

Abu Dhabi Summer Season raffle draw winner

The 10th of 12 weekly Abu Dhabi Summer Season raffle draws was held on Saturday at Deerfields Mall. Shahad Razwan Al Zalahad from Syria won a Mercedes E200. Two more cars will be given away on the next two Saturdays. Next weekend's draw is at Al Ain's Bawadi Mall. Visit www.abudhabisummerseason.ae for more details

A focus on youth

Anna Seaman meets the first recipient of Ayyam Gallery's Young Artist in Residency programme, who also has a solo show at the venue



Noor Bahjat has her studio in Ayyam Gallery, where visitors can see her artworks and even watch her producing them. Duncan Chard for The National

Noor Bahjat, the first artist chosen for Ayyam Gallery's Young Artist in Residency programme, has some pretty impressive mentors from her home country.

Tammam Azzam caused a worldwide viral sensation when, in 2013, he digitally superimposed Gustav Klimt's painting *The Kiss* against a war-ravaged Syrian building.

Mohammad Orabi, whose child-like portraits offer a personal perspective but also call to mind martyr posters, is another powerful artist whose work echoes his country's turmoil.

After being uprooted from Syria, both Azzam and Orabi have a permanent base in Ayyam's flagship office and gallery space in Alserkal Avenue, Dubai.

Bahjat, who is now enjoying her first solo exhibition at the gallery, was also allowed to set up her studio within the gallery space, giving visitors a chance not only to see her art but watch her producing it.

The paintings that form the backbone of her exhibition are figurative works, featuring wide-eyed, haunting portraits that compel the viewer to respond. Some feature women in black surrounding a table full of sinister objects such as a skull and an upturned globe. In others, the figures have animal skulls for heads.

All are full of heavy texture, achieved by thickly applying paint and then scraping it off.

Although she denies that the war in Syria has motivated her work, the paintings seem heavily laced with the trauma of conflict.

"I'm not a political person, I'm too young for that and it is not my intention to focus on the war," she says. "However, I did study in Damascus during the war, so I might have been influenced."

"Art is for everyone; I don't title the paintings because I want everyone to create their own stories about the work and I don't have my own agenda as to who I want people to see the work."

"When you look at the painting,

it is just you and the painting – so whatever you see in it is the right interpretation."

One of my personal favourites of her works is of a woman with a bowed head, painted in shades of blue on a coral-pink background. Behind her is a shadow staring straight out of the canvas and covering her mouth.

"This one began with me just playing around with figures and I was surprised by the results – I loved it," she says. "As I see it, the blue lady is limited by social constraints and the lady behind her is her soul. She has strength

in her eyes but if she talks she will make a big problem, so her mouth is covered."

One of the biggest Middle Eastern galleries in the world, with five branches across the region and one in London, Ayyam Gallery has always supported young artists. In 2007, shortly after founding the first Ayyam Gallery in Damascus, cousins Hisham and Khaled Samawi launched their Shabab Ayyam programme – an incubator project that sought to support the emerging generation of Syrian painters in the country's capital, including Orabi and Tazzam.

Now that the two artists work daily in their studios adjacent to the gallery, they are in a prime position to act as mentors and have been working every day for the past six months with Bahjat to help her develop her art.

Having them so close has proved invaluable, says Hisham, the gallery's managing partner. "Their exchanges have been remarkable, particularly since Mohammed and Tammam joined the gallery as young artists and developed their distinctive styles under the umbrella of Shabab Ayyam," says Hisham.

"Moreover, having the residency studio adjacent to the gallery has allowed visitors to become familiar with Noor's work, while charting her process and development. Aside from providing her with unmatched exposure and support, the studio space introduced Noor to a vibrant artistic community, where her growth as a painter has been phenomenal."

● **Noor Bahjat: Young Artist in Residency Graduation Exhibition runs until September 15**

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on the blogs

Anna Seaman writes on The Art Blog:

The Art Dubai team has announced the jury for the eighth and ninth editions of the Abraaj Group Art Prize, which will include leading international curators Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Defne Ayas and Sandhini Poddar.

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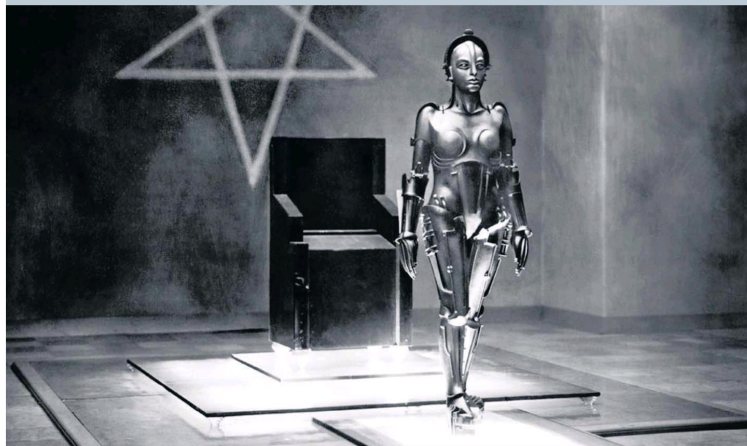
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5 things to do today

● Abu Dhabi ● Dubai ■ Northern Emirates



watch the 1927 German sci-fi film *Metropolis* as part of the Iris Yas Island indoor classic movies series. The Fritz Lang film about a dystopian city in the year 2026, where above ground there is wealth and industry, while below ground there is desperation and death. The film is known for its pioneering special effects and stars Gustav Fröhlich and Brigitte Helm.
 ● 7:30pm, Yas Marina, Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, reservations at 055 160 5636, www.facebook.com/irisyaslanduae

book your table for the Second Hand Charity Flea Market, where you can sell pre-loved



get tickets now for the forthcoming five-month Meydan horse-racing season. A variety of packages are available that offer views of the action, restaurant access and even private grandstands.

● Starts on November 5, from Dh50 for admission, Meydan Racecourse, 04 327 2210, ticketoffice@dubairacingclub.com

sign up for the acclaimed international acting qualification workshops from the London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art (LAMDA), which provide the means to gain skills for a solid foundation in acting.

● September 14 to November 23, 7:30pm to 10pm on seven Mondays, Dh1,500 for 24.5 hours, plus fees for optional exam, Constellation, Dubai Media City, Dubai, 04 438 5574, www.constellation.ae

register for the How To In Abu Dhabi Sessions. New expats are invited to this two-evening meet-and-greet event to have questions answered, learn about local customs, sign

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goods, including home decor items, toys, accessories and more. Funds collected from table fees will be donated to Unicef. Reserve your table by September 5 for Dh245, afterwards for Dh285.

● September 19, 9am to 2pm, free entry, Sheraton Abu Dhabi Hotel & Resort, Abu Dhabi, book tables at 02 677 3333, Sabine.Farah@sheraton.com



up for clubs and societies and get information on visas, licences, bank accounts and more.

● August 30 and September 13, 8pm to 9.30pm, free, McGettigan's, beside Al Raha Beach Hotel and Resort, Abu Dhabi, register at www.abudhabipaddy.com

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