

Paper trail

Four international artists explore how paper retains cultural and historical influences in a group show at Lawrie Shabibi. *Jenny Hewett* chats to three of them

The first traces of paper go back to 2nd century BC China, where the Han Dynasty produced course sheets from pounded hemp fibres. Since its inception, paper has retained its original value and its appearance has altered little over time. Here, we get to ponder paper's cultural meaning via artworks that use a variety of different techniques and chat to three artists about their preferred medium and exactly what it means to them.

THE LOWDOWN
Exhibition: 'Traces'
until July 18. at Lawrie
Shabibi, Unit 21,
Alserkal Avenue, Al
Quoz (04 346 9906).
Artists: Shahpour Pouya,
Selma Gurbuz, Nadia Kaabi-
Linke, Marwan Sahmarani.
Price range of works: On
request.



Bird's Nest

Selma Gurbuz, Turkish, based in Istanbul

I use hand-made Nepalese paper, which I get custom-made in Nepal. I work very meticulously, almost as a calligrapher, with ink and special brushes. With time, one becomes a master in this and the technique brings freedom. In my paintings I create compositions of nature in my dreams with the background of repeating motifs to which I sometimes give an optical effect. The characters of that nature emerge from these motifs as well. They enjoy nature under a tree, sometimes in a park or by a river and sometimes they dance. They start a journey towards different worlds, geographies and they animate the journey of the image.



Barutha Strasse

Nadia Kaabi-Linke, Tunisian, based in Berlin

My technique is often related to prints, and the ambivalent ontology of a print that is always on the edge of being there and not being there. In this sense, I make use of paper because it is a very useful material to take records of things that are still real somewhere although these things are already forgotten. This is a wall print that was taken from the outside wall of the Bethlehem and Brother's cemetery in Kreuzberg, Berlin. This cemetery was built by the residents during the 19th century. The official graveyard of the church was crowded at this time and some residents started an initiative and buried their deceased on a fallow ground near the church. These traces might say something about history and culture on the wall pieced together by graves, but I want to leave it open to everyone to make sense out of it. For me the work reminds me of dark romanticism and Gothics.

Untitled 3

Shahpour Pouya, Iranian, based in New York

Paper is very connected to the concept of time, fantasy and history. I use metallic leaves and open acrylic on top of paper when I make backgrounds with colour graphite pencils. Paper is also strongly connected to the history of human intellectuality. It was invented by the Chinese and went to Europe via the Silk Road, so its footprints are all over the place. Tourfan manuscripts, Persian miniatures and Byzantium maps of the old world are all part of human history.



► NEXT WEEK: 'The Arrangement', Amir H Fallah's exhibition at The Third Line