

A collection of work by Meena Kamal is now on show at the Z Gallery in the Four Points Sheraton on Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai. **The artist creates abstract landscapes, based on her memories and experiences, in oil and mixed media.** The show will run alongside a selection of images of the Sky Lounge on level 43 of the hotel



A take on life and death

Another work, *Road Kill*, which she began a year earlier, consisted of 200 terracotta dead dogs that she modelled on dead dogs found on the highways in Tehran and then placed onto streets around the city. Although she mostly cast these herself, she still needed help to place the sculptures and to photograph them and later, when she decided to bury them all, she needed someone to film her doing so.

"We can't do things on our own," she says. "No matter how independent you think you are, you need the help of others because we are all connected. That is why the process of my work is as important as the idea itself."

Beauty in the surreal

Her most recent work in the show brings home this point again.

Dream Catcher, a project facilitated with a grant from the Prince Claus Fund in the Netherlands, is still underway, but some of the pieces are on display in the gallery for the first time. The year-long project involves housewives from the Khorasan region of Iran, who Fayyazi invites to an old dilapidated house in Tehran to create artworks – the women wind yarn around detritus found around the area. The result? Strange, organic forms that left Fayyazi "flabbergasted".

"They are like our thoughts, there is everything and nothing at the same time. There is no right or wrong and everything is contradicting. For me, the actual art is the moment of production."

Flair for the extraordinary

While this may seem highly conceptual, the placement of these weird and wonderful creations is strangely alluring. This is perhaps down to the fact that the arrangement of the show was executed by Ramin and Rokni Haerizadeh and Hesam Rahmani, fellow Iranian artists who have their own long-standing relationships with the gallery.

Other works in the show include *TrunKated*, a sculpture covered with broken ceramic flower pots, mugs and plates that was exhibited last year at Art Dubai as well as Fayyazi's sculpted crows, which peer at the viewer upon entering.

But she insists that any visitor should not be intimidated.

"The audience needs to realise that they are part of it too," she says. "Whoever crosses my way, I would like them to have an input, by viewing, having an opinion or helping me make it."

● *Rearranged* is on display at Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde until October 23. Visit www.ivde.net for more details

✉ aseaman@thenational.ae

Weirdly wonderful



Anna Seaman meets Bita Fayyazi, a quirky Iranian artist whose lifelike cockroach installation at her current show in Dubai is just one of many artworks serving as a metaphor for her practice

According to Wikipedia, the proper collective noun for cockroaches is an intrusion. In relation to the 1,500 ceramic oversized versions of the common pest that are crawling up the wall of Gallery Isabelle Van Eynde at the moment, this description couldn't be more apt.

The disgustingly lifelike insects are part of *Rearranged*, a solo show from the Iranian artist Bita Fayyazi and, although they elicit a negative response from most viewers, they

are an interesting allegory for her entire artistic practice.

Strength in numbers

"From the very beginning, whatever I have made, I made in large numbers," she says. "I am interested in multitudes and all my serious works have included this."

Apart from underlining their effect, the other key thing about working in large numbers is that no project is possible to complete without

the help of others.

To make the ceramic cockroaches, of which the first edition of 2,000 pieces was displayed at the sixth Biennial of Contemporary Ceramic Art of Iran in 1998, Fayyazi needed help – and lots of it.

"I made five or six moulds and I invited people to help me make them. Whoever visited my studio, my students and anyone who wanted to, would make one or two and slowly the whole swarm appeared."

Bita Fayyazi's works, from top, *TrunKated* 3, 2012; and *Cockroaches*, 1998-1999.

Photos by Rebecca Rees / Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde