

stories over art

middle east & beyond

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#6

ART & DESIGN | ARCHITECTURE | FASHION | INTERVIEWS | COMMENTARY | FILM | MUSIC | PERFORMANCE | PHOTOGRAPHY | FEATURES | REVIEWS

SEABASS

EDITOR'S NOTE



BMW "Majlis Fann" at Abu Dhabi Art Fair celebrates local culture, art and design

With good weather knocking on our doors, we've been stepping out more than we would. And as one would expect, all the outings have been to savor art and cultural bites in every form possible. This month's edit note is going to be a quick recap of what we saw, we experienced in the UAE.

After a while, we visited Alserkal Avenue, Dubai, to watch a theatrical production. We loved Searching for Pierrot, performed by Gillian Rhodes, an American performer and storyteller. Our review inside! We were disappointed that just a handful (perhaps 30 or so!) of us were in the audience, but then that's why we run this magazine, to acquaint you with arts. As for Alserkal, we were sad to see that it has become a space for food trucks, pop-ups, and more — don't we have enough of that already?

Umrao Jaan Ada, a musical, took us to Dubai Opera, and while at this venue too, we spotted enough empty seats, enough were taken too. The production needs much work — and failed to impress at any level — stage, concept, music; the list is long. We dressed the part, but they missed the mark. We decided not to write

about it on the pages and instead devoted the space to a few good events recently hosted in Dubai!

We didn't attend Diljit Dosanjh's big concert in Abu Dhabi, but we know everybody else did, and the fans are still singing the tune. Right now, we're trying to save ourselves from the deluge of messages from people once again selling and buying Coldplay concerts. Our art calendars are full for the next few weeks, and we hope the same for spaces. Show up and support the arts.

P.S: In an era of ChatGPT and Paywalls, we're daring to create original content and offer it to our readers without a fee. Your support would go a long way. Subscribe to the portal, and meet us on socials as well.



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TABLE OF CONTENT

INTERVIEW: JONATHAN LI TSZ CHUN	4
LANGUAGE: THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH	8
WHISPERS OF THE CITY: A TAPESTRY OF ARTWORKS	10
SHARJAH: FIRST ARAB CITY TO HOST WORLD STAGE DESIGN	12
LANGUAGE: ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY	13
EXHIBITION: ANDY WARHOL, THE GLAM FACTORY	14
FASHION: SAVE THE OCEANS	16
THEATRE: YOU WERE 'REMARKABLE' GILLIAN!	20
TRIBUTE: LATE JABER JASSIM, EMIRATI SONG AMBASSADOR	23

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INTERVIEW



JONATHAN LI
TSZ CHUN

Jonathan Li has been part of the Hong Kong film industry for over two decades, starting as a production assistant before working with notable directors like Derek Yee and Soi Cheang. His directorial debut, *The Brink* (2017), received critical acclaim.



What's your earliest memory of creating/directing films?

Around 2005, I worked as an assistant director and wanted to transition into directing. I observed how other directors created stories on set. I collaborated with Soi Cheang, a well-known director, on the film *Dog Bite Dog*, where I participated in the scriptwriting process—this is one of my earliest memories.

I vividly recall sitting in a room with the writers and the director, working together to build a scene and craft a character, exploring how to evolve it.

If you could collaborate with any artist, living or dead, who would it be and why?

I had the privilege of working with director Ringo Lam, who has since passed away. In 2015, I collaborated with him for just half a year on a film called *Wild City*, but I had to leave the production early to focus on my debut. He was a true master and mentor to me, and I regret not having the opportunity to work with him more. I always wished I could have learned more from him.

What's the weirdest thing you've ever used as a medium/tool/platform in your work?

I wouldn't call it a weird medium; instead, it's an out-of-the-box approach or a unique design choice for the film. In *Dog Bite Dog*, I used a Super 8 camera for the flashback scenes to add texture to the visuals. In another instance, while shooting a gunfight scene where prop guns were not allowed, we painted the actors' hands black to mimic the color of a gun, and they had to shape their hands to form a gun during filming.



INTERVIEW

What's the most unusual source of inspiration you've ever had?

When I hit a bottleneck, the ideal solution would be if the answer fell from the sky—obviously, that would be best. I believe the best approach is to step away from it. Walking, enjoying a meal, or meeting with friends can be incredibly helpful. Sometimes, the answer might come from another script or the one I'm currently working on, but either way, it's beneficial to take a break and get some fresh air. I also find reading very useful. While the answers may not come directly from the book, reading can inspire new ideas. When I'm waiting for an idea, I meditate on it and explore different paths. If I don't find the answer, I simply go back and try another direction. Eventually, the solution will reveal itself.

If you could only use three colors/instruments/software for the rest of your life, which would you choose?

Phone, light, and camera. After all, without a camera and lights, we wouldn't be able to make a film, as the fundamental elements of filmmaking are light and shadow. Similarly, we need our phones to communicate with others. I couldn't connect with people or share their stories without a phone. Most importantly, I couldn't call anyone to come to work without a phone.

Black, white, and gray. These colors form the beginning of films and can be used to create different layers and textures with light and shadow. Without any one of them, you wouldn't be able to create a story.

What film do you take the most pride in and why?

I wouldn't say I take pride in it, but I am most passionate about my second film, *Dust to Dust*, because I truly poured myself into it. I even told the producer, "I'm going to make a film that probably won't make any money. Are you okay with it?" Thankfully, the producers fully supported me.

