

Sahar Sharif

Masters of Arts in Museum Studies (2013), New York University

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ALUMNI PROFILE

Sahar Sharif Mohammed, an AUD alumna who graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design, shares her professional and academic experiences along with her plans.

Prior to completing her degree at AUD, Sahar worked for the UAE Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2009 and loved the diversity of working in the museum world. “Diversity has always been part of my identity; from my cultural heritage to my daily life to the flexibility of designing exhibitions – therefore, it just seemed like the perfect fit,” Sahar says.

Sahar was granted a scholarship from the Emirates Foundation to continue a Master of the Arts in Museum Studies at New York University, where she is currently completing the final seven months of the two-year graduate program. Her favorite part throughout this major was when she worked on a long project where she had to create her own museum from scratch, so she came up with the idea of a ‘Museum of Industrial Design’, or MID, the first of its kind in the world.

“I think I have to say that I’m very lucky to be an Emirati. I owe it all to my country, our leaders’ wisdom and foresight to have given us the chance and, most importantly, support us to pursue anything that’s extraordinarily different. I also owe a big thank you to Salwa Mikdadi of the Emirates Foundation. She really inspired me to go for this and never give up,” Sahar says.

Sahar loves working on various exhibition design projects. She recently helped design a blockbuster exhibition at the Latin American Museum in New York (El Museo Del Barrio) on Caribbean art and heritage called ‘Caribbean Crossroads of the World’. She also works on smaller projects with private collectors in and outside New York, where her work is a lot more diverse and gets exposure to all the various fields in the museum and the art world. Along with designing, Sahar is currently organizing art collections and helps to create public interest in certain programs or exhibitions with the Salsali Museum in Dubai.



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Describing her passion for working in the art scene, Sahar says: “The beauty of working in the art world is that you never know who you are going to meet, and where you are going next... so grab your morning coffee and be ready for anything that comes your way.”

Regarding her choice for ‘Museum Studies’, Sahar says that she was subconsciously led to this path. She adds: “Blame it on the Kobe Earthquake and its exhibit at the Natural History Museum in London. As a seven-year-old kid, I was fascinated by the interactive scenario they created with everything around you shaking and you hanging on for dear life. Then, I always had a passion for art and creating new things, and visiting art museums, wherever in the world I went.”

About her plans after completing her degree, Sahar says: “First, I will dance insanely to an old Kuwaiti song and then go visit the Angkor Wat temples in Cambodia with one of my closest culturally-savvy friends. Then, it’s back to work.”

One of Sahar’s top plans is to find a museum position in the Middle East or

in countries with a developing museum scene, as these places offer a lot more flexibility. Besides, she wants to come back to develop the UAE’s museum scene while trying to encourage a “museum-going culture” in the region, and project the existing rich and diverse heritage.

Sahar says that she applies what she learned at AUD in her career. “I need to write a book on all that I learned at AUD,” she says. “But if there’s one thing that comes to mind, it is always keeping up the spirit of learning for the sake of learning, and always being open-minded, because you never know where you’re going to utilize what you picked up in an elective class two years ago.”

“AUD always made us forward-thinking, and we were always updated on the latest technological developments, especially in the design field; which I really owe to all the design professors in the Departments of Architecture and Interior Design, or as we called it, the A building.”

The key to success, according to Sahar, is to stay updated with the latest happenings in the field, to keep networking and attending events. “Plan for tomorrow but live for today, because that’s how you will be most efficient,” she says. “Pursue things that make you inspired to do it, no matter how different. If you believe that you can, and work toward it, destiny will carve that path for you, in ways that you never imagined.” ■