

WSJ. MAGAZINE | WHAT'S NEWS | CREATIVE BRIEF

7 Exciting Artists in the UAE

Introducing the new generation of internationally recognized Emirati artists



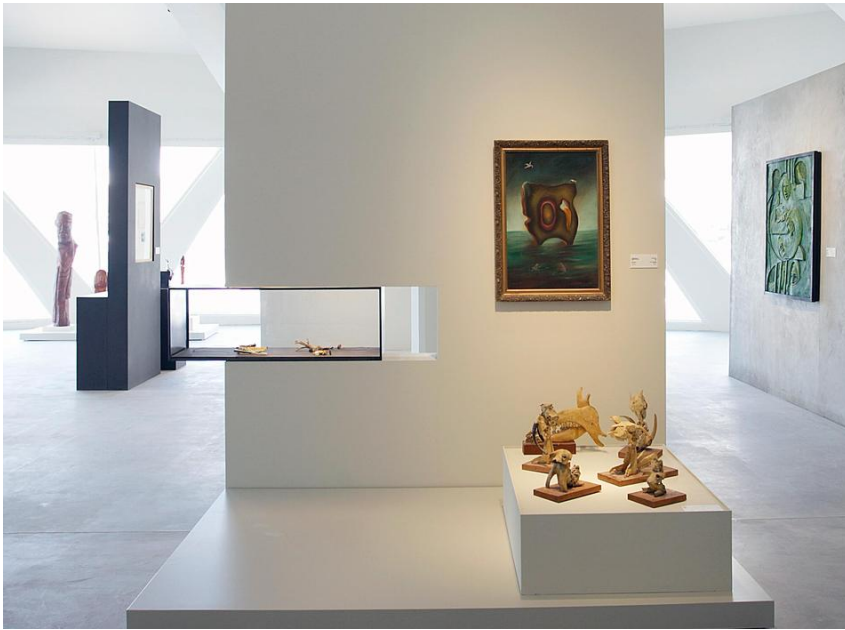
BRILLIANT CAREER | The 2016 mixed-media piece 'Combs,' by Dubai artist Hassan Sharif, a longtime leader of the Emirati art scene, who has a show at New York's Alexander Gray Associates. *PHOTO: COURTESY OF ALEXANDER GRAY ASSOCIATES, NEW YORK/ISABELLE VAN DEN EYNDE, DUBAI © 2015 HASSAN SHARIF/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY NY*

By **CAROL KINO**

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BEYOND THE FANTASTICAL skyscrapers and glittering malls, the United Arab Emirates is home to a community of serious, internationally recognized artists. That's

due largely to Hassan Sharif, 65, whose riotous works are on view at New York gallery Alexander Gray Associates April 7–May 14. Born in Dubai in 1951, Sharif attended art school in London, returning home in 1984 to a land where calligraphic abstraction defined the edge. When his Dada-esque conceptualism confounded viewers, he fostered a new dialogue by teaching, establishing arts associations and translating key Western texts. Though Sharif’s assemblages can appear unruly, they’re made by systematically deconstructing magazines, plastic bags or flip-flops and binding them together into useless “objects,” an ironic metaphor for art. His pieces are in the collection of the Guggenheim (New York and Abu Dhabi), the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Hong Kong’s M+ and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, Qatar. New York’s New Museum prominently featured his work in *Here and Elsewhere*, its 2014 survey of Arab art. Sharif has also served as a colleague and mentor to generations of Emirati artists, including the notable talents below. alexandergray.com.



Abdullah Al Saadi installation at the Sharjah biennial PHOTO: INSTALLATION VIEW, 1980–TODAY: EXHIBITIONS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, SHARJAH, UAE, COURTESY OF SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

Abdullah Al Saadi

Another conceptual pioneer, Al Saadi, 50, co-founded several Emirati arts associations with Sharif and others. Based in the Sharjah city of Khor Fakkan, he creates land art-inspired work, logging his mountain treks with diaristic paintings on found stones or piles of sandals worn out en route. Curators took note of his installations at the Sharjah, Venice and São Paulo biennales, leading to his inclusion in group shows like the New Museum’s *Here and Elsewhere*.

Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh and Hesam Rahmanian



Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh and Hesam Rahmanian's show at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art *PHOTO: INSTALLATION VIEW, RAMIN HAERIZADEH, ROKNI HAERIZADEH AND HESAM RAHMANIAN, THE BIRTHDAY PARTY, INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, BOSTON, 2015–2016, PHOTO BY CHARLES MAYER*

Iranian exiles, the Haerizadeh brothers (Ramin, 40, and Rokni, 37) and their childhood friend Rahmanian, 35, have lived and worked communally in Dubai since 2009. In their salonlike studio, they display their own creations alongside those of fellow artists like David Hockney and Martha Rosler. Their recent show at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, which included a Sharif work, was a critical hit.



Installation of work by Mohammed Kazem *PHOTO: 1980–TODAY: EXHIBITIONS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, SHARJAH, UAE, COURTESY OF SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION*

Mohammed Kazem

One of Sharif's best-known protégés is Dubai-based Kazem, 47. His work, which encompasses photography, performance, video and installation, often involves mapping —like documenting potential urban developments in the desert or filming wood panels he's tossed into the ocean as they drift away. A veteran of biennales from Venice to Sharjah to Havana, he has pieces in Doha's Mathaf, the Fondation Louis Vuitton and the Sharjah Art Museum.



Ebtisam Abdulaziz's 'Blue Freedom' (2013)

Ebtisam Abdulaziz

It's no surprise that Abdulaziz, 40, studied mathematics. Numbers and calculations pervade this Sharjah-based artist's work, from the precise geometry of her drawings to the cryptic codes she printed on a bodysuit for a long-running performance piece. A former student of Kazem's, she expands upon his and Sharif's passion for systems. Her work is in the collections of Deutsche Bank, the Sharjah

Art Foundation and members of Emirati royalty.