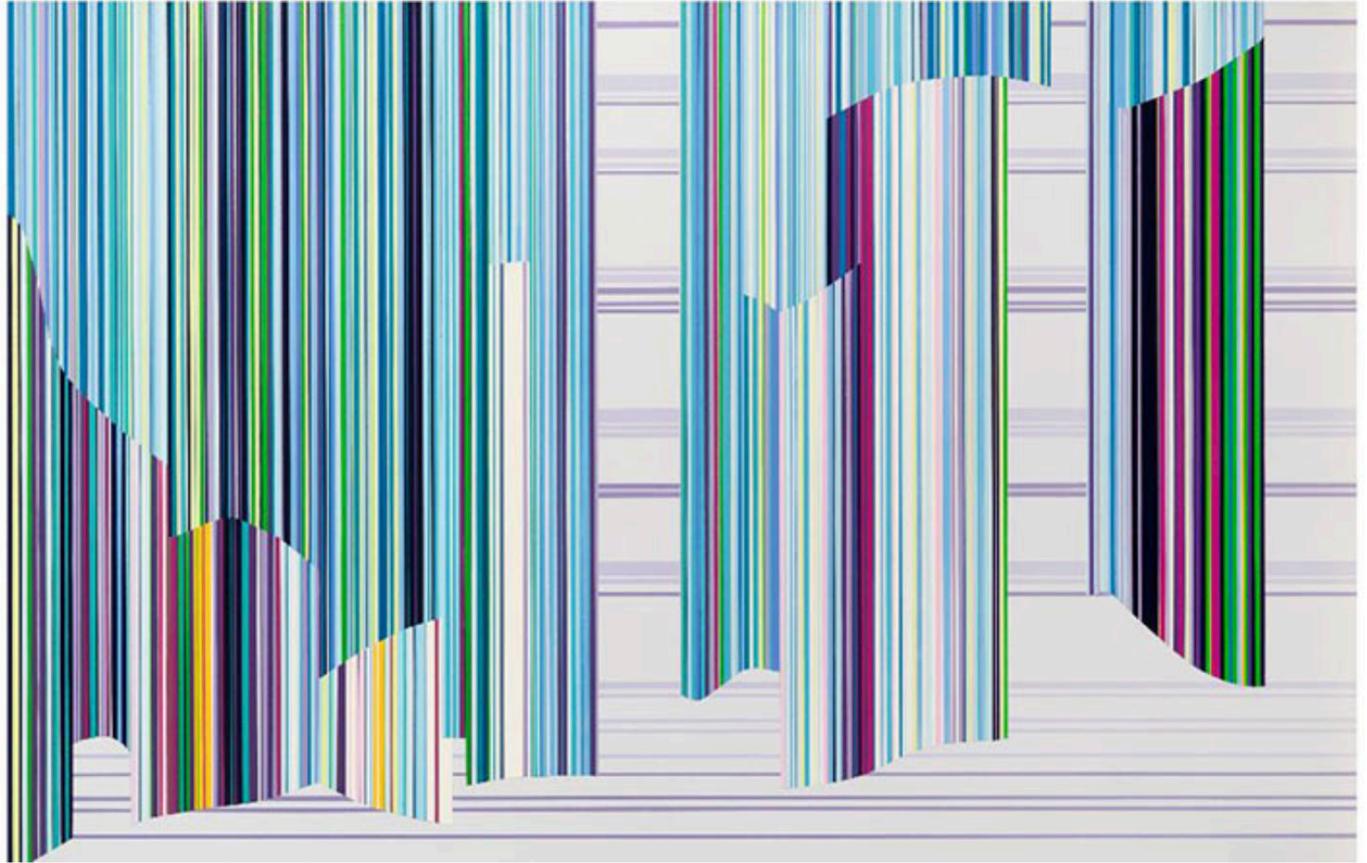


Firetti Contemporary Dubai speaks the language of Breaking Boundaries



An artwork being hosted by Firetti Contemporary.

Muhammad Yusuf, *Features Writer*

Firetti Contemporary art gallery is presenting *Breaking Boundaries* (Feb. 3 — Apr. 13), a show bringing together antipodal linguistic and cultural aspects of communication through the works of British artist Josh Rowell and Saudi Arabian artist Nasser Al Salem. The show is curated by Celine Azem and Kayna Lang, and co-curated by Mohammed Al Saqqa.

