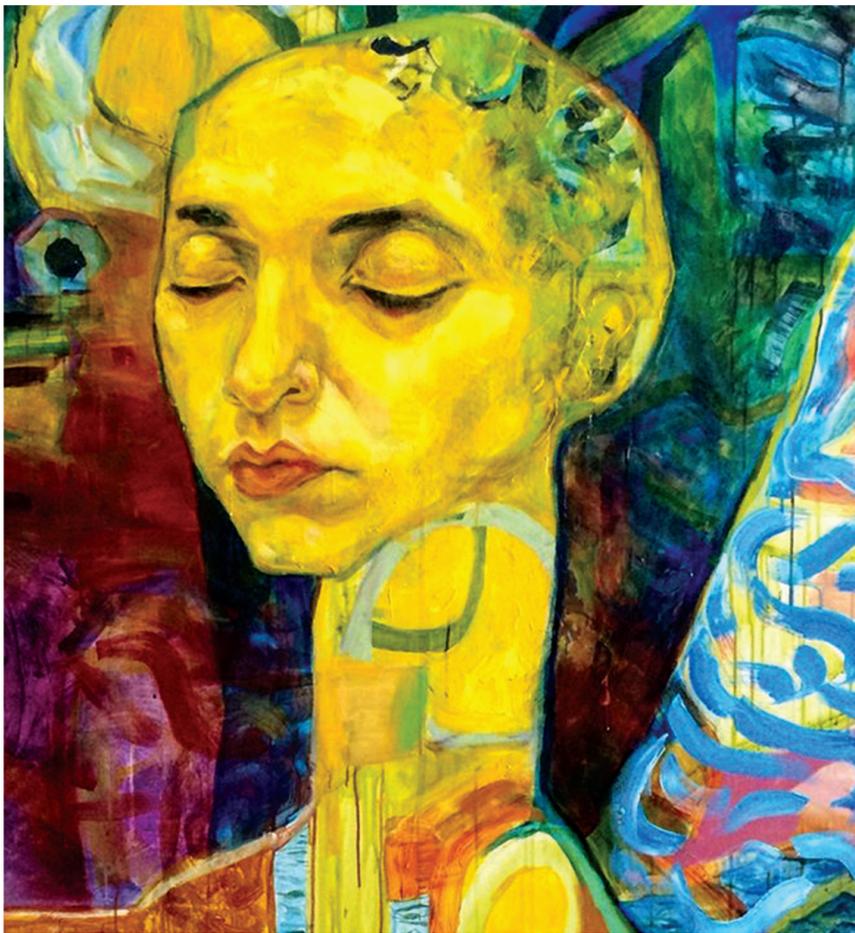
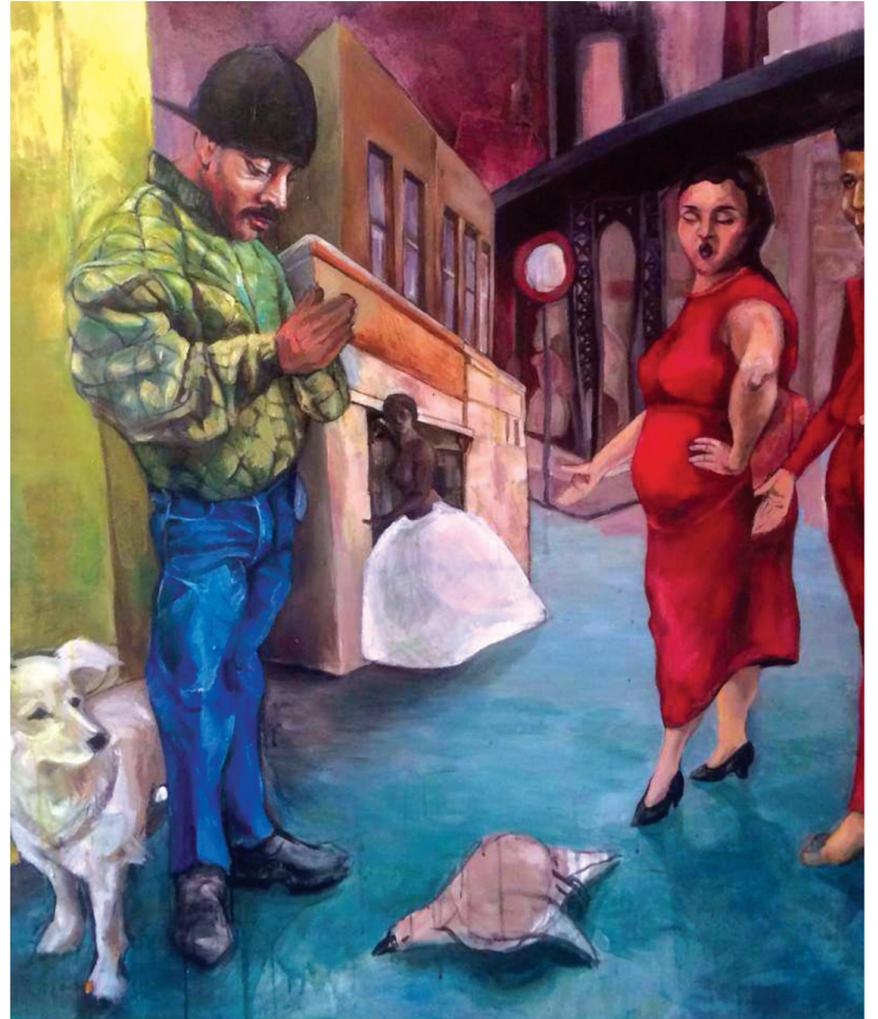


ARTS & CULTURE

The agony and the ecstasy of city lights in modern times



SHARJAH: Yasmina Alexandra Nysten's solo show '(Live) @ The Crying Room' at Tornadothings Gallery, New York, which ran through July, consisted of a selection of large-scale canvas paintings and smaller works on paper she produced in the past three years.

