

Toei Kelly voices teenage elephant Meena in 'Sing 2,' now in GCC cinemas.



Weekend Lifestyle, Art & Culture

ART

Moroccan artist Yamou: 'We need to invent another way of living'

The acclaimed veteran artist has placed nature at the heart of his work for decades

Denise Murray London

The paintings of Moroccan artist Abderrahim Yamou give a fresh and sometimes startling perspective on the wonders of the natural world. Yamou, it seems, notices details which most miss — so, a seed is portrayed in all its splendor and given the same prominence as a tree trunk or a flower. It's like walking into a new dimension, where normal proportions and perspectives no longer apply.

Yamou says his science background shaped his acute observation of nature. As an undergraduate, he studied biology at the University of Toulouse, before earning the French equivalent of a Master's degree in the history of contemporary art in Morocco at the Sorbonne. It wasn't until 1986, however, aged 27, that he decided to commit himself fully to art.

Yamou's imagination is also fired by his homeland of Morocco. Born in Casablanca in 1959, he showed a leaning towards art from an early age, drawing on any surface he could find. This artistic drive didn't come from his father — a blind lottery vendor — or his mother ("I was born in a humble, respectful and caring environment," he tells Arab News), but he was given the space to be creative, as reflected in the wide range of mediums he uses. Apart from his paintings, Yamou also creates sculptures inspired by traditional African art, most notably N'Kondé statuettes from Bas Congo.

He describes how, early on, he started "working with earth."

"I mixed the earth with glue and spread it out on a wooden surface. When I kneaded this material, I had a wish to see a green shoot. But that was impossible because the glue sterilized the soil," he says. "My interest in plants, gardens and trees stems from this time and also has its roots in the south of Morocco, where green symbolizes life and survival."

He has maintained that interest ever since. It is particularly clear in his series "Branches" and "Chlorophyll."

Of the former, he says: "I was interested in the movement and direction that a branch takes to go towards light. On this journey, the plant undergoes constraints which force the branches to contort in order to move forward. I have observed these contortions a lot in my garden and I find them aesthetically beautiful — a poetry of effort and dancing resistance."

Discussing "Molecule P1," a painting from the "Chlorophyll" series, he explains: "I am interested in the interior of plants — the molecules that constitute them and the atoms of chlorophyll. In this painting, branches, seeds, flowers and atoms coexist. My



(From bottom) Moroccan artist Abderrahim Yamou and his works 'November' and 'Les Terrasses' from his 'Branches' series. Images supplied



view of nature is much more poetic than botanical."

Yamou currently divides his time between Paris and Tahannaout, a village south of Marrakesh, near the foot of the Atlas Mountains. But the place he most loves to be, he says, is his studio.

"Except for external constraints, I like to be in the workshop every day. It's a place of research and chosen solitude.

I keep the rigor and constancy of my former scientific studies," Yamou explains.

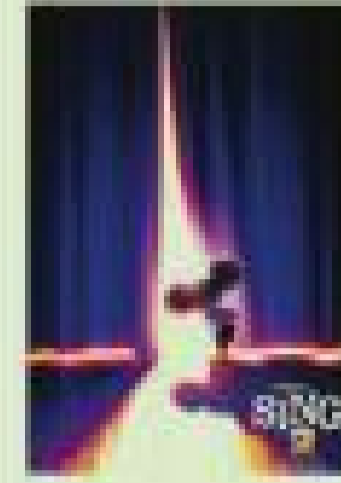
His close observation of nature over many years has led Yamou to form some carefully considered opinions about how best to look after our planet.

"We are all aware of the growing environmental concerns. But to reverse this, we need more than awareness," he says. "We need to invent another way of living; we need to make more room for the other inhabitants of the earth — all the other living things, the flora and fauna. We need to realize that plants and animals are also inhabitants of this planet and that their presence contributes to the global balance. We must gradually reduce the number of humans on earth and learn to live with less — except for those who have nothing or very little."

He encourages people to persevere with their personal efforts to protect the planet, as each and every action is worthwhile and builds a momentum for change. "While waiting for collective action to take effect, it is not useless to proceed individually to reduce all that appears harmful to us," he concludes.

