**Beauty of the confusion**

Sailstorfer uses the technique of oxidation painting, coating his canvases with metallic primers containing iron or copper until January 7, 2014.

**Picturing one’s own dilemmas**

When German artist Michael Sailstorfer struggled to come to a decision over his career, he decided to paint.

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By Jyoti Kalsi

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Michael Sailstorfer’s first solo exhibition in Dubai, *Try to reach the goal without touching the walls*, features a series of oxidation paintings depicting his attempts to find his way through various mazes. The young German artist is also displaying a set of artworks inspired by Formula One race tracks and a video featuring a car journey. The mazes and the race tracks are a metaphor for life, and the artworks are essentially about navigating the twists and turns in life, making the right decision at every turn and steering oneself in the correct direction.

"Life and art are always about making decisions," says Sailstorfer. "When I started working with mazes a few years ago, I was at a point in my career where I was asking myself about what would be the right direction to take in my art and where I wanted to go. To create a visual representation of what was going on in my mind, I decided to use the technique of oxidation painting. I coated my canvases with metallic primers containing iron or copper. On these metallic surfaces I printed various mazes that I found on the internet, ranging from circular and square ones to abstract shapes and figurative ones such as a car like the shape of Iron Man. I then tried to follow the standard instruction that comes with these mazes of 'reaching the goal without touching the walls'. But rather than using paint to trace my path, I navigated the maze with an acid spray. The streaks of metallic reds, browns and greens you see on the canvases are caused by the oxidation of the metal primers by the acid," Sailstorfer says.

The artist admits that the idea is inspired by Andy Warhol’s oxidation paintings and just as the American artist used his urine as an acid to leave his personal markings, both personally and perhaps politically, Sailstorfer is also displaying for the first time a video he created in 2003 while he was still an art school student. The video shows him driving his car through the Bavarian landscape, singing along with the radio, with the lights in the car blinking like disco lights. The inclusion of this video in the show is a reference to his artistic journey from the beginning of his career to the present. His enjoyment of the drive in the video and the intuitive way he has sprayed the acid in his recent paintings offer insights into the artist’s attitude towards life and the process by which he makes his own decisions.

"Try to reach the goal without touching the walls will run at Carbon 12, Al Quoz, until January 7, 2014."