

Farid Al Rais

By Reem Fekri



Haneen3, 2006, water color on paper, 55x75 cm - Courtesy of the artist.

Farid Al Rais, a UAE national, is a contemporary artist who's practice explores a more classical approach, a somewhat rarity in the UAE's flourishing art scene. He asserts that during the 1980's -90's there were many artists within the UAE that worked with a classical approach, which, he views is lacking today. Classical work, Al Rais feels, is laborious and demanding, yet by examining these works, he believes that one can feel the true skill of the artist.

Born in 1984, after obtaining a degree in Computing and Information Systems from the University of Dubai, a field distant from his artistic practice, Al Rais was

encouraged by his mother to continue developing his talent, which he believed that he would improve on by simply doing, rather than being mentored.

Encouraged by his father, who originally discovered his talent, throughout his childhood, he draw everyday and maintains that it was his father eventually introduced him to watercolors, one of the main reasons why this medium is so prevalent in his work. Aside from his father, Al Rais is further influenced by Abdul Qader Al Rais; growing up surrounded by his work and thus being heavily inspired by it and helping him develop his own style. Another great mentor is Matar Bin Lahej;

a UAE artist who also depicts scenes from the region, with a contemporary twist, they met a few years ago, and Al Rais has continuously returned to Lahej for advice and feedback.

Playing heavily with the notion of heritage, Al Rais paints scenes from a more traditionally landscaped UAE, something that many only experience through books and literature. He argues that it is not simply to copy what he sees, rather, there are histories, memories that lead him to depict it. Using his own method of colors rather than what is factual, he further adds elements that cease to exist in ‘real life’ in order to maintain balance and compensate what is lacking. What develops in each painting is more than just scenery – behind Al Rais’s love of landscape and heritage, he wants to create a type of remembrance for the future generations, during a time of intense urban development that he fears that what is left of the traditional landscape will disappear and there will be a lack of knowledge of what used to be. Finding the hustle of the city slightly too overpowering, Al Rais prefers to spend his time at the desert or the sea, a refuge to find comfort and calm. Evidently, the environment is heavily reflected within his artistic practice. He argues that people tend to view his country’s progress within its skyscrapers rather than within its historical cultural perspectives. One of his main objectives is to bring back a refreshed look and feel of a classical school of art in UAE. Farid’s attempts are only the very beginning of the rise of a new era in art in the country and the appearance of a new breed of young ambitious generation. He argues that many of the younger contemporary artists start immediately with modern art schools, failing to learn the basics of art. Summarizing this issue was a British art expert, who maintained that previous generations of local artists from the UAE were focused more on their paintings, training hard to develop a type of perfection in their work, involving themselves in exhibitions to show their work to an art audiences. However, the younger generations is doing exactly the opposite; focusing on exhibits’ participation rather than the artwork themselves. With this in mind, Al Rais tends to follow artists that were of a previous generation

Al Rais feels that the cultural development within the UAE has progressed, and the opportunities available



Zaweya, 2008, Water color on paper, 75x55 cm - Courtesy of the artist.

now reflect this. He strongly believes that the UAE could be a capital of art in the future, on par with New York or London, and hopes that the future generation of artists focuses on their artistic practice rather than on the eminence of having an exhibition to gain respect, admiration and international standards.