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## [Art Dubai](#)

Art Fair

- [Overview](#)

- [Gallery news](#)

## Gallery Highlights at Art Dubai 2018 (1.3.2018)



Elif Uras, Venus Niche, 2016. Courtesy the Artist and Galerist.

The countdown for the twelfth edition of Art Dubai has begun, and as with every edition, diversity remains one of Art Dubai's fortes: diversity in artist representation, artistic mediums, and undoubtedly, in thoughts and concepts – spearheaded by the world's most innovative emerging and established artists.

From the regional gallery scene, Green Art Gallery – one of Dubai's oldest art galleries that was established in 1995 – returns with a solo presentation of bold yet lyrical wooden works by the Lebanese-born, Paris-based sculptor Chaouki Choukini (b. 1946). Fascinatingly, it was Choukini's observation of mountain scenery in his native South Lebanon that sparked an interest in sculpture, leading to a lifetime career in poetic carving. Istanbul's Galerist dedicates its solo booth to works by the New York and Istanbul-based multidisciplinary artist Elif Uras (b. 1972), who showcases her voluptuous ceramic vessels, entitled Venus Niche (2016). Through this sculptural series, Uras thoughtfully challenges the notion of femininity in the ever-evolving modern world – a recurring theme in the artist's diverse oeuvre. Selma Feriani Gallery – located between Tunis and London – will reveal a duo presentation of works by

Tunisian artists Lina Ben Rejeb (b. 1985), a researcher transfixed by text and its endless artistic possibilities, and Hedi Turki (b. 1922), a luminary of abstract painting in Tunisia.

One core aspect that will be noticeable in the Contemporary halls is a focus on African art. This year, 11 African art-specialised galleries from Europe, America, and Africa will represent multidisciplinary artists from Cameroon, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and the like. Additionally, Art Dubai will welcome a gallery from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – a first for the fair.

Through its two-artist presentation at the fair, Addis Fine Art is set to reveal an intimate selection of vibrant digital prints by the Ethiopian photographer Girma Berta (b. 1990). Through his narrative-driven series, *Moving Shadows* (2016-17), the observant and self-taught Berta seeks to document the streets of his native Addis Ababa in all its forms: 'the beautiful, the ugly and all that is in between.' On the other hand, works by Ethiopian-born, San Francisco-based Wosene Worke Kosrof (b. 1950) offer viewers a fascinating insight into the artist's attempt to transfigure his native Amharic script into abstract art. From London, returning gallery TAFETA will present a solo display of works on paper and sculptures by the Nigerian-born artist Victor Ekpuk (b. 1964), who explores the multi-layered and timely themes of politics, gender, and culture.

Women artists from the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Europe will also feature significantly at Contemporary, presenting conceptual and visual works of art. London's Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, who has just launched a Berlin outpost, will showcase paintings by Iranian artist Soheila Sokhanvari, whose works possess a magical realist element, playing with political and social themes. Art Dubai newcomer Gallery 1957 in Accra will display works by Togolese artist Modupeola Fadugba (b. 1985), whose visually compelling paintings reflect upon and reanalyze her personal experiences as a young artist. Last but not least, Sara Ouhaddou (b. 1986), a Moroccan-French artist represented by Galerie Polaris in Paris, questions issues related to cultural identity and re-examines the role of craftsmanship in Arab heritage through her delicate, modern embroideries, inspired partly by her insightful visits to remote yet artistically productive Moroccan villages.

Among the new participating galleries this year is Madrid's Galería Elba Benítez, founded in 1990 and which will present a duo show, including the works of San Sebastian-born artist Cristina Iglesias (b. 1956). Through her monumental sculptural works and photo-based imagery, she offers a sense of grandness, physicality, solitude, and mystery that architecture exudes. Another exciting newcomer to the fair comes from Kazakhstan through the Almaty-based

Aspan Gallery, which will showcase the socially engaged artists Bakhyt Bubikanova (b. 1985), and artistic duo Yelena Vorobyeva (b. 1959) and Viktor Vorobyev (b. 1959). Collectively, their works reflect upon their socio-political surroundings, from Bubikanova's exploration of a woman artist's role in patriarchal Central Asia to the Vorobyev's visual commentary of Post-Soviet realities and everyday life.

From South America, the fair will host returning contemporary galleries from Brazil, Argentina, and Peru. Based between Buenos Aires and Lima, Revolver Galería will exhibit Argentinian multidisciplinary artist Matías Duville's (b. 1974) site-specific installation for the fair, serving as a music stage for the artist to perform. In addition, São Paulo's Vermelho will stage eclectic and multimedia display of works by Brazilian artists Cinthia Marcelle (b. 1974) and artistic duo Angela Detanico (b. 1974) and Rafael Lain (b. 1973) – all of whom primarily work with installation, performance, and video.

Diversity will indeed permeate multiple facets at the 12th edition of Art Dubai: a venue of intellectual engagement, endless discoveries, and above all, ongoing cross-cultural dialogue.

'Diversity is the Name of the Game', 2018  
Written by Rawaa Talass

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