

Art Dubai 2015: African art sweeps 'Modern' section of quirky fair

Saffiya Ansari 19/03/2015

The Middle East's largest art fair threw open its doors to the public on Thursday, with lovers of head-cocking creativity flocking to Art Dubai 2015 to see what the event has to offer.

This year, the fair is split into three sections - contemporary, modern and Marker - each serving up a distinct form of art for buyers, experts and those who simply want to add a little color to their day.



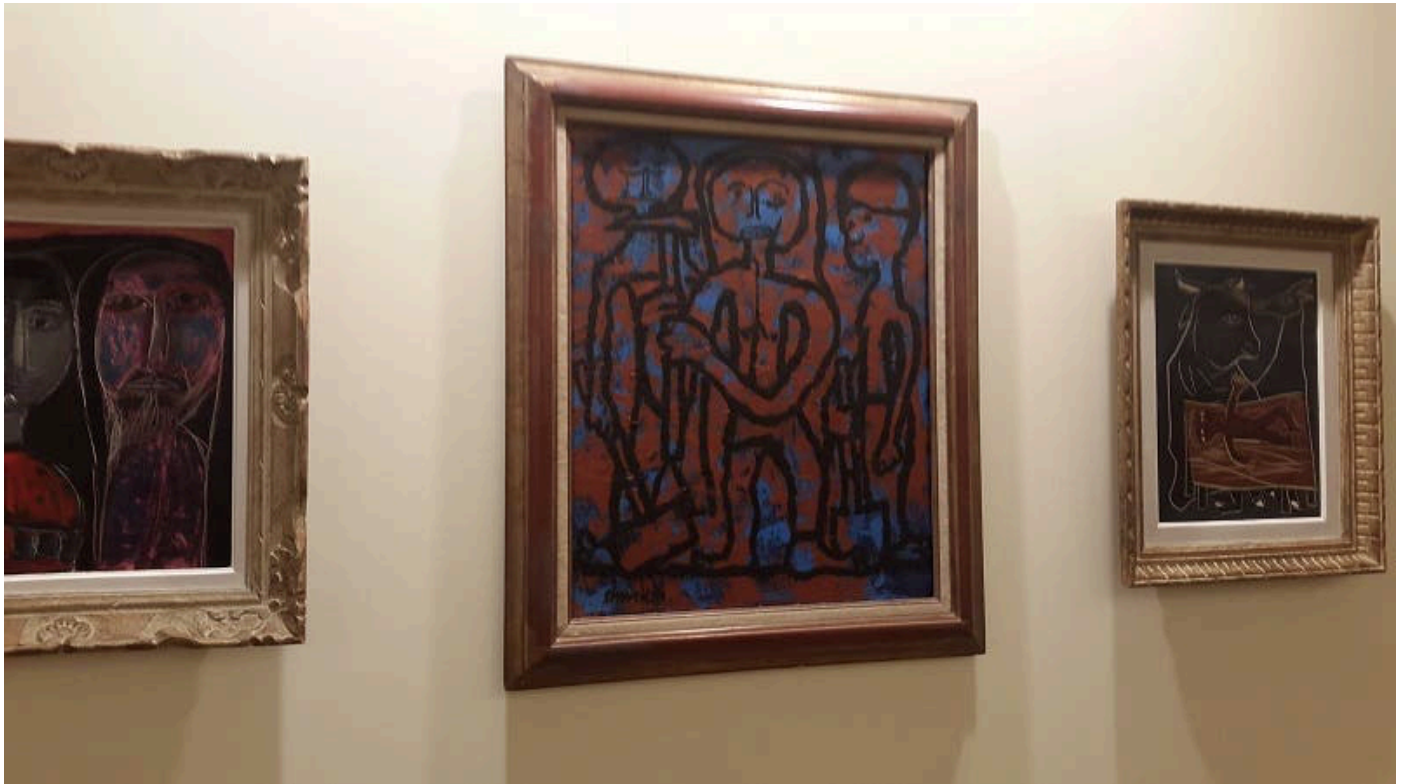
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Art Dubai Modern is devoted to modern art from the Middle East, Africa and

South Asia, presented by regionally and internationally based galleries.

Each of the 15 exhibitors is presenting a solo or two-person show, featuring work by modern masters from the 20th century up to the year 2000.

Inaugurated in 2014, the Modern section this year has a distinctly African vibe, with much of the works featuring tessellated figures, African mask inspired faces and block printed colors.



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The Elmarsa gallery boasted art by Tunisian Gouider Triki and Jakarta-born Tunisian Hatim Elmekki.

Despite living oceans apart, both artists' work featured cave painting-style depictions of the human form, whether a mother and her child in Elmekki's "Maternite a la coupe de fruits" (1950) or Triki's chalk-colored morass of sketched-out human bodies in "Desarroii II" (2000).

Both artists are “pioneers in the history of North African art who have paved the way for the emergence of 20th century modernism,” a gallery representative told Al Arabiya News.



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A stone's throw away, Beirut's Galerie Janine Rubeiz chose to display work by Lebanese artist Jamil Molaeb.

Molaeb started his artistic career in the 1970s, and taught at various universities in the country.

He interweaves traditional with modern painting depicting scenes of traditional rural life. The series of woodcuts presented at Art Dubai stems from period of 1980-2000.

Neatly arranged printed images fill a wall in the gallery's booth. A scarecrow fends off birds in a rural monochromatic scene while two figures appear to be

farming in an image splashed with pink and red hues.



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Meanwhile the Lagos-based Mydrim Gallery presents selected works by Nigerian artist Bruce Onobrakpeya.

“Onobrakpeya contributed to the development of a postcolonial aesthetic for African art,” according to a press release and has previously exhibited at London’s Tate Modern.

Proposals are reviewed by an Advisory Committee which this year is made up of such influential names as Bisi Silva, founder/director of Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos and Savita Apte, an art historian specializing in modern and contemporary South Asian art, among others.

Founded in 2007, Art Dubai 2015 takes place between March 18-21 and features 92 galleries from 40 countries, making this year’s fair the largest and most global to date.

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