

FEATURED ([HTTPS://SELECTIONSARTS.COM/CATEGORY/FEATURED/](https://selectionsarts.com/category/featured/))
FROM PRINT ([HTTPS://SELECTIONSARTS.COM/CATEGORY/FROM-PRINT/](https://selectionsarts.com/category/from-print/))
FEBRUARY 14, 2024

ARTISTIC UNITY: ART IN THE UAE: INTERVIEW WITH MOHAMED AHMED IBRAHIM

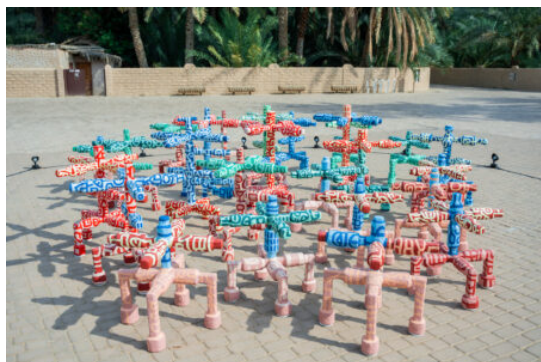
by SELECTIONS MAGAZINE ([HTTPS://SELECTIONSARTS.COM/AUTHOR/SELECTIONS-MAGAZINE/](https://selectionsarts.com/author/selections-magazine/))

facebook.com/sharer.php?selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/
twitter.com/intent/tweet?text=https://selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/
www.pinterest.com/pin/selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/
www.linkedin.com/sharing/share-offsite/?url=https://selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/
[facebook.com/sharer.php?selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/](https://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/)
[instagram.com/sharer.php?selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/](https://www.instagram.com/sharer.php?selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/)
[\(mailto:selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/\)](mailto:selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/)

selectionsarts.com/artistic-the-uae-interview-with-mohamed-ibrahim/
We use cookies to personalise content and ads, to provide social media features and to analyse our traffic. We also share information about your use of our site with our social media, advertising and analytics partners who may combine it with other information that you've provided to them or that they've collected from your use of their services

This article appeared in The Artistic Unity Issue #67 that was dedicated to the art scene in the UAE in which we unravel the threads of unity by exploring the perspectives of various stakeholders within the UAE's art community. Through insightful interviews with galleries, art institutions, and auction houses, a vivid mosaic emerged, depicting how unity has been woven into the fabric of the art scene.

Rima Nasser: How do you perceive the concept of artistic unity within the UAE's art scene, and how has it evolved from the 1990s to the present?



Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, Mesquite Tree, 2020, Cardboard, papier-mâché, leaves, grass, coffee, tea, tobacco, 138 x 83 x 43 cm.
Photography by Ismail Noor. Courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi.

Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim: When we talk about culture in Emirati society, art is always part of this culture. Emirati society is distinguished by the exchange and acceptance of other cultures, which naturally led to the great influence brought to the Emirates by these different cultures. The audible culture, or music, was influenced, for example, by African, Indian, Persian, etc., mainly by civilisations that surrounded the Emirates and interacted with it. Returning to art, it is a new culture that has entered society in the modern era, not only in the Emirates but typically worldwide, knowing that this visual culture is the product of European culture. Therefore, artists, whether local or visitors, Arabs or foreigners, were automatically influenced by this Emirati visual culture, and inevitably added to it. This, from my point of view, created a visual cultural somewhat different from others, specifically European, in the world. There are Arab artists who founded the artistic movement in the Emirates, including the late artist Abdullatif Al Smoudi, as well as Yaser Dweik, Abdul Karim AL-Sayed and Ahmed Haidush, not to mention the critics who visited the local scene and influenced it, including Professor Asaad Arabi, who had a great appreciation, scientifically and intellectually, for the local Emirati art scene. And being one of the first generation and first advocates of the artistic movement, I was truly influenced by these artists as much as I influenced them, and this facilitated the young artists' acceptance of other cultures or other visual practices.

RN: Your representation at the Venice Biennale is a remarkable achievement. How do you believe this global platform has impacted the recognition and development of the UAE's contemporary art scene on the world stage?

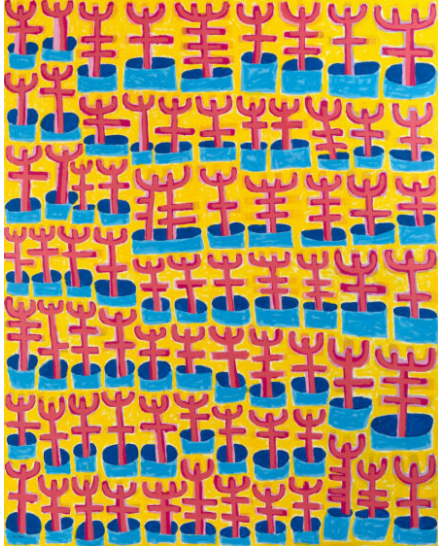


Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, Al Ain Oasis
Installation, Al Ain Oasis Farm, Abu Dhabi,
UAE, 2023. Courtesy of the artist, Abu Dhabi
Art and Lawrie Shabibi.

MAI: This event is considered one of the oldest biennales and a prominent global platform. It offers the essence of the world's visual experiences, whether from artists, critics or from all segments of the world interested in art. This creates some kind of challenge – to be or not to be – whereas in order to be you must We use cookies to personalise content and ads, to provide social media features and to analyse our usage. We also share information about your use of our site with our social media, advertising and analytics partners who may combine it with other information that you've provided to them or that they've collected from your use of their services. I feel a great responsibility, both

me to interact with all the producers of visual culture from around the world, an experience that placed us all side by side. This is where the importance of the Venice Biennale lies, offering an opportunity that would not have existed without the support of governmental and private institutions, which creates a driving force for the artist himself to self-develop and engage with others. Whatever it is, there are individual differences, which reminds me of the Chinese proverb that says: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink". So, this finally depends on the vision of the artist himself and his vision of artistic discourse.

RN: Collaboration with other artists often fosters creativity and growth. Can you share instances where you've collaborated with other artists in the UAE, and how have these collaborative efforts influenced and enriched your own artistic work?



Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, My Garden's Details No. 1, 2021, Acrylic on canvas, 250 x 200 cm. Photo by Ismail Noor of Seeing Things. Courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi.

MAI: Frankly, I love every artist who produces a beautiful work of art. In my early days, I was influenced by the great names who shaped the global artistic movements, such as Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and Mark Rothko. Through them, the spark was ignited in the artistic movement. Going back to modern artists, it is now easier to read a work of art. Nonetheless, you do not need to only understand the artwork, but rather the artist behind this work. This is because today, in our modern era, it has become possible for the artist to use any existing tool to produce the artwork, which has generated a kind of ease, making it insufficient.

We need to recognise the artist and hear him talk about the artwork in order to understand it. Many times, I am dazzled by a work of art, but when I meet the artist or initiate a dialogue, I discover the fragility of this artist. In the modern era, this is what I call occasion art, that is, when the artist produces only for a personal exhibition or a specific occasion. Producing artwork has become self-sustaining, as the artist produces only for himself. After all, a work of art must be authentic and sincere. Additionally, I am influenced by the environment, by the area in which I live, by my city of Khor Fakkan, the nature of its mountains, the sea and its geography. I always spend a lot of time in its beautiful setting, especially in January when I go on a solo trip to the mountains for about ten days. And this is from where my colourful works are born, in the proximity of the mountains where these colours are found in stones, plants, birds.

RN: In what ways do you envision the UAE's art scene as an ever-evolving masterpiece that captivates, provokes, and inspires audiences, both locally and internationally?

MAI: Being one of the founders of the artistic movement in the Emirates, I believe that whenever we talk about art in any culture, it needs a collection of several elements, including the institutes, the observer, the gallerist, the collector, etc., and not only the artist. These elements are what generate the art scene in any society. This is what creates a visual environment, thus supporting the presence of today's young artists where tools are easily accessible to them, unlike our days when we struggled to find a gallery, for example. I am very optimistic about the Emirati cultural scene following my interaction with young artists, not only Emiratis but also from diverse cultures. And as we said before, the beauty of our society lies in its acceptance of all cultures, and these are powerful tools that distinguish Emirati society where dialogue can be carried out smoothly with others. This is the message of art, the message to break these boundaries because art is human speech, everywhere in the world. I would be happy to discover an artist, for example, in North America, whose language is close to mine. This makes me feel that as an artist, I am not alone in this world.

We use cookies to personalise content and ads, to provide social media features and to analyse our traffic. We also share information about your use of our site with our social media, advertising and analytics partners who may combine it with other information that you've provided to them or that they've collected from your use of their services



Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, Untitled, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 82 x 52 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Lawrie Shabibi. Photo by Ismail Noor.

ABOUT MOHAMED AHMED IBRAHIM

As a pioneering force in the UAE's artistic movement, Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim holds a significant position within the country's cultural history, including contributions to global platforms like the Venice Biennale.

[PREVIOUS ARTICLE](#)

< [The Custodian: Interview with Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi](https://selectionsarts.com/the-custodian-interview-with-sultan-sooud-al-qassemi/)
(<https://selectionsarts.com/the-custodian-interview-with-sultan-sooud-al-qassemi/>).

We use cookies to personalise content and ads, to provide social media features and to analyse our traffic. We also share information about your use of our site with our social media advertising and analytics partners who may combine it with other information that you've provided to them or that they've collected from your use of their services.

[READ](#) [AGENDA](https://selectionsarts.com/agenda/) ([HTTPS://SELECTIONSARTS.COM/AGENDA/](https://selectionsarts.com/agenda/)), [GALLERIES](https://selectionsarts.com/category/galleries/) ([HTTPS://SELECTIONSARTS.COM/CATEGORY/GALLERIES/](https://selectionsarts.com/category/galleries/)), [CULTURAL NARRATIVES](https://www.selectionsarts.com/cultural-narratives/) ([HTTPS://WWW](https://www.selectionsarts.com/cultural-narratives/)