



Wasel Safwan: ‘Painting on a big canvas or making three-dimensional shapes on a big scale is one of my desires’

Life in abstract

Artist Wasel Safwan Antepi’s ‘UAEism’ style art is reflective of his philosophy towards life and this country

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ART WAS BORN from a respect for humanity; its colours correspond to different tongues in different conditions at the same time. Artist Wasel Safwan Antepi’s approach to ‘UAEism’ styled art is based on this philosophy.

Isn’t it amusing, an architect having such a passion in something that could be done easily by computers?

Professional architect Jonathan Knight told me few days ago: “Never let go of the art-side of your life. The two things, painting and architecture, can work together and help each subject.” I feel art is more flexible for my imagination to think freely and put ideas on the floor than the atmosphere I had while working as an architect. There is no architecture without art. However, architecture has influenced my style and personality. Never do I feel that I am away from the architectural world as while I paint on canvas I work in three-dimensional shapes. If you ask any architect, he will know what I am talking about.

What is the initial concept behind UAEism? UAEism is for anyone who has lived and been brought up in the UAE. It is the multi-cultural atmosphere we all share. Those aspects are affecting us everyday, and there is no flavour or taste apart from mutual sharing.

The beautiful colours from the different nations we have on this land can add an aesthetic skyline to the land.

So why in abstract form?

Islam is one of the main reasons, because in Islam it is forbidden to draw figures. Also studying architecture had influenced and supported my ideas on building my art in strong basics. Then, the atmosphere I am living with... I am not from the aesthetic style of Andalusia, Ottoman and other civilisations that feed our minds with the pleasure of beauty in art and architecture.

How did you come up with the idea of UAEism?

Since I was born and bred in the UAE, I can feel the UAE’s culture. It is amazing to see what is happening in the UAE.

How do you manage to handle these large canvases?

Painting on a big canvas or making three-dimensional shapes on a big scale is one of my desires. I feel my thoughts are limited on small canvases. I want to express my emotion on an unlimited wall. I once painted around a 360x250cm big canvas. I was crazy! I had no store to save it, so winds broke it down! But I did not give up; I went back again and kept on painting on a big scale. I have a store now and nothing is better than painting on a big scale.

Do you paint these in your studio?



Wasel’s artworks are abstract

My studio is at my dad’s villa in Al Ain. Usually, I am painting under the neem tree, as it gives good shading, and is surrounded by the sound of water and whisper of birds. Many ask how I can paint in high temperature. In Al Ain, however, we do not have humidity. I paint in the daytime to see the colours in a natural way, my light is the sun, my cover of heat is the shades and my oxygen is the breeze. Sometimes I paint in 50 degrees Centigrade too. When you love your job, you find your place.

What would you want people to take away from your art?

I always have viewers from different nations, each one sees it from a different viewpoint. It is a strange feeling when they discover issues or shapes that I never thought of while painting. My work might represent buildings or cities or three-dimensional forms in new shapes and geometries. Sharp contrasting volumes, shapes and colours on a large canvas compose a view of the world that is vibrant and confident. It is a new science and mathematics.

Wasel Safwan artwork can be viewed at www.waselart.com