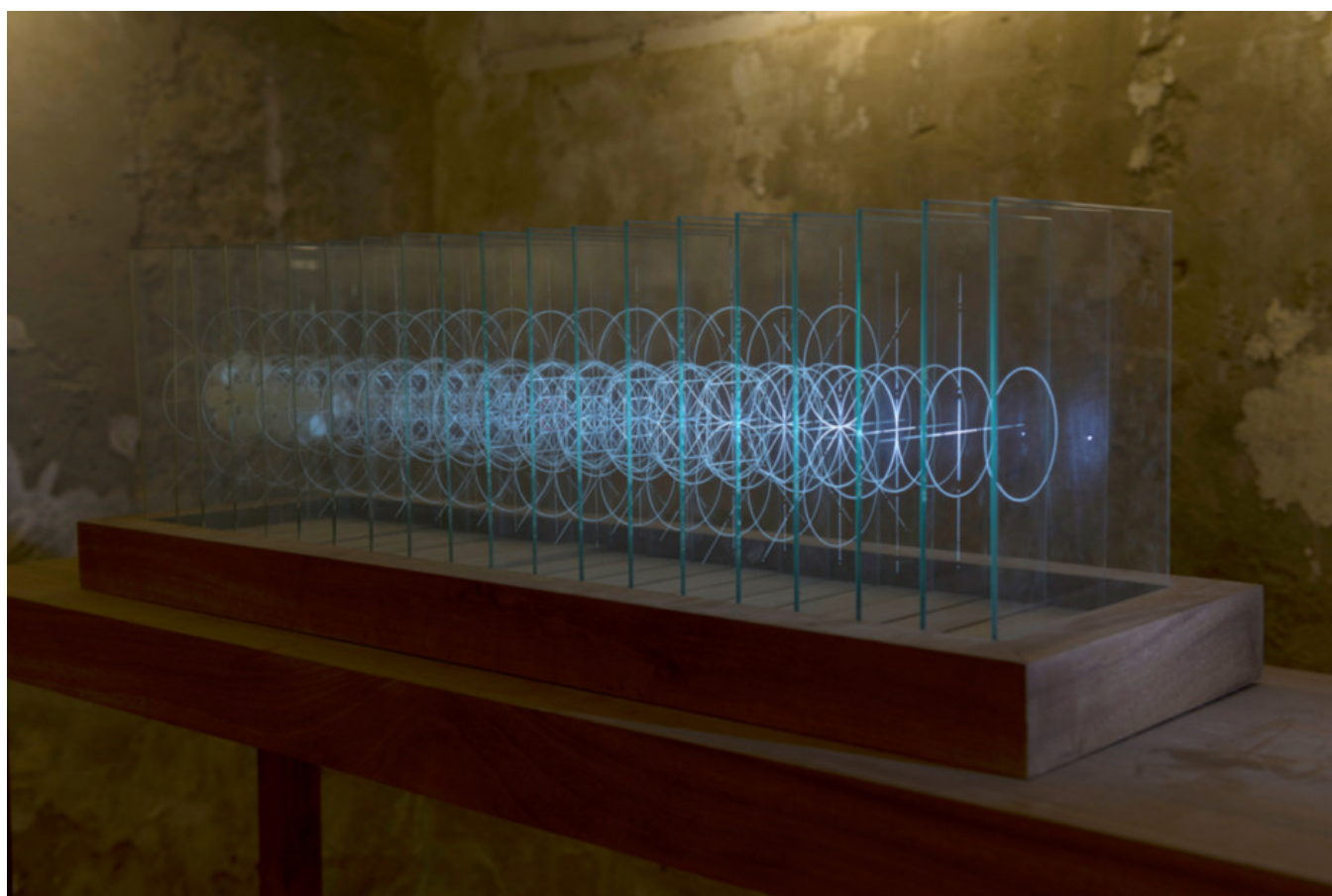


Abu Dhabi Art 2016 will offer a vibrant fare

[By Omar Shariff, Special to Weekend Review](#)

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Starting November 16, the eighth edition of the event will feature works by artists from 20 countries and 40 of the world's most innovative galleries



Al Mangour; Innovation by Ahmed Angawi, white ink on glass, 20 sheets, 2016. Image Credit: © JonR Studio

The vitality of the arts scene in Abu Dhabi will be on full display when the UAE capital's flagship annual arts event returns this week. In its eighth edition, Abu Dhabi Art 2016 will run from November 16 to 19 and feature works of artists from 20 countries. Organised by the Abu Dhabi Tourism

and Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), the art fair is taking place under the patronage of His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

Though some commentators tend to emphasise the role of the global art market when explaining the explosive expansion of the contemporary arts scene in the Gulf, many in the region see it as one of the by-products of the social and cultural development that the Middle East is going through.

