**Blurring the boundaries**

New York-based artist Nancy Lorenz juxtaposes motifs from East Asia, specifically Japan, to produce transformative pieces gilded in gold, silver and mother-of-pearl.

**By Joffi Kalsi**
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American artist Nancy Lorenz was born in Texas but spent her teenage years in Japan. She uses traditional eastern decorative techniques and materials to create contemporary abstract expressionist artworks. The New York-based artist's solo show in Dubai, Silver Moon, presents a retrospective of her luminous soulful artworks with a distinctly Japanese ethos.

Anahita Razmi, who was born in Hamburg of Iranian origin. Her work focuses on issues of identity and gender, examining processes of cultural appropriation by recontextualising images, artefacts and identities. In her latest show in Dubai, Take Me To Your Leader, the Berlin-based artist has used well-known Western tropes to talk about Eastern cultures, politics and stereotypes. Her new work also has an interesting Japanese link.

Lorenz was 13 when her father’s job took her family to Tokyo. Her exposure to Japanese decorative arts during the five years she lived in Tokyo led her to decide to be an artist. She studied painting and print making at the University of Michigan and did her master’s in fine art at the Tyler School of Art. During this time, she spent a year in Italy at the school’s Rome campus where she developed an appreciation of gold ground painting and the minimalist 1960s Italian arte povera movement. Later in New York, she trained as a gold-leafing artist in Italy. She knows how to gild and gilded ‘pours’. She uses precious materials such as gold and mother-of-pearl to create her luminous artworks, but she has found ways to use gilding techniques on everyday materials such as wood, cardboard and jute.

“My fascination with gilding techniques and mother-of-pearl inlay came from my adolescence in Japan, while my interest in gold-leafing developed in Italy. I know how to do things in old fashioned ways, but I love to combine craft with an irreverent use of materials to create something new and innovative,” Lorenz says.

Her show in Dubai features a selection of her luminous, meditative works from the early 2000s titled Rock Garden Room. The abstract landscape with bamboo trees, flowing water, rocks, fluid lines and empty spaces is made with silver leaf, mother of pearl inlay, pigment, gesso and lacquer on twelve wood panels.

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The title of her show refers to the well-known jinbaori, a costume previously worn by samurais, which has been tailored into a coat with an artificial shape. In 16th century Japan, the textile for this garment were sometimes imported from China or Europe. But in a rare case a Persian carpet made its way to Japan, perhaps via the silk route from Kashan. Since textiles are not placed on the floor in Japanese culture, the carpet was tailored into a jinbaori for a high-ranking samurai. This is an interesting example of a cultural misunderstanding, telling a history of multiple displacements.

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The Soap Opera Digest

"My 'reign coats' are new versions of jinbooras made from Persian carpets as a modern interpretation of miscommunication and displacement." - Anahita Razmi, artist

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