

Pen to Paper exhibition and Ayyam Gallery's grand opening attractions of Jeddah Art Week

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The image shows the logo for Saudi Gazette, which consists of the words "Saudi Gazette" in a large, bold, blue serif font, centered on a light blue rectangular background.

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From left to right: Saudi Artist Qaswra Hafez, Founder of Ayyam Gallery

Khaled Samawi, Founder of Ayyam Gallery Jouhayna Samawi, Sotheby's International Contemporary Art Specialist Lina Lazaar Jameel. — SG photo by Roberta Fedele

Roberta Fedele

Saudi Gazette

JEDDAH – Athr Gallery's intense schedule of events and the grand opening of Ayyam Gallery were undoubtedly among the main attractions of Jeddah Art Week.

Athr Gallery's "Pen to Paper" group exhibition displayed the artworks of 17 Middle Eastern artists, exploring the value of knowledge and the art of using words and text within the artistic language.

Co-curated by Al Madad Foundation, a UK registered charity committed to using art as a platform to promote literacy and education for disadvantaged children, the exhibit aimed at stressing the role of literacy as a tool to empower children and teach them to think critically.

Through his 2012 artwork "Boy With Kite," Lebanese Artist Abdelrahman Katanani well exemplifies the hope that education and knowledge can offer to a child.

"Just like a kite, education travels across borders and cultures and opens up the mind making a person visible to the world," says Katanani.

Pen To Paper exhibit's opening was followed by a silent and public charity auction held by Deputy Chairman of Sotheby Europe Lord Poltimore that led to the sale of other 17 artworks, not included in the exhibit, to fund Al Madad Foundation's education programs.

"Illuminarsi rompendo l'eterno ritorno" – literally meaning "Enlighten yourself breaking the eternal return" – by Italian Artist Giovanni Ozzola was one of the artworks on sale at the charity auction. Arrived in Jeddah for the occasion, Ozzola explained the meaning behind his neon wire installation.

"The "eternal return" is a cross cultural concept, present in both Eastern and Western traditions, that I find very appealing," said Ozzola. "When I conceived this work I was inspired by the idea of breaking the psychological chains that obstruct the inner growth of an individual and oblige him to face the same problems again and again precluding his possibility to live in a state of greater awareness.

"I decided to give my artwork a circular form to exemplify the idea of a constraint that a person can transcend facing his fears and obsessions," he added.

Conclusive event of the Jeddah Art Week, the grand opening of Ayyam Gallery attracted hundreds of people to the gallery's new and bright building that will host until April 11 the "Profile Portraits" exhibition by acclaimed Syrian Artist Mohannad Orabi.

Inspired by the use of social medias as useful instruments to communicate with friends and revolutionary tools to disseminate information, Orabi gave life to a body of works based on the use of his friends' profile pictures. Already present in Damascus, Beirut and Dubai, Ayyam Gallery is the first international gallery dedicated to the promotion of Middle Eastern contemporary art to open in Saudi Arabia.

Founder of Ayyam Gallery Khaled Samawi said: "The increasing number of talents among the country's extremely young population is very appealing for us. Through our gallery we represent at the moment about 50 artists that we want to support to keep this positive momentum going."

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