My first film was an action movie, but I chose to make a drama for my second. I actually prefer creating dramas over action films.

Do you have any quirky rituals or habits when you're in your creative zone?

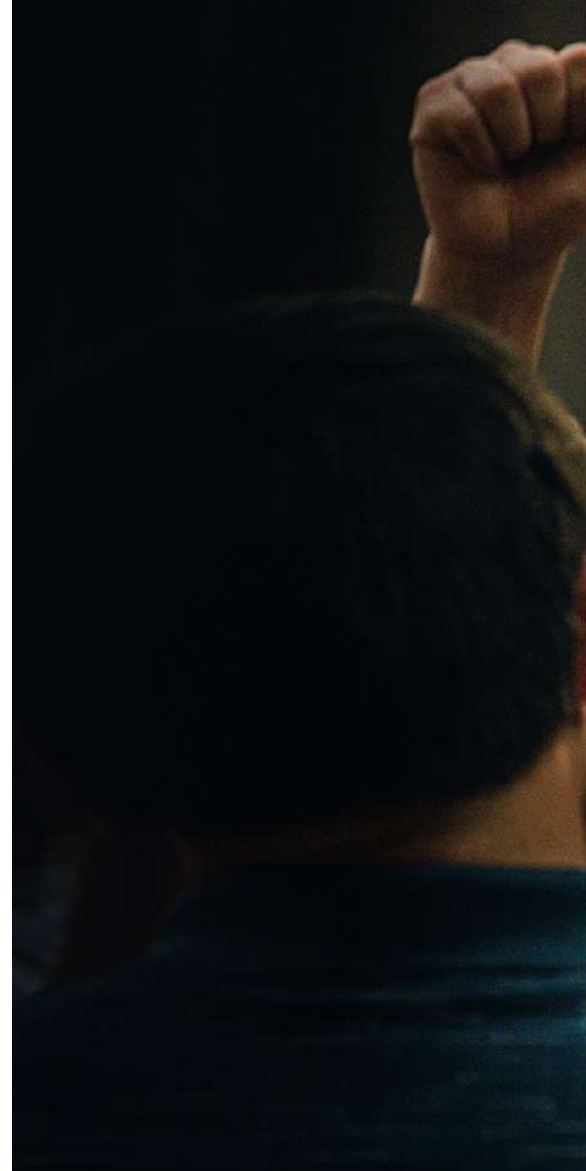
Before filming begins, I visit a specific temple (Ji Gong Temple) to pray for safety and smooth production and to seek guidance through fortune-telling. Part of this ritual involves drawing a fortune stick, and the number on the stick serves as an answer or direction to the question I'm praying about. This practice is quite common in Southern Chinese culture.

If your life had a soundtrack, what would be the top three songs on it?

Instead of songs, I would choose instruments. As a child, I learned to play the recorder, and in my teens, I picked up the guitar. Now, I would choose the harmonica. These three instruments represent the different stages of my life.

What's the most memorable reaction someone has had to your work?

In *Dust to Dust*, there's a scene where the older brother's character is committing





murder, and the younger brother is behind him, worried because he doesn't want his brother to commit this act. It's a very serious moment, yet at that point, the audience unexpectedly laughed, and I still don't know why.

If you could turn any book into a film, which one would it be?

I don't have one yet.

What would you be doing if you weren't a director?

I wouldn't be doing anything if I'm not a director.

Can you describe your directing style in three words?

I don't think style is something I can impose on myself; instead, it's something that others project onto me. However, if I had to choose a style I like, it would be realism.

What's your favorite part about the process of directing?

The creative aspect of the entire process presents various challenges and obstacles at every step. You must collaborate with different people to find solutions.

If you could have your work displayed anywhere in the world, where would it be?

Anywhere with people. Wherever there are people, there are stories, and I want to make films that move and connect people.

What's one thing people would be surprised to learn about you?

I was once a private detective.

The Hong Kong Film Festival returned to Dubai as the Hong Kong Film Gala Presentation (HKFGP) with an eclectic selection of Hong Kong's most captivating cinematic masterpieces in November 2024 at Cinema Akil, Alserkal Avenue, Dubai. Jonathan Li's work was part of the event, and the audiences connected with Hong Kong's finest talent, including him, through three post-screening Q&A sessions and more.



Sheikh Rashid opening the new Council building in Dubai 1973

LANGUAGE: THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH

The findings challenge traditional education systems that overemphasize grammar and spelling, calling for a shift toward practical language skills such as speaking and listening, which are essential for success in today's globalized world

As the British Council celebrates 90 years of global engagement, it continues as a language education, cultural exchange, and research leader. This milestone is marked through *The Future of English: Global Perspectives*, an essential publication from the British Council's ongoing research into the role of English worldwide. The report builds on previous research and explores global perspectives on using English for educational, professional, and social purposes. The findings are crucial when English proficiency is increasingly critical to personal and professional success in MENA and worldwide.

The research forms part of the British Council's three-phase global project, which examines the evolving role of English as an international language. This latest research follows *The Future of English* (1997) and *English Next* (2006) by David Graddol, which shaped global conversations around language education. Building on Graddol's work, *The Future of English: Global Perspectives* draws from extensive roundtable discussions with policymakers and educational leaders across the globe, offering valuable insights into English language trends and projections for the coming decades.

The British Council's research highlights distinct regional insights into the state and future of English learning. Delegates from MENA countries shared perspectives at roundtable discussions on how English is perceived and taught across the region and found the following:

- Maghreb (Morocco, Tunisia, Libya): A growing demand for English is driven by aspirations for better educational and employment opportunities. Young people in Morocco, in particular, would like to see English replace French, although the roundtable agreed English should not prevail at the expense of other languages.

