

FOCUS



BAGFUL OF ART

MUHAMMAD YUSUF WRITES ABOUT AN EXHIBITION WHERE ART AND FASHION MEET

Pro Art Gallery Dubai, is currently showcasing a joint exhibition resulting from a collaboration of the works of Hong Kong-based handbag designer, Piecco Pang and New York-based painter Antoinette Wysocki (June 5-20).

Titled Full Spectrum, the show was conceptualised when Pang met Tatiana Faure, owner and founder of the gallery in Dubai. The concept to present and sell together the paintings and handbags of the same print was born.

To take the story a little into

the past, Pang first met Wysocki at her art inaugural in Hong Kong. A strong, creative connection was formed. Deciding to hone in on their love for fashion, function and art, they agreed to telescope their vision of fusing art and fashion. It resulted in the creation of limited edition handbags, designed by Pang, that featured abstract paintings created by Wysocki.

Full Spectrum is a platform that debuts the artistic partnership between the two artists who come together to show their works and to create ready to wear art pieces in the form

of evening clutches, which are one of kind pieces, just like the paintings they were birthed from.

"This is the first time Pro Art Gallery is showcasing such a wonderful combination of not only artists, but two diverse art forms. The collections are set to make a huge mark in the art world in the UAE and we foresee a tremendous amount of interest in this unique exhibition", said Faure.

An article in UK newspaper Financial Times (May 10, 2013) raised the question: does art really sell products? The writer

pointed to the collaboration of Pang and Wysocki as an example, which is profitable for both art and business. There are other famous collaborations too, like that between luxury firms and artists such as the Vuitton/ Yayoi Kusama collaboration.

Art has even inspired art fashion: Yves Saint Laurent had the Mondrian Collection, Elsa Schiaparelli worked with Salvador Dali... and everyone remembers the Vuitton/ Takashi Murakami collaboration.

Wysocki is an expressionistic painter who employs mixed media on organic materials. She

says she has distanced herself from the confines of stretched canvas – the holy grail of many an artist – and turned her attention to working on rag. She finds that paper allows her to play with its absorption rate and characteristic malleability, while helping her retain the immediacy of drawing – which has always been her touchstone.

She has developed a process of combining various materials so that they interact, binding or refracting from each other and also with the paper/linen. Each work starts with gestures and washes, and then moves into

COVER STORY LEANN RIMES 08

music	keith urban	06	fashion	paul smith	16
films	before midnight	10	travel	samoa	18
bollywood	vidya balan	12	motoring	mercedes-benz e class	30

PLUS ASTROSCAPE, HEALTH WATCH, INFOTECH, FOOD, QUIZ, YOUNG WORLD & TALKING POINT





controlled, detailed brush strokes. When the painting reaches its comfort zone, it is time for her to indulge somewhat.

The goal is to balance raw, sometimes untouched, surfaces in some areas with highly saturated colour, sometimes consciously, sometimes by chance. She keeps in mind that one mis-used layer of material can either alter a piece beyond repair or inspire the next step – or even become the focus of the piece itself.

What follows is a kind of ghostly composition, with botan-

ical overtones, the amazing details of which come to light only on closer examination. Wysocki has shown internationally including art hubs like New York, London and Hong Kong.

"I'm a really big supporter of drawing vs painting", she has

been quoted as saying. "People always give such heavy weight to a painting and I always wanted to blur those lines. The mixed media aspect is a lot of play and trying to understand if things really bind together or separate".

A self-proclaimed perfectionist, Pang began to design and create unique, personalised clutch bags for close group of personal friends. Transcending his profession as a private banker, his art, which began as a hobby, soon established his reputation as one of Hong Kong's top bespoke clutch bag designers.

Pang's clutch bags, besides eliminating the awkwardness of carrying large handbags, are renowned for their interiors, which can hold everything from lipsticks to blackberries and wallets to face cream!



NADA RAZA

Nada Raza is the Guest Curator of the 2014 Abraaj Group Art Prize (AGAP, sixth edition), as per an announcement of its selection committee. From Karachi and currently based at Tate Modern, London, as Assistant Curator focusing on South Asia, Raza holds an MA in Critical Writing and Curatorial Practice from the Chelsea College of Art and writes regularly for regional and international publications. According to AGAP, she will be working closely with this year's prize winners to realise new projects, to be unveiled at Art Dubai 2014.

She joins the internationally recognised committee, which will finalise the five winning artists. Once they are selected, she will collaborate with the artists as their projects evolve. She will then present the finished works in a specially curated exhibition at Art Dubai in March 2014.

Raza holds an MA in Critical

Writing and Curatorial Practice from the Chelsea College of Art and has previously worked with Iniva and Green Cardamom in London where she contributed to curatorial projects including 'Lines of Control' (Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University 2012) and 'Social Fabric' (Iniva, 2012). She has lived and worked independently in the UAE where she maintains strong links.

Speaking of her appointment, she commented: "The Abraaj Group Art Prize is a unique platform for emerging artists from the region, allow-

ing complex and ambitious projects to be realised with critical support from a curator. I look forward to engaging with each selected artist in the process of articulating conceptual ideas through to the production of compelling works of art, bringing them to regional and international audiences."

Frederic Sicre, Managing Director at The Abraaj Group said: "Nada Raza brings a wealth of broad expertise to her role as the tenth guest curator for our prize and her experience of working directly with artists, galleries and institutions from

the region will help evolve the prize and develop new perspectives".

The Selection Committee includes leading experts in the field of the visual arts including Antonia Carver, Director, Art Dubai; Dana Farouki, Patron; Salwa Mikdad, art historian and curator; Jessica Morgan, Daskalopoulos Curator, International Art, Tate, London and Glenn Lowry, Director, the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Savita Apte, Chair of the committee, said that "Nada brings an institutional curatorial perspective as well as a wealth of experience working in the region to the Abraaj Group Art Prize. She will be working closely with the artists to develop their projects, while evolving new forms of documentation that draw on her experience with new media platforms. Nada's unique approach will be unveiled at Art Dubai in March next year."

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