 was one of the first two galleries here… now, it has turned into a contemporary art hub, hosting Dubai’s best galleries.

GM: What inspired you to open your own art gallery?

K: The sheer love of art, and the dream of putting together a comprehensive program with amazing artists. It had to be done! I have spent over a year and half thinking about opening a gallery “somewhere”… that was in 2007. In February 2008, Nadine (my partner) and I moved to Dubai to open our gallery.

GM: What do you think has made your gallery successful?

K: It’s about the quality of the work your artists produce, and your own constant work without feeling the fatigue of one of the most demanding jobs in the world. So far, our artists have been doing great and we have promoted their works at 110% with passion and integrity. We live, breathe, eat art the whole year and love what we do.

GM: Is there any consistent message, regardless of different shows, that you want your gallery to deliver to visitors?

K: The constant drive to deliver quality exhibitions, and sticking to our guns… I think that’s about it.

GM: How would you describe Dubai, as an art/gallery city, compared to other major cities in the Middle East?

K: Extremely transient, yet open; a hub from/to Asia+Europe+US… On paper the ideal location for the program we put together.
GM: What do you look for when acquiring new artwork &/ or artists?

K: Complementarity and high level of practice. We do enjoy challenging practices but not at the cost of denying a certain formalism… We want to work with dedicated and genuine artists.

GM: What is the most common reason you have, if any, for rejecting a particular artist’s work?

K: This relates to my answer above. Maybe additionally the fact that we want to avoid short lived trends/modes, and artists who have very little understanding of our program.

GM: What’s your perspective regarding artists with a formal art education and the ones without?

K: A brilliant artist is brilliant with or without education, period. Naturally the education (might) helps, but I don’t think it’s always a must… it varies from one person to another. When you find a piece of art that you can’t forget about and you find yourself talking about it to others, you should acquire the piece. That is when you know you have fallen in love and will live happily ever after in the company of art in your everyday existence.

GM: Please name one misunderstanding or misperception regarding galleries and artists.

K: Galleries remain the highest professional authority regarding the work of the artists they represent… therefore and most often, recommendations are purely professional and not just about “making a sale.” Artists (the ones we work with) are extremely professional and reliable… contrary to what the general public might think.

GM: What has been more provocative decision you have made in your work as a gallerist?

K: I don’t know if the word would be provocative… the fact that a gallery is all about the artists they represent and not our egos.

GM: What’s your definition of art?

K: The transformation of physical frequencies into emotions and/or thoughts … a unique visual representation of thought(s) proper to each artist, composed of various layers.

GM: How do you think art galleries may evolve over the next few years?

K: We need to be super professional and embrace all the technological novelties at our disposal. It is a fact that “online” there is more and more happening, but galleries shouldn’t sacrifice the (quality) of exhibitions held in their permanent spaces.

There are two things that are slowly but luckily changing for a better climate and a healthier art scene and art market: The post-2008 mentality of being desperate for sales, to anyone. Taking part at every art fair just for “exposure.”

During the economic crisis, the short term winners were social-climbers and bargain hunters; there was an emergence of loads of unnecessary art fairs since the barriers to enter the business were so low! But in 2016 we should all be looking for quality collectors as the guardians of our artists’ amazing works, and avoid art fairs with low commercial and curatorial capabilities.