

CONSTRUCTION, DESTRUCTION, RECONSTRUCTION

Veteran artist, Faisal Samra invited **Bahrain Confidential** to his private studio, in Juffair. **Melissa Nazareth** spoke to him about his work and got an EXCLUSIVE on his art exhibition to be held in February, in London.



Tell our readers more about your exhibition in London.

I will be exhibiting my work at Ayyam Gallery in London and it is called Construction, Destruction, Reconstruction (CDR). CDR is the essence of anything created by mankind or even divine creation. It's an ongoing and inevitable cycle which keeps things more organic and alive. Nothing that's created stays the same forever; it changes and is destroyed either naturally or by oneself and then re constructed.

For instance, the chair (Left Top & Below) symbolises power. Now if this power becomes a dictatorship and begins looking at self benefit rather than the bigger good then it undergoes change; it is destroyed and re constructed to a state where the good of all people comes into the picture. Another example is the sculpture (turn over to the next page); the man is looking at himself in the mirror and at some level his super ego takes over. He is then destroyed and from the broken pieces comes another person. A single unit is fragmented and the positive energy is now shared by many rather than used by one.

You mean it's more like evolution?

I'm not sure. Change is a more precise word. Evolution means going to a better stage. But who says we're moving towards a better stage!

Do you think that this change can be controlled or is it beyond our control?

It depends on the process of change. If you're using the right process then you will reach the right end but if you're using the incorrect process then it will guide you to something else; it will be a Frankenstein (an agency that escapes control and destroys its creator).

Do you have a certain style of going about your art?

When I work, I start with a concept which builds automatically over the process of my work. Though I may start with a single concept, gradually so many more different layers and dimensions are added to my work. Also, I don't always explain all the details but leave it open for my audience to interpret.

I believe that art needs to be honest and not political. If it is then it will, at some point be discarded. I try to analyse what's going on around me and hold the metaphorical bull by its horns; we need to face the truth. My work is not a message, it's a statement based on what I see. You could agree or disagree. If you disagree please feel free to make your point.

What media do you usually use?

My theme dictates what media I use to create my work and not the other way round. We now live in an era of multimedia art. I even use videos, acting and other performances to express my art. I'm the first artist in Bahrain to have started exhibitions with a single theme. My debut single theme exhibition, Nostalgia was held in Kuwait. Through this series I worked on how to provoke memories through images to the point that these images, for instance if they were about spices, the audience could almost smell the spices. Now single theme exhibitions are very common





but when I started it they were not. I thought this was a better way of doing exhibitions as then my audience is more prepared about a single topic.

Describe a typical day in your life.

In 1993 I quit my job and became a full time artist. I spend around 9 hours in my studio and I do have a routine but then there are times when I take my time off. There is a time to work and then a time to sit back and collect subjects through observation. You can't really force art; if you do you may not get the best results.

What is Faisal Samra like beneath all the artistic, intense themes?

I would say I'm simple and easy going. I have an ironic sense of humour, black comedy like they say. Life is too short to be taken too seriously.

What are your expectations from your exhibition in February?

I have come to believe from my experience that one must not have any expectations, to avoid disappointment. I have worked hard and done my part. I will now go ahead with an open mind ■

