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**Meet the experts: Alexander Gray**

*NYC gallery owner tells us what's hot and what's not*



Artist: Ardeshir Mohasses  
Title: Untitled, 1998  
Gallery: Shirin Gallery  
Art Dubai hall: Modern

Artist: Huseyn Haqverdlyev  
Title: Profile, 2004  
Gallery: YARAT  
Art Dubai hall: Marker

**The NYC gallery owner**

**Alexander Gray**

Alexander Gray Associates

**You are in charge of a contemporary gallery in New York City. What do you think of Art Dubai in a global context? What are you planning for the show?**

We are enamoured of Art Dubai and its programme. Unlike many art fairs that have proliferated globally, Art Dubai strikes a distinctive chord, with an identity that emphasises cultural diasporas, rather than trying to replicate the dominant art market as defined by the auction house circuit of market-friendly names. Like Dubai itself, it is a hub for global exchange, a place of unexpected encounters and connections. A highlight of our presentation will be our first exhibition of [Iranian-born American sculptor] Siah Armajani's work, since announcing our representation of this pioneering and influential artist.

**You have lectured on the subject of art. What is your criteria for something to be considered a work of art?**

The great MoMA photography curator, John Szarkowski, described photography in terms of windows and mirrors. For contemporary art, I like to expand that metaphor towards the kaleidoscope. In art, the mirror provides a space for the viewer to examine our personal identities – the emotional, the poetic; the window frames our view of the outside world – the social and the political. A great work of art ends up a kaleidoscope, made of these windows and mirrors constantly moving, shifting perspective and creating confusing and reflective visual experiences for us to reconsider positions and relationships.

**What advice would you give a first time visitor to Art Dubai?**

Visitors at art fairs should ask lots of questions to the dealers present, who bring expertise and passion. Don't just stop for the shiny, sparkly artworks; great pleasure comes from slowing down and contemplating more subtle forms. And please, no selfies with artworks – we are not at Disneyland!

**What's the most expensive piece of art you've ever sold and what**

**do you think about the astronomical figures that are paid for art by the likes of Rothko?**

I prefer to keep the focus on the artwork itself, not the sensationalism of astronomical prices. Art has more important values than financial – intrinsic value that provides us with intellectual and emotional satisfaction. With Rothko, for example, it's a shame that people are not writing about the extraordinary experience that is Rothko's sublime Chapel at the Menil Foundation in Houston, which reminds us that art ultimately has transcendent, spiritual value.

**Is the art world as cut-throat and murky as we're lead to believe by some sections of the media?**

Don't believe everything you read. There are many participants in the art world –artists, gallerists, curators, collectors – who operate with integrity and true passion for our chosen field. My advice: avoid those who speak only of money and investment, speculation and return – that's where the darkness resides.

*Head to Contemporary booth A 15 to see the exhibition.*

*By Time Out Dubai staff*

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