- The Gulf (Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar): English is increasingly seen as a lingua franca. Technological advancements and the shift to flexible learning during the pandemic have reshaped language education, with a growing need for educators to improve digital literacy.

- Egypt and Levant (Yemen, Egypt, Lebanon,

Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Jordan): English is becoming more important for economic mobility, but quality provision remains inconsistent. Stakeholders emphasized the need to address technology access and ensure equitable learning opportunities.

The research also explores how technology integration in language learning has transformed the educational landscape. The British Council's commitment to using digital tools to support language learning is evident across MENA, ensuring that teachers and students can continue to benefit from high-quality resources and innovative solutions, even during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research emphasizes that language learning policies should align with the evolving needs of learners today. The findings challenge traditional education systems that overemphasize grammar and spelling, calling for a shift toward practical language skills such as speaking and listening, which are essential for success in today's globalized world. Policymakers are encouraged to consider how English language learning can best serve the needs of learners, with a focus on equipping them for the workplace and other real-world contexts.

"The British Council has been at the heart of transforming language learning globally for 90 years, and the *Future of English* research demonstrates that the demand for English is stronger than ever. As we look to the future, we remain committed to supporting learners and educators through innovative resources and research-driven insights," said Amir Ramzan, Regional Director, British Council MENA.

The British Council enhances cultural relations between the UAE and the UK through meaningful partnerships and joint initiatives addressing global challenges. The British Council invites educators, policymakers, and learners across the region to engage with *The Future of English: Global Perspectives* findings and participate in ongoing conversations about the future of language education.



Sheikh Rashid opening the new Council building in Dubai 1973

WHISPERS OF THE CITY: A TAPESTRY OF ARTWORKS

Featuring more than 70 sculptures by 40 artists from various artistic disciplines and nations, this year's edition celebrates DIFC's 20th anniversary with interactive elements for the public to enjoy.

Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) has unveiled its third edition of the DIFC Sculpture Park this year, featuring the theme "Whispers of the City: A Tapestry of Artworks." This much-anticipated display of public art and sculptures from local, regional, and international artists has opened to the public through April 2025.

The DIFC Sculpture Park aligns with Her Highness Sheikha Latifa Bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's vision to position Dubai as an open-air art gallery, enhancing the city's cultural landscape. The theme invites visitors on a journey through the vibrant tapestry of urban life, where each artwork serves as a thread, weaving together the diverse narratives of the city's inhabitants.

Featuring more than 70 sculptures by 40 artists from various artistic disciplines and nations, this year's edition celebrates DIFC's 20th anniversary with interactive elements for the public to enjoy. DIFC Sculpture Park enhances Dubai's creative and cultural landscape, strengthens the city's position as a global arts destination, and reinforces DIFC's role as a key arts and culture hub in Dubai. DIFC Sculpture Park is located around the destination, and you can visit it. Art enthusiasts, school groups, and the public are encouraged to take advantage of this unique opportunity to be immersed in the world of art and culture right in the heart of Dubai.

Art enthusiasts recently experienced and explored Art Nights, where 170 artworks transformed DIFC's Gate Village. Renowned international sculptor Anthony Quinn's work was featured at DIFC Art Nights with his kinetic golden sculpture 'Infinite Love,' alongside over 100 artists from around the world, representing a variety of disciplines. For the first time, the event included design, further cementing DIFC Art Nights as a key cultural platform in the Emirate. Alongside the launch of the Sculpture Park, the "Sculpting Futures" campaign, held in conjunction with Dubai Cares, was also announced at the event.

The opening of the DIFC Sculpture Park follows the 18th edition of DIFC Art Nights, which witnessed unprecedented attendance since its opening night in Gate Village on 7 November, heralding nine nights of art and culture to celebrate DIFC's 20th anniversary year. After rigorous assessment from an open call for artists, local, regional, and international artists converged to have their works displayed in the heart of Dubai's financial district.



DIFC Sculpture Park



SHARJAH: FIRST ARAB CITY TO HOST WORLD STAGE DESIGN

World Stage Design (WSD) 2025 Sharjah will take place from 18 to 25th October 2025

World Stage Design (WSD) 2025 Sharjah will occur from 18–25 October 2025. The exhibition will feature three categories: Performance Design, Space and Object Design and Set, Sound, Costume, Lighting, and Video Design. Works of professionals and emerging talent in scenography, puppetry, décor, architecture, and other theatre and live events technicians will be part of the exhibition.

Conducted quadrennially, WSD is the only exhibition globally to showcase performance designs from individual designers. After successful shows in Toronto, Seoul, Cardiff, Taipei, and Calgary, the sixth edition of the event – WSD25 Sharjah, UAE, is its first time in an Arab country. The event is co-produced by the Sharjah Performing Arts Academy (SPAA) and the International Organization of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians (OISTAT).

“It is remarkable that we are hosting a global event focused on live events and performance design in Sharjah, UAE. WSD25 Sharjah has sustainability as a core ethos. The event offers a unique opportunity for professionals and enthusiasts of live events in the region to engage with work from around the world. Exhibiting international designers, artists, and visitors can experience the local performing arts culture and interact and collaborate with their Middle Eastern counterparts,” said Jacqui George, Project



Director, WSD25.

All categories will look for evidence of ecological and sustainable design methods and approaches as a central theme.