Screen Scene

WHAT'S ON IN CINEMAS

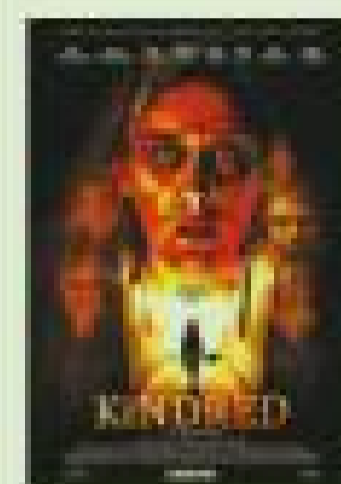


Sing 2

Voice cast: Reese Witherspoon, Scarlett Johansson

Director: Garth Jennings

In the sequel to 2016's "Sing," Buster Moon has become famous for his new theater. But when a talent scout for Redshore City ("where stars are made") is overwhelmed by his new show, Buster and the gang decide to wow the world again.



The Kindred

Starring: April Pearson, James Cosmo, Patrick Bergin

Director: Jamie Patterson

Helen Tullet is heavily pregnant when she has a car accident and goes into a coma. She wakes to find that she is a mother, and that her father has killed himself. Helen begins to see the ghosts of children whom she suspects her father of murdering.



Father Christmas is Back

Starring: Elizabeth Hurley, John Cleese

Directors: Mick Davis, Philippe Martinez

British comedy about a group of four adult sisters spending the holidays at a mansion in the north of England. They are joined by their estranged father, James, for the first time in decades, and discover why he left in the first place.



Radioactive

Starring: Rosamund Pike, Sam Riley, Aneurin Barnard, Anya Taylor-Joy

Director: Marjane Satrapi

Biopic telling the extraordinary tale of the pioneering scientist Marie Curie — the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, her discovery of radioactivity and her struggles to be taken seriously by the scientific community.



Survive the Game

Starring: Bruce Willis, Chad Michael Murray

Director: James Cullen Bressack

A wounded cop, his partner and a farm-owning "troubled" veteran face a gang of drug dealers in this crime thriller. Though outnumbered, the trio boast "stealth, smarts and marksmanship."

REVIEW

Benedict Cumberbatch plays against type in 'The Power of the Dog'

Matt Ross Amman

There's something a bit discomfolding about watching Benedict Cumberbatch swaggering through the Montana mountains in "The Power of the Dog" — the latest movie from New Zealand director Jane Campion. Some of the British actor's most notable performances, remember, have him as a man of extraordinary precision and poise; characteristics that are a long way from his portrayal of rancher Phil Burbank. That said, such a sense of slight discomfort only serves Campion's movie, helping to build a sense of something not quite right at the heart of her adaptation



Kodi Smit-McPhee and Benedict Cumberbatch in 'The Power of the Dog,' Netflix

of Thomas Savage's 1967 Western novel, set in 1925.

Phil and his brother George (Jessie Plemons) run a successful ranch. Phil is the practical one, turning his hand (or knife) to anything that needs doing and building an easy rapport with the ranch hands. He calls George 'fatso' all the time, and mocks his brother's aspirations of climbing the societal ladder.

When George marries widowed inn owner Rose (Kirsten Dunst), Phil suspects she's only after his money. And when Rose and her oddball, effeminate son Peter (Kodi Smit-McPhee) come to live at the ranch, Phil turns outwardly hostile to the pair of

them, driving Rose to drink and taunting Peter's academic pursuits and lack of wilderness skills. Phil offers to take Peter under his wing, teaching the boy to ride

Cumberbatch plays Phil with such sophisticated menace that we're never sure if his interest in Peter is benevolent.

and urging him to 'man up' and throw off the influence of his mollywoodling mother.

Cumberbatch plays Phil with such sophisticated menace that we're never sure if his

interest in Peter is benevolent, or part of a more sinister plan. Smit-McPhee, also, imbues Peter with such eccentricity that it's never clear how genuine his foal-like innocence really is — an ever-present unknown that Campion skillfully wields throughout the movie's long runtime (125 minutes).

"The Power of the Dog" is also staggeringly beautiful, with the rolling hills of New Zealand standing in for Montana and providing breathtaking backdrops to the story's very human dynamics. While the final act drags its feet ever so slightly, the film remains a stylish masterclass in slow-burn character development.