

Art Dubai 2021 leads the way back to normality

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Works by Hoda Tawakol. Courtesy of Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde / Art Dubai.



DUBAI.- Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai and hosted by Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), [Art Dubai](#) returned, signaling the resurgence of the Emirate and embracing the resilient spirit that Dubai embodies.

Taking place over six days between the 29 March and 3 April, the fair introduced a number of innovations to safely welcome over 18,000 visitors over the course of the event, with tickets sold out prior to the fair opening to the public. These included a new booking system to help ensure social distancing, a remote participation programme for galleries unable to travel to Dubai to attend the fair and a new payment model to help galleries participate.

The fair featured 50 leading contemporary and modern galleries from 31 countries. +2 (Tehran), Galería Albarrán Bourdais (Madrid), Mono Gallery (Riyadh), Stems Gallery (Belgium), and Yusto/Giner (Marbella) joined the fair for the first time alongside many returning galleries including Perrotin (Paris), who returned after nine years. Exhibitors saw robust sales across the week, with artworks being placed in major private collections and international institutions and many more in process of negotiation.

A broad range of sales

Custot Gallery Dubai sold two works by Ian Davenport in the price range of \$120-150,000 each; Lawrie Shabibi Dubai sold five works by Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, a leading figure in Emirati art, between \$15,000 and \$20,000 each; Gallery 1957 from Ghana sold four works by Ivory-Coast based artist Joana Choumali in the price range of \$10-16,000 each. First time exhibitors Comptoir des Mines Galerie from Morocco sold a work by Moroccan-born artist Fatiha Zemmouri for \$32,000 and Albrarrán Bourdais from Spain sold a Beltran Lavier for \$80,000. Continua Gallery from Italy sold a series of Shilpa Gupta works to an institution for \$50,000 and Perrotin from France sold a JR work for \$65,000 and a Daniel Ashram for \$45,000. F Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery from UK sold a number of works by Iraqi-born artist Afifa Aleiby for \$50,000 each.

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Galleries commented:

William Lawrie of Lawrie Shabibi (Dubai/London) gallery said: “Art Dubai pulled off something amazing, at a time that much of the rest of the art world is at a standstill. I was stunned by the number of collectors

who had come from all corners of the world, despite travel restrictions and red tape. There was a concentrated energy throughout the run of the fair, lots of excitement and some great sales.”

Victoria Cooke, Director of Gallery 1957 (Accra/London) said: “Beyond Art Dubai showing a much-needed stride of confidence, we sold to important collectors and made new introductions in a region that continues to be very important to our gallery; a reminder that in-person connections are integral to the art market.”

Maimiti Cazalis, Senior Director of Galerie Nathalie Obadia (Paris/Brussels) said: “Weve been extremely delighted to be back at the Art Dubai fair, after a gap of 5 years. On many levels, this fair has been a success. We sold artworks from all the artists presented on our booth and have been very impressed by the quality of the visitors attending the fair. We are thrilled to develop sales and projects with the artists in the region.”

Art Dubai, despite current travel restrictions due to COVID-19, saw many international travelers visit the city to attend the fair and the creative districts such as Alserkal Avenue and the contemporary museum Jameel Arts Centre. These included groups and representatives from the Garage Museum (Moscow), Tate (London), Aga Khan Museum (Toronto) and Museum of Contemporary Art (Cleveland).

Antonia Carver, Director of Art Jameel, commented: “The return of the UAE as an international destination for curators, artists, gallerists and patrons was felt more keenly than ever this week, given the past year of global isolation. Weve seen a rise in local visitors to Jameel Arts Centre through 2020 and to share our exhibitions now with the international crowd was a joy.”

Art Dubai 2021 was hosted by Dubai International Financial Centre and sponsored by Julius Baer. The Dubai Culture & Arts Authority (Dubai Culture) is the fairs strategic partner.

