

The Art of Connection

[Fatma] Walking through the alleyways, I would close my eyes within that space and try to feel the breeze within my face, touching the walls and smelling the salt within the air. It just takes me back to memories that are not entirely my own, where I put myself in the place or in the position of my ancestors and try to feel how they felt, see what they see, touch what they touched.

[Text on screen] Beyond Emerging Artists is an annual mentorship programme by Abu Dhabi Art, nurturing talent and creativity for UAE-based artists

[Dina] I love thinking of how fabric can shelter, how it can be a tent, how it can be a curtain, how it can cover or protect or hide or conceal or expose, how it flows, how it drapes. The play of different yarns interacting with each other.

[Text on screen] In 2025, HSBC created new, international opportunities for these artists, connecting them to global audiences

[Simrin] I feel liberated. I feel that I'm just expressing my emotions, and I feel like it's flowing very spontaneously. And it's a release of my thoughts, my creative process, my emotions. It's like everything coming together. My name is Simrin Mehera Agarwal. I'm a multidisciplinary artist based in Abu Dhabi. As a child, I used to go for long walks with my parents. I used to go and take a lot of pictures. I used to sketch, I used to collect pebbles and rocks and leaves and bring it all back. That's my passion. I really wanted to be an artist. My parents were very encouraging, and I always pursued it.

[Fatma] My name is Fatma Al Ali. I'm a multidisciplinary artist from Sharjah. I always knew that I wanted to be an artist, but I didn't really see it as a legit, proper profession that I can actually go for and have it as a career. And that just translated in my head to being a doctor, which I pursued for three full years. And then I found myself that I was not really happy within that. So I stopped mid-semester and I was like, I'm not doing this anymore.

[Dina] My name is Dina Nazmi Khorchid. I'm a visual artist. I primarily work with textiles printed and woven. My father disappeared in the Gulf War in 1991. I was three years old at the time. And through my work, I connect back to his memory. And I think of the larger story of my father, a Palestinian man, and what that identity means in the world. Through art making, I try to understand that history. I try to understand my position. How do I navigate something that is difficult, like loss, navigate not having answers, not having access, and reflect on that through art making.

[Simrin] Through my work, I want to give this message to people that instead of thinking about destruction, we should think about restoring the planet. We should think about regeneration.

[Fatma] Growing up, I would hear stories from my father, from his time growing up. I remember my grandmother and her stories. Just like to see the shift of how they used to live and how we live right now. And then I felt like I didn't know much, and I wanted to learn more.

[Simrin] When the open call came out for Beyond Emerging Artists, I instantly applied for it. I personally had a project in mind which I wanted to showcase. I've been working on it for a very, very long time, but I didn't have the resources to actually make the project happen.

[Fatma] With the Beyond Emerging Artists program, it was really great because it really connected us with the right people. It connected us with the right curators and galleries.

[Dina] The impact of a collaboration between Abu Dhabi Art and HSBC to support emerging artists is a very unique thing. To be able to access something like that later on in life while practicing as an artist is something that is just amazing.

[Simrin] As soon as I heard that the exhibition is going to Hong Kong and London, I was very curious because the space matters a lot. Look at the endorsement. You have HSBC, you have Abu Dhabi Art, and these are all big names. So I mean, for an emerging artist, the level of exposure is tremendous.

[Fatma] I'm really excited about the element that the work is going to be traveling abroad, and that gives me different opportunities and opens me up to different markets and meeting different people.

[Simrin] A little bit of anxiety is always there. I'm wondering what's going to happen on the opening day. How are people going to perceive my work? And what will be the general feedback that I get from my work?

[Dina] Being in different art ecosystems or different markets is a new stage in my life to think of what someone in Hong Kong might feel when they're looking at my work or someone in London. And hopefully, all of that will open up even more places, more connections, more conversations. Unfortunately, I can't be in Hong Kong for the show, in the London show, due to time not being enough to secure a visa and having a prior commitment at a residency. But I'm glad that my pieces will make it.