Nevertheless, the various events in the UAE's art calendar — Art Dubai, Sharjah Biennial, Abu Dhabi Art — have grown tremendously in importance from a global perspective. More and more international collectors, journalists, curators and critics are attending the art shows in the UAE, and in the Gulf in general. As a result, the regional artists have found global recognition.

However, long before the international arts world got involved, Emirati artists such as Hassan and Hussain Sharif and Abdul Qader Al Rais had a huge impact on the UAE arts scene. These pioneers were proof that the contemporary arts in the region are not an imported phenomenon. Today, budding artists in the UAE and throughout the GCC are benefitting from art education, workshops and platforms to showcase their talent.

Abu Dhabi Art 2016 will mainly be organised at the Manarat Al Saadiyat, located on the Saadiyat island. A 15,400-square metre arts and culture centre, Manarat Al Saadiyat also features four gallery spaces. The venue is home to exhibitions with international collections from around the world, including three major galleries, a central events gallery, sales centre, a 250-seat theatre and a restaurant.

Manarat Al Saadiyat's main galleries are permanent spaces for a series of exhibitions and educational programmes organised by TCA Abu Dhabi. According to the organisers, this is part of an ongoing cultural programme

dedicated to developing awareness and understanding of arts and culture prior to the launch of the Saadiyat Cultural District.

Wide range of participants

Forty of the world's most innovative galleries will be represented at Abu Dhabi Art 2016. The annual event has grown to become one of the most significant in the Middle East arts calendar. Internationally renowned artists will showcase their work alongside emerging talent from the region and beyond. Visitors will also be treated to a performing arts programme, including live performances and art installations. At this year's event, a series of public talks will bring together experts from the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Zayed National Museum and arts institutions from abroad.

“Evolving and adapting to the ongoing development of the cultural landscape in the Saadiyat Cultural District and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi Art embodies the cultural intrigue and creative ambition that defines the city: its desire to explore and understand the world around us. Abu Dhabi Art offers a multi-disciplinary experience combining an art fair with a diverse arts programme. The art fair presents innovative and established galleries from around the world showcasing artworks for sale, and the Abu Dhabi Art programme features a dynamic interdisciplinary set of art, talks and sensational events for all audiences to enjoy,” says an organiser.

Abu Dhabi Art 2016 will comprise four gallery sections: Modern and Contemporary; Bidaya; Beyond, and Gateway. The various galleries — from the Middle East, Asia, Europe and North America — will exhibit under these categories.

Modern and Contemporary

In the modern and contemporary section, Picasso's “Buste d'Homme” will

be showcased by the returning Acquavella Galleries, a New York-based art house founded in the early 1920s, which originally specialised in artworks of the Italian Renaissance. It later introduced leading American museums and collectors to Italian Renaissance and Baroque painting, and then to the 19th- and 20th-century European masters.

Aicon Gallery will present works such as Abdullah N.I. Syed's "Courting Falcons" (2016), a hand-cut Dh200 banknote in a shadow box. And also artwork by M.F. Husain. Though based in New York, the gallery primarily provides a platform for modern and contemporary artists from South Asia and the Middle East. Alongside in-depth, focused solo shows, it also presents "a programme of curated group exhibitions that are international in their scope and ambition".

The Sean Kelly Gallery, also from New York, will be taking part in Abu Dhabi Art for the first time. It was founded by its UK-born owner in 1991, and quickly established a reputation for diverse, intellectually driven, unconventional exhibitions. At this month's event, it will present "Only By Chance" (2016), stamped glass sheets by the up-and-coming artist Idris Khan, as well as works by other artists.

