

curated out of the artist's open call. And that exhibition was part of the curatorial open call. Of the 10 exhibitions we curated from the open call we did, there is just so much good work out there and I want to show it all.

Q: Where is Art4you Gallery heading? Are you able to share details about future projects?

A: I will keep that secret for now. But I always love when people decide to follow and keep up with the gallery, and see what I am doing, whether in person or virtually through the lens of my social media pages or website. So please do that if you are into what the gallery is up to. check @art4ugallery_art at instagram and ART4you Gallery at FB.

Q: What is next for Field Projects in the coming year? Are there any exciting plans you might be able to share with us?

A: Field Projects is upcoming. This will be a collaboration between us and a couple of other UAE Based artists with USA Gallery. I am excited to see what kind of exchange we can have and how the two spaces will affect each other. We are also coming soon with some international projects in 2023.

Q: You have mentioned that you'd like to arrange travelling exhibitions in collaborations with other artist-run galleries and expand Projects across the globe in future. What drives you to be so proactive in providing so many great opportunities to others? Could also tell us more about your vision for the travelling exhibitions?

A: I would organize with another curator to have a travelling exhibition (Paris, Singapore, Italy, Australia, India etc.) and you would each buy an airline ticket and travel to the other curator's location. The host curator would

provide the venue and you would provide the group show. I thought of it as a snapshot of an art scene from another place, but also parameters or rules (everything must fit in the suitcase) in which to challenge your and artists' creativity and invention. I was and am still thinking about putting on exhibitions like putting on punk shows: what is the cheapest way to get exposure. And through exposure how can we meet more like-minded individuals who are willing to share knowledge and build something together.

I think of Projects and Art as a platform where you get to share things that you are really invested in with others who are excited to think through the idea with you. It is a place where you do not have to be an expert, but you can still get at a complex idea. It is also a place where failure can be the center of the idea. But what really draws me to this platform is that it is a place where people can be honest about how weird they truly are. This would be one of my dream projects.

**Founder of Art4you Gallery -
Rengi Cherian & Jesno Jackson
Jenson Renji (Son)
Creative Designer**



hear from on rare occasions when something grabs their attention. I am constantly trying to be better about staying in touch with everyone as it is fun and keeps this all running. And that is always a secret strategy to move ahead with sales.

Q: What advice would you give an inexperienced collector?

A: Go with your gut. Intuition and personal taste are so important. Choose what you want to live with, and if possible, do not buy art simply as an investment. Purchase works that inspire you and will evolve in your eyes the longer you live with them.

Q: In your opinion are there any trends shaping the current UAE art scene?

A: It seems that Art is steadily becoming increasingly embraced by the larger contemporary art world, which is great as it is contemporary art. I see lots of new and young artists finding interesting ways to create works in completely new ways. Abstraction is feeling more thoughtful and less decorative. Some issues are at the forefront and helping broader audiences experience lives outside their own. I still feel that we need more approachable ways for the outcome when we compare other countries.

Q: To all the emerging and mid-career artists wanting to establish their work and career as extensively as you did, what would you recommend?

A: I am a true believer in creating your own space to show your work. Most of us do not fit into a mainstream aesthetic or whatever is trending in the art world. But that does not make your or my voice less significant.

Q: You have a terribly busy work schedule; how do you spend any downtime you are able to grab?

A: Spending time with my spouse and son, watching movies, music, outings, even just a little, is a great way for me to unwind. Eating well, whether at home or out, is key. Enjoying everything that UAE has to offer. There is just so much opportunity to experience things here that you cannot see anywhere else. I think I should explore it more.

Q: Are you still able to find the time to make art?

A: I am just now finding time to get back to art making. Everyday I do some sketches, rough or serious. The first 3 years of Art4you Gallery were all-consuming. So, it is exciting to start up again. I am always occupied with my personal interest to paint watercolours and coffee paintings during my personal time.

Q: We enjoy the fact that you are providing regular opportunities with the call for art, which you announce twice a month. Not many galleries provide such opportunities, and most tend to work with those artists they have links with. What is it like, finding and choosing artists for group shows in Projects?

A: The Open Call is a way we can do a lot of gallery visits without having to travel the world. It is exciting for us because it allows us to see what is happening beyond our immediate art scene. Sometimes we will find an artist who literally lives in my neighborhood, but we have never crossed paths and other times we discover an artist from different countries. About 65% of artists we show are discovered through the open call process. This year there were only one or two out of twelve exhibitions which were not

say a proper hello to everyone and let them know we are here for questions or to further explain the art on view. Really, Art4you Gallery just wants the space to feel open and inviting.

Q: We would love to hear more about Art4you; how does it inspire and influence the way in which it is developing?

A: It is a truly wonderful platform for artists and students. There is no perfect name for it but there are few like us that you get to see and feel the sky. It all feels like a UAE from another time. My aim is the future for artists.

Q: What do you hope visitors contact when they approach your gallery?

A: Excited, curious, inspired, like they should go home and make some art!

