

A Decade in Dubai

Art Dubai celebrates its 10th edition with a show that is larger and more international than ever.



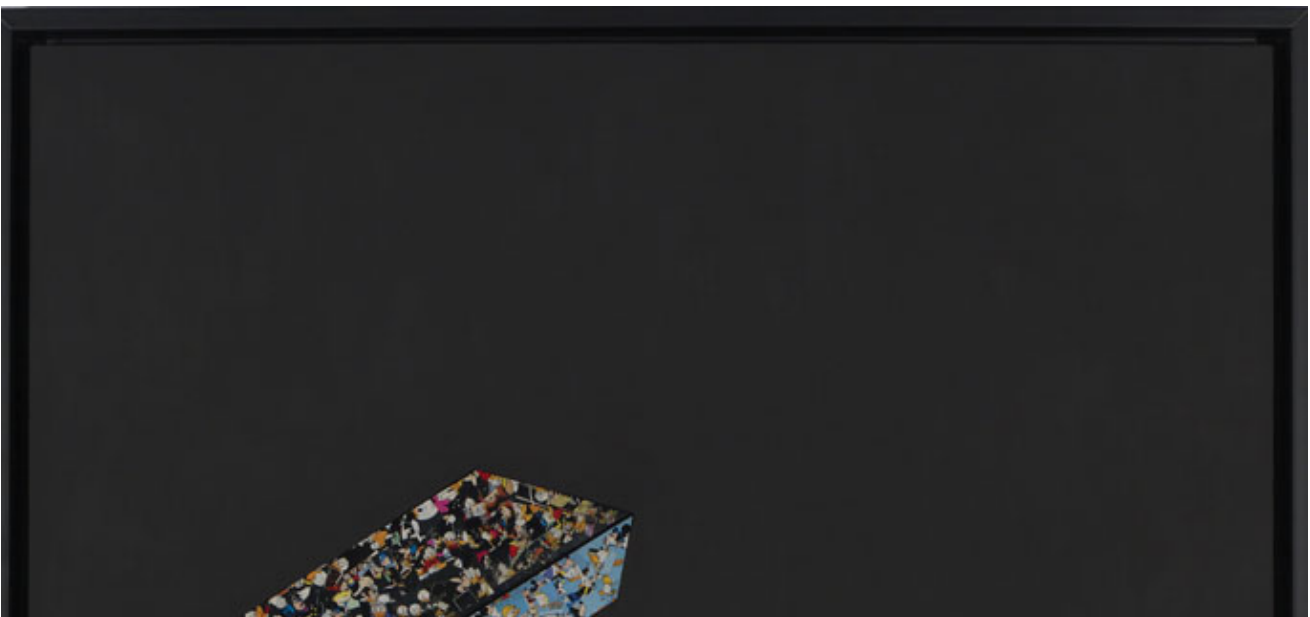
Art Dubai has come a long way since its inception in 2007. Originally known as the *DIFC Gulf Art Fair*, it was rebranded as *Art Dubai* just a year later and relocated to Madinat Jumeirah. Nowadays it has asserted its place on the world stage as the leading art fair of the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA) region, drawing record crowds of 27,516 visitors to its 2016 edition. With 94 galleries from 40 countries, showing works by 500 artists of 70 nationalities, it is not difficult to see the appeal in these increasingly globalised times. Interestingly, the fair was also noticeably younger and more female than both previous editions and other similar shows in 2016; 45 per cent of the artists shown were women, according to fair director Antonia Carver.

