Annual CFAD Faculty Exhibition 2019

University of Sharjah
Finally, there are those who elected to investigate shared natural phenomena, both physical and metaphysical, opting to reveal what is concealed to the naked eye. Adopting global citizenship, they search for ways to make visible what is invisible. Emergence is about making apparent what we all comprehend and experience, without reference to a particular culture or specific locale.

In the end, individual artists and designers collectively merge to produce the 2019 Faculty Show; a celebration of mediums, techniques, and themes, providing for an eclectic and engaging exhibition. Audience are introduced to a visual festival encompassing clothing and textiles, furniture and sculpture, paintings and prints. What makes us one is the urge to share our stance through this emergence of cultural identifiers.

Nadia Al Hasani
Professor and Dean
College of Fine Arts and Design

Cultural identity is intrinsic to our sense of belonging. Whether explicit or implicit, there is a strong tendency to reflect it through one’s national identity, particularly when asked to present oneself to others. The artists and designers participating in this show are true to their place of origin or current domicile. What matters is not what their identity and empathy is but rather how they choose to make it public. Their work reflects one of three distinct approaches to personal affinities.

Predominant are those who have embraced their national identity and worked to expand on its norms, symbols, and practice. They research the intrinsic meaning behind a traditional object, reason for a gesture, and consequences of a moment in history. In the end, it is about emergence, in the sense of self-reflections from within and making visible a courageous public position in a most evocative way.

Others have adopted their current locale favoring to explore new territories, understand their historical context, and translate their findings to new imagery and contemporary forms. As guest residents, they choose to make prominent what is perceived as a notion or object of the past. Emergence is about the process of bringing a fading memory back into existence and paying homage to a borrowed culture.

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In this show, the diverse faculty of the College of Fine Arts and Design have come together to display works across several disciplines, mediums, genres, and sensibilities. Celebrating such diversity in the 21st century sometimes falls into the banal category of an easy postmodernism where meaning hovers at the level of our usual background noise of 24/7 advertising cliches. However, what happens when we take these works seriously, that is, as works of art and design rather than as just another series of images?

It requires a certain type of participation, a certain type of looking beyond our habitual Instagram browsing, to really appreciate such works. But when we do this, when we allow the works to speak and then speak to each other across disciplinary boundaries - to merge together - what emerges is a wonderfully cacophonous ensemble: a vision of what real diversity can be. Only then can we understand the sense of displaying a screenprint of a red sombrero next to a dense abstract painting inspired by the Syrian landscape and a collage of snapshots taken from Sharjah dhow port. In this way, I hope you appreciate the diversity of CFAD faculty work!

Jay Hetrick
Assistant Professor of Art History and Theory
Fine Arts Coordinator
College of Fine Arts and Design
The College of Fine Arts and Design brings together works by faculty from across the college to showcase the collective creativity of CFAD faculty for campus and community audiences. The variety of media featured reflects a broad range of teaching disciplines and concentrations offered by each department.

Emerge, Merge, Emergence represent works from CFAD faculty and staff that encapsulate the inquisitive spirit of academic research in the visual arts and design.

To emerge, merge and unfold, faculty are encouraged to step out of their routine and contribute works that fall outside the boundaries of what they would be generally expected to exhibit.

Shaikha Al Mazrou
Curator
Abdulhadi Al Salti was born in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. He is an interior architect with a bachelor’s degree in interior design, Ajman University and member of Society of Engineers - UAE. He has an extensive experience in design practice and project management. His work focuses on designing interior spaces for film, television and theatre and entertainment events.

Wood joinery is a dying art that is rarely seen today. However, it is a sustainable practice that sharply reduces or fully eliminates the use of nails, screws and glue. The prototype developed promotes an environmentally friendly design and use of street furniture.