Q: How important is it to go to art school for those who want to make art?

A: I do not think art school is necessary for anyone, but it can definitely introduce artists to new methods of art making, other artists, provocative ideas and, most importantly, it gives you a dedicated span of time to create.

Q: Artists often do not like speaking about their own work. What is your approach to interviewing artists and writing about art?

A: I don't do so many interviews with artists, mostly because I didn't have much time first, secondly I am often more interested in trying to figure out what I like about a given practice and what makes it interesting and unique than necessarily hearing what the artist has to say about it. Besides, they have already done the work. It is my job to engage with it. We have started this year 2020 with CONVERSATIONS - Create and connect

initiative which has focus on interviews - Artist Diaries, Visiting Artist Talk etc...And In 2022, we also started the initiatives like Open Talk Forum.

Q: Do you work with a fixed body of artists or is the program more fluid?

A: Both—I love developing relationships with artists and showing them as "galleys artists", and I am also always keen to see new work and meet interesting artists worldwide.

Q: How does the advice you offer to artists, those who are self-taught and contemporary artists differ?

A: I do not think advice given to self-taught or trained artists would ever be different. I do suppose the one thing I would advise an "Art4you artist" would be that if they have decided they are an "Art4you artist" and are aware of the field, they really are not that and the label is not going to be helpful.

Q: Can you tell us more about the artists you are currently working with?

A: I work with so many talented artists and bodies of work. It is hands down the best part about running the gallery ways, and I feel perpetually lucky to be surrounded by such talents. There are so many that I feel it a dis-service to highlight anyone individually, but if I am working with some of the artists it is because their art moves me and I think their work is ahead of the game.

Q: How do you establish a connection with collectors and how do you maintain that relationship?

A: Each relationship is so unique. Some collectors become great friends that you talk to almost every week, and others you only

satisfaction as making my own art. We balance our own lives and art practices with promoting others' practice and searching for collectors and opportunities for them. The role of the curator, as far as I am concerned, is to facilitate and mediate the presentation of art in the best possible way. In other words, to make art happy. This means prioritizing art over ideas.

Q: Do you have a particular curatorial methodology that interests you and frames your work?

A: Looking at a lot of art and trying to figure out ways to make it happy. A clear commitment to materials and making, the manifest development of their own personal, idiosyncratic language, which they are trying to solve through their work. I need something real. I am interested in fully integrated artists. Artists who think plastically. . I was really interested in race and post-colonial interactions, and some into ephemeral or existential topics. I had some particular interests and directions that always had in my curating style, which helped me to come up with a platform to continue my journey.

Q: How important is social media in your work as a gallerist, founder and curator?

A: Simply put, I do not think I would still be in my job without Facebook and Instagram. It's the only social platform I use daily for the gallery, and it has allowed me to get the word out that I am here, meet artists, find collectors and even reach out to people who would never look at an email from me but somehow are open to messaging on the app. It is not perfect by any means, but it's free and such a powerful tool for artists and galleries.

Q: What are some of the ways that curating challenges and satisfies you creatively?

A: You are telling a story with art made by other people, and I love it when curation allows for new or expanded ideas about these artworks. How art is placed and installed created new dialogues with the other works they are near and interacting with. I think it is a creative act as powerful as making art.

Q: What does your working day look like?

A: Always different... Emails, lots of emails, posting on social media, researching, and writing about whatever show is new, keeping track of inventory, invoices, designing, sending out previews, writing to artists. There is never a shortage of things to do and stay on top of. As an art curator, I oversee various art collections, including their acquisition, exhibition and storage. When collections need to be purchased, sold, loaned or exchanged, my job involves negotiating and authorizing such transactions. Additionally, I may evaluate and authenticate works of art as well as categorize pieces in a collection, depending on shows and inventories. However, an art curator's job is unique and much more intricate than many people assume, which requires depth knowledge and abundant experience in specific art and design areas.

Q: How would you compare Art4you and Art4you Gallery?

A: Art4you - I would say was my personal brand. In 2009, the lot was a single-family residential home. I used to use Art4you for curation and exhibitions personally. But Art4you Gallery was a community and experienced tremendous success shaping student lives through exposure to the arts in the beginning and built up and I try to make it more approachable and fun in the beginning and open opportunities for artists. We do not play it very "cool" and instead make sure to

touch helped to stylize the image with decorating colors in my own style. Although I studied art in college, I consider myself self-taught, I used to do all kinds of creative art and craft in my childhood.

Q: When did you launch Art4you and what is the backstory that led to this? How did you get into curation?

A: I Founded Art4you in 2009 and had never really felt aspirations of being a "gallerist". However, I had extended the community and taken it seriously when I moved to Dubai and relaunched Art4you Gallery in 2016. I was feeling very much inspired in my teaching career as an Art Instructor and at the time I really felt to proceed on my mission. It was my life experience being an artist when I was abstractly looking for a big life change. Somehow it was a perfect fit for what my life needed. In that time when physical gallery spaces are becoming more and more scarce, I was able to collaborate with some dynamic space in some galleries dedicated to giving emerging and mid-career artists a platform to exhibit their work.

