

# A peek into the world of Ali Golestaneh

The Iranian artist's works speak volumes about his simple, solitary life, his passion for painting, and his ability to see beauty in everything around him

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Ali Golestaneh's Iris sketches Image Credit: Supplied

Well-known Iranian artist Ali Golestaneh's first solo show in Dubai features selected works from different periods of his career. These include figurative and landscape paintings in pencil or gouache on paper and oil on canvas.

At the entrance to the gallery is a display of posters and invitation cards from the artist's exhibitions at various galleries, dating back to the 1960s. "This is a recreation of the entrance to the artist's home. Although he lives in a busy metropolis like Tehran, his old brick house in a quiet lane is far removed from the hustle and bustle and modern skyscrapers of the city. You can feel the tranquillity as soon as you step inside this traditional Iranian home; and the sense of calm is also reflected in his paintings. By recreating here the entrance to his home, we wanted visitors to get a feel of the environment in which he works, and which is now the main subject of his paintings," Shaqayeq Arabi, curator of the show says.

The artist's love for painting outdoors is reflected in several landscapes from the 1990s. These include paintings of the mountains, forests and industrial areas around Tehran. The realistic works capture the beauty of nature as well as scenes from everyday life in the city. Also on display are some soulful studies of irises, roses and other flowers. The artist's enduring interest in painting the female form is also reflected in his figurative paintings from different periods.

Most of Golestaneh's recent paintings are pencil on paper works depicting his immediate environment. These include paintings of various rooms in his home, his favourite chair and the view from his balcony in different seasons. The artist's attention to detail, and his bright palette in these realistic paintings, speak about the immense pleasure he derives from his work.

Despite the mundane subjects, the paintings are profound and have a spiritual feel. They tell us about the artist's simple, solitary life, his passion for painting, and his

ability to see beauty in everything around him, thus offering a subtle reminder about how busy and disconnected from nature modern life has become.

“Golestaneh lived in England and Spain for a few years. During that time, he economised by using colour pencils on paper. But that has become a favourite medium now, and one that he is well-known for. When he was young he enjoyed painting outdoors and travelled all around Iran to paint landscapes. But he is now in his mid-seventies and rarely ventures out of his home. So he just paints what he sees around him, whether it is the beautiful trees outside or a pile of old newspapers lying in a corner of his house. Part of the charm of his work is that he has never cared about following popular subjects, styles or trends, and paints subjects he likes in his own distinct style,” Arabi says.

The show will run at Total Arts Gallery at the Courtyard, Al Quoz until January 30. Jyoti Kalsi is an arts-enthusiast based in Dubai.

## CAIRO VIDEO FESTIVAL IN DUBAI

Art lovers in the UAE have the opportunity to view a selection of highlights from the sixth Cairo Video Festival at an exhibition hosted by DUCTAC’s Gallery of Light. The festival, held in November 2014, was organised by Medrar, a Cairo-based nonprofit arts collective that hosts festivals, workshops and events designed to stimulate collaborations and discussions with contemporary artists based in the region.

The sixth edition of the event was titled “Generator”, after the power generator that has become an essential piece of equipment in every house due to the frequent power outages in Cairo over the past two years. Just as the generator offers an alternative way to keep life in motion, the festival aimed to create alternative

channels for the expression of creativity in a region where artists encounter many difficulties in producing and showcasing their work.

The ten-day festival featured video art and experimental films by artists from Egypt and around the world; and the screenings were complemented by artists' talks and discussions to foster public interest in new media production and experimentation. The artworks were selected on the basis of quality, authenticity and conviction in the investigation of subject matter.

The videos selected by the festival curators for the show in Dubai include works by regional and international artists addressing a variety of subjects. Chilean artist Emilia Izquierdo's animated video, "Caged", speaks about our internal struggles through images of a prisoner trying to free himself from jail. On the other hand, Indonesian artist Arya Sukapura Putra addresses the pervasive influence of technology in our lives in a performative piece about electronic spiritual healing.

Egyptian artists showcased in the exhibition include Ahmad Shawky, Rania Fouad and Mai Al Shazly. Shawky's "Cactus painting" is an allegorical piece about human behaviour and the growing consumerism in our society.

Al Shazly explores ideas of resistance and dependency in her work, "Undercurrents"; and Fouad's "Haiku" is a lyrical, layered narrative that combines Japanese haiku, Western sound and moving pictures to tell an emotional tale.

The show will run at the Gallery of Light, DUCTAC, Mall of Emirates until January 21.



**Still from Emilia Izquierdo's Caged featured at the sixth Cairo Video Festival** Image Credit: Supplied