

Festival fever

If you've got an inner artist struggling to get out, head to Elham Arts Festival this month, which is sure to spark your creativity. Words *Christina Fernandes*

Invaded by the Portuguese in 1521, the Bahrain Fort is set to be taken over once again this month, but this time by a bunch of people with a mission of peace: to bring art to the people. From May 13-16, grassroots arts group Elham is staging an experimental arts festival

in collaboration with the Qala'at Al Bahrain that aims to get the crowds involved, rather than watching from the sidelines, via exhibitions, readings, screenings, music and workshops. 'The event embodies the spirit of Elham in that it celebrates the creative diversity in Bahrain and involves everyone,' says Elham founding member Ali Al Saeed, who is behind the festival, along with several other people with a passion for the arts.

'Since Elham's inception in 2006, we've showcased the work of numerous artists, and it's become clear that there's a lot of talent on this island,' adds Arthur D'Souza, another

of the principal organisers. 'The aim of the festival is to bring this talent to the greater public, while making the arts more accessible and engaging. We're excited to be having it at the brilliantly appointed new Fort Museum, set beside the sea with a spacious café and lecture rooms for the various satellite events.' The festival's experimental nature

makes it a first for Bahrain, and we're watching with interest to see if the public gets down and creative. *From May 13-16 at the Qal'at Al Bahrain Museum, Karbabad. All activities are free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.elhambahrain.net. To book for workshops, email elhambahrain@yahoo.com or call 36 621 223*

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Exhibitions



The festival kicks off on May 13 with the opening of a group exhibition featuring works by Waheeda Mallulah, Arthur D'Souza, Fawaz Alolaiwat, Mariam Haji, Khalid Farhan and Serena Stevens, while the whole fort will become a temporary gallery space displaying the works of various members of Elham, from sculpture to photography. Festival attendees will also have the opportunity to watch a work of art emerge over the course of

the weekend, as a variety of artists paint on a giant canvas set up beside the sea. And perhaps the most experimental element of all will be an interactive installation workshop entitled Towerz, led by Irish artist Keith Winter and American artist Steve Mkinteyr of the Cuboid Collective (above), which will involve the production of a DIY magazine from start to finish, followed by the construction of a 'skyscraper' from recycled materials.

Photography

Snappers, this is your chance to up your game: on May 15, Lebanese photographer Camille Zakharia will conduct a photography workshop focusing on the works of leading documentary photographers including Eugene Atget, August Sander and Henri Cartier-Bresson, following which participants will be requested to complete an assignment within a 24-hour period. The results will be screened outdoors at the Fort Museum on May 16, along with a 15-minute photo video entitled 'Palestine 9 Metres' by Palestinian documentary photographer Steve Sabella, which presents the daily life of Palestinians and the effects of the separation wall.

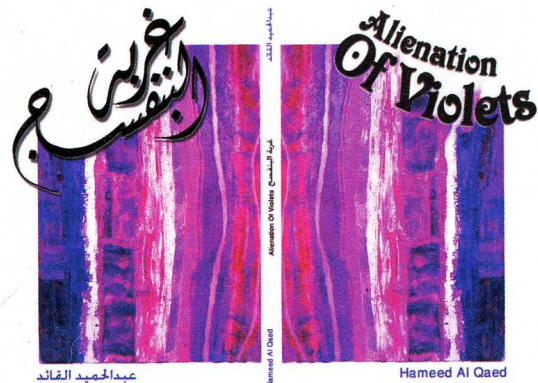


PHOTO: WAHEEDA MALLULAH

Words

Poets Khalid Alroawie, Hameed Al Qaed and Terry Kaliski take the stage on May 14 accompanied by contemporary oud player Hassan Al Hujairi and Nader Ameerudin on guitar. And on May 16, you can settle in with a coffee at the museum's brand new café and let the words of a few of the country's resident authors

wash over you, including Bahrain's Ali Al Saeed and British writers Terry Kaliski and Julia Stuart (who talks about how she writes in our Books section this month, see p51). The writers will also answer your questions and chat informally about the creative writing process, as well as sign copies of their books.





On May 15, the National Museum's Cultural Hall will come alive with the sound of music care of several groups, including American one-man band Cody, bluesy Faisal Sheikh, rising experimental folk star Ala Ghawas, rockers Silverlake, and Latino La Movida (above). One of Bahrain's most popular bands since its formation in 2000, La Movida will be debuting brand new material at the

festival. 'About 50 to 60 per cent of our performance will be new music,' says Ahmed Al Qasim, the band's lead vocalist and bass guitarist. 'We have always been a live performing band, and audience feedback has always been important to us. The songs we will perform at the concert will go on our debut album, and the audience's reaction will have an effect on the whole recording process.'