The various wood pieces are joined together applying tongue-and-groove and slot methods eliminating the need for additional binding elements. Integrating a PV panel ensures its contemporary and continued use as a charging station. Both design and function allow for a mobile bench that can be set anywhere.
Andra Camelia Clitan

Inspiration can bear many names, mine it’s just called HOME”. Andra Clitan is inspired by her origins, her home country and its culture, traditional art and craftsmanship. Furthermore, the idea of multiculturalism helps her to use different elements but in the same time to keep the essence of her origins.

Andra is interested to make a fusion between Romanian traditional costumes and different cultures from all over the world, being inspired by her childhood stories from Transylvania and her later discoveries from different continents she visited, studied or lived in, like Asia, Middle East and Europe.

Throughout the years Andra had an important contribution in preserving traditional techniques and influences from many parts of the globe, creating exclusive designs and opening a new dialogue by developing self-sufficient and independent communities.

She values this by reviving traditional craftsmanship, taking elements from traditional cuts and patterns, using modern techniques to tailor them into unique garments. You will see elements such as felt productions, hand weaved fabrics and different types of embroideries, from different parts of the globe.
Asil Al-Baghdadi

Asil Al-Baghdadi gained her M.A. degree in Interior Design in 2004. She simultaneously worked as an educator and professional interior designer. Her focus is on creating innovative architectural and interior solutions with an emphasis on the “hands-on experience.”

The new CFAD Library space is in need of an identity. The proposed design is inspired by Al Ghaf Tree (شجرةالغاف), a local tree well recognized in the UAE. In fact, it is labeled the “Union Tree” and was adopted in 2019 as the symbol of the “Year of Tolerance.” This recent recognition kindled the idea of using it to inspire a design that is rooted in rich heritage while reaching out to the future with all its promises.

The CFAD Library interior promises a modern functional design adopting an abstract approach to creating an esthetically clean and minimal environment to meet the College’s needs. It provides the essential functions of a College Library while catering to a visually inspiring space for its users. It ensures a distinct environment representative of the locale’s particular heritage and future aspirations.
Ayman Fathy

Ayman Fathy is a designer, researcher, and educator. He is especially interested in interdisciplinary approaches to developing visual patterns combining traditional techniques and digital media.

Selected as the symbol of the Year of Tolerance 2019, Al Ghaf is the UAE authentic national tree, a source of life and symbol of stability in the middle of the desert. Under its shadows, the UAE local ancestors gathered to consult on matters related to their daily lives. The work is an abstract textile repeated pattern inspired by Al Ghaf Tree. It aims to capture the essence that characterizes Al Ghaf tree and what it represents.

Al Ghaf: A Pattern of Life, Print, 2019
I use my own family history, American history, and American pop culture as the foundation for a body of work that looks at the experiences of Latin American people and the role they play in the American cultural and political landscape. This political direction in my work comes at a time when a significant portion of the American population feels entitled to dictate the terms on which Latin identity gets to exist and what spaces Latino people get to inhabit.

My creative energy could be spent on other projects but is instead consumed by the demands of having to justify my own existence in the country I was born in. And as much as I resent being forced to address America’s long history of discrimination toward Latin American people I see the importance of setting the record straight. If Latino people don’t tell their stories men like Donald Trump will gladly tell the story for us, and it will be a story that serves their own appetite for power at our expense.
Dr. Dana is a creative interior designer, researcher, and educator from Jordan. She received her PhD in Interior Design in 2015 from Malaysia. She was the first Jordanian female to hold a PhD in Interior Design. Her research focuses on interior design and cultural identity, which influences her academic research and applied designs.

Inspired by Wegner’s lounge chair, the Burqa Chair is made of laminated wood and upholstered fabric. The reinterpreted chair is inspired by the Emirati “Burqa” [البرقع]. In the United Arab Emirates, the Burqa is a traditional form of modesty for women. Handcrafted of delicate fabric and worn over the face, this accessory is traditionally worn by married women to distinguish them from unmarried women.

