

## Off the wall

Good art depicts a subject, but great art reflects artistic vision and renders you speechless. *Liz Totton* investigates how No White Walls is breaking boundaries with a brand new exhibition

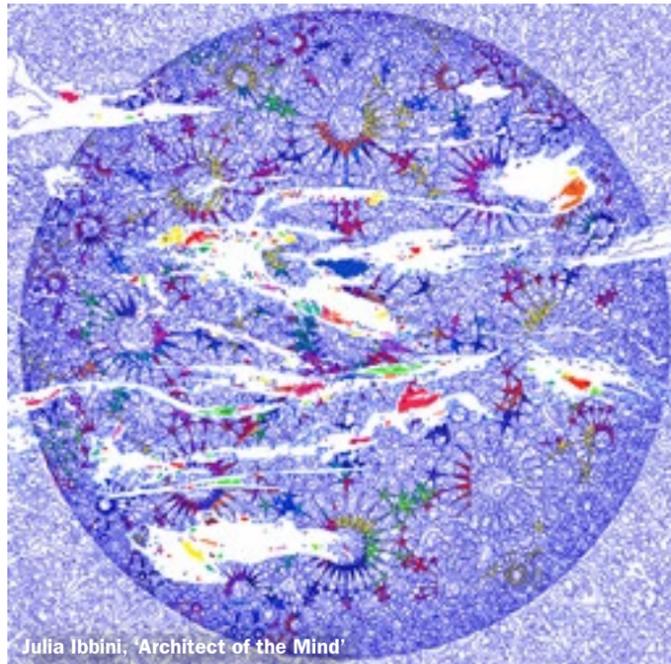
In a long white corridor bathed in light, hangs some of the most vivid and insightful artwork you will find in the capital this month. Artist Emily Gordon who co-founded No White Walls with artist Julia Ibbini says, 'There is no space like this Fairmont passageway anywhere in Abu Dhabi. This corridor receives the most fantastic natural light, which shifts throughout the day and casts unusual luminosity and shadows on the artwork.'

For its third year, the No White Walls initiative attacks the big white canvas at the Fairmont Bab Al Bahr and lines it with the work of its collective of artists who reflect their community in diverse ways.

Julia Ibbini and Emily Gordon have lived in Abu Dhabi for a long time; Julia has lived here her entire life and Emily has resided in the capital for the past 25 years. It is safe to say they know the city well and represent it visually often. Three years ago, they started the artist-led collective known as No White Walls to introduce the concept of public art to the capital and it's been going strong ever since.

Emily says, 'We get hundreds of submissions from local artists when we do our call for artists. For our collective, we select artists whose artwork is sublime, hard to categorise and understand. We also look for very professional artists who are ready to hang their artwork in an exhibition where art is literally flying off the walls. They must be ready to replace artwork that sells on the spot, and it all must be high calibre and fit in with the general theme of the show, which is artwork that is loosely pertaining to the region,' adds Julia.

'Of course, the artwork is all very different, but it has all been created



Julia Ibbini, 'Architect of the Mind'



Janine Ibbini, 'Al Sharq Al Owsat - Complexity'

### 'The artwork was created by local artists who visually represent their local world'

by local artists who visually represent their local world view. At our exhibition, you will see such diverse artwork from the colourful weavings of Janine Ibbini [Julia's mother] who has lived in the Middle East for 30 years - 28 of those in the UAE. Her complex textile work is influenced by the people, the culture and the landscapes she experiences here to the pop art of the Dubai-based Australian

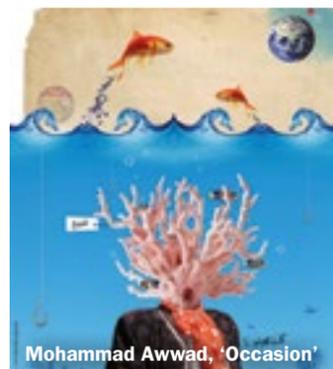
expat, Jen Simon, whose work is more colourful and pop-oriented.'

Emily and Julia are committed to developing initiatives that bring the art-loving community in Abu Dhabi closer to local artists. Julia tells us that, 'we started No White Walls to paper the city's white walls with glorious colour and to allow art lovers and collectors a glimpse into the life of a working artist, to understand

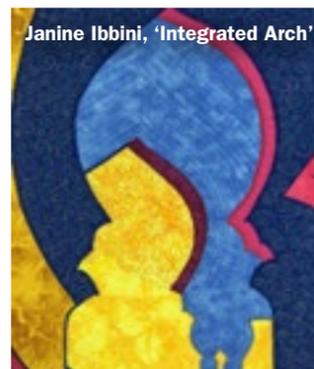
more about the artistic process and to learn about what inspires them.'

