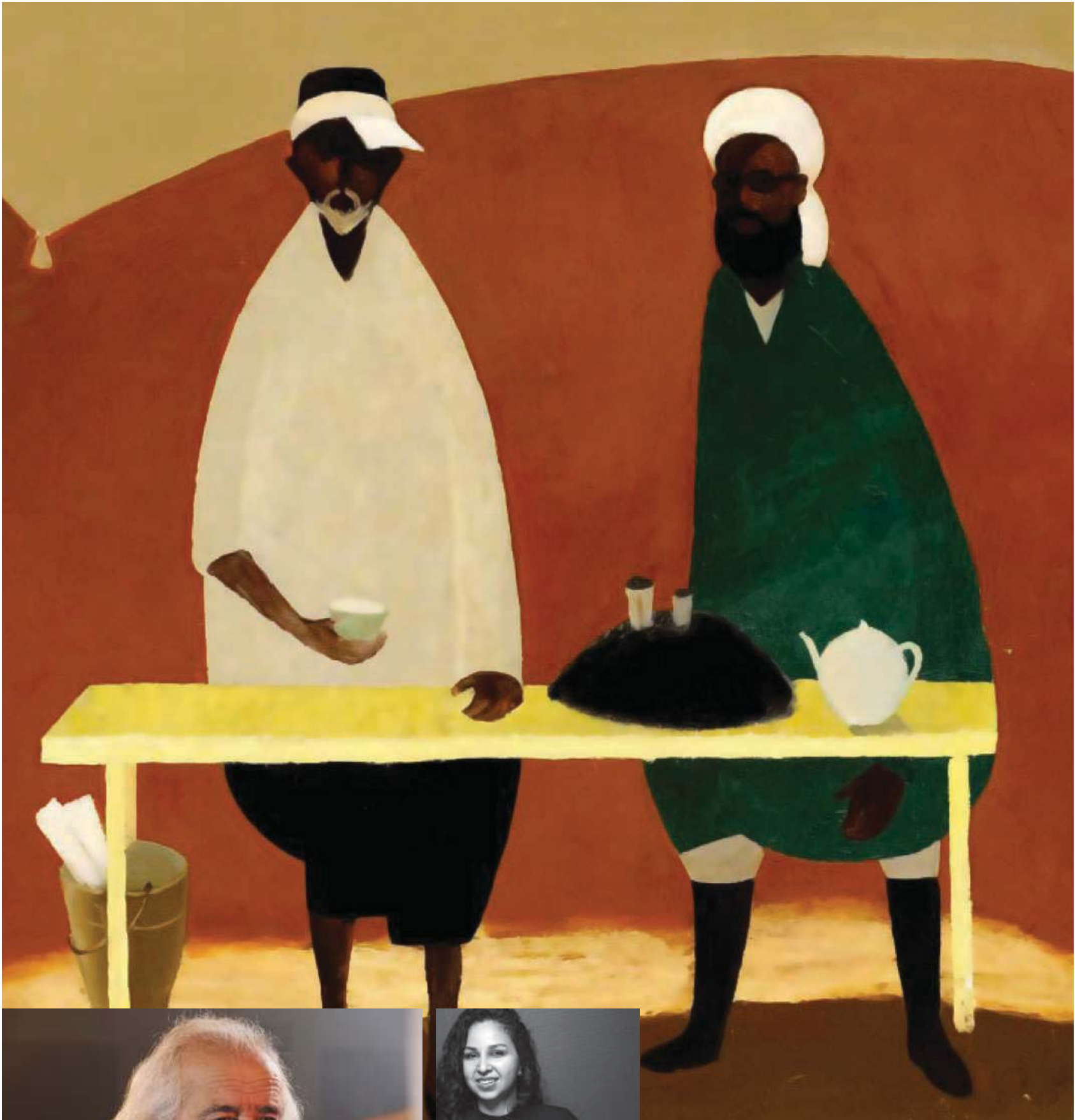


ARTS & CULTURE

‘In Silence’ exhibition showcases Uzbek life and resonates with universal themes



DUBAI: ‘In Silence’, an exhibition of the works of Uzbek artist Ibragim Valikhodjaev curated by Zara (Zahra Habibizad), was inaugurated on June 1 at Mondoir Gallery by Amir Solimani (gallery founder) and Farhad Abdi (founder of O4 Gallery). Running till June end, the show features a selection of the artist’s works from 1992 to the present. Among the showcased pieces, 15 are sourced from private collectors, offering a glimpse into Ibragim’s evolving style and vision over the past 30 years. Notably, the latest addition to his repertoire is a 240 by 270 centimetre abstract painting, showcasing the evolution of the artist’s prowess, experience and skill, compared to his earlier works. Valikhodjaev (b. 1958) is a renowned artist-painter and chairman of the Union of Artists of Uzbekistan. His journey into art began in childhood, where he displayed a passion for painting, initially assisting his father in adorning house walls with landscapes and still lifes. At age 28, he embarked on formal art education at the Tashkent Theater and Art Institute; it marked the commencement of his illustrious career. In his academic tenure, he honed his skills, gradu-

