

TheNational



Michael Sailstorfer impresses with labyrinthine artworks at Carbon 12 in Dubai

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The five wall pieces hanging in Carbon 12 gallery this month summarise a lifetime of work for the German artist Michael Sailstorfer.

He often uses everyday industrial materials and manipulates them. For this show, called Try to Reach the Goal Without Touching the Walls, he has taken large canvases, covered them in iron and copper primer and printed mazes on them. Then, in a kind of contemplation about the physical and mental process of art, Sailstorfer has laid them on the ground and used acid to trace his attempts to escape the maze.

Chemical reactions

The acid on the metal primers causes oxidation and rust, so that the intellectual journey of decision-making when putting together a piece of art, as well as the sometimes trial-and-error process, can be seen visibly and clearly in his Mazes series.

“I do mostly sculpture or three-dimensional work but for these I was reflecting on my own practice,” says the German artist. “Art is always about making decisions and I wanted to take this process literally and represent it like this as a kind of drawing on canvas.”

Journeys

Just as the mazes represent the mental journey Sailstorfer himself has taken as an artist, he is also showing *Welttour*, a 2003 video piece that he has never exhibited in a gallery before. *Welttour* (it means world tour) is a performance piece Sailstorfer completed while he was still at college. It shows inverted footage of him driving a Volkswagen van through the Bavarian countryside while singing along to the radio. "It is also about distance and travelling and the journey," he muses. "That is what I love."

Racetracks

Encased in orange Plexiglas cases, the final element of the show is the series from which the exhibition takes its name – replicas of the world's Formula One racetracks, cut out of truck tyre inner tubes and nailed on top of each other to create the visual effect of another maze.

"I like that they look kind of abstract," Sailstorfer says. "They look like calligraphy or like minimal art."

Solo show

Sailstorfer is an internationally exhibited artist who made his UAE debut in 2007, in Sharjah at the Biennial. Carbon 12 has displayed him in a few group shows but this is his first solo in Dubai.

"For me, it is always important that a show does something conceptually or that it really holds together along one seam," he concludes. "This show is really about a journey through my life or a portrait of my artistic practice."

• Try to Reach the Goal Without Touching the Walls is showing at Carbon 12, on Alserkal Avenue until January 7. Visit carbon12dubai.com for details.