



Basma AlSulaiman Museum of Contemporary Art

by: Mariam Polding

Metaverses, Avatars and contemporary art might be words unfamiliar to common dialogue anywhere, but they are the new buzz words hitting the Saudi and international art scene with reckoning force, thanks to the launch of BASMOCA: Basma Alsulaiman Museum of Contemporary Art.

Artists, patrons, aesthetic and cultural enthusiasts, locally and abroad are all invited to become part of a cyber-universe that is making history; BASMOCA is the first virtual museum in the world that is based on an actual art collection, and is a pioneering project on a global scale set to change the art world. Over the past few decades, Alsulaiman has amassed a comprehensive and varied pan-global collection of contemporary art, which includes paintings, photography, sculptures and

installations. "I was buying art all over the place, wherever I saw it," she says. "I started to look into exhibitions and museums, and the first contemporary show to blow my mind was Charles Saatchi's *Sensation* (1997) at the Royal Academy, London." As a champion of young Saudi artists Alsulaiman has acquired pieces by the Kingdom's celebrated artists that are garnering much international acclaim: artworks from the soldier Abdulnasser Gharem's *Restored Behavior series*, like *The Pat*, "Concrete Block II"; Bassem Al Sharqi's *Jeddah Barcodes*, which consists of 36 canvases of different sizes positioned together; Halim Al-Karim's eerily striking *Urban Witnesses Series*; and, Dr. Ahmed Mater's *AW Yellow Cow*



ولدت بسمة السليمان من والدين ينتميان إلى مقاطعة القصيم في وسط المملكة العربية السعودية . ولقد استقت بسمة متعتها الشخصية من إبداع مجموعتها الفنية الخاصة . وقد أرادت بسمة مشاركة الآخرين أعمالها وخصوصاً أنها قد عملت على إنتاجها بمواصفات عالمية . يفضل بعض الهواة جنسية معينة . ولكن مجموعة بسمة العالمية تقدم نظرة عامة واقعية للتصوير والعرض والرسم والنحت المعاصر . وفي الوقت عينه ، هي نصيرة الفنانين السعوديين الشباب وهي متحمسة لعرض أعمالهم على أوسع نطاق ممكن .

تتمحور رؤية «بسموكا» بتجسيد متحف واقعي يمثل حقيقة المجموعة الخاصة المتاحة للعامة . وبموازاة ذلك ، ركزت بسمة وبدقة على مدى تأثير الفن في العقد الماضي على ذوقها الشخصي الراقي لإنتاج المجموعة الدائمة للفن المعاصر .

ستضم بسموكا - كاليري منفصل - من أجل الترويج للفنانين الشباب الناشئين من المملكة العربية السعودية والشرق الأوسط . بسموكا هي مساحة افتراضية ، تركز على تكنولوجيا العوالم الافتراضية التي يتفاعل فيها الناس في فضاء المعلوماتية الثلاثي الأبعاد الذي يستعير مكوناته من العالم الحقيقي ولكن من دون حدود فيزيائية . إنه متحف ، بل أكثر من المتحف بقليل ، إنه مكان حيث يتمكن الناس في العالم أينما كانوا من التجمع برمزية ليتأملوا الفن ويتبادلوا الأفكار والمعلومات في جلسة واقعية وحقيقية ، بغض النظر عن العمر والجنس والعرق والهويات الثقافية أو الاجتماعية و الاقتصادية .

بسموكا



Series, among many others.

Count yourself lucky, if you have the opportunity to enjoy the collection in the corporeal sense, but with Alsulaiman's private collection split between her homes in London and Jeddah – fulfilling such an invitation is not without its challenges. BASMOCA dissolves any obstacles mobility might present, by extending an open invitation to appreciate her extensive private collection, vicariously through your custom designed avatar.

Based on Virtual Worlds Technology, BASMOCA is a Metaverse, in which people interact in 3D cyberspace that uses the metaphor of the real world, but without its physical limitations. BASMOCA is a museum, but so much more than that; it is a place where people anywhere in the world can come together, in Avatar form, to look at art and exchange ideas and information, in a real life setting, regardless of age, gender, ethnic, cultural or socio-economic identities.

"I want to share my vision with other people. By embracing technology, we can make the collection available, all over the world, to as many people as possible. To be able to show an international collection in a global forum, this is the future," Alsulaiman expresses.

Although Saudi has a strong cultural tradition in verbal art forms, such as poetry and stories, plastic art is relatively new to the region. There is no formal art college and art is not taught in schools. Art practice in Saudi comes from personal initiatives and instinct. Saudi artists are often self-taught, although sponsors such as Almansorah and Edge of Arabia are now sending young artists abroad to study. Nevertheless, artists usually have other jobs and create art in their spare time. Saudi is a country full of creative potential and the art is very rich. So much is unsaid but beginning to be expressed by artists such as Dr Ahmed Mater and the soldier Abdul Nasser Gharem whose multi-faceted work encompasses beautiful imagery and controversial ideas.

Saudi artists are keen to be seen abroad but also aware that they need to learn; they require critical responses to their own work as well as exposure to the work of others. That aside, Saudi artists are creating the most interesting art in the Gulf region. BASMOCA's mission is to break down these barriers, allow people to explore different art and cultures, discover new artists and ideas, whilst experiencing a real collection in an interactive way. In addition to the permanent collection of contemporary artworks, BASMOCA will also house a separate gallery to promote young, emerging artists from Saudi and the Middle East.

Design your Avatar and commence your journey into the contemporary art world that is BASMOCA. Visit www.basmoca.com and click on the virtual museum to download the Second Life application.