

Suzy Sikorski Highlights Art Dubai 2021

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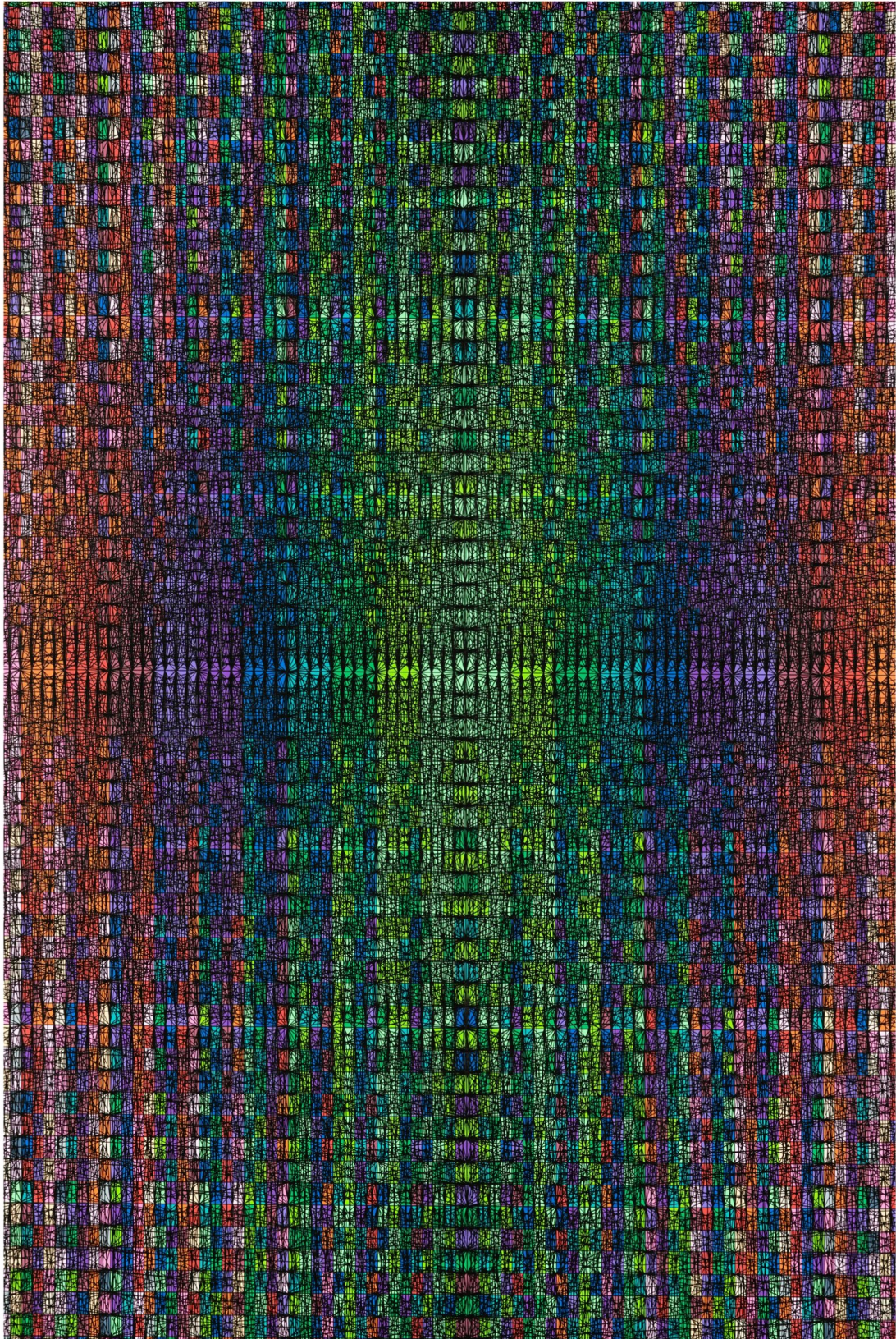
April 11, 2021

DUBAI- Art Dubai's 14th edition took place at the infamous Dubai International Financial Centre between March 29th – April 3rd. During which, **artmejo** partnered up with Mid East Art's very own **Suzy Sikorski** who walked around the exhibition halls doing what she loves, collecting stories.

Suzy picked 10 of her favourite works from **Art Dubai** and is sharing their stories with **artmejo**. Upon “*reviewing my selection on the whole,*” she said, she “*was wholeheartedly attracted to natural forms, notions of isolation and separation, and the meditative experiences. Quite timely given these days!*”

Here are **Suzy**'s picks:

Nima Nabavi:



Third Line Gallery, Nima Nabavi, Pigment Paint on Linen, 165.1 cm x 83.82 cm

I had the chance to meet Nima Nabavi at the fair, discussing the largest work he's ever worked on—as part of the pieces he completed during the pandemic. Understanding his complex process using mainly pens, paint and rulers, **Nabavi** focuses on geometric abstraction and its connection to the natural world, with drawings and paintings that are heavily layered, grid-driven manifestations of imagined, ordered structures. The

tessellated construct of the work is both rhythmic and meditative in process and experience. Quite refreshing to 'get lost' within the inner mechanic of the exacting composition, and equally as meditative in process for the artist!

