

UAE art exhibit makes for heavy sailing

Xavier Mascaro takes inspiration from his childhood to create his ironclad *Departure*.



June 21, 2016

For his UAE exhibition, *Departure*, Spanish artist Xavier Mascaro built 27 iron and bronze boats, the largest of which is 18 metres long.

He told *EDGAR* why the boat is such a powerful symbol for him.

Was it physically demanding to create this exhibition?

Yes, it was hard, physical work. Initially the metal had to be melted at an industrial foundry in order to be poured into a sand mold. Then there's the preparation of the models, making the molds through sand casting; then the cutting, grinding and welding of the cast pieces, not to mention actually moving them at each stage. And of course getting them to the exhibition venue.



Why were you interested in boats?

The boat is a symbol that has been used throughout history in every culture, everywhere. It is timeless. So many meanings have been associated with it: communication, power, the flow of life, a passage of one life to another.

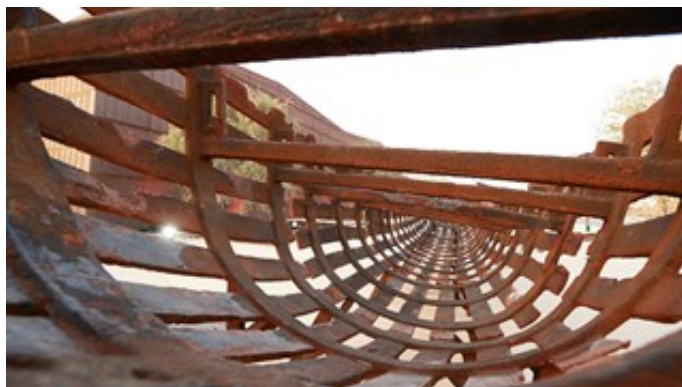
To me it is a metaphor of life. We are all always departing towards the future; time flows endlessly while we, like nomads, pass by.

Did you grow up near the coastline?

Yes. I spent many years of my childhood in the Mediterranean coast of Spain, in Barcelona, Valencia and in a town in Alicante during the summer.

Did you do much sailing?

My father had a sailboat and he, my two brothers and I would sail most weekends, even in bad weather. I have great memories of those days. I remember the feeling of speed and that amazing silence. You would only hear the sounds of water and the wind in the sails.



Your exhibition also features Emirati poetry about sailors – did you find the stories moving?

Very much. I think of the sea as a subject which is universal. To read these stories about people departing while their families were waiting for them

back home on the shore made me understand how meaningful and powerful the combination of these poems, along with the iconography of the sculptures and drawings, would appear to visitors, and especially Emiratis. I knew the relationship the UAE has with the sea, and has had for centuries.

Where is your studio?

I actually have two studios: one in Mexico City and a larger 1,300 square metre warehouse in Madrid. This is where I have many pieces in process. Some are just fragments that I need to put together and have been waiting on the floor for years.

Are the studios covered in sketches and ideas?

Well, neat and tidy would not really describe it! There are areas where small models, sketches and raw materials are dispersed on tables or on the floor. It is a little messy but I know where to find everything – except my keys.



xaviermascaro.com

Departure is on display at Warehouse 421 in Abu Dhabi until September 24. warehouse421.ae/en

Images: Warehouse421