[Text on screen] July 2025 - Hong Kong

[Fatma] Ever since I got here, I've been trying to be mindful and be within the moment itself and take everything in.

[Simrin] It was very interesting to meet curators from M+ Museum, and then I was able to see this particular exhibition with the history of ink paintings.

[Speaker 1] We are a museum of visual culture from more or less the 20th and 21st century.

But also you see in this first painting a naturalism, wanting to capture a moment.

[Speaker 2] Deploying different languages freely.

It also speaks to a new kind of modern visual that we want to bring up.

[Daniel] My name is Daniel Lancaster. I'm the Global Art Manager for HSBC. And today we're in Hong Kong, at the Sotheby's Maison, for Install Day. So this is a very exciting moment when we see the exhibition we've been planning for months has come to life.

Alongside Beyond Emergent Artists, we'll be showcasing works from HSBC's permanent collection, Under the Different Perspectives Art Series, which brings together an extraordinary mix of artists from around the world.

[Fatma] When we walked in and I saw the space, it's a white canvas for us to play around and put the work on.

[Simrin] I think I'm a perfectionist, so I want everything to be, at least my install should be perfect. And for this exhibition, I can't mess it up at all.

[Fatma] I want to put it on the floor to see it. I feel like I'm very particular with the way that I'm handling my work because these, specifically, they're made out of sand, and it's very fragile and breaks easily. The amount of care that they're putting into handling each piece, taking so much care out of it, makes me feel safe. It makes me feel safe.

[Simrin] I'm now done with my projector. It's all set up. The video is playing. And now I'm going to just move on with the installation of all the massive works which make up most of the exhibition. So I still have a lot of work to do before things are perfect. But yeah, we are working on it. But yeah, it's fun.

Okay. Careful, careful. This.

It's like I'm inviting the viewer to come into my world to experience what I experience. It's basically showing them my vision and whatever's going on in my mind and what I think about the ocean and how I express that. It feels really amazing. It's all sorted now. Everything is displayed, all done.

[Fatma] Okay, I want to push a bit right and then a little forward. I actually got emotional earlier. I actually cried, and I didn't even expect myself that I would cry. But when I started and I played the audio, the English part was fine. But then when I... Now she's talking in Arabic, in Emirati, and when she started speaking in Emirati, I got super emotional that I had to step out and let all the emotions out because it felt like a part of my... It felt weird. I'm in Hong Kong. I'm like, this is an artwork that I made.

[Dina] I was really happy to see my work installed in Hong Kong and being taken care of with so much care and delicate nature the way that I would if I was there.

[Fatma] And the floor, it wasn't like this.

[Simrin] Do you think I can adjust something on the floor? I think she would like the fold to be a bit more.

To be straight, right?

[Dina] That has been a learning experience for me to trust others and to let go and to trust that the work itself can speak for itself. And can represent me the same way that I represent the work.

[Daniel] This is a unique opportunity to showcase in Sotheby's Maison. This is an absolutely amazing venue. Essentially what we want on this exhibition is people to go on a journey. It's a journey of reflection, and it's about different artists telling you their stories. And to think about the world around us and to reflect on the humour and experience. I think as an artist, you want your work to be seen. And in my honest opinion, I don't think there's a better place in Hong Kong to do such an exhibition.

[Mohammed] Very, very happy and proud to be here. Very difficult, actually, for people from different cultures and backgrounds to come and to agree on something other than art. Asma Siddiq Al Mutawa. Actually, without this lady, it would have been very difficult for us to get into this partnership with Abu Dhabi Art.

[Asma] Good evening, everyone. Art is a universal language that speak to heart across borders and cultures. Tonight, we are gathering here in Hong Kong to celebrate this language and ability to connect us all.

