

GUIDED TOUR – PABLO DEL VAL ON ART DUBAI 2021

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By Selections Arts

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Art Dubai brings a very dynamic fair this year. We are putting aside the computer and phone screens that have become our new normality, we're removing most social activations which leaves a fair that focuses on the relationship between the viewer and the object without any distractions.

Both local and western galleries are focusing on the Global South. We have major artists from Africa, Middle East, South Asia and Latin America. The diversity presented sits well with Dubai's DNA, a multicultural hub; that brings possibilities for galleries to present artists from their roster that wouldn't particularly work in their home town.

Artists have been working on figuration, a sensitive theme for the Middle East. They have particularly referred back to iconography, a type of portraiture that was assimilated to white culture and white power. All of a sudden, this iconography is reused in a political statement or with social connotations. This theme brings works overtaken by very flashy acid colours, somewhere between comic and punchy street art. It's also very exciting to see the proposals from young artists from the region as well. We see less geometry and monochrome works and move to an explosion of shapes and colour, a combination that works well with the Middle Eastern taste and Art Dubai's guests.



Alia Ali, *Warrior Lips*, from the FLUX series 2019, Archival Pigment Print, upholstered frame in Wax Print, 124 x 91.5 x 6 cm, photo by Alia Ali, Courtesy of Galerie—Peter—Sillem

The galleries have some brilliant representations. GALLERIA CONTINUA (San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Havana/Rome/São Paulo/Paris) brings a selection by Shilpa Gupta and Nikhil Chopra, both Indian artists. Chopra presents an entire set of drawings referring to his latest movie. Footage of the movie related to the drawings are part of the video program.

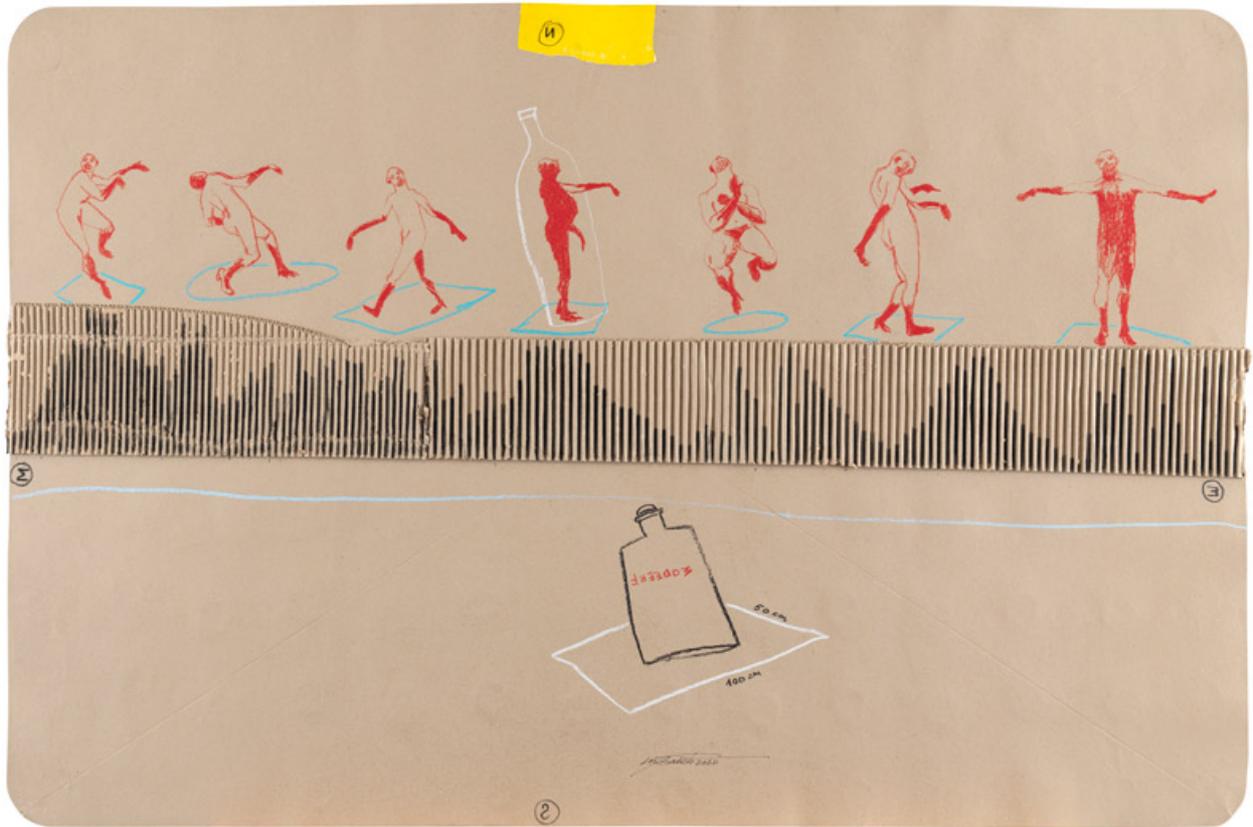


Nikhil Chopra, Remembering Being There: Morjim, 2020. Pastel and charcoal on paper, 45 x 65 cm.
Courtesy of GALLERIA CONTINUA



Shilpa Gupta, Untitled (Asrat), 2018. Tracing on paper, wood, 22 x 30,5 x 3 cm. Courtesy of GALLERIA CONTINUA

Galerie Nathalie Obaida (Paris/Brussels) has opted to bring Middle Eastern and African artists such as Nu Barreto and Youssef Nabil.