There was no straight line or ladder that led me to become an art curator, unfortunately. Education was a basic hurdle, an undergraduate in Art History and then a Masters in a special field of art -Curatorship, I started volunteering and interning at various galleries and institutions to get a sense of what the exhibition cycle looks like and what the average tasks and considerations might be. A really good grasp of the practical side of exhibiting art was achieved from India. With some of the practical skills and theoretical knowledge, for me it doesn't necessarily have to be thematic or constricting, but challenging.

Q: Launching a gallery community in Dubai has its challenges. Do you recall the advice you were given at the time? Did you have a lot of support and mentoring? Were many cautious in their response to your new undertaking?

A: I think it is extremely daunting for anyone to think of an art community in the UAE. And for me, I had never worked at a large group before, outside of working as an art educator /artist activist / art curator, so I really had no idea what it would entail. The first year was brutal, and I often found myself asking aloud to myself for help with projects and workshops... But as I got going, like anything, it started feeling easier and slightly more stable. Collectors are great, and along with the artists we show, are at the core of what we do. So many people new to me made purchases and trusted in what I was doing. It was humbling and hard to let them know that they were keeping Art4you Gallery afloat those first 2 years. I also think it helped that I had the niche of focusing primarily on self-taught and established artists. We really went well with exhibitions, live art events, and mural works for government entities in the UAE. Having an academic background studying art, and also being an accomplished artist, I was able to possess a keen eye for new talent and an understanding of the important role collaboration has in the arts.

Q: What is your understanding of the role of curator?

A: To me, when I am putting shows together and curating, I first start by looking for art and artists making works that I personally would want to live with. Finding individuals and objects that move, in whatever way, is the most exciting part of this, and then getting to be playful (and thoughtful) about how they are presented is giving me the same creative

For artist-turned-curator-gallerist Jesno Jackson, the curatorial journey has always been led by the heart (with support from my spouse, the Founder of Art4you Gallery - Rengi Cherian). She is a Fine Artist/ Art Educator/ Art Curator/ Artist Activist/ Water colorist/ Creative Designer/ Founder-Art4you Gallery / Women Empowerment Speaker.

"I first start by looking for art and artists making works that I personally would want to live with," Jesno explains. She began collecting art during college in the early 90s, and launched Art4you in Bangalore, India in 2009 during a lull in her own art practice. Now, almost 12 years later and over the initial start-up hurdles, Jesno finds the curatorial challenges of presenting work in interesting and thought-provoking ways as satisfying as making work herself. Her long-standing love is with outsider and vernacular/self-taught artists, which makes up roughly half of his gallery events programming. The other half focuses on emerging contemporary and underrepresented artists, with the occasional intertwining of the two. Jesno takes great care to create a sophisticated and contemporary digital and physical aesthetic for Art4you Gallery, which allows her to spotlight and elevate the work of self-taught makers in a fine art context. At her exhibitions, Jesno has presented work from the historical to recent reveal of a creative output that is completely unfettered in its directness with a complete lack of inhibition. This freedom and naive nonconformity runs through the work of many of the artists in the Art4you Gallery events. It's a special eye that can recognise the latent potential of the untrained artists and separate the amateurish from the unconstrained. And Jesno is a master of this.

We're thrilled to have been able to interview Jesno. She brought her characteristic

excitement about discovering new artists and industry expertise to bear in what we think is a fabulous selection.

MISSION of Art4you Gallery: (FOUNDED: 2016)- Our mission is to support artists by providing a creative environment for them to reside, develop, perform, and exhibit. Art4you Gallery inspires artists and provides connection to the community for shared benefits for creatives.

Q: You were born in Kerala, India and now live in UAE. You gained your BFA from Navabharath Educational Research Foundation, Bangalore in 2005, and MVA from College of Fine Arts (KCPCFA) Bangalore University. Were you raised in a creative household? Can you tell us about your earliest memories of making art?

A: I was raised in a family that made art or expressed much creative energy, and I was always told about my mother, who was a principal who inspired doing artwork and my father was my backbone. For nearly 15 years, I have lived with my family in God's own country. Being a native of India I have cultivated my interest in art during my childhood. As a young girl, I would spend many hours doing drawings and paintings. My talent in art was recognized and nurtured by my parents and continues to be the best critic and appraiser - though I am self taught in childhood. My mother inspired me to create the color, the textures and the theme since I was a child. The paint and brush are mainly inspired by the impressions and reflections of my life. Captivated by the natural beauty, I have decided to capture the birds and animals on paper. Drawing and Painting grew as a passion through childhood, my parents being my helping hand gave me the courage to learn and practice in creative art. The mixing of colors with environmental



Jesno Jackson

Art Teacher/Artist/Art Curator
Founder of ART4You Gallery Community

Conversation with an Independent Art Curator Jesno Jackson - Art4you Gallery.



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