Depicting individuals in a contorted figurative style, her work showcased an asymmetrical experiment conducted on the human form, highlighting various urban scenes as settings for momentary, mystifying happenings, with characters entranced and entangled in isolated episodes.

Nysten was born in 1988 and grew up in Helsinki, Cannes and Beirut. She received her Bachelor's in Fine Arts from Alba University, Beirut (Academie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts) and an MFA in Digital Arts, Computer Animation from Pratt Institute. She currently lives and works in Queens, New York.

She speaks to Gulf Today about crying out loud

• Can we describe '(Live) @ The Crying Room' as an eerie cabinet of urban curiosities? I feel like it's too general; but it's possible. What I mean by that is that it does not give any specific description of what the show really was, rather an opinion. '(Live) @ The Crying Room'

Top left: *Jocund (Ancestral Altitudes)*, acrylic on canvas.

Bottom left: *Somnambulist*, acrylic on canvas.

Top right: *Bird Dies*, acrylic on canvas.

Bottom right: *Cavity*, acrylic on canvas.

is better described as a compositional study of urban atmospheres that transcend into the ethereal realm.

•Is there a Dickensian touch to your works? Dickensian? By that you mean poor people torn asunder crushed by the wheels of industry, poisoned by pollution, where homeless children and orphans are made to live at the workhouses? Or do you mean Dickensian in a more Christmas carol kind of way, where it's time travel and ghosts and God bless us, each and everyone in the end? I don't know. Good question.

The present environment calls for a new order: The comparative apparatus of emphasising a particular piece of the human condition in order to denounce another. Unravelling

outlandish characters to reveal the frail depths of their humanity.

Meanwhile, the ever-trending dispositions of the young and creative continue unabated ... neutralised (inside) ... the non-binary acceptance of variety (a wider spectrum). Meanwhile, I don't have an agenda; and I am not here to expose the misfortunes of the many miserable multitudes.

•Is the NYC (New York City) you see a non-white phenomenon (your characters are anything but white)?

NYC is multi-racial, many-shaded phenomenon which does not exclude 'white'.

•If so, is there a subconscious protest against Trump's pro-white presidency? Trump seems to be making too many special appearances nowadays. My work is not Trump conscious. And I started working on these pieces way before he was elected. He does not affect me or my work.

•Why does grotesquerie attract you? Why shouldn't it? I find grotesquerie often humorous. And also what is at one time considered grotesque could change significantly in a matter of calendar years.

I believe we are all a little grotesque and by exploring grotesquerie I seek to unite humanity

by demonstrating not that we are ugly creatures emphatically, but rather there is beauty in the bond shared by all to be the only animal that blushes (or needs to).

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and the beholder is a grotesque with only one good eye.

•The brightness of your colours makes your scenes more melancholic. Comment.

Colour is a purely emotional element: The brighter the colour is, the deeper the melancholy and so forth, caught in the cavernous contrasts of colour and subject.

•According to you, is disconnect from one's surroundings part of contemporary urban life? Contemporary urban life is defined by the complete opposite: in other words, the characters depicted in the urban landscape are distinctly connected to their interior and exterior surroundings in much the same way that Native Americans in the American northeast were bonded to the land or be damned.

•Why do your characters radiate listlessness? Surely there is more to urban life than merely hanging around? Listless: a person who in their manner is lacking in energy or enthusiasm. I would disagree. None of my characters are lacking either.

In fact, I would say that they have energy

and enthusiasm in spades. Sometimes both. Also, there is great radiation in stable presence. Also, No, urban life does NOT mean something more than 'merely hanging around!' (sometimes). Consider a non-linear time frame.

•You seem to like dark humour (the very contrast between the title of the exhibition - Crying Room - and the gallery - Tornado - suggests there is a lol factor in the images).

Catharsis really takes off the edge ... Don't you find? Dark Comedy is never the aim, like a work of writing is not necessarily primarily about the language it is written in.

Dark comedy is not a conscious choice, but its manifestation is celebrated. Primarily, because it sheds a sharp bright light.

•Fashionable folks, ghoulish moods, desperate locales. Could we describe the contents of '(Live) @ The Crying Room' this way?

Fashionable ghouls in desperate moods depicted locally. Desperate fashionable folks in ghoulish local moods. Moody ghouls fashionably desperate. I like all the above.

"The Room Folks" (Live) cry & cry (Tears) of Sadness & JOY (enjoy): Is Crying ever a strange or eerie act? - (none - rhetorical).

Muhammad Yusuf, Features Writer