Nú Barreto, Fitchadus, 2020. Pencil, oil pastel and collage on paper, 85,5 x 126,5 cm. Courtesy of Galerie Nathalie Obadia



Youssef Nabil, Natacha and Crown, Cairo 2000, 2000. Hand coloured gelatin silver print – series of 3 each unique, 140 x 100 x 3,5 cm. Courtesy of Galerie Nathalie Obadia

The Third Line brings Jordan Nasser. He's now one of the most exciting international artists of Palestinian origin. The textiles that he does matches with Etel Adnan's, also his way of working; he develops the work with a group of crafts of woman weavers in Lebanon and then makes his paintings as they go back and forth to develop the traditional Palestinian patterns to create contemporary works of art.



Jordan Nassar, Pebbles in a Dip, 2021, Hand-embroidered cotton on cotton, 39.37 x 44.45 cm,
Courtesy of The Artist and The Third Line, Dubai

Gazelli Art House (Baku/London) brings a program mainly with Azerbaijani artists and it's very exciting to see what the youngsters in this part of the world are doing and what they're looking for.



Orkhan Huseynov, Mount Shahdagh, 2021. Plexiglas, 55 x 40 cm. courtesy of Gazelli Art House

Circle Art Gallery (Nairobi/London) which is coming with an Egyptian artist and a Sudanese artist, it is very exciting to see also this certain aesthetic they come from Africa but at the same time they live in the Middle East.



Salah Elmur, Ethiopian Nun, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 95 x 95 cm. Courtesy of Circle Art Gallery



Souad Abdel Rassoul, Londgig, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 113 x 70 cm. Courtesy of Circle Art Gallery

There is also a rediscovery of established artists from the region such as Hussein Sharif represented by [Salwa Zeidan Gallery](#) (Abu Dhabi). Sharif is an Emirati based artist that was part of the group of the original 'Five' conceptual artists in the UAE that included Mohammed Kazem, Mohammed Ahmed Ibrahim, Abdullah Al Saadi and his brother Hassan Sharif.

The presentation showcases certain works from the 80s and the 90s and also his latest production, as well as a fantastic outdoor installation.



Hussain Sharif, Faces 2, 2017. 455 Tin Cans turned to human face, each one has different expression varies. Courtesy of Salwa Zeidan Gallery

On the other hand, [Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery](#) (London, Berlin) represents the work of Afifa Aleiby, an Iraqi artist with a passionate story. Aleiby left Iraq to study in Moscow and never could return. From Moscow she went as a professor to teach in Yemen and later settled in the Netherlands. She's an artist who has been working with the female figure and with certain inspirations coming from different schools. Her work embodies several movements such as Bauhaus with allegories linking to the Renaissance. Her work is very intriguing but familiar at the same time. She has all these feminist statements in her paintings and she's one of the only woman of this generation who managed to develop a career and just now, starts gaining International recognition.

Both Hussein Sharif and Afifa Aleiby are having solo representations we are very excited about.



Afifa Aleiby, *Al Anfal*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 150 x 100 cm. Courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

The Sculpture Park brings together very large scale installations and sculptures from the participating galleries, with a total of 11 works by 10 artists including: Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, Rachid Koraïchi, Rashed Al Shashai, Goncalo Mabunda, Hussain Sharif, Dia Al-Azzawi, Costas Varotsos, Tarik Currimbhoy, Bernar Venet and Pablo Reinoso.



Costas Varotsos, *Horizon*, 1996. Glass and iron, circle: diam. 200 cm x 8 cm base: 20 x 200 cm.
Courtesy Giorgio Persano

Some of the works allow activation from the audience; Reinoso for example presents a bench that people can use whereas Mozambican artist Goncalo Mabunda shows two of his thrones produced with leftovers from weapons from the civil war in Mozambique. There is also a beautiful dialogue between the installation of Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim and Hussain Sharif.



Pablo Reinoso, Simple Talk (Right) , 2017. Painted steel, 115 x 613 x 163 cm. Courtesy of Custot Gallery



Goncalo Mabunda, Throne of the stars, 2017. Decommissioned weapons and scrap metal, 140 x 94 x 70 cm. AKKA Project

All the proposals from these geographies that you generally don't see in the western market is what makes Art Dubai so special and what collectors from around the world travel for.

We have so many communities in Dubai so there's always something that appeals to the visitor. There's always going to be the more established artist of course but I think our visitors and the local collectors are looking for a different type of adventure that we cater

to and that's what makes Art Dubai so special.

Art Dubai is ongoing until the 3rd of April.

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