Left: Ibragim Valikhodjaev is a Uzbek artist.
Zahra Habibizad is curator of ‘In Silence’.
ally developing a distinct creative approach characterised by a departure from realism towards stylisation and form generalisation. His works are not only housed in museums across Uzbekistan but also adorn private collections and galleries worldwide, including the USA, Canada, Italy, Germany, France, and South Korea. Curator Zahra Habibizad answers a few questions
Why is the exhibition named ‘In Silence’?
I chose the name ‘In Silence’ because of the tranquility and serenity that I can perceive in all of Ibragim’s paintings. The collection gathered from him spans three decades and encompasses various styles and works he has produced. Throughout these periods of artistic exploration, a common thread emerges in all his works: a sense of tranquility and serenity. Ibragim himself is a remarkably calm artist,

rarely seen speaking much; this characteristic also resonates through his art. The title represents a common theme across Ibragim’s works and reflects his personal demeanour as well.
How does the Uzbek particular translate into the global general?
Throughout the collection presented, we see that over the past three decades, Ibragim has successfully expressed the nuances of Uzbek culture in his work, aiming to resonate with audiences worldwide. The artist endeavours to bridge the gap between his cultural heritage and universal themes, capturing the essence of everyday life in Uzbekistan while offering insights that transcend geographical boundaries. Through his art, he seeks to evoke emotions and provoke thoughts that resonate universally.
Which artists does Ibragim admire?
Ibragim expresses admiration for several influential artists, notably Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, and the Impressionists. Paul Gauguin, in particular, captivates him with his mastery of colour science. Gauguin’s meticulous attention

Old Men by Ibragim Valikhodjaev.

to colour, the interplay of colour spots, and their relationships within his compositions, resonates deeply with Ibragim’s own exploration of colour in his artworks. Gauguin’s works, known for their decorative qualities and unique use of colour schemes, also inspire Ibragim in his own exploration of colour’s expressive potential. Henri Matisse, known for his decorative style and emphasis on simplicity and his ability to create compelling paintings from seemingly ordinary subjects, resonates with Ibragim’s approach to portraying the vibrancy of everyday life in Uzbekistan. Matisse’s bold use of colour and simplified forms have influenced Ibragim’s evolving artistic style, encouraging him to experiment with stylisation and abstraction in his works. Ibragim also draws inspiration from the Impressionist movement, seen particularly in his portrayal of landscapes and everyday scenes.
Why does Ibragim like colour?
Colour is not just a preference for Ibragim; it is the primary tool he uses in his artistic expression. He sees colour as having its own unique mood and vibration, capable of affecting each viewer differently. Whether it’s pure green, pure red or any other hue, Ibragim strips them down to their essential vibrancy and clarity.
What aspects of Uzbek life inspire Ibragim as an artist?
Firstly, he is deeply captivated by the rich and vibrant colour palette inherent in Uzbekistan. This

palette is vividly displayed in traditional clothing, architectural styles, household items, as well as in folk, decorative, and applied arts. The bright and sunny colours reflect the lively, warm, and positive temperament of the Uzbek people. Bustling scenes of oriental bazaars, where the vibrant interactions and diverse array of goods, also spark his creativity. He is equally intrigued by the tranquil beauty of Uzbek landscapes, capturing their serene essence through his brushstrokes.
Can one find both Soviet and post-Soviet influences in Ibragim’s work?
While his artistic style transcends specific labels or categories, one can discern both Soviet and post-Soviet influences in his work, reflecting the evolving historical and cultural landscape of Uzbekistan. Born in Uzbekistan during the Soviet era, Ibragim’s art is deeply rooted in the foundational, academic, artistic school and the principles of socialist realism. The post-Soviet era, in contrast, introduced new ideas and formal concepts, liberating artists to explore and express themselves freely without formal or ideological constraints.
Does he have a style of art he would like to practice in future?
Ibragim has always moved forward, perpetually searching. In this exhibition, he has presented a completely different work, namely, ‘Pink Abstraction’. It reflects his spirit of exploration and vitality and stands distinctly apart from his other works. Nobody can predict the future; we only know he is working, moving, and continuously searching during this process.
Muhammad Yusuf, Features Writer