WSD2025 includes Scenofest, a celebration of scenography with a wide range of seminars, workshops, performances, and presentations by leading theatre practitioners and artists. The Theatre Architecture Competition (TAC) and Technical Invention Prize (TIP) will also run alongside the event.

Sharjah Performing Arts Academy (SPAA) is the only dedicated performing arts academy in the Middle East that offers comprehensive performing and production arts education. SPAA trains students for various roles, from actors and dancers to stage managers and scenic designers, preparing them for success in the competitive global industry. The Academy aims to develop confident, creative professionals who can lead and collaborate in any global context. OISTAT was founded in Prague in 1968. It stands for “Organisation Internationale des Scénographes, Techniciens et Architectes de Théâtre” in French and “International Organisation of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians” in English. OISTAT is a global network for theatre practitioners celebrating design, technology, and architecture in live performances.

LANGUAGE: ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY

The workshop also explored the six foundational styles of Arabic calligraphy: Kufic, Thuluth, Naskh, Persian, Diwani, and Ruq'ah.

The Mohammed Bin Rashid Library recently organized an engaging workshop, “The Golden Ratio in Arabic Calligraphy,” in collaboration with Zukhruf Arts. Renowned calligrapher Odai Al-Araji presented the session. The event was part of the Library’s vision and sustainable strategy to preserve the Arabic language, celebrate the artistry of Arabic calligraphy, and pass this cultural treasure to future generations.

Kicking off the session, Al-Araji delved into the historical evolution of Arabic calligraphy, highlighting the significance of the golden ratio in perfecting this timeless art’s aesthetics. He demonstrated how this mathematical principle can enhance the balance and harmony of calligraphic designs across various mediums. His discussion included practical applications, including logo design, architectural masterpieces, and landmarks such as the Burj Khalifa and the Eiffel Tower, showcasing how the golden ratio influences visual appeal.

The workshop also explored the six foundational styles of Arabic calligraphy: Kufic, Thuluth, Naskh, Persian, Diwani, and Ruq'ah. Al-Araji explained each script’s unique characteristics and cultural contexts, offering practical examples that showcased their potential for creating innovative and cohesive calligraphic designs.



Participants actively engaged in hands-on exercises, applying the golden ratio to their calligraphy projects. Their creative endeavors reflected a remarkable understanding of the theoretical concepts discussed, transforming them into stunning designs. The attendees’ enthusiasm and high skill level underscored the workshop’s success in bridging art and education.

The Library continues pioneering in promoting the Arabic language and its artistic expressions. Its diverse events and workshops attract enthusiasts from all walks of life. The “Treasures of The Library” exhibition houses a rare collection of original manuscripts, traditional tools once wielded by master calligraphers, and unique editions of Qur’ans and literary works adorned with exquisite Arabic calligraphy. This exhibition serves as a rich cultural gateway, shedding light on the heritage, beauty, and evolution of Arabic calligraphy throughout history.



EXHIBITION: ANDY WARHOL, THE GLAM FACTORY

Over 100 original works by the pop art icon were on display at this recently concluded exhibition in Dubai. A multi-talented creative – painter, advertiser, filmmaker, actor, musician, and television producer – Warhol redefined the stature and power of the artist. Even today, his work continues to inspire and provoke. His innovative use of screenprinting, fascination with consumer culture, and talent as a portraitist of the global elite made him one of the most revolutionary artists of the 20th century.

The recently concluded “Andy Warhol, The Glam Factory” exhibition in Dubai explored the life and work of one of the most iconic figures in contemporary art. Presented by Art For All and hosted at Foundry, it marked the first time that a comprehensive collection of over 100 original works by Warhol had been displayed in the UAE. Held from September 20 to October 31, 2024, the exhibition offered a unique opportunity for art lovers in Dubai to engage with the groundbreaking work of the “King of Pop Art.”

Curated by Nada Ghandour, the exhibition delved deep into the life and legacy of Andy Warhol, offering visitors an intimate and thought-provoking experience of his artistic evolution. It showcased some of his most celebrated works, including screenprint portraits of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and Mao Zedong, alongside lesser-known but equally impactful pieces demonstrating Warhol’s innovative media use and profound influence on the art world.

Exhibition Design and Atmosphere

Designed by renowned New York-based architect Ibrahim Kombarji, the exhibition space was a harmonious fusion of Warhol’s avant-garde sensibilities and modern architectural design. The exhibition was organized into two main sections: Andy Warhol: From Shadows to Light and The Glam Factory: Art Meets Business. These sections were carefully curated to highlight the different phases of Warhol’s career and explore his innovative approach to art and commerce. Through a combination of paintings, screenprints, photographs, and magazines, the exhibition charted Warhol’s rise from an illustrator in the 1950s to the cultural phenomenon he became by the 1980s.

From Shadows to Light

The exhibition’s first section, Andy Warhol: From Shadows to Light, focused on Warhol’s early career and artistic development. It showcased his first steps as an illustrator, capturing the essence of his commercial work in magazines such as *Vogue*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, and *The New Yorker*. Visitors could see the progression of his art, from his advertising campaigns to his famous Campbell’s Soup Cans series. This segment also highlighted Warhol’s technical mastery and pioneering approach to mass production, blending fine art with commercial and industrial techniques that redefined what art could be.

Warhol’s work was at the intersection of art and commerce, and his ability to turn everyday objects into high art was a central theme in this section. The juxtaposition of consumer culture with artistic expression challenged visitors to reflect on the world of mass production and the commodification of art—a central theme in Warhol’s career.