The unique shape of the Burqa, which surrounds and cuddle the face in an affectionate way, resembles the shape of the seat in hugging people in a comfortable way. The Burqa chair represents the Emirati cultural identity in a contemporary manner distinguishing it from the classic design. A side table and curtain fabric are further designed to complete the set with the Burqa inspired traditional design.
Inspired by the golden sands of Meliha, this sofa made of clear acrylic truly embodies the Meliha feel as it literally holds the Meliha sands in its core. With the coffee table attached to it made from blue and green mosaic pieces, it indeed qualifies to be Meliha’s one and only true oasis.
Iman Ibrahim

Iman Ibrahim holds Bachelor, Master and PhD degrees in Architectural Engineering from Cairo University. She is a designer and academician with extensive teaching experience. Her research focuses on Sustainable Design, Eco-Designs and Environmentally Friendly Designs.

The SOUQ, Arabic for marketplace, is the beating heart of many ancient cities from the Near East to North Africa, and the cradle of traditional urban culture in Arab societies. The SOUQ, with its unique architecture and communal function, has deep historical and cultural significance. It is intrinsically linked to the development of cities, architecture and a sense of place.

What distinguishes the Emirati Souq is the “CHANDAL,” an architectural element which creates the sense of gathering through repetition. The work pays homage to the Chandal through contemporizing the representation of the modular unit and notions of repetition. Through a systematic use of reflections and optical illusions, the vision of the traditional Emirati Souq is re-captured and sustained for generations to come.

Envisioning the Chandal, Mixed Media, 150 x 150 cm, 2019
Izmer Bin Ahmad

Trained as a practicing artist as well as an academic researcher, Bin Ahmad’s professional activities encompass both studio practice and academic writing. His recent research and publications focus on the manifestation of somatic nationalism in Malaysian artistic and cultural production. His work on the body is rooted in his studio exploration on the objecthood of images and their corporeal effects, which continues to inform his artistic production.

The work presented in this exhibition emerges from the artist’s ongoing interest in the materiality and agency of the image. He thinks of images not so much as a representation, but as objects that confront and affect us. Approaching the image as such, my approach to painting has less to do with making an image but more with the ways that certain characteristics of certain images affect his response and consequently elicit certain ways to intend, desire and paint. The image in this sense is not simply painted but rather an active collaborator in its emergence, as well as that of the artist.

Green Stain, Acrylic on Canvas, 50 x 50 cm, 2019
She: I won’t wear you, like my mum and grandmother.

Burqa: I am your adornment and beauty.

She: (with amusement) My adornment and beauty!

Burqa: I am your adornment … to emphasise the beauty of your eyes and hide the flaws that you don’t want people to see.

She: What do you mean? What flaws can be hidden?

Burqa: The wrinkles on your skin, your blackheads and your prominent teeth.

She: What else?

Burqa: In the indigo dye that is within me … when it sticks to your face as you wash it off, it will glow like the face of Prophet Yusuf.

She: Is that possible? What else?

Burqa: I protect you from the evil of envious eyes by covering some of the features of your face, in the same way as, in the past, your mother was keen to keep me in a metal tin and put me inside her wooden clothes chest as if I was a precious treasure.
Sharjah Dhow Port is one of the most dynamic locals in the United Arab Emirates. It is a point of transit and intersection between myriad of worlds. Transport vessels from a large geographic area come and take on new journeys from here. The trading roots in the area are deep and wide. In the words of one of the Indian boat captains: his father remembers the times when he would port his dhow on the coast and Bedouins from the dessert would come to trade on the spot.

I have had long interest in studying the activities at the port as a cultural experience. More importantly, I have focused on observing and documenting the visual textures and their signified communications. Beginning at 2010, I have spent countless hours interviewing sailors and workers alike, while documenting objects, surfaces, textures and above all, human exchanges. As a result, I have produced an experiential photographic panorama of this ethnographic study.
Manar Laham

Manar Laham is an Illustrator based in the UAE. Graduated with an MFA in traditional Illustration from The Academy of Art University in San Francisco, and a BFA in Fine Arts from University of Sharjah. Laham exhibited his work in a number of venues in the United States, Canada, Europe and the UAE. His illustrative work covers a wide range of linear and tonal expressions of shape and space mostly focusing on the human form.