Listings

Advice for readers

If you have any comments or suggestions, please phone *Time Out* on 17 564 111. Please make sure to call before visiting any locations, as times and venues are liable to change.

Advice for contributors

Listings and notification of events must arrive by the first of every month before the magazine goes on sale. Include the name of the activity/event, venue, contact details and website, taxi landmark, cost, start and end dates/timings, and a short description. Email information to: art@timeoutbahrain.com. If you cannot send by email, please ring 17 564 111. Listings are free, but as space is limited, inclusion is not guaranteed.

Art galleries

Albareh Art Gallery Adliya (17 717 707; www.albareh.com). Open Sat 9am-4pm; Sun-Thu 7am-2pm. The gallery exhibits paintings, sculptures and photography by some of the region's best talents, while the adjoining cafe showcases work by emerging artists.

Al Oraifi Gallery Sheraton complex (17 535 112). Open Sat-Thu 9.30am-1.30pm; 4.30pm-8.30pm. Rashid Al Oraifi showcases his abstract art here.

Al Rivaq Art Gallery Three Osama Bin Zaid Avenue, Adliya & Al Aali Shopping Complex (17 717 441; www.alrivaqgallery.org). Open Sat-Thu 10am-5pm. The Adliya space has long been a meeting spot for controversial regional artists, and the new cavernous industrial space at Al Aali mall promises even more artistic experimentation.

Arabesque Art Gallery Umm Al Hassan, just behind the British Club (17 722 916). Open Sat-Thu 8.30am-7pm. This gallery sells oil paintings and watercolours by the owner, Weheb Kooheji.

Art Lounge Venue varies (39 212 060; www.artlounge08.com). Art Lounge is a free-floating gallery that sets up shop in hotel lobbies, cafes and malls around town. Check the website for details.

Bahrain Art Framing Gallery Exhibition Road, Gudaibiya (17 717 165). Another shop opp. **Universal Food Centre, Gudaibiya** (17 713 970). Open Sat-Thu 8.30am-1pm, 3.30pm-8.30pm. A small collection of art is exhibited in two fascinating framing shops.

Bashar Art Gallery Near the British Club, opp. Al Meena Supermarket, Adliya (17 727 326). Open Sat-Thu 8.30am-12.30pm, 3pm-7pm; Fri 10am-noon, 4pm-6pm. Houses paintings, etchings, stained glass and frames by local artists. The gallery also specialises in framing.

British Council 146 Sheikh Salman Highway (17 261 555; www.britishcouncil.org/me.htm). Open Sat-Thu 8am-6pm. The council organises a number of exhibitions and workshops throughout the year, and offers professional artists and performers a chance to apply for support and get connected through their UK cultural networks.

Casa Dell'Arte Building 1403, Rd 3233, Suqaiya (17 822 414; www.casadelarte.bh). Open Sat-Thu 10am-1pm, 4pm-9pm. Specialises in art by emerging artists (which means it's affordable too), as well as hosting readings, workshops and various artists' gatherings.

Faisal Samra's Private Gallery House 64, Road 4102, block 341, Juffair (39 645 994). Viewings by appointment only. Ubiquitous Saudi artist Faisal Samra displays his own paintings, sculptures and graphic artworks in his private gallery.

La Fontaine Centre of Contemporary Art 92 Hooraa Avenue (17 230 123; www.lafontaineartcentre.com; lfcart@batelco.com.bh). Open Tue-Sun 10am-1pm, 4pm-6pm. Exhibitions by international

artists alternate with regional offerings in this updated Islamic house. An interesting array of performances is also offered in the open-air central courtyard.

Classes & art groups

Awali Arts Awali area (39 538 691). mallengallery@gmail.com; www.smmallen.moonfruit.com. Acrylics: Mon 7pm-9pm or Tue 12.30pm-3pm. Watercolour: Wed 9am-11.30am. Advanced painting: Tue 8.30am-11am. Explore your creativity and discover your unique artistic voice. Inspiring painting and drawing courses led by artist Seana Mallen, for all abilities.

L'Atelier Art Lounge Country Mall, Budaiya Hwy, Budaiya. Opp. Cinnabon (17 599 030). Open daily 10am-10pm; Fri 10am-11pm. Entry BD6. This interactive art studio invites budding artists to pitch up and paint or draw on any surface, paper, ceramic, glass, wood etc. Art supplies available to buy, or just bring your own.

Sounds Great Adliya/Juffair area (soundsgreat@lycos.com). Classes Mon (Apr/May tbc) 7.30pm-9pm. Cost BD60 for six-week course. Join the acapella workshops for the opportunity to sing pieces in jazz, popular, contemporary and African styles. Private tuition also available.