The Glam Factory: Art Meets Business

The second section, The Glam Factory: Art Meets Business, explored Warhol’s ascent to fame and his relationship with the rich and famous, blending high society with art in a way that no artist before him had. Known for his screen-printed portraits of celebrities, Warhol turned the painted portrait back into a central

genre of contemporary art. Iconic images of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and other cultural icons were featured prominently, showing how Warhol’s art could simultaneously celebrate and critique the notion of celebrity.

This section also included works illustrating Warhol’s collaborations with various cultural and political figures. Portraits of Edward Kennedy, Paloma Picasso, and Keith Haring showcased the extensive network Warhol built throughout his career. At the same time, pieces inspired by his friendships with fashion designers like Calvin Klein and Giorgio Armani and rock stars like Mick Jagger further emphasized Warhol’s position as a key figure in the art and entertainment industries.

A particularly striking feature of this section was the recreation of two immersive spaces: The Silver Factory and Studio 54. The Silver Factory, a multidisciplinary creative space Warhol designed for collaboration, was reimaged in the exhibition to reflect his creative process’s experimental, interdisciplinary nature. Meanwhile, Studio 54—the infamous nightclub where Warhol mingled with New York’s elite—was brought to life through lighting and design, transporting visitors to the hedonistic, glamorous world that Warhol inhabited.

Thematic Exploration

Throughout the exhibition, Warhol’s exploration of consumerism, celebrity culture, and mass media was fully displayed. Warhol’s work spoke to the rapidly changing American society of the 1960s to the 1980s, a time marked by technological innovation, shifting social dynamics, and the rise of the celebrity. The exhibition offered visitors the chance to reflect on how Warhol’s art mirrored and shaped this period of cultural transformation.

Warhol’s use of mass production techniques, such as screenprinting, was groundbreaking and continues influencing contemporary art. His ability to create art that blurred the lines between high culture and consumerism made him a pivotal figure in the development of modern art.

Curatorial Insights

Nada Ghandour, the exhibition curator, shared her thoughts on the significance of Warhol’s work and its enduring relevance. “Curating Andy Warhol, The Glam Factory has been a remarkable experience,” Ghandour said. “Warhol’s art continues to resonate deeply with audiences around the world. This exhibition offered a unique opportunity to explore Warhol’s innovative approach to art and his profound commentary on consumerism and celebrity culture. Visitors left with a newfound appreciation for Warhol’s work and its enduring relevance.”



The exhibition was open to the public at Foundry, Downtown Dubai, from September 20 to October 31, 2024



FASHION: SAVE THE OCEANS

As we started researching our new project, we naturally thought a lot about the ocean. Not only the pleasure it brings and the food it provides us but also its dual roles: as the planet's lungs — generating 50% of the oxygen we need; and as its largest carbon sink — absorbing 25% of all carbon dioxide emissions. We learned about the vast plastics crises choking our oceans and impacting marine life. Home, or, more specifically, family, is a central theme in what I wish to share with you. These are the themes of finding your purpose, what luxury means today in climate change, and doing the right thing.

Sitting at my desk overlooking Port Ginesta harbor in Barcelona to write this piece, I reflected on the recent unprecedented rainfall that caused such terrible devastation in the Valencia region of Spain. Even here in Barcelona, we didn't entirely escape, but for us, it was just heavy rain, and the damage was only financial.

It's a stark reminder that extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and less predictable, and that impact is felt closer to home than many imagined.

Home, or, more specifically, family, is a central theme in what I wish to share with you. These are the themes of finding your purpose, what luxury means today in climate change, and doing the right thing.

There is no denying that expectations of luxury are changing. No longer is it enough to create products that prioritize exclusivity; there is a growing sense that the luxury sector has a role beyond merely preserving skills and craftsmanship to also leading the field in conserving resources and taking decisions less harmful to nature. Indeed, we take pride in our commitment to nature-based sustainability targets and raising awareness of the fashion industry's impact on biodiversity.

At Seabass, doing the right thing has meant baking sustainability into the foundations of our young business almost as a point of hygiene — something that is a 'must do'. We have one planet, and its resources are finite — the human population is not

only consuming them at an unsustainable rate, but we are also damaging the natural world to such an extent that it's struggling to repair itself.

Of course, each of us has a frame of reference that influences our choices and the causes we champion. We found our purpose while on a family holiday at Miami Beach with our then—only son Bass — the ocean. By the time we left our vacation, we knew we wanted the luxury of being able to enjoy our time by the ocean, making valuable memories without worrying about our son burning, and we also wanted to create something that would not look out of place in the iconic hotels of the world. At the same time, we were thinking about the environmental legacy that our children would inherit. So our take on luxury became about the joy and privilege of enjoying time spent together in nature and the importance of preserving that nature for future generations.

All this thinking led us to create a luxury swim and resort wear brand that would provide UV protection without compromising style while making the least impact possible.

As we started researching our new project, we naturally thought a lot about the ocean. Not only the pleasure it brings and the food it provides us but also its dual roles: as the planet's lungs — generating 50% of the oxygen we need; and as its largest carbon sink — absorbing 25% of all carbon dioxide emissions. We learned about the vast plastics

crises choking our oceans and impacting marine life.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a globally respected charity that works with business and education to accelerate the transition to a circular economy, predicted one tonne of plastic in the ocean for every three tonnes of fish by 2025. Around 40% of plastic waste that makes its way into the ocean is from packaging, while 20% to 30% comes from marine sources such as ghost fishing nets, lines, ropes, and abandoned vessels. According to a 2018 study in Scientific Reports, ghost fishing nets make up at least 46 percent of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

Abandoned fishing nets are made of nylon or other plastic compounds that can last centuries. Even when they eventually break down, they never go away. They just become smaller pieces of plastic, microplastics. Marine animals ingest it, and it not only harms them but also ends up in the food chain.

