

dubai *delights*



OF CHARCOAL AND DIAMONDS

Carbon 12 fuses different elements together to create an art collection as rich and varied as the population of Dubai.

The water of Dubai Marina glints deep blue in the winter sunlight. Along the waterfront, shops and cafés are opening one by one like mushrooms, slowly but surely filling the retail and culinary needs of Dubai's vast, international populace. So too are the galleries coming, ready to fulfil the cultural appetites that follow. The latest addition to Dubai Marina's burgeoning gallery scene, Carbon 12 promises to be one of the Emirate's best kept secrets.

Down a flight of stairs off one of the Marina's busy thoroughfares, proves that appearances can be deceiving. Divided into three distinct spaces, the entrance, with its smooth black floors and carefully selected few artworks (on this visit, those of

Iranian Alireza Massoumi), belies the vast, almost 400-metre-square industrial gallery space behind a quirky set of stairs (but watch your head!).

"We wanted Carbon 12 to go beyond boundaries," says Director and Partner, Kourosh Nouri. "We want to promote an international, not just a regional, view of the art world." Deriving its name from a clever and rather scientific source, Carbon 12 refers to one of life's most important building blocks, one the gallery says is the "underdog of the elements". Carbon's ability to produce two extremely different products (charcoal and diamonds) reflects the dual-nature of the gallery and the non-radioactive isotope of Carbon, which is 12, and represents how "we dare to find magic in extremes, but just like the 12, we are safe."

With this mantra, Nouri and his partner, Nadine Knotzer, work with two international curators to hunt down the hottest names in the international art scene and scout the next rising talent. Nationality, for Nouri, is not a deciding factor. “We show international and regional art, whatever we like, to be honest,” he says. “If an artist happens to be Japanese or Emirati, that is irrelevant, since we are drawn to the works themselves.” Nouri does point out, however, the importance for a gallery to have a cohesive collection. “There is a thin line that connects the 21 artists in our stable,” he says, “they all provide an international view of the art world.”

With plans to bring the total number of artists at the gallery to around 30, with the addition of up to seven new names by 2010, artists already range from as far and wide as Norway, Portugal, Austria and Iran. “Obviously, many of the Iranian artists that we exhibit already have their own agents in the region,” says Nouri. “However, we are the regional representatives for the international artists that we bring to the gallery.”

Focusing on media artists and photographers – with a keen interest in emerging photographers – Nouri is pragmatic about the need for a strong curatorial background. “One needs good

curators behind one,” he says. “If you do not have proper curation, your collection gets weaker, in terms of content, over time.” He is also aware of the need to plan far in advance, in order to create a cohesive collection and vision for the gallery. “How can you have a solid, comprehensive collection if you don’t know what you are doing a few months down the line? Where is the unity? What sort of collection is that?” he asks.

Dubbing Carbon 12 a “no-compromise art gallery”, Nouri has no plans to add extra features such as a café or library, preferring instead to concentrate purely on the art. “It’s an art gallery, period,” he says with a smile, “although we do have some informal chit-chats with artists in the pipeline.” With an art advisory (‘art collecting’) service available, as well as hopes to advise corporate collections in future, Carbon 12 also plans to participate in Art Dubai 2010, as well as art fairs in Asia.

For now, the hardest part of managing the new gallery for Nouri is fitting in all the people he wants to display. “Selecting exhibitions is a nightmare!” he laughs. “It’s not a choice of either A or B being better than the other, it’s a matter of us picking somebody who we are 100 percent sure fits into our continuum, and that’s hard!”

Coming up at Carbon 12

From left to right: Thierry Feuz. Atlas. 2008. Lacquer on canvas. 220 x 120 cm; Katherine Bernhardt. Heidi Klum. 2009. Acrylic on canvas. 181 x 241 cm; Katherine Bernhardt. M.I.A. 2009. Acrylic on canvas. 151 x 151 cm; Bernhard Buhmann. Untitled. 2008. Oil on canvas. 210 x 250 cm.



3 March–1 April

Microworlds and Macrovisions

Thierry Feuz

The abstract works of Thierry Feuz range from abstraction to imagination and geometrical compositions to biomorphic evolution. A kaleidoscope of artistic viewpoints and colours presents the juxtaposition of macrovisions and microworlds. Feuz’s *Technicolor Series* defines the new horizons of a cosmos sought to be discovered. Their Surrealist counterparts are approaching from the other side: Bacteria and jellyfish-like creatures inhabit these paintings, celebrating the contradiction of evolutionary theory and metaphysics.

2 April–3 May

Wonder Women

Katherine Bernhardt

The *Wonder Women* collection shows the world’s top fashion icons (Kate Moss, Gisele Bundchen) in a way they have never been seen before – through the eyes of Katherine Bernhardt. Fast, hasty, confused, scribbled and smeared, dripping and damp. One can almost smell the strong scent of fresh paint; hear the last brushstrokes being applied; feel the vibrant atmosphere of the ups and downs of a life in the fast lane. Both in content and style, there is a raw energy, a lust for life in Bernhardt’s paintings. The glamour of

today’s wonder women from *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar* collide with large brushstrokes and the aggressiveness of Abstract Expressionism.

5 May–4 June

Bernhard Buhmann’s Playground

6 June–15 July

The Magnificent Seven

Alessa Esteban

Florian Hafele

Bernhard Garnicnig

Mathias Garnitschnig

Omid Massoumi

Philip Mueller

Farzan Sadjadi

For more information on Carbon 12, call +971 504644392 or visit www.carbon12dubai.com