[Simrin] Really great. There have been some amazing people who have liked the work, and I'm supposed to resend them my portfolio, so I'm very excited.

[Fatma] I told you, during the opening, it was like this. I'm living the moment that's like, I'm not processing anything, and it will all come down later on. Hello. Hello.

[Simrin] Hi.

[Fatma] Your presence is truly missed. We feel it through the work, but really hope that you were here with us.

[Dina] I miss you both.

I'm really sad that I can't make it. I wish I can be there, but it is what it is. I'm still really grateful that my work can make it, and in a way, that's me being there. But I wish that I could physically be there to be next to my work, answer questions, tell people more about the context behind the pieces, be able to explore and understand what the Hong Kong art scene is about.

[Text on screen] October 2025 – London

[Simrin] I'm very, very familiar with London because I studied at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. You have several museums and galleries, and it's a very important centre for contemporary art.

[Vivan] Welcome, welcome.

[Simrin] Hello, Simran.

[Vivan] Welcome, welcome.

[Simrin] Lovely to meet you. I love your works. They look amazing. As soon as you walk in, you're like, wow!

[Vivan] Thank you.

[Simrin] It was a great opportunity that HSBC was able to organise this meeting with this artist called Vivian Zhang.

[Vivan] This one, for example, it will be laid on the floor, and I would use pots of paint to pour it on the floor, and then it sits, and then overnight, and then I...

[Simrin] It's got a lovely flowy quality. So good.

[Daniel] We're here at Saatchi today. All the artworks arrived, and this is the most exciting time because we actually get to see the works up. They do the install, and the exhibition opens to the public tomorrow.

[Simrin] Wow. Oh my God, it looks really good, yeah? I love it. Oh. Wow! I like... I love it. I find the lighting is really amazing, and I find the space superb. For the large works, it has an ample of height, the wall heights. It has good lighting. The space is fantastic. And I mean, I couldn't even imagine that the works would look like this in this space. This is totally amazing. I'm super happy.

[Fatma] I feel like every time the work travels, it takes a life on its own, given that it's the same exact work shapes itself differently from the other space. So it's quite nice to see it here within the context of London. It's the final day here in London today, and the show is later on this evening. I'm quite excited. Let's see how it goes, InshAllah.

[Mohammed] Our partnership with Abu Dhabi Art, it's actually exactly to celebrate that, to celebrate the talent, to celebrate the aspiration of those young artists, the young Emirati and Middle Eastern artists. We started this journey a few months ago in Hong Kong. Massive, massive success. We are privileged to bring this exhibition to the UK, to London, a city that has always inspired the world of art and creativity.

[Fatma] It's been really exciting having the opportunity to travel around the world and show my work and show this part of the history that I carry with me and the stories that I want to share with different audiences. I was really excited. It's also been the first time that my parents actually get to see my work and to see that aspect of me as an artist, Fatma, the artist. I think it took them by surprise.

[Simrin] They didn't realise that it could be this big.

[Interviewer] Taking what you're feeling from tonight? What do you want to do now?

[Fatma] Definitely keep on trying to find different ways to tell the stories, different materials, different parts of the oral history that might have been unseen and putting it out there.

[Dina] Having that experience really shaped my practice to what it is today, I feel like things grew not only in physical scale, which is very true of a lot of my pieces, but also in my approach to making art.

[Simrin]

In the future, I'm looking to develop a lot of public art projects. At the moment, I'm working on paintings, I'm working on video and sculpture, so I'm trying to bring all the mediums together. I think I want to travel a lot more. I'll be coming back to London again, going to Hong Kong, and I wish to take my solo show to New York. I mean, I'm in talks with a few galleries there.

[Text on screen] Simrin is expanding her research and preparing for her next solo exhibition in New York.

Fatma is currently developing new works for Abu Dhabi Art, whilst expanding her research and artistic practice.

Dina has just completed an artist residency in California and is now preparing for her upcoming international shows.