The artwork titled “Al Boa’ Boa” is a playful representation of what resonates Laham’s imagination from different environments and people that have, and continue to surround him on a daily basis.
Al Shawahid (1981-2017) is an assemblage of handmade aluminum spoons mounted on a wooden board painted white that recalls the size and shape of a gravestone. Contained within a coarsely fashioned plaster arch, the anthropomorphic spoons are arranged roughly by size, as if posing for an intergenerational family photo. Below their “feet” is a burial mound with a small mirror affixed in its center. The work is hung with the mirror at eye level. The different “generations” of spoons are witnesses to this cycle of life, which is embodied by the family. Viewers are invited to reflect on their own mortality staring back at them from the mirror. Al Shawahid stages an affective field of tender yet hopeful solemnity.

At the request of Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi, President and Director of Sharjah Art Foundation, the art work was recreated and exhibited at the National Pavilion, UAE for the Venice Biennale 2017.
Kubaisy luxuriously intends to import what one can call the (sophistication) of deliberate and insolent terror and intimidation, by which he endeavors to magnify shapes and features of his characters, besides the (caricature) overexaggeration and diligence in presenting this manner of sarcastic consciousness and exposed arrogance of their behaviors and practices.

In the fact, they are merely cartoon characters with puffed bellies and swollen jugular veins, wearing hats and coats that conceal their physical deformities, bearing grudge and evil schemes and behaving malignantly, in an ingenious periphrasis subjected to a total consciousness that is parallel to the value of that overt and covert effect of all the intentions Kubaisy has already adopted in his cultural.

Drums of War, Bronze, 40 x 40 x 60cm, 2016
This group of works, entitled «One Face... And Many Souls», depicts one of the eldest philosophical concepts that was found in many ancient cultures «Reincarnation». In my works, I was inspired by the personal qualities that characterized each one of the ancient Egyptian goddesses and so, I chose to depict “Seshat”, “Isis”, “Nephthys”, “Bastet”, “Kebechet”, and “Maa’t”. Then I merged them with the concept of «Self Portrait» to carry deeper psychological dimensions. I executed the works with black ink and ball point pens to inspire the power of the past.
My name is Polite Mangoro, and I was born in Zimbabwe. I studied Fashion and Textiles education and qualified as a teacher in 1987. I then underwent further intensive training in Fashion Designing, Pattern Cutting, Grading and Tailoring with Speciss College, a tertiary institution in Zimbabwe. In 2002 I graduated at the University of Zimbabwe with a Bachelor of Education in Technical Education majoring in Fashion and Nutrition.

Since my graduation in 1987, I have been inspired by the military belt which soldiers fasten around their waist. I discovered that it was not an ordinary belt, but acted as a tool bag or survivors’ kit. As I was starting on a career, I was inspired to make mine also and called it Survivor’s belt. I really wanted to have my designing and sewing tools to be readily available, so I fashioned a belt that could be converted into a bag. Fasten up your belt, was the encouragement to get the job done. I made it with enough pockets to hold cutting, marking, sewing, drawing and measuring tools. I also used press studs for easy adjusting. This belt can have a variety of covers to introduce different colours and textures. A lot of innovation and creativity is possible on this belt by using recycle and up-cycle principles with used materials. A variety of sewing techniques can also be shown on this bag like embroidery, patch work, quilting, batik, tie dye as well as other fabric manipulation techniques like pleating, tucks, gathers and darts.

The future of this belt-bag in fashion is bright as it can have more uses, and it can be given a slimming finish to the body, amongst other effects. Different sizes such as small, medium and large will be introduced, and the belt is fastened or adjusted according to sizes.
Renji Mathews has a Masters degree in Digital Media for Film & TV and a wealth of experience in the Post-production industry in India and the UAE. As a domain expert for companies like Avid, Adobe and Apple, he has trained the staff of major TV channels and production houses across the Middle East. His areas of expertise include Non-linear editing, digital cinematography, motion graphics and 3D animation. Other areas of interest are drone photography/video and creating 360 degree immersive video.

