

# H.E. Sheikha Maisa Al-Qassimi



**I'd love to dine with:**

Bruce Nauman.

**Latest acquisition:** *A Catching*

*the Moon* artist book by

Farideh Lashai.

**Art is:** And will always be a central focus of my everyday life.

**I would pay monthly**

**instalments forever for:** A work

by Lucio Fontana.

**The work I could stare at for**

**hours is:** Anything by Rothko.

**Wishlist:** Works by Man

Ray, Babak Golkar and

Antony Gormley.



With three hands in the art world, as an artist, curator and a collector, as a child, Sharjah native, HE Sheikha Maisa Al-Qassimi used to visit the city's art school and paint. She bought her first painting when she was just 15. "I used to spend a lot of time at the Dubai International Art Centre too and I would exchange works with other artists," says Al-Qassimi. "I was just always surrounded by art." She most recently co-curated a show, *Time and Space Matter*, at Dubai's Capital D Studio with Emirati artist and curator Noor Al-Suwaidi. Al-Qassimi also recently aided the development of the Tawasul Orphans Education Fund, a non-profit initiative, which supports orphans' education. With a passion for photography, Al-Qassimi's collection boasts a selection of Contemporary works by Middle Eastern artists such as Ayman Yossri Daydban, Tammam Al-Azzam and Mahmoud Bakhshi. "I need to connect with an artwork and it has to have a relationship to where I am in my life," she adds. "My collection reflects my journey and where I am in a specific time" Al-Qassimi graduated with a Bachelor's in Photography from the American University in Dubai (AUD) in 2000 and went on to complete a Master's in Contemporary Art from the Sotheby's Institute of Art in 2011. She will soon relocate to the UAE capital to join the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi's curatorial team.

**How did art factor in to your childhood?**

My earliest memory is of visiting museums with my parents when I was about six. Art was something that I grew up with and I was encouraged to engage with it and understand it.

*“Every artwork that I have reminds me of a moment in time. It’s very personal.”*

**How do you approach collecting?**

I don't plan my acquisitions; it's open to what moves me. I need to feel a personal and emotional connection to the pieces I buy. Also, there are certain genres that I just can't bring myself to like, such as political art.

**What are your objectives as a young collector?**

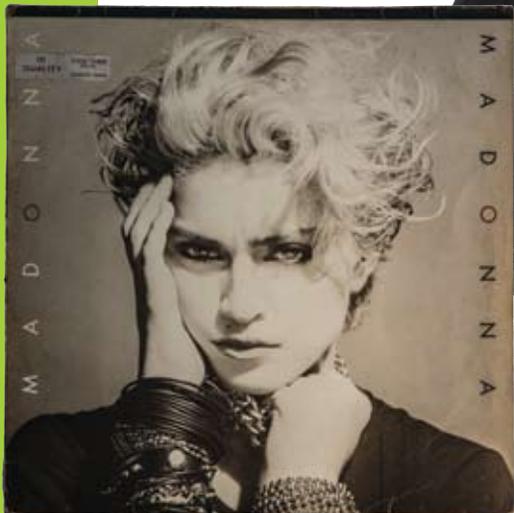
I don't collect for the sake of investment but at the same time, I wouldn't buy something that is not of value. It's not the stock market; I should be able to enjoy an artwork and want to buy it without thinking of its monetary value.

**Your collection leans towards photography. Is this intentional?**



Facing page:  
HE Sheikha Maisa Al-Qassimi sits in Zeinab Al-Hashemi's *Monolith Pillar*. 2013. Polystyrene and cement. 300 x 150 x 150 cm with a work by Hamra Abbas. *Untitled (Paper Plates)*. 2008. Paper sculpture in Perspex box. 20 x 20 cm; (On the floor): Tammam Al-Azzam. *Bleeding, Syria*. 2012. Archival print on cotton paper. 60 x 60 cm. Edition one of five.

This page:  
(Top) Pedram Baldari. *Irrexcxsible VII* (2008) and (bottom) *Irrexcxsible IX* (2007). X-rays on light boxes. 38 x 44 cm each.



I majored in photography at AUD and no one took the genre seriously at that time because it wasn't considered an art medium. But I stuck with it and kept creating work. Now, photographic pieces are included in auctions and Middle Eastern collectors have started acquiring such works. Although I own pieces from different media, I really relate to photography.

**Do you want your collection to expand to include other media?**

I don't have a preferred medium; the one thing I don't own is a large-scale painting because I don't have the space for it! I would never want to put an artwork I acquire in storage. I don't like to say I'm collecting Middle Eastern art; I'm a young collector of all types of art. As the collection grows, I can have many different subsets within the larger collection. I think it's too early for me to collect a specific genre so I'm currently just developing my collection. I am really into Pakistani art at the moment; I am fascinated by it and feel that Pakistani artists see the world in a different way.

**What piqued your interest in Pakistani art?**

I guess it's the Islamic references in the work, the miniature painting and the Islamic geometric design elements. Pakistan really has some great emerging artists.

**What has been one of your biggest cultural accomplishments?**

Launching a charity auction in April! As a chairperson at the Sharjah Business Women Council, we created the non-profit programme Tawasul with the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industries, which supports orphans in pursuing higher education. We created an auction to raise money for the fund, which saw 26 artists participate including Farhad Moshiri, Nja Mahdaoui, Hassan Hajjaj, Ahmed Mater and Lalla Essaydi. Managing the auction was extremely challenging, yet fulfilling.





Facing page:  
Above: Nadine Kanso. *Madonna*.  
2013. Archival photographic  
prints. 50 x 50 cm. Edition one  
of three. Image courtesy Cuadro  
Fine Art Gallery, Dubai.

Below: HE Sheikha Maisa Al-  
Qassimi with a work by Gauri  
Gill. *Shah Alam Bookstore*,  
*Kabul*. 2007. Silver gelatin  
print. 51 x 61 cm.

This page:  
Left: Ayman Yossri Daydhan.  
(Detail) *Ilaika Ayuha Al Arabi*.  
2011. Mixed media on museum  
quality archival paper. Unique  
piece. 77 x 55 cm. Image  
courtesy Athr Gallery, Jeddah.

Right: Noor Al-Suwaidi.  
*Encounter*. 2011. Acrylic on  
canvas. 60 x 90 cm. Image  
courtesy the artist.

*Photography by Zan Nakari  
unless otherwise specified.*

***“I think I can help artists by being a mentor, an ‘artist manager’ and giving them guidance thanks to my background as an artist.”***

**What does your collection say about you?**

Every artwork that I have reminds me of a moment in time. It’s very personal. For example, I have a paper plate by Hamra Abbas, which reminds me of my Master’s abroad, but focuses on a concept and theme that is very close to home. Another example is Mahmoud Bakhshi’s *Viva Dubai, Viva Abu Dhabi*, which I bought as I will now be moving to Abu Dhabi to join the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi curatorial team. This artwork will serve as a memory of the overwhelming excitement I feel about this change.

**How does being an artist support your curatorial role?**

The last time I made art was in 2005; if I want to be a true artist, I must focus on that and only that. I think I can help artists by being a mentor, an ‘artist manager’ and giving them guidance thanks to my background as an artist.

**Are there certain artists that you’re keen on supporting?**

I am interested in the Middle Eastern Contemporary art scene as well as Emirati artists such as Noor Al-Suwaidi, Maitha Demithan and even the younger emerging artists such as Zeinab Al-Hashimi and Shamma Al-Amri to name a few. I have a different relationship with these younger artists as I work closely with them. 🌐