A further 9% of the plastic found in the ocean can be attributed to microfibers shed when we wash our clothes. Unsurprisingly, around 60% of clothes produced annually are effectively plastic. While fast fashion isn't solely to blame, it is the sector that relies most heavily on cheaply priced manmade fibres such as acrylic and polyester. Washing these clothes causes around half a million tonnes of plastic microfibers to be released into the ocean yearly—the equivalent of almost three billion polyester shirts.

This is a vast topic; as individuals, we can feel like minnows. However, there are things that every one of us can do to improve the situation. Purpose and personal values are so heavily intertwined – you can't solve every problem, so channel your energies into what matters most to you.

Firstly – something we can all do – avoid consuming single-use plastics wherever possible. Since plastics never disappear, the next best thing is to support the circular economy wherever possible and choose items made from recycled ocean plastics. It's possible to find many products on the market today that are made using recovered plastic – not just from the ocean, but from Bluetooth speakers and water bottles to table mats. For us, this is where SEAQUAL comes in. SEAQUAL is made using marine litter, including recovered ghost fishing nets, gathered from various sources, including the coasts of Tunisia. In partnership with three other brands, Seabass has contributed to purchasing a recycling machine that shreds plastic, making it easier to transport than bulk plastic waste. It is then shipped to Spain, where we make our garments in a family-run Fairtrade factory. When we found this luxury feeling yarn, we knew it was the material we had to choose for our collections. We made this choice knowing that we did not have to compromise on luxury feel or aesthetics – our customers are always so surprised by how soft and smooth our fabrics are when they realize it's essentially derived from waste.

Secondly, follow the of the upcoming United Nations-led negotiations for an international treaty to end global plastic pollution taking place later this month from 25 November through to 1 December in Busan, North Korea. Add your signature to gathered

petitions that will increase pressure on governments and businesses worldwide to back the treaty. For example, if you are a business owner or have friends or family who run a business, encourage them to sign the Business For Plastics Treaty jointly organized by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the WWF.

Use a washing bag such as Guppy Friend to pop your clothes in before entering the machine or a laundry ball such as the Cora Ball. Guppy bags can reduce microfibre release by 86 percent and capture the microfibers that do break free, while makers of Cora Ball say that if 10% of U.S households used the ball when they do laundry, it would prevent the equivalent of 30 million water bottles from entering waterways per year.

Retrofitting old laundry machines with a microfiber-catching device can capture fibres before they enter the environment – the technology is still relatively new and not optimum. However, it is still better than not doing anything.

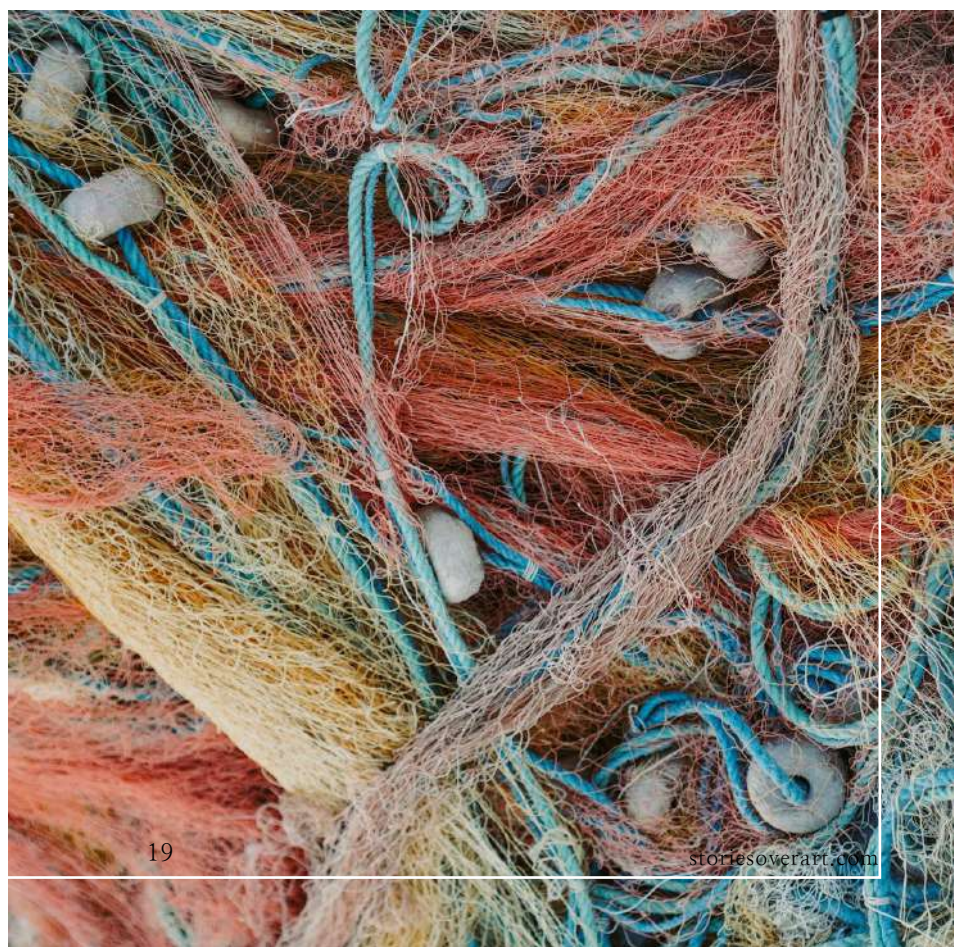
Quite simply – washing your clothes less. Fabrics that have been washed often will shed more microfibers than when new. If you have a top-loading washing machine that needs replacing, buy a front loader instead, as these have been proven to cause lower microfibre shedding.

