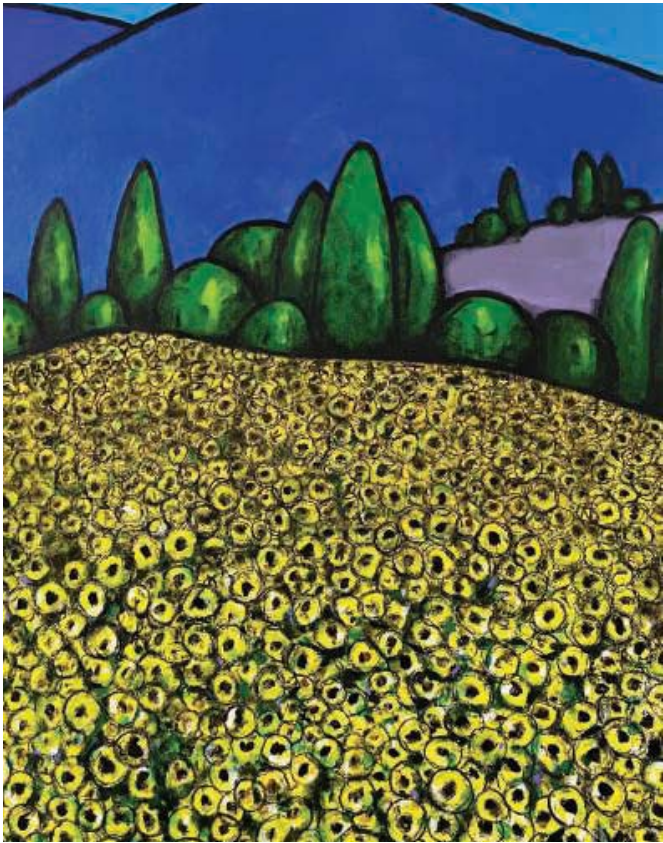


ARTS & CULTURE

Pure therapy: Farhad Abdi's show at Mondoir Gallery has medicinal effect



Not to Always be Green is the title of this work.



To Learn Silence highlights stillness.



DUBAI: Farhad Abdi is an artist whose work is not mere representation; he delves into the deeper symbolism of nature, life, and the human experience. His art, particularly in the "Pure" exhibition at Mondoir Art Gallery (Aug. 16–30), curated by Zara (Zahra Habibizad), stands as a testament to his expert understanding of both form and emotion. In the exhibition, for example, trees are not just subjects on a canvas: they are cosmic symbols, pillars of strength, resilience, and eternal rebirth. The tree is a central motif in the exhibition and for the artist, they are more than natural elements; they are mythical entities, towering over unknown landscapes and reaching towards the heavens. Rendered in deep, vibrant colours, the trees strive to evoke a sense of awe and wonder, inviting the viewer to explore their symbolic meanings. In the "Pure" collection, they are the sole beings that undergo seasonal death — only to be reborn, thus experiencing



Curator Zara (Zahra Habibizad).

Left: Farhad Abdi's art is known for its symbolism.

countless cycles of life and death throughout their existence. The annual cycle of shedding leaves and regrowth serves as a metaphor for resilience and renewal — it is a concept also deeply ingrained in cultural, literary and artistic traditions. Abdi's trees stand as symbols of endurance and strength, embodying the idea that life persists, despite adversity. The trees showcase the artist's mastery of technique. The trunks and branches are often abstracted into bold, solid shapes, while the foliage is rendered in rich, luminous colours. The abstraction blurs the line between reality and imagination, creating trees that exist in a liminal space — neither fully real nor entirely



Farhad Abdi's work titled The Wind Listens.



A colourful composition titled Not to Leave.

fantastical. They are monumental in scale, reminiscent of the Romantic sublime; but they also possess a quiet, meditative quality that invites contemplation. Abdi is celebrated for his bold use of pure colours and minimalist forms, which together create a powerful visual impact. His signature technique features assertive black lines that frame and define the vibrant hues of red, yellow and green dominating his canvases. Abdi's approach to colour is intuitive and often spontaneous. He does not decide on the colours till he starts interacting with the canvas. The choices are driven by his emotional state at the moment of creation — which is why the colours in "Pure" are deliberately non-realistic. They are reflections of his inner feelings rather than accurate depictions of nature. The method allows the paintings to convey different moods — sometimes fatigue, sometimes joy, sometimes sorrow. Abdi strips away extraneous details to focus on the essence of his subjects. His compositions are often deceptively simple; yet they invite the viewer into a complex interplay of abstraction and reality, where each form is distilled to its most basic and potent expression. The reductionist approach allows him to explore visual expression with each colour and line carrying its individual, significant weight and meaning. His use of colour is both deliberate and expressive, with the hues carefully chosen

to evoke specific emotions and themes. The bold, pure colours in his paintings are applied with precision. Yet they possess a dynamic energy that suggests movement and growth. The assertive black lines that characterise Abdi's work serve as both a framing device and a means of creating contrast. The lines guide the viewer's eye, leading them through the composition. They also create a sense of tension between the vibrant colours and the starkness of the black. It reflects the duality of life and death, resilience and fragility. "I see colour as a powerful language, capable of conveying deep emotions without the need for intricate details," Abdi says. "The black lines serve as guides, offering structure and contrast to the vibrant colours. This simplicity allows the viewer to focus on the emotional impact of the work, without getting lost in superfluous details. It's about stripping away the unnecessary to reveal the emotional core." His work is firmly rooted in the tradition of contemporary experimental painting. It also seeks to transcend this genre through its focused engagement with nature and symbolism. His paintings are not just visual experiences; they are meditative explorations of the human condition, with nature serving as a mirror for our inner lives. Abdi's work stands out for its emotional depth and conceptual clarity. While many artists



A composition titled Bitter Moon.

explore abstract forms and vibrant colours, his unique approach to these elements — combined with his focus on symbolism and resilience — makes him quite exceptional. His paintings offer viewers a sense of stability and continuity in a world often characterised by uncertainty. They offer viewers not just a visual experience, but a space for reflection and contemplation. In a world where insecurity, conflict and existential anxiety are pervasive, Abdi's paintings provide a sense of solace and hope, reminding us of the enduring, positive power of nature and the human spirit. "Life is full of cycles," he says, "and there is always the potential for growth and new beginnings. "Pure" celebrates resilience — the idea that, like the trees, we can endure and thrive, no matter what challenges we face. I hope that "Pure" brings a sense of calm and reflection to those who view it. If someone leaves the exhibition feeling more in tune with these ideas, then the work has succeeded." His exhibitions, both solo and group, have consistently garnered attention for their emotional resonance and technical mastery. From his early solo exhibitions in Tehran to his more recent participation in international group shows, his work has captivated audiences and critics alike.