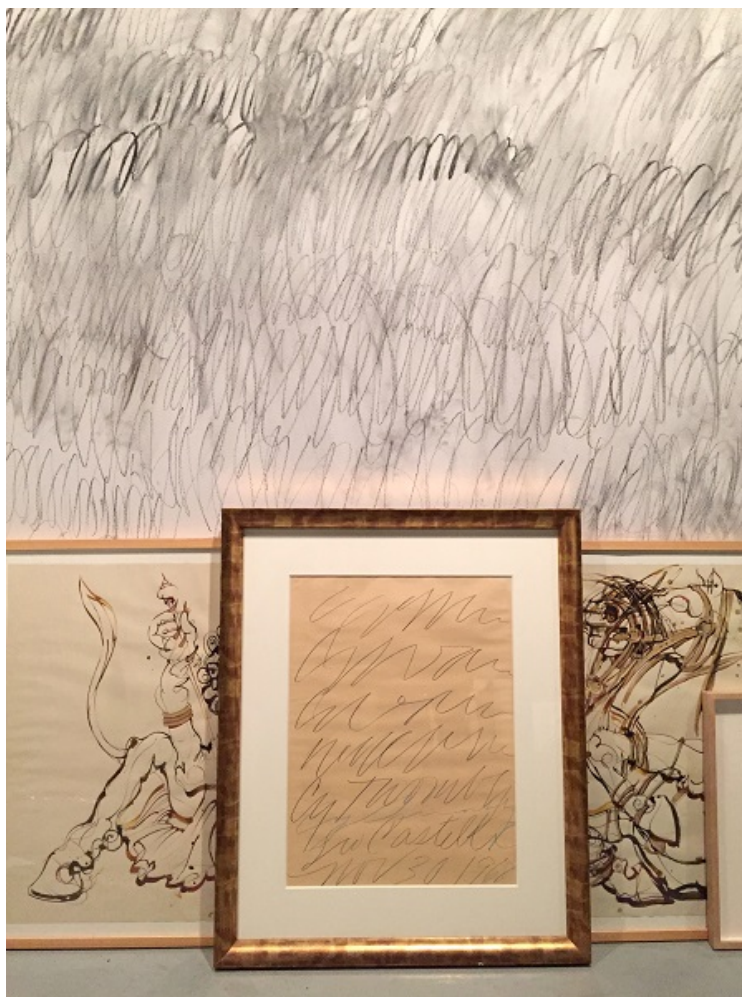


Exhibitions (<https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions>)

## Cy Twombly Haunts One of Dubai's Oldest Galleries in New Show

Iranians pay homage to the late artist, through the beauty of the line.

Myrna Ayad (<https://news.artnet.com/about/myrna-ayad-341>), January 10, 2016



The gallery's walls were covered in Twombly's signature scribbles.  
Image: Courtesy Total Arts Gallery Dubai

It definitely feels like the ghost of [Cy Twombly](http://www.artnet.com/artists/cy-twombly/) has been in Dubai. One can imagine the late artist rolling up his sleeves and painting the walls of Total Arts gallery in his spontaneous scribbles for his latest show, “Cy Twombly and the Line Calligraphic.”

For three days in November, Iranian artists [Fereydoun Ave](http://www.artnet.com/artists/fereydoun-ave) and [Shaqayeq Arabi](https://news.artnet.com/people/shaqayeq-arabi-u-turned-ziggurat-337543) carefully draped the gallery with Twombly’s characteristic calligraphic swirls. Then, they set over 100 paintings, works on paper, sculptures and posters in a salon-style hanging. Ave, who has been collecting art for decades, approached his friends and longtime collaborators, Arabi and her husband, Dariush Zandi, who founded Total Arts a little more than two decades ago. Keen on the exhibition’s premise, the trio set out to celebrate the art of the line.

Twombly and Ave originally met in the South of France in the 1970s. “He was elegant, refined, simplistic and had an intelligent humor,” recalls Ave in an interview. “He said ‘I take the line and I follow it and sometimes it becomes writing.’”



This goache-on-paper work by Farshid Maleki is included in the show.

Image: Courtesy of Total Arts Gallery Dubai.

The American artist had an interest in the region for years. Twombly traveled to Iran in the 1980s, before he created a series inspired by the Sufi poet and mystic Rumi. His works can also be found in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, which he visited after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. And among the pieces on display at Total Arts gallery is a poster he had done for Ave’s Tehran show, “The Four Seasons” in the 1970s.

The works on display at one of Dubai’s oldest galleries range from figuration and abstraction to calligraphy and installation, but they share two common denominators: they all come from Ave’s collection and they all address the idea of the line, in all its variations. “At one point in our travels, I told Cy that *khatt* in Persian means both calligraphy and drawing and he said ‘but that’s what I do!’” recalls Ave. “I suppose everything I do is an homage to him because he opened my eyes to so many different things, especially that freedom and courage to just do it.”



Installation view of "Cy Twombly and the Calligraphic Line."

Image: Courtesy of Total Arts Dubai.

It is the real belief in Twombly's legacy that forms the basis of the exhibition. We surveyed the works in his collection —from Ahmad Aminazar's dexterous strokes to his student Rokni Haerizadeh's dreamlike figures, and Koorosh Shishegaran's line as a symbol to Ardeshir Mohasses's satirical, animated figures. Through these works, the show becomes an inspiring take on a simple concept.



A drawing by Ardeshir Mohases included in the show.  
Image: Courtesy of Total Arts Gallery Dubai.

The exhibition is also refreshing as a grouping: the artists hail from various countries and their work sits together without being forced. This is not another clichéd show that merely and meekly gathers the work of Middle Eastern artists, nor is it an exhibition of calligraphic experimentation. Instead, it is an intelligent, poetic assemblage of works by artists who use the line as a starting point and investigate its seemingly endless possibilities.

“I want this show to create a dialogue between Cy’s work as someone who followed the line and let it become drawing,” says Ave. “That freshness is the spirit that should be encouraged in young Iranian artists.” It is this freshness that Ave has and continues to work towards in Iran, by being a mentor to many an emerging artist, gallerist, and curator. “I know I am a bridge, I make a difference there,” he says. Next on Ave’s list is a show called “Fearless,” concerned with the next wave of Iranian artists to be staged in March at Total Arts.

There’s nothing quite like bold, energetic forms from young artists influenced by a true master. Twombly would have approved.

*“Cy Twombly And The Line Calligraphic” is on view at Total Arts at the Courtyard in Dubai until February 15, 2016.*

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