

# Hassan Sharif

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Artist Hassan Sharif. Photo/Supplied.

A practicing artist in the United Arab Emirates since the 1970s, Hassan Sharif has developed a strong body of work that is largely experimental and has strong associations with the materiality of daily life. Sharif began his career drawing caricatures and cartoon for *Akhbar Dubai*, a Dubai newspaper, which attracted a considerable amount of interest in the 1970s. In 1979 he was awarded a scholarship to study in Europe, first at the Warwickshire College of Royal Leamington Spa before attending the Byam Shaw School of Art in London.

At different times experimenting with drawing, painting, performance art, and the creation of objects, Sharif was influenced by British Constructivism and the experience and process of constructing an artwork. Incorporating flowing movement influenced by Fluxus with mathematical systematic drawing techniques into his performances *Body and Square*, *Store III* and *Body in a Store*, all performed in Dubai in 1986, Sharif became one of the Gulf areas first experimental performance artists. He is also considered by many to be the first conceptual artist of the United Arab Emirates.

He graduated with a diploma in fine art and design in 1984 and upon returning to Dubai began exploring the 'gap' that he perceived between painting and sculpture. Appropriating cotton, textiles, metal, plastic and everyday items Sharif manipulates the materials by twisting, knotting, folding and wrapping to create sculptural forms that explore ideas of consumerism, mass production and the simplicity of daily life. Combining recycled materials and found objects he creates forms that have no purpose or function other than to be seen, to be experienced as a provocative entity that draws the audience's attention to his perception of the reality of life in the United Arab Emirates and the fast-paced evolution of society.

Sharif founded the Emirates Fine Arts Society in 1980. In 1984 he founded the Al Marija Art Atelier in Sharjah and later established the Dubai Atelier for Youth in 1987, organisations that focus on the promotion of contemporary art by providing mentorship opportunities for young artists. Sharif has taken part in numerous international group exhibitions including the 3rd Cairo International Biennial in Egypt in 1990, an exhibition of Emirates Arts at the Sittard Art Centre in Holland, the 7th Havana Biennial in Cuba in 2000 and the Ludwig Forum for International Art in Aachen, Germany in 2002.

Sharif has had solo exhibitions at the Sharjah International Arts Biennial in 2001, 2003 and 2007 and his work is held in several private and public collections including the Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha, Qatar, the Sharjah Art Museum, United Arab Emirates and the Sittard Art Centre in Holland.

For the 18th Biennale of Sydney, Hassan Sharif will have a large presence at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. *Plastic Sandals* (2008) will be immediately visible in the vestibule upon entrance to the gallery, while *Suspended Objects* (2011) together with a selection of 17 works from the series 'Objects', will be exhibited in the main exhibition space.