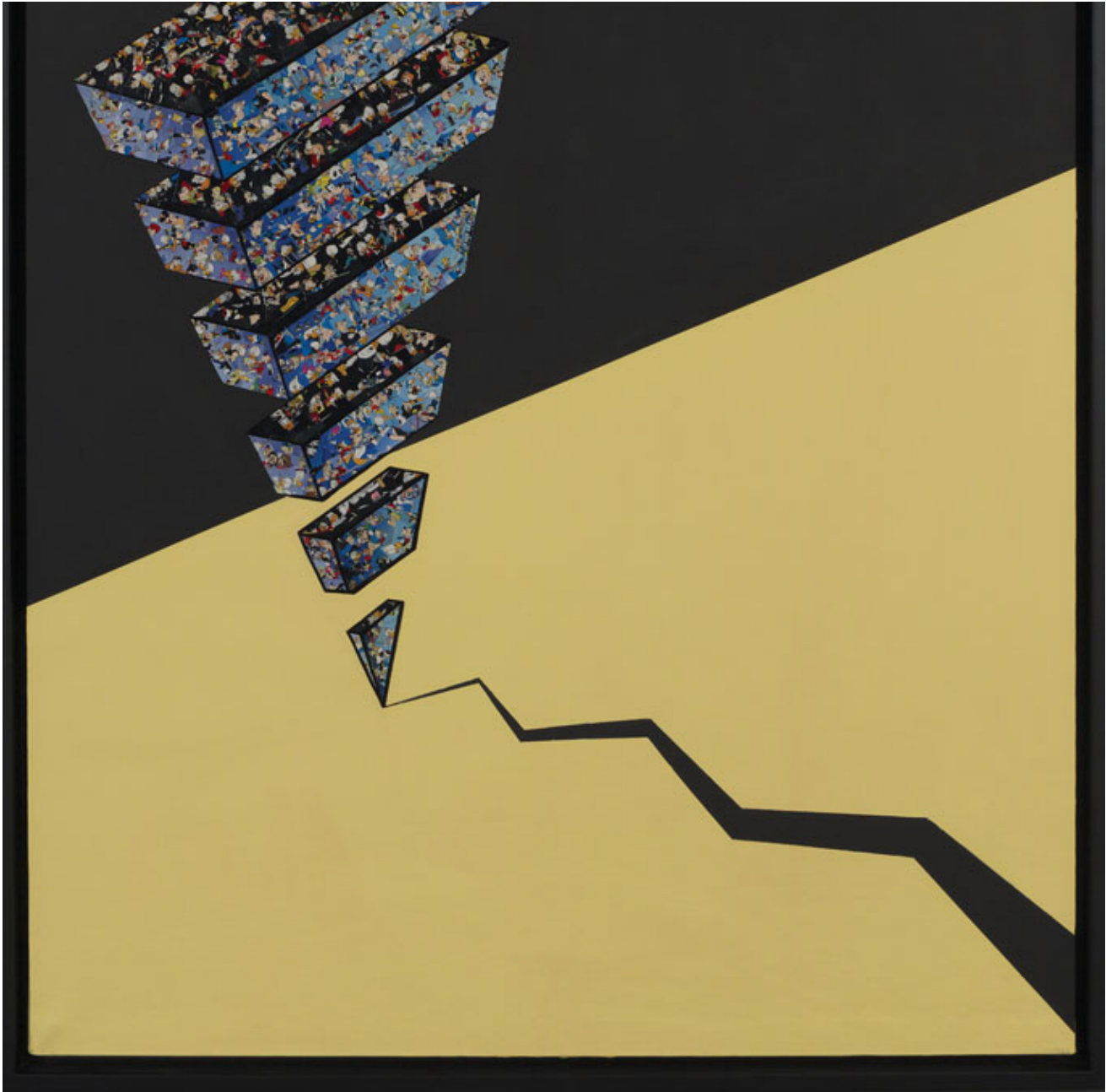




Samia Taktak Zaru, Untitled, 1976

Contemporary represented the largest section of exhibitors, with 76 galleries from 36 countries and spanning from some of the world's most influential institutions to dynamic, up-and-coming spaces. *Trendesign's* top pick? Russian artist [Olya Kroytor's](#) *Situations* series that was on show at the Moscow-based Artwin Gallery's booth. Kroytor's complex works combine geometric abstraction, collage and comics with 3D objects and counter-reliefs that eschew traditional painting techniques.





Olya Kroytor, Situation #15, 2015

The smaller *Modern* section comprised 13 galleries from 10 countries, all of which featured modern masters of 20th century art from the MENASA region – including Samia Taktak Zaru and Muhanna Durra as represented by Amman’s [Wadi Finan Art Gallery](#). *Modern’s* varied works told a fascinating story of the trials and tribulations of the 20th century: colonialism, nationalism, and complex identities, among others.

[Abdoulaye Konaté, Blain_Southern, 2016, The Studio](#)



Attendees peruse the Modern section

Marker, the smallest section, was perhaps the most unique. The invitation-only curated platform is a part of the fair's extensive not-for-profit programming and focuses each year on a different theme or geography. This year's theme was the Philippines – the first such showcase of Filipino art at a major international art fair. Works by some 20 Filipino artists, both modern masters and emerging talents, were presented by various independent, artist-run spaces. The section was curated by Ringo Bunoan and anchored around the work of Filipino artist, teacher and curator [Roberto Chabet](#), who passed away in 2013 and is seen as one of the pioneers of modern art in the Philippines.





Muhanna Durra, Rachmaninoff, 1981

In addition to the more formal gallery presentations, *Art Dubai* hosted a fascinating programme of projects, talks, residencies and pop-up dining outlets in collaboration with various Emirati and international institutions that demonstrated the sheer amount of effort and capital that went into making the fair great. The *Abraaj Group Art Prize* exhibition showed the newly commissioned work of winning duo [Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme](#), alongside pieces by the three shortlisted artists, Dina Danish, Mahmoud Khaled and Basir Mahmood. Commissions, meanwhile, gave regional and international artists the opportunity to develop site-specific works within the grounds of the fair. A radio station was even created specially to broadcast the entire week around the fair, giving unique insights and exclusive interviews.

Photography: Courtesy of Art Dubai

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