



LIFESTYLE

## Breaking Boundaries At Firetti Contemporary

Artists Josh Rowell and Nasser Al Salem use language as the core of their artistic practice

**Firetti Contemporary** presents *Breaking Boundaries*, bringing together antipodal linguistic and cultural aspects of communication through the works of British artist Josh Rowell and Saudi Arabian artist Nasser Al Salem.

Opening on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and will run until 13 April, *Breaking Boundaries* will showcase Rowell and Al Salem using language as the core of their artistic practice. Through the works of Josh Rowell, artworks are presented with a language that explores and reshapes information and celebrates the hand-made in a time that is increasingly being enveloped by the virtual. Nasser Al Salem, on the other hand, 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, 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 will unveil the first ever NFT by Al Salem *Allah (He is the First and Last)*, and first NFT of the series *Virtually Fragile* by Rowell. Taking yet another step into the means of language and spreading ideas through an unfamiliar channel, both artists are closing the gap between the two worlds of the digital and physical. The presented NFT's provide a unique and individual administration into crypto communication so that viewers and collectors can appreciate not only the digital possibilities of their work but also the tangible potential of both the physical and digital being showcased side by side.

*Breaking Boundaries* presents viewers with a variety of works by both artists. Rowell's *Virtually Fragile* series, features the moment in which connectivity is lost to the digital world. This series 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 is transformed into abstract chaos.

These 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. Nasser 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, creating an immersive and experiential representation. Both artists signify a shift in language, breaking it down to deliver separate messages.

We see this 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 by the artist 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. These 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. Al Salem 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 once again pushes the importance of the gallery to act as a platform for connecting minds and concepts within a global cultural space, by intersecting ideas and themes of significance towards the forefront of the art scene.

Breaking Boundaries will be open from 3 February to 13 April 2022 at Firetti Contemporary, located at Unit 29 Alserkal Avenue, Street 8, Al Quoz 1. For more information, email [info@firetticontemporary.com](mailto:info@firetticontemporary.com), call 04 5462276 or visit [www.firetticontemporary.com](http://www.firetticontemporary.com).