When buying clothes, research before you buy them and prioritize buying from companies making a conscious effort to reduce their impact. The Microfiber 2030 Commitment and Roadmap is a shared ambition to work towards zero impact from fibre fragmentation from textiles to the natural environment. Some fabric manufacturers are involved in this, so it is worth checking out who is involved. Choose natural fibres over synthetics when buying clothes that are not specialized for sportswear or swimming.

Raise awareness of the issue in your local community by whatever means you can to empower people to make more informed choices through fun and educational activities. This might mean activating your creativity – I read recently about an artist using thousands of single-use straws to create a sculpture in a shopping mall. I learned about a marine research project in Iceland that invested in machinery to turn found plastic into plant pots and used it to run community workshops for schoolchildren. It's your turn now.



What are the damaging effects of fast fashion, and how can and does the fashion industry respond to the ocean's ecological issues, such as pollution from discarded fishing nets, one of the most dangerous pollutants for marine life? How can sourcing from fishing nets clean up the oceans and introduce circular fashion principles, showing that luxury can be made from unexpected, waste-derived materials without compromising quality or style? Kayleigh Van Ruiven, Creative Director of Seabass, a solutions-based swim and resortwear brand creating elegant, UV-protective clothing for the whole family, contributes an exclusive highlighting how luxury is evolving from exclusivity and aesthetic appeal to sustainability and environmental responsibility.



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THEATRE: YOU WERE 'REMARKABLE', GILLIAN!

And we mean it in the dictionary sense: adjective, worthy of attention, striking.

We meet people by chance—some are “remarkable,” and others are not. The “remarkable” walk through open doors while the “unremarkable” linger in shadows. As a young boy, I was surrounded by “remarkable” adults doing all adult-ish (read: boring) things. I was ‘looked after’ — never hungry (unless Father punished me and sent me to bed without supper). I was never without clothes or proper shelter (Mother didn’t care much, but the caretakers did their job). Father hosted parties for other “remarkable” people, for he needed them (even when he was the Director, which confused me). Mother didn’t care much about anything until other high-society people cared (this impacted her priorities, which confused me). I often felt unseen. I longed for freedom, sneaking away to the pantomimes. There, I discovered a clown in white baggy pants who made everyone laugh, but I could see his sadness. I called him Pierrot. Pierrot, too, went on to become “remarkable,” and despite my efforts, he left the pantomimes for the Opera. Parents thought I was too much trouble, so I was sent to boarding. On return, I was “remarkable,” walking into places I once had to sneak into. Over the years, I met many Pierrots—people playing roles they couldn’t escape. The last time I saw Pierrot retired, I asked him his real name. He told me, and I was left more confused than ever.

Now, read this entire story again. Hopefully, I’ve narrated it as briefly as possible and not revealed

much, but just enough to draw you to the theatres the next time the brilliant Gillian Rhodes brings her theatrical production, *Searching for Pierrot*, to you. Gillian, an American performer and storyteller, graduated with a dance major from Columbia University after training in classical ballet from age five. Since 2012, she has been living and working in Asia, from choreographing live television in Cambodia and dancing for a contemporary company in South Korea to performing in music videos, teaching at universities, choreographing and acting for film and television, and modeling in Pakistan. In addition to her movement-based work, which reflects her diverse experiences and draws on dance, physical theatre, and mime, Gillian is an accomplished and professional writer.

And now imagine only one person enacting all the roles — young boy, father, mother, Pierrot, and more, which we shall not reveal. While we may be incapable of playing multiple characters in one go, here’s our attempt to explain why the show needs to be watched!

● Dressed as a little boy in a plain brown shirt with suspenders holding a brown pair of pants, Gillan single-handedly brings each of the above (and more) characters alive on the stage. Over 70 minutes, she compels you to stay engaged, curious, and entertained. Some in the audience complained that mult-rolling (when an actor plays multiple roles onstage) was not for them: I could have easily

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watched her for 70 more minutes.

- The script is original, which is refreshing, especially in the era of ChatGPT and AI; also, it leaves one to draw one's interpretations, having seen no previous renditions— be it as a book, theatre, or film. What lessons you take from this are yours to decipher and stay with.

- A few movements that were more impressive than the other included but were not limited to the boy taking the trains to the theatre, him making his way through the crowds, or even the simplest, him being pulled by the ear or him holding the hand of an adult.

- Gillian's ability to shift between characters is nothing short of mesmerizing. With effortless transitions in mannerisms, voice, and body language—whether using props, real or imagined, like a hat for the father or a cigar for the Lady in Red—she leaves you in awe.

- You can make an impact with fewer props (a couple of chairs, a table, and a couch) and play with light (the smartness to depict the Lady in Red with a mere red spotlight was genius) — the minimalism of the show was fantastic.

- You don't need an orchestra (always) to make music a significant accomplice to the story or the other way around: the show featured live accompaniment by Dubai-based musician Amoon Dass, and the timing and the rhythm were perfect.

