Hazem Mahdy captures both the personal and the universal in his beautiful patterns that have an innate feeling of balance and tranquillity.

The artist has used images of his arms and hands in various "mudras" (meditative hand poses) to create beautiful patterns that have an innate feeling of balance and tranquillity, and a hypnotic quality that draws the viewer in towards the centre. "Because the mandalas looked interesting, I did a lot of research on how they are made and what the patterns mean. But initially when I tried to create those kind of patterns in my studio it did not work. I then realised that it is a subconscious process that will happen and it helped me to discover and express my inner self," he says.

The artist has used images of his arms and hands in various "mudras" (meditative hand poses) to create beautiful patterns that have an innate feeling of balance and tranquillity, and a hypnotic quality that draws the viewer in towards the centre. "Because the mandalas looked interesting, I did a lot of research on how they are made and what the patterns mean. But initially when I tried to create those kind of patterns in my studio it did not work. I then realised that it is a subconscious process that will happen and it helped me to discover and express my inner self," he says.

When starting a piece I would meditate beforehand and listen to chants to put myself in a zone where my thoughts and feelings flowed out spontaneously. This entire series is a form of 'automatic art' with each piece capturing a transient moment of pure and honest self-expression. The blue I have used throughout this series is the colour of the 'throat chakra', which is the chakra of expression," Mahdy says. At their core, the artworks are deeply personal and essentially self-portraits of the artist. But the hands within these organic patterns also represent all of humanity and the bond that exists between human beings and nature. "Ultimately my work is about unity. Like the hands in these patterns, the souls of all human beings are interconnected, regardless of the differences in our culture, religion or beliefs. The hands are a symbol for reaching out and supporting others and connecting with the universe," the artist says.

Jyoti Kalsi is an arts enthusiast based in Dubai.

Hamra Abbas is interested in investigating notions of cultural history, violence, gender roles, ornamentation and faith by deconstructing how we see images that are part of collective memory. In her latest show, Kaaba Picture as a Misprint, the Pakistani artist, who won the Abraaj Capital Art Prize in 2011 and the Jury Prize at Sharjah Biennial 9, has explored the idea of devotion through the altering of scale and medium of images associated with the Kaaba and Haj. By using the visual language of religion and contemporary acts of devotion, the artist has addressed ideas of transformation, individual experience and the diversity of religious understanding and involvement.

The title of the show comes from a series of six photographs, where Abbas has reduced the cubic form of the Kaaba to its most simple geometric representation of two black rectangles. In a reference to printing technology, she has further broken down the black forms into cyan, magenta and yellow versions of the shape. These three versions are then printed off centre in the photographs. By showing that the image becomes black when the three colours are layered upon each other, and by calling her method a "misprint", the artist links the quest for truth through religious devotion to the plethora of ways in which truth may be understood and experienced.

In a series of photographs, titled Kaaba Pictures, Abbas looks at souvenirs that people buy during the Haj to serve as a portable memory of the sacred ritual. The artist made paintings of some of these objects and then photographed them to create large-scale artworks. Similarly, in Wall Hanging, she has created a print of a painting of the silk- and gold-embroidered "kiswa" that covers the door of the Kaaba. Her original painting was based on a plaster-cast souvenir bought by her mother, and the translations from embroidery to plaster cast to painting to digital photography and print remove the final art object from its religious origin to explore multiple reinterpretations of the original. By highlighting the process of the production of these mass-produced images for public consumption, the artist invites us to contemplate our perception of spiritual icons and the symbolic and religious significance attached to them.

Kaaba Picture as a Misprint will run at Lawrie Shabibi until May 27.