Dubai's Cuadro Fine Art Gallery will showcase works such as "Primordial" (1988) by Mohammed Ebrahim, among others. Cuadro runs a residency programme that offers selected artists — both regional and international — studio space in the UAE. At the end of their residency, they can also use opportunities to exhibit the work they have created at Cuadro.

The Hunar Gallery in Dubai will be representing the works of Emirati artist Al Rais. Hunar (which means art in Persian and Urdu) was started in 1998, and the gallery has a stated aim of encouraging the public in the UAE and beyond to appreciate and value modern Middle Eastern art.

Works by another Emirati artist, Mohammad Al Mazrouei, among others, will be presented by the Swiss gallery AB43 Contemporary. Following

projects of cultural exchange in Dubai, Heidi and Franz J. Leupi, the couple behind AB (which stands for Across Borders), decided in 2003 to place the focus of their work firmly on the contemporary arts scene in the Arab world and the broader Middle East.

Bidaya

A platform provided to one emergent gallery to participate in the international arts scene, Bidaya means “beginning”. At this year’s event, Jeddah’s Hafez Gallery has been chosen as the Bidaya gallery, and will feature works by Saudi artists such as Ebrahim Al Dessouqi. Launched in 2014, Hafez Gallery seeks to explore Saudi and Middle Eastern Modern and Contemporary art. It promotes the concept of a Saudi visual identity.

Beyond

Beyond provides a curated public art platform for large-scale sculptures and installations, bringing art to the public arena. Selected works will be exhibited throughout Abu Dhabi for a period of six months, creating a contemporary canvas of artwork in an urban landscape. Artists such as Ahmad Faig (Cuadro Fine Art Gallery), Wang Dongling (Hanart TZ Gallery) and Lee Bul (Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac) will take part in this year’s event. Dongling is renowned for his huge works of calligraphy and public performances.

Gateway

This segment has been added for the first time in Abu Dhabi Art. Under this, the following curated exhibitions will be presented at three locations within the fair:

Gu Dexin by Alexandra Munroe

A large-scale installation by the influential Beijing artist Gu Dexin will be curated by Alexandra Munroe, Samsung senior curator, Asian Art, and

senior adviser, Global Arts at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation. Born in Beijing in 1961, Gu was a key figure in China's '85 New Wave movement. He also participated in the historic 1989 exhibition "Les Magiciens de la Terre" at the Centre Georges Pompidou, making him one of the first Chinese artists to exhibit in the emerging context of global art.

He was one of the pioneers who began making contemporary art during the 1980s. His early paintings, watercolours, and embroideries showcase dystopian worlds. His installations are visceral, involving raw meat and rotting fruit; they compel the viewer to face up to the reality of decay. In a dramatic move in 2009, Gu announced that he was quitting art entirely, claiming to be frustrated with the world of arts.

Modern Arab Art by Catherine David

An exhibition on modern Arab art curated by Catherine David, deputy director of the National Museum of Modern Art (Musée National d'Art Moderne) at Paris' Centre Georges Pompidou, will be part of Gateway.

(Re) Birth by Fabrice Bousteau

Curated by artistic director and long-term Abu Dhabi Art collaborator Fabrice Bousteau, "(Re) Birth" will include a thematic group exhibition, including emerging and established artists.

Event details

Date and timing: Abu Dhabi Art runs annually from November 16-19, and will be open from Wednesday to Saturday from 2 to 10pm.

Registration: Entry is free of charge. Access registration is required, and this can be done online (www.abudhabiart.ae) or onsite at the registration desk.

The online registration opened two months prior to Abu Dhabi Art, and will be open until the last day of Abu Dhabi Art. Registration is mandatory to attend the Abu Dhabi Art Programme. The latest time to register online for a programme is six hours prior to the programme start time.

Purchasing artworks: Artworks can be purchased from the commercial galleries art fair sectors: Modern and Contemporary, Signature, Bidaya and Artists' Waves, located in the Galleries Hall. "Beyond" art pieces, which are located at several sites around Manarat Al Saadiyat, and around the city, are also available for sale.

Omar Shariff is a freelance writer based in Abu Dhabi.



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