- While the play is family-friendly, and I recommend taking children to watch it to master the performance, the little ones will require hand-holding to gather the script's depth.

- As for you, ultimately, you'd be left with your search: to understand the difference between remarkable and unremarkable, to look into the mirror and be surprised with what you see — a blue fin-scaled monster or a tragic clown in white baggie pants. Is there then a Pierrot in each of us? Or are we all in search of Pierrot?

The show was performed in November 2024 at a performing arts space in Alserkal Avenue, Dubai, in French and English: we attended the evening show in English.



Purva Grover is an author, journalist, and creative entrepreneur. She is the founder-editor of [storiesoverart.com](https://www.storiesoverart.com), a sanctuary for all who find solace, inspiration, and purpose in art. In a world that often overlooks the significance of art, she stands firm in her belief that it is essential, more so than anything else.





TRIBUTE: LATE JABER JASSIM, EMIRATI SONG AMBASSADOR

The Mohammed Bin Rashid Library (MBRL) organized a concert celebrating the late Jaber Jassim, Emirati Song Ambassador. With a large turnout of music lovers and art enthusiasts, and in the presence of MBRL’s board members, the audience enjoyed a remarkable performance by Saif Al Ali, accompanied by a talented ensemble of musicians, conducted by maestro Abdulaziz Al Madani.

As one of the most prominent figures in the Emirati music industry, Jassim has contributed significantly to developing Emirati songs throughout his career. Jassim’s lyrics revolved around love and patriotism for the UAE and its people, making him a symbol of Emirati culture and art despite his passing in 2001.

Saif Al Ali began the concert with some of Jassim’s most famous songs, including “Ghazal Fallah,” “Oyounk Tejbar Al Khater,” “Wanas,” “Da’a Fikri,” “Ya Weil Man Da’ Fikru,” “Shado Al Araban,” “Nasitoona Habayebna,” “Hamam Naah,”

“Safany Ya Sakhif,” and “Sah Bazqar,” in addition to several masterpieces of Emirati heritage music. The talented maestro, Abdulaziz Al Madani, led the orchestra alongside a team of masterful musicians who performed Jassim’s iconic songs harmoniously.

At the end of the ceremony, Dr. Mohammed Salem AlMazrooei, Board Member of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Library Foundation, presented an honorary shield to both artist Saif Al Ali and maestro Abdulaziz Al Madani, as well as to Eid Jassim Al Marikhi, brother of the late artist, who attended as a representative of his family.

As a pioneer in promoting art and celebrating Emirati artists, MBRL seeks to nurture the cultural scene by organizing a series of events and activities, such as literary and musical evenings, art exhibitions, workshops, and seminars with prominent thinkers and artists from the UAE and abroad throughout the year.





CONCERT

Coke Studio Live is set to return to Dubai on 8 December 2024. Music enthusiasts can look forward to an unforgettable night at Coca-Cola Arena in Dubai's City Walk, where a stellar roster of artists will showcase the very best of South Asian artistic mastery, celebrating music and culture. With powerhouse producer and curator Zulfiqar (Xulfi) and Jabbar Khan at the helm and produced by Giraffe Pakistan, the second edition of Coke Studio Live promises an impressive lineup. The headliners include the following, with more artists to be announced soon: Gharwi Group is a collective of musicians dedicated to preserving and promoting traditional Punjabi music; Hasan Raheem is known for blending R&B, pop, and hip-hop to create a unique sound; Kaavish known for their melodic compositions and poetic lyrics that evoke deep emotional resonance; Kaifi Khalil, a rising star in the Pakistani music scene, is known for his soulful renditions and fusion of Baloch folk with modern genres; Abdul Hannan, a rising star known for his soulful voice and heartfelt lyrics; and Umair Butt, known for his performance in Coke Studio Season 14 with the song "Neray Neray Vas."



ORCHESTRA

Following the success of its first edition in May 2024, Coca-Cola Arena is delighted to welcome back Imperial Orchestra, a modern-day symphony orchestra from St. Petersburg, for Cinema Medley 2 – a unique symphonic experience that fuses the magic of music and cinema. The performance will feature grandiose soundtracks from iconic films and TV shows of the 20th and 21st centuries. Cinema Medley 2 is the spectacular sequel to the original symphonic show, featuring an even grander production and program. With 120 virtuoso musicians on one stage under the masterful direction of conductor Lev Dunaev, Imperial Orchestra will deliver a breathtaking performance that combines a large symphony orchestra, powerful choir, digital organ, and unique folk instruments – all elevated by cutting-edge technology. Audiences will be transported into the heart of cinematic magic with masterpieces by legendary composers such as Hans Zimmer, John Williams, Howard Shore, David Arnold, and Steve Jablonsky. The show will feature unforgettable scores from Oppenheimer, Stranger Things, The Mandalorian, The Avengers, Lord of the Rings, Transformers, The Last Samurai, Titanic, James Bond, The Terminator, The Untouchables, and many more. The show's highlight will be the Imperial Orchestra's exclusive symphonic suite of the Oppenheimer soundtrack, making its debut in Dubai. Don't miss your chance to experience the spectacle of Cinema Medley 2 by Imperial Orchestra at Coca-Cola Arena on 10th December 2024.

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middle east & beyond

December 2024
#6

Street art is visual art created in public locations for public visibility. Where in Dubai have you witnessed street art that you've loved and why? Send your responses to hello@storiesoverart.com with the subject line "Street and Arts."

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