Safwan Dahoul:



Ayyam Gallery, Safwan Dahoul, Dream 180, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200cm

Am I still dreaming? **Safwan Dahoul's** ongoing Dream series since the 1980s has explored the physical and psychological effects of alienation, solitude, and longing – a part of us that has been fully materialized during this time in quarantine. The recurring protagonist in these works are caught in a moment of paralysis and stagnation, overcome by the overwhelming subconscious in an event of mourning, estrangement, or political conflict. 'Dream 180' is part of **Dahoul's** recent technique painting the subject from an actual crumbled piece of paper depicting the face. The fragments and shards of the face, and rigid sharp impressions within it seem as if the female is floating underwater, playing with our imagination whether it is a reflection or the real depiction.

Anish Kapoor:



Galleria Continua, Anish Kapoor, *Random Triangle Mirror*, 2019, Courtesy the artist and Galleria Continua

Stand in line for taking this selfie! *Random Triangle Mirror* one of the hottest works to snap a picture of ourselves in tessellating expansion. **Kapoor** is one of the most acclaimed international artists of today, devoting his oeuvre to exploring the 'void' within his sculptural pieces and installations. This elegant sculpture combines simple materials, intricate geometric shape, and the organic curved disc form. **Kapoor's** use of mirror is both personal and at the same time impersonal given the striations and splinter of the real, in a way inviting us to touch and experience a different world and accept our sense of self as part of a larger universe. Immediately in this piece, we are transported into a fragmented reflection of ourselves—swallowed and encapsulated by the artist, our striated representations explode onto the space as we embrace metaphysical polarities of presence and absence, concealment and revelation.

Ibrahim El Dessouki:



Hafez Gallery, Ibrahim El Dessouki, Series of Gated Communities, pentptych 3/5, 2020, Oil and oil bars on clear primed canvas, 170 × 150 cm





Commissioned pots by Haytham Hedaya for El Dessouki's Gated Communities

Ibrahim El Dessouki's paintings combines a unique ability to capture the hyper realistic in his painting style as he presents the inner soul of Egypt. His works are divided between indoor and outdoor compositions, the former capturing the beautiful realities of everyday objects, while the latter captures breathtaking landscapes and beautiful women strolling through the neighborhood. This particular work combines both for merging natural plants within the indoor and residential spaces. Depicting two kinds of cactus in beautifully painted menagerie of glazed pots, the piece showcases his deft ability to isolate negative space, and subtle manipulation of shadow and light in the reflections within the pots. As a commission, **Haytham Hedaya**, an Egyptian ceramist artist, produced a variety of pots, with many different shapes following a specific color palette and glazes. Elaborately painted and highly meticulous with several iterations and layers of paint, the piece exudes a sense of softness in the shine and texture of the pots, despite the harshness of the plants' natural properties; soft and curved forms meet harsh rigidity.

Omar Ba:



Omar Ba, image courtesy of Galerie Templon

This stunning work by Omar Ba is explosive in the artist's figurative and decorative styles, inviting us into the surreal scenes of the Senegalese artist in both organic patterns and political elements. Splitting his time between Dakar and Geneva, **Ba** examines the traditional folklore and naturalist scenes of Senegal, while also building on larger

discussions connecting histories Europe and Africa. This work in particular was from the *Anomaly* series just exhibited at Galerie Templon and is one of the only works depicting his self portrait. **Ba** is presented in a suit of the Western culture, and at the same time is submerged within a naturalistic scene inundated with flora and fauna of Senegal that overwhelm the composition. The work is both heavily textured in material and depiction, produced by mixing oil, gouache and crayon and delicately applied china ink with rough, readymade surfaces.

Souad Abdelrassoul:



Circle Art Agency, Souad Abdelrassoul, The Laura Flower, 2021, Acrylic on canvas, 178 x 177.5cm

Souad and her husband, the acclaimed artist **Saleh Al Mur** were the dynamic duo displayed at Circle Art Agency's booth this fair. This particular piece by **Souad** struck of chord in me, both for its timeliness in today's isolation, but also in recognizing the void and sense of separation within any of our relationships today. Exploring African figurative art, her subjects depict folkloric faces and examine the interactions between people,

animals and plants, while simultaneously embracing the interior portraiture traditions of European painting. Are we seeing a couple in reality, or is it a figment of one of the sitter's imagination? The divide between the couple through the plant in the central axis, is quite literally separating the two sitters that are contrasted in figurative elements. **Souad's** careