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Art exhibitions in the UAE: what to see now the new season is here

We share our guide to the pick of new exhibitions opening in the Emirates



Nick Leech

[\(/topics/Author/Nick%20Leech\)](#)
September 14, 2017

Updated: September 20, 2017 02:08 PM

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Fabian Muir, Urban Burqa. Courtesy Gulf Photo Plus

Now that a new art season is upon us, here's our guide to the pick of the new exhibitions opening in Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Dubai.

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Fossil finger from Saudi Arabia



French photographer Bruno Boudjelal traces the life of philosopher and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. Courtesy Agence VU.

Bruno Boudjelal, *Frantz Fanon*

NYU Abu Dhabi, The Project Space, Abu Dhabi

Until September 27, 2017

The one downside to this enchanting exhibition is the absence of its photographer, Bruno Boudjelal. A witty and engaging storyteller whose charm is encapsulated in this impressionistic ode to liberty, Boudjelal charts his odyssey in search of the psychoanalyst, philosopher and inspirational revolutionary Frantz Fanon in a series of poetic images that evoke Fanon's birthplace, Martinique, the years of his radicalisation in Algeria and Ghana, where he briefly served as a diplomat for the post-colonial Provisional Algerian Government.

Community & Critique: SEAF 2016/2017 Cohort 4

Warehouse421, Abu Dhabi

September 16 to January 14, 2018

For a snapshot of who the future players might be in the UAE's creative industries, visit the Mina Zayed-based gallery spaces of the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation to see process-driven work from the latest home-grown graduates of the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Emerging Artists Fellowship (SEAF).

A year-long programme delivered in partnership with the Rhodes Island School of Design, SEAF acts as an intensive preparatory school to around 15 UAE-based creatives each year, many of whom go on to pursue further post-graduate studies in the fields of art and design.

The March Project 2017

Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah

September 30 to October 30, 2017

The March Project 2017 exhibition features site-specific works developed by five artists during the fourth edition of this annual educational residency programme. Designed to encourage young artists to research, realise and present site-specific works through a series of professional development courses, seminars, exhibitions and site visits over a five-month period, this year's crop includes Al Anood Al Obaidly and Nasir Nasrallah from the United Arab Emirates, Mahmoud Safadi from Lebanon and Sofiane Zouggar from Algeria.

Maha Maamoun, Select works in video and photography

Project Space Art Jameel, Dubai

September 13 to October 12, 2017

The video and photo series featured in this exhibition were the first works to be acquired by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York through its new institutional collaboration with Art Jameel and the establishment of the Art Jameel Fund, which allows the Museum to acquire works by modern and contemporary artists from the Middle East. These include Maha Maamoun, whose work explores the proliferation of reproducible imagery that circulates, gyre-like, in Cairo's visual economy.

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Ramin Haerizadeh, *Still Life*, 2017. Courtesy Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde

Ramin Haerizadeh, To Be or Not To Be, That is the Question. And Though, it Troubles the Digestion

Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai

September 13 to November 2

If ever there was a show that had to be seen up close it is this mid-career retrospective of the solo work of Ramin Haerizadeh.

Featuring a series of subtly-layered collages and photomontages that the artist returns to and modifies over time, the work contextualises profoundly personal images of the artist's mother and family with imagery that reflects on broader political themes and events, unleashing the playful and profoundly political spirit Dada and Surrealism on Middle Eastern diasporic life, the Arab Spring and life in Dubai.

Jacob Hashimoto, Eclipse and Enoc Perez, The Desert Bloom

Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai

September 21 to November 4

One of two Alserkal Avenue galleries presenting two shows at once, Leila Heller Gallery presents Jacob Hashimoto's monumental *Eclipse* (2017), a billowing cloud of black and white rice paper and bamboo that featured as part of *The End of Utopia* show at this year's Venice Biennale. This is accompanied by Enoc Perez's *The Desert Bloom*, a series of prints and paintings of regional architectural icons that examine the intrinsically utopian impulses behind buildings such as the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi and Zaha Hadid's Haydar Aliev Cultural Centre in Baku.



Roshanak Aminelahi's *Warrior Riding*, 2016. Courtesy Ayyam Gallery
Roshanak Aminelahi, Gordafarid and Mohannad Orabi, Ripples

Ayyam Gallery, Alserkal Avenue, Dubai

September 13 to October 26

Ayyam Gallery's September offerings feature a new body of work by the Dubai-based Syrian artist, Mohannad Oraibi and the first solo show for the Dubai-based Iranian painter Roshanak Aminelahi. Oraibi's paintings of children represent a continuation of the naive style of painting he first explored in his *Mu'allaqat* exhibition at Ayyam Gallery Beirut in 2016 and not only refer to a sense of lost innocence while looking back to life in Syria before the war but to the sense of loss that comes with exile and displacement. Aminelahi's large scale works include monumental portraits of mounted warriors, enigmatic women and birds that look further back, to epic story cycles such as the *Shahnameh*, and to a celebrated female warrior Gordafarid, whose legendary prowess is echoed in the contemporary deeds of Kurdish women who have taken up arms against ISIL.

Amir Khojasteh and Philip Mueller, Good Face and Incurable Flaws

Carbon 12, Dubai

September 13 to October 31, 2017

One of two shows opening in Dubai that are investigating portraiture, for the other see *Behind the Portrait* at Gulf Photo Plus, *Good Face and Incurable Flaws* features the work of 2 artists who are ostensibly headed in very different directions. Phillip Mueller's Renaissance-inspired Apollonian portraits appear to stand in stark contrast to Amir Khojasteh's more Dionysian grotesques, but both address the question that sit at the heart of the genre, what is it that really makes a telling human likeness?

Pouran Jinch, The Line of March

The Third Line, Dubai

September 13 to October 21

Reflecting on the widespread conflict that defines contemporary politics and the creeping and quiet militarisation of everyday life, from the games we play and the words and language we use, Pouran Jinch's *The Line of March* receives its world premiere in Dubai. A playful meditation on abstraction and minimalism from both a North Atlantic and a Middle Eastern perspective, the work combines traditional calligraphy and embroidery, drawing and sculpture to exquisite effect.



Daniel Gustav Cramer, Owl (1932 / 1938), 2017, 1 of 2 found photographs, glass plates, nails, 34 x 58 cm. Courtesy Grey Noise gallery
Daniel Gustav Cramer and Joana Escoval, Sand

Grey Noise, Dubai

September 23 to October 28, 2017

Umer Butt's shows at Grey Noise are always distinguished by the care that goes into their curation - this collaboration with Portugal's Vera Cortês Art Agency has been more than a year in the planning - and by a commitment to work that is as aesthetically austere as it is intellectually demanding.

The first exhibition of Cramer and Escoval's work in the UAE, *Sand* takes its name from the first work in the exhibition, a show that features works that reflect on environments, atmospheres and perceptions that are connected by ideas as much as subject matter or media.

Behind the Portrait

Gulf Photo Plus, Dubai

Opens September 13

In our image-saturated world, virtually every meaningful moment from birth to death is captured on camera, be it on video, mobile, digital, or film. Never before have we been surrounded by such a superabundance of imagery but the irony is that the more image-saturated our lives become, the less time we devote to actively looking at those images.

Featuring portraits accompanied by short stories and explanations, *Behind the Portrait* is designed to take us back to the stories and the emotions behind the exhibited images, raising questions about the eloquence of pictures, both still and moving, and their relationship with their subjects, with us and with words.

Massoud Arabshahi, Early Works from the Azari Collection

Lawrie Shabibi

September 23 to November 2

Featuring 25 works on paper, card, carbon paper and foil, all made between the years 1960-1964, this exhibition surveys Massoud Arabshahi's formative works at a key moment, not just in the artist's career but in the development of Iranian Modernism.

At a time when artists in Iran were searching for a new visual language to connect the country's traditions with modernity, Arabshahi looked to the ancient reliefs of Mesopotamia and Persia for inspiration. The works on show are all taken from the private collection of the Azari family, formed by an Iranian-American couple who were resident in Tehran between 1959 and 1964.

M Pravat, Liquid States

1x1 Gallery, Dubai

September 14 to October 31, 2017

A more than decade-long investigation of the layers of construction and demolition, permanence and disintegration, detritus and decay that comprise Pravat's immediate architectural and urban surroundings in Delhi, this show uses architectural features and the traces left on objects to investigate the relationship between Delhi's urban fabric and its memories, real and otherwise.

Pierre Dunoyer, vers le tableau

Jean-Paul Najjar Foundation, Dubai

September 13 to October 26, 2017

Part of the job of a tableau, an object whose purpose is to focus the mind and to encourage contemplation, is to put the viewer in a situation where they not only question the purpose and meaning of the scene in front of them, but their own existence. Such is the purpose of Pierre Dunoyer's abstract works, which he describes as tableaux rather than paintings.

Theatre of the Absurd

Green Art Gallery, Dubai

September 13 to October 28, 2017

Including works by six artists from France, Russia, Spain, Brazil and India, Theatre of the Absurd features paintings and sculptures by the French-Syrian artist Farah Atassi that nod to the early 20th century Modernist avant-garde, sculptures by Hemali Bhuta that investigate liminal states and spaces and new works from Nika Neelova's *Lemniscate* series, which investigates the vestigial remains of humanity in a post-human world. The result is a show that examines the relationships between art and architecture and between people and the spaces they inhabit.

Thameur Mejri, Heretic Spaces

Galerie Elmarsa, Dubai

September 13 to October 19, 2017

The first solo exhibition by the 35-year-old Tunisian artist Thameur Mejri in the UAE, *Heretic Spaces* contains drawings and paintings that explores themes of masculinity and violence with a particular focus on North Africa and the Middle East. Mejri's canvases are grotesque spaces where bodies are mangled, mutilated and dismembered and then displayed alongside the detritus of everyday life while drawing on the visual references taking from the language of newsreels, film and the history of art. There are links to Goya and Bacon to be drawn, but the brutal influence of current affairs is much more immediate.

Created Realities

Custot Gallery Dubai

September 27 to October 28, 2017

A group exhibition of photography from the last and the current century, *Created Realities* features work by photographers such as Sebastião Salgado, Rene Burri, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Rhona Bitners that focuses on human activity. The result is a global range of photographs from some of the undoubted masters of the medium that explore humans' interactions with each other and their environment, as well as their impact on both and the marks and traces that are left behind.

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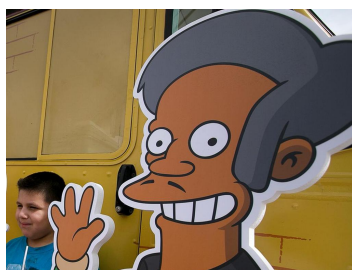
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