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A new season of art in Dubai

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Alserkal Avenue will inject fresh cultural enthusiasm into the city with an array of new exhibitions, music shows and talks this month

By Jyoti Kalsi Special to Weekend Review
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GULF NEWS



Image Credit: Supplied

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After the summer lull, Dubai is now gearing up for a new

season of cultural activities. Alserkal Avenue, the city's fastest-growing arts quarter, will kick off the season on Monday, September 10, with the opening of several new shows, the launch of a new series of talks on design, and preview performances of dance and music shows to be staged later in the season.

Located in the Al Quoz industrial area, Alserkal Avenue is a complex of warehouses that is home to 20 arts spaces, including art galleries, the region's first private art museum and the UAE's first design gallery. The complex has recently added music to this creative mix by welcoming The Fridge, the region's leading independent artist and music management company. Each of these spaces has lined up something new for the "open house" on Monday, giving visitors a unique opportunity to enjoy the diversity and depth of Dubai's vibrant cultural scene in one evening and at one location. Adding another delicious flavour to the evening will be the refreshments served by Lime Tree Café and Kitchen.

The programme will begin at La Galerie Nationale at 6pm with a discussion with well-known Italian architect and designer Piero Alessandrini. This is the first in a series of monthly talks, titled Design Stories, organised by Design Days Dubai, the region's first design fair. The event coincides with the opening at the gallery of a joint exhibition of furniture by the 86-year-old Alessandrini and contemporary designer Arnaud Rivieren. The show, titled "Art Generation", will offer visitors a chance to compare the ideas, inspirations and artistic language of two designers who belong to different eras, while highlighting the fact that the beauty and legacy of good design is timeless.

The discussion with Alessandrini will be moderated by art writer Sandra Lane, and Guillaume Cuiry, director of

La Galerie Nationale. Alessandrini's daughter Chiara Alessandrini will also join in. The discussion will centre on the designer's work and design philosophy, with specific references to his designs showcased in "Art Generation". "Our aim with Design Stories is to engage the public in the design world by encouraging conversation, discussion and debate. Through these talks we want to focus on the history behind key aesthetic movements, and the market of design and design trends. We are fortunate to launch this series with one of the foremost designers of our times, and we hope to involve local and international exhibitors and speakers from the 2013 edition of Design Day Dubai in future sessions," says Cyril Zammit, fair director, Design Days Dubai.

The Fridge is all set to celebrate its move to Alserkal Avenue with a variety of live performances. "We are proud to be the first performing arts organisation in this complex, and we are happy that we can now offer better facilities, such as a larger stage and private practice rooms to our musical artistes and the wider performing arts community. We have planned two very special performances to show off our new premises. First, we are going to give visitors a sneak peek of our upcoming show, 'Kalubela', which will be a vocal and aerial extravaganza in an exploration of the follies, the heartaches, the dilemmas and the glories of love, and which will bring together Western stage sophistication with Arabian finesse and mystique. We want to invite all art lovers to come and see what we have been working on over the summer, and be the first to catch a glimpse of some of the vocalists, dancers and aerialists who will perform in 'Kalubela', before it opens at The First Group Theatre next month. We have also invited international hip hop star The Narcicyst to present the inaugural musical performance on our new stage," says Shelley Frost, founder of The Fridge.

With new shows opening in all the art galleries in Alserkal Avenue on Monday, this will be a great opportunity for art lovers to view cutting-edge art from around the world, and to interact with the artists, curators and gallerists. Lawrie Shabibi has announced the inauguration of Project Space, dedicated to promoting upcoming artists, which will open with an exhibition by Afghan-American artist Gazelle Samizay. In her first solo show, titled “im/pure”, Samizay will present a series of photographs and video works exploring the notion of the passage of time, the human desire for release from the burden of grief and past experiences, and the impossibility of a true catharsis. A new show featuring the latest works by the gallery’s roster of well-known artists will also open in the main gallery space. “A Window Inside”, the Gulf Photo Plus exhibition, also has a connection with Afghanistan. It features well-known documentary photographer Lana Slezić’s award-winning series on Afghani women and girls, which portrays their strength and beauty despite the extreme hardship.

Similarly, Syrian photographer Jaber Al Azmeh’s latest work speaks about the hardship faced by the Syrian revolutionaries. The series, titled “Wounds”, features staged re-enactments of what is happening on the streets of Syria now, and will be on display at Green Art Gallery. While Al Azmeh’s work expresses the artist’s grief about the turmoil in his country, it is also about every human being’s fight for freedom. In stark contrast to Al Azmeh’s disturbing images, Hatty Pedder’s show at Mojo Gallery is a spirited celebration of the city of Mumbai in India. Borrowing the Mumbai slang for “amazing”, Pedder has called her show “Jhakass! Mumbai – A Study Of Beautiful Chaos”. Her paintings and collages, some with neon acrylic sheets in the backdrop, capture every mood and facet of the city.

Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde’s offering for the season

is the second edition of “What Lies Beneath”, a show designed to promote young Iranian artists living and working in Iran. Besides Eman Raad, Pouya Parsamagham, Farrokh Mahdavi and Arafeh Riahi, who were featured in the first edition, the show also includes works by Shahrzad Chavagalae and Javad Azemi. The artists have been mentored by well-known Dubai-based artist Rokni Haerizadeh, and their works include paintings, video art, embroidered artworks, photography and installations. Salsali Private Museum’s show “The Seismic Sanctuary” also features an Iranian artist — Pantea Rahmani. The exhibition will showcase some of the artist’s earlier works from Ramin Salsali’s collection, along with pieces from her new series of Tehran landscapes. Rahmani, who is well known for her monumental and detailed self-portraits, has adopted the same approach to mapping the face of her city to create stunning 5-metre-long monochromatic canvases.

Majid Koorang Beheshti’s photographic show “Telling Spaces” at Ayyam Art Centre also depicts Tehran, dwelling on the chaos, destruction and violence the city has witnessed, but also expressing hope for a better future and faith in the indomitable spirit of its people. On the other hand, Arman Stepanian uses photographic images to tell stories of the past and the present. His show at Etemad Dubai, titled “Collage Tales”, will feature narratives created from an assembly of familiar symbols of Iranian culture and heritage, superimposed on staged studio settings.

Carbon 12 is bringing Portuguese artist Gil Heitor Cortesao for his second solo show in Dubai. The exhibition, titled “Coming Home”, will showcase his latest work in his signature style of reverse glass painting on Plexiglas. Showcase gallery will display the work of the 75-year-old South African artist Andrew Verster, who takes inspiration from ancient cultures and the practice

of marking the body by tattooing, scarification and body painting to create a colourful body of work titled “A Brief History of Insignificant Things”.

Abdul Munem Bin Eisa Alserkal, the driving force behind Alserkal Avenue, says: “We are happy to see that this complex is growing into a vibrant arts district by welcoming more and more new projects and initiatives. We look forward to welcoming all art lovers to Alserkal Avenue for this evening of arts, music, dance and discussion. We will be announcing some more surprises on Monday at a public reception at the Shelter.”