Using language as the core of artistic practice, the works of Rowell — as well as artworks of Al Salem — are presented with a purpose that explores and reshapes information and celebrates the hand-made in a time that is increasingly being enveloped and perhaps bypassed by the virtual.

Al Salem pushes the boundaries of age-old Islamic art by re-inventing it in non-conventional mixed media forms and by exploring its conceptual potential.

Mara Firetti, Founder of Firetti Contemporary, explains: “It is considered a truism that language is a crucial tool for successful communication in all walks of life.

“Since early history, humans have crafted languages to refine communication. The emergence of language was a defining moment in the evolution of modern humans, setting the pivotal foundation for all means of dialogue.

“Throughout the history of linguistics, the expansion in methods of communication has led to an unlimited potential for interpretation.”

The exhibition also unveils the first ever NFT by Al Salem - Allah (He is the -First and Last), and first NFT of the series, Virtually Fragile, by Rowell.



An artwork brightens up the space at Firetti Contemporary.

Taking yet another step into the means of language and spreading ideas through an unfamiliar channel, both artists attempt to close the gap between the two worlds of the digital and physical. The presented NFTs provide a unique view into crypto communication, so viewers and collectors can appreciate not only the digital possibilities of the work, but also the tangible potential of both the physical and digital being showcased side by side.

Rowell's Virtually Fragile series features the moment in which connectivity is lost to the digital world. It highlights the loss of the ability to connect and communicate within the virtual realm - a great shift from a space where functions of data and connectivity are transformed into abstract chaos.

The alternated, abstract linear movements are interpreted by Al Salem, through his multimedia installation, Allah. The visual manifestation of the word Allah is an abstracted representation in which its letters are stripped down to basic geometric lines and shapes.

The artist explores through a minimalist approach, how form and light can imitate an approximate representation of the divine. Al Salem radically eschews the conventional and traditionalist aesthetic appeal of a calligraphic form, and creates an immersive and experiential representation. Both artists signify a shift in language, breaking it down to deliver separate messages. It is seen once again in *What if the circle disappeared*, where Al Salem explores the use of the circle throughout history in relation to traditions of calligraphy.

The calligraphy used here is called *Mushaf Koofee*, or *Old Kuffi* — meaning, before the introduction of the 'dot', and of the three main traditional Arabic calligraphic systems created by the Arabic calligrapher Ibn Muqlah in the ninth century. In this work, Al Salem is questioning what effect the possible non-existence of the circle may have had, using calligraphy as a vehicle for exploring social and religious questions.

An additional series presented by Rowell is *Painting Language*, which was born out of a long-term interest in the functions of language and information, especially considering the digital age.

The paintings are coding systems for language; each one contains in them a body of text that can be taken from any source (book, magazine, script) and from any language.

The system operates through colour, sequence and pattern, and ultimately the language becomes transformed into detailed and symmetrical paintings.

Similarly, in Al Salem's work *State of Affairs*, the artist unveils the power of words and the production of meaning.

He deconstructs the verse "He arranges (each) matter" into a letter or groups of letters, which are then repeated or duplicated and scattered across the surface of the paper.

The expansion of the letters on the paper represents the continuous expansion of the universe and the constant movement that characterises it in its entirety. Here, each letter is a unique element of formal organisation within a system.

With *Breaking Boundaries*, Firetti Contemporary tries to once again push the importance of the gallery to act as a platform for connecting minds and concepts in a global cultural space, by intersecting ideas and themes of significance towards the forefront of the art scene.

The gallery strives to highlight social and environmental issues, aiming to create meaningful and sustainable collections. It promotes local and international artists, in its space in Alserkal Avenue. It was founded by Mara Firetti, an entrepreneur dedicated to the promotion and growth of international artists. In the last 15 years as an art advisor and artist promoter, she has principally dedicated her expertise in developing the career of sculptor Helidon Xhixha.

Organising public events and international exhibitions in renowned institutions and art fairs has allowed her to acquire a large portfolio of high-profile art collectors, and win extensive experience as a press officer for artists with a network of important relationships.

<https://www.gulftoday.ae/culture/2022/01/23/firetti-contemporary-dubai-speaks-the-language-of-breaking-boundaries>