On the evening of Thursday September 17, No White Walls kicks off at the Fairmont Bab Al Bahr and the reception is open to the public. Everyone is encouraged to meet and greet all six artists. Come out to be part of the local art scene and mingle with artists and other art lovers.

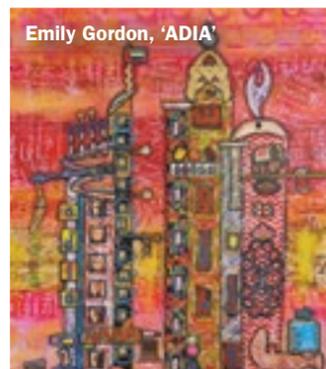
*Free entry. Open daily from 8am-11pm. The price of artwork ranges from Dhs1,000-20,000. The Chocolate Gallery, Fairmont Bab Al Bahr, Bain Al Jessrain. For more information, email julia.ibbini@gmail.com or call (055 609 3775).*



Mohammad Awwad, 'Occasion'



Janine Ibbini, 'Integrated Arch'



Emily Gordon, 'ADIA'



Jennifer Simon, 'Untitled'

### About No White Walls

Founded in 2013 by Julia Ibbini and Emily Gordon who are both passionate about developing the arts community at a grass-roots level, through staging exhibitions and developing visual projects throughout the Emirates.

Their mission is to encourage direct contact with the artists and their audience, by providing a platform for engaging in the arts, and adding to the cultural diversity within the UAE.

No White Walls has developed a strong following within the UAE and is generously supported by the business community in Abu Dhabi. The collective's major annual exhibition is held at Fairmont Bab Al Bahr in the capital and is sponsored and supported each year by Royal Jet.

### MEET THE ARTISTS

#### Julia Ibbini

Julia's digital artwork is 'built, painstakingly with layer upon layer of visual materials and information; the end result is akin to a diary entry from a certain point in time'. Julia's works explore manipulation of images until almost all reference to a literal form is removed. Each piece is worked digitally, produced as a print and then re-worked with inks, metallic paints and Swarovski crystals. She often depicts Abu Dhabi and her love of the sea.

#### Emily Gordon

Emily's artwork is also built layer by layer. Emily is a civil engineer by training, but when she came to Abu Dhabi, few women were in the workforce, so she began to dabble in art. Dabbling soon turned into a passion, which swiftly became her profession as people took notice of her pioneering style of layering paint, resin and recycled objects to create artwork so full of depth you feel drawn into them as though you were reading a story.

#### Mohammad Awwad

Mohammad is an artist and graphic designer located in Amman, Jordan, and a graduate of the Academy of Arts (Egypt), who finds inspiration in random motives, personal interests, colours and textures. His artwork shows vintage, surreal style with playful colours contrasting over layers of textures, and mixes the various cultures that he has been exposed to.

#### Janine Ibbini

Janine is an award-winning textile artist who has lived in the Middle East for more than 30 years. Her work is shaped by the people, the culture and the landscapes she experiences in this region. Her work involves



Julia Ibbini, 'Night Cities'

The No White Walls exhibition opens on September 17 and the public is welcome to attend the reception from 7pm-9pm. There you can meet the six artists and learn about their unique and creative styles plus pick up tips.



Mohammad Awwad, 'Rituals of Ecstasy'



Yiannis Roussakis, 'Hero'

numerous layers of fabric with each piece taking weeks to complete. When she isn't making art, she is an active member of the textile arts community and enjoys teaching.

#### Jennifer Simon

Jennifer was born in the UK, grew up in Australia and has lived in the UAE since 2000. She is widely known for her unique and colourful depiction

of global urban cityscapes. Since then, her work has evolved and now includes the people that inhabit the cities, drawing inspiration from her time living in the Middle East and earlier globetrotting experiences that she has had. She likes to observe humanity, its creations and record the things that have made an impact on her life.

#### Yiannis Roussakis

Yiannis was born in Athens, Greece. For the past 12 years, he has been living and working around the world (Laos, Thailand, Qatar, Mexico, Ghana, India, Oman, Scotland, London and Athens) and is now based in UAE. With his photos he aims to reveal the surreal nature of seemingly trivial objects, spaces and moments, reflecting the idea that our personal reality is a state of dreaming. He has presented his work in solo and collective shows in Abu Dhabi, London, Athens and Glasgow.



Yiannis Roussakis, 'Saudade'

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