Studio Ceramics Off Budaiya Highway (17 599 026). Open Sat-Thu 9.30am-6pm; closed Fri. Open evenings for special bookings. Pop along and paint your own Bisque pottery, imported from the UK, then have it glazed and fired in the kiln. On May 17, tying in with Arthouse, ladies can enjoy a pottery painting workshop (BD12 incl firing and finishing).

Culture

Al Fateh Islamic Centre Opp. Gulf Hotel, Juffair (17 727 773). Open Sun-Thu 9am-4pm. As part of the city's biggest mosque, the Islamic Centre also holds tours and discussions, open to all.

Al Jasra Handicrafts Centre Al Jasra Village, towards the King Fahad Causeway (17 611 900). Open Sat 10am-4pm; Sun-Thu 8am-2pm. A vast range of indigenous handicrafts is kept alive and well at this centre, with regular workshops.

Beit Al Jasra (Al Jasra House) Muharraq (17 334 945). Open Sat-Thu 8am-2pm; Wed, Thu 9am-6pm; Fri 3pm-6pm. Entry costs 200fils. This fully restored house is a fine example of traditional Bahraini dwellings.

Capital Mall for Bahraini Productive Families Al Seef Area, Karbabad (17 582 169). Open daily 9am-1pm; 3pm-9pm. Established to create jobs and promote traditional handicrafts, this is the place to pick up souvenirs with a social conscience. Look for palm baskets, artisanal perfumes and abbaye-clad dolls.

Shaikh Ebrahim bin Mohammed Al Khalifa Centre for Culture & Research Muharraq (17 322 549), email info@shaikhebrahimcenter.com. Open Sat-Thur 9am-1pm and 4pm-7pm. Set in historic Muharraq, this cultural centre comprises an auditorium that hosts lectures and performances every Monday night, along with several restored traditional houses devoted to showcasing local crafts and culture and a contemporary coffee shop.

Dance

Bahrain Ballet Centre Near BIHR School, Budaiya (17 693 232; ballet@batalco.com.bh). Open Sat-Thu 3pm-6pm. BD20 for four weeks, 12 weeks is BD48, BD6 per class. Prices for other classes and centre activities vary. Hosts an impressive range of classes, not just in ballet, for adults and children. Jazz, belly dancing, tap, salsa, karate, Irish dancing and modern dance are taught by British qualified teachers.

Profiles Fitness Centre Adliya (17 727 766). Open Tue 5pm-6pm; Sun 5.30pm-6.30pm. Bellydancing costs BD5. For more information call Iman on 39 407 053. Iman has been teaching in Bahrain for

Art & Culture

POTTY FOR POTTERY
Join the special pottery painting workshop at Studio Ceramics on Saturday, May 17. See listings

Movies



Finally, movie buffs will be pleased with May 14's line-up of experimental short films, which will be screened under the stars in the museum's car-park-turned-walk-in cinema. These include two movies by Bahraini filmmakers that debuted at Dubai's recent Gulf Festival: *The Cage* by

Hussain Al Riffai (pictured), which revolves around a 30-year old man who has locked up his younger sister out of disapproval of a romantic liaison, and *The Omen* by Mohammed Buali about a family member's return home after a long absence. And if this has got you all fired up to create your own screen magic, there's a film-making lecture on May 16 conducted by highly respected Bahraini filmmaker Bassam Al Thawadhi, who has produced a number of feature films, including *Al Hajiz (The Barrier)* and *A Bahraini Tale*, along with numerous educational and cultural programmes for television. The lecture will focus on production and cinematography in particular.

Agenda

All events except where otherwise stated will take place at the Qal'at Al Bahrain Museum.

Wednesday, May 13

8pm Opening of festival and main exhibition (venue tbc)

Thursday, May 14

9am-4pm Speed Towerz performance art workshop led by Keith Winter, Steve Mkinteyr and Mariam Haji
3pm-9pm Live Art 09 (live painting by various artists)
7pm-8pm Poetry recital with acoustic music
8pm-9.30pm Open-air screening of short movies

Friday, May 15

9am-4pm Speed Towerz continues
10am-1pm Photography lecture by Camille Zakharia
6pm-7pm Art Talk (venue tbc)
8pm-10.30pm Concert by local bands at the Cultural Hall, National Museum

Saturday, May 16

10am-1pm Filmmaking workshop led by Bassam Al Thawadi
11am-4pm Speed Towerz finale
3pm-7pm Live Art 09 (artists reveal the completed artwork)
4.30pm-6pm Book reading and signing by resident authors
6pm-7pm Photography screening
8pm Closing reception