

# INWARD JOURNEY

by Neena Sharma

**SAGHAYEGH ARABI HAS BEEN PAINTING** since as far back as she can remember. A young Iranian artist living in Dubai, she says: "My paintings are a reflection of my surrounding and the things I see around me — the people, my friends, war, events etc. Through my imagination everything comes to life on my canvas."

Total Arts, Courtyard, is now exhibiting her abstract paintings, which are marked by strong colours, unique texture and composition. "The colour, the texture and the composition all work together to create the feeling I have at that particular moment. Even the size and the shape of the canvas matters," she says.

Saghayegh has been painting for the last 15 years. Although she graduated in graphic design in Tehran, she later studied fine arts in Paris, graduating from Sorbonne University. Ever since her paintings have been exhibited in many solo and group exhibitions in several countries.

Like most artists, Saghayegh began by painting realistically. "But with time I realised that I needed to do something apart from still life and landscapes. Sometimes I used to draw a fish and

throw water on it or draw a water melon and throw the juice on it."

Slowly her work and vision evolved, as she began to experiment with abstract work. Now she is poised to move on to the next level, relief work and three-dimensional artworks.

Having said that she is not rigid about form and style. "I can still do realistic work if I feel like it. It's all about conveying what I feel," she says.

Abstract painting is difficult, Saghayegh concedes. An abstract work of art may mean ten different things to ten different people, who often detect familiar forms and images in abstract work. She says: "But finally it all boils down to communication. My work portrays feelings and not stories or message. If a viewer can response emotionally to my work I am rewarded."

Shaghayegh has a highly intuitive approach to work, moving deeper and deeper towards feelings with minimum strokes. She is also intrigued with space. She says: "I began to notice space or void appearing in my painting, an area of white canvas that remained unpainted as the work progressed. I kept looking at this large space and asking 'what is the source?' This led me to examine the concept of the void. Your imagination can fill this empty space but it can also be resting place for your eyes."

But her work is spontaneous. She does not paint in order to please somebody or keeping the popular taste in mind. Her work is a search for the self, an inward journey.

The exhibition, her first solo exhibition in the UAE, will run through March 26. Gallery timings are 10 am to 1 pm and 4pm to 8 pm except Fridays.

Total Arts, Courtyard, is holding an exhibition of paintings by Saghayegh Arabi, an Iranian artist based in Dubai

