

Syrian style and substance

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Acclaimed Syrian artist Thayer Helal is just one of a huge number of artists who will have work on show in this week's Art Dubai at Madinat Jumeirah.

Thayer is a senior faculty member of the University of Sharjah, Fine Arts College.

And the graduate of Damascus University is also well known for an approach to painting that mixes the traditional Arab visual culture with some modern and different styles.

Some traditional cornerstones have influenced Thayer's work.

He explains: "I'm working with repetition, using my culture and background, Arabic and Islamic culture. But the repetition and patterns, while traditional, are perhaps more abstract and more modern. It is inspired by life, but the style at the same time looks contemporary while also reflecting my culture."

As well as my Arabic and Islamic traditions, I am also inspired by Chinese, European, all sorts of cultures really.

"In one year I work on around 20-25 pieces, I'm sometimes working on two to three a week.

"My paintings may look similar to each other, but they are different. From year to year I can see a big change.

"If you start looking at collections in 2001 and 2010 it will be different.

"I'm no

necessarily following Islamic art, but it has helped me to make abstract works. We are a new generation, with a different way of thinking.

"But then you imagine that this has been done for thousands of years. It has helped me to focus and think about my culture."
More than 30 countries and 70 galleries will be represented at this year's Art Dubai, which runs from March 17-20.

A large programme of events will run at the same time, including the Global Art Forum, the Abraaj Capital Art Prize, special projects curated by Bidoun Projects and also 'The Poetry of Time', an exhibition presented by jeweller and watch specialists Van Cleef & Arpels.

Check the official web site www.artdubai.ae for details.