Always keen to look at everything from a different perspective, for these photos Renji uses a drone to get a bird’s eye view of CFAD and other areas of the University of Sharjah. The ‘Globe/ball’ image is composed of a total of 102 photos that were combined to give 34 HDR (High Dynamic Range) photos which were then aligned and stitched together using software to produce a Geospheric Panorama.
Shaikha Al Mazrou’s sculptural experimentations and investigations are expressions of materiality – articulations of tension, the interplay between form and content, as well as an intuitive, keenly felt understanding of materials and their physical properties.

She combines and evolves ideas from contemporary artistic movements similarly pre-occupied with formal and material elements – from colour theory to geometric abstraction. Deeply studied, her works resonate richly with the history of sculpture, abstraction and contemporary art, while always keeping a tight conceptual and physical focus on the formal considerations manifested in her investigative practice.

Composed of simple gestures, each work is poised at a point of harmony, or else caught in a precarious moment of tension. Her sculptural forms are refined distillations of relentless experimentation, a playful yet rigorous testing that embraces material essence and conceptual compression, formal representation and abstract articulation.
Dr. Shaima Elbardawil is a Jordanian visual communication practitioner, researcher, and educator. She was born from Palestinian parents in Kuwait, spent her childhood and grew up in the United Arab Emirates and studied between Jordan and the United Kingdom. Her research focuses on exploring contemporary Arabic typography practices in a variety of contexts.

Her “Contemporary Kufic” series represents visual experimentations of representing Kufic typeface in various personalities. The presented artworks are visual translations of two verses from Mahmoud Darwish famous Poem ‘Amal’ which means in English ‘Hope’.

Letters of Hope, Plexiglass, 2019
Beneath the Rubble, a continuation of his extensive series Landmarks, highlights Syrian born artist Thaier Helal's latest experiments in abstraction. As his creative observation deepens within these structural mixed media works, the artist also makes reference to the tragic changes happening within his native country. This leads him to pose radical questions as he addresses a myriad of subjects concerning our existence, meaning and the current state of bitterness that drains our mind and soul.

Helal's expressionistic patterns and vigorously built up canvases are marked by ruggedness and harmony. He takes on a process of trial and error until he reaches a unique visual manifestation of his individual perception of beauty. The dominant use of white within these works allows the artist to feel a sense of peace, tranquility, and meditation, while in other works the use of black and grey evoke a feeling of death and pain experienced by his nation.

Meanwhile, the dense, reoccurring, vertical and horizontal lines in his work offer a comparison to the newly flattened horizon and the remains of destruction: ruin and rubble. One layer at a time, using great care and deliberation, the artist is able to transform his materials into more than just conceptual works. His distinctly abstract canvases convey the possibility of rebirth and regeneration.
What gives us a view into the cosmos? We see real objects, but intangible, not comprehensible, incredible far away. I guess we do it with earth-based eyes and earth-trained fantasy, so that the objects we try to understand become our will and imagination. In this photography the elements are based on real photographed-objects, but edited in Photoshop. We do see a fantasy without the invitation to see a fantasy - neither a telescope photography, nor a filmstill. So is left the question, what do we see?

Tor Seidel

Motion and Stasis, Ink jet print on Hahnemuehle, 240 x 110 cm, 2018
I am not an artist, but an art historian, therefore the works exhibited in this Faculty Show are not to be considered as artistic photographs or pictures with particular aesthetic qualities, rather as pages from the visual diary of an art historian. I took these photos while working on various ideas and texts in different places. One aspect that may however still connect an artist’s creative work and an art historian’s writing passion is that inspiration may come at any time and in any location, and this is illustrated by the three pictures in this exhibition taken in different countries and contexts in Sarteano (Italy), in Helsinki (Finland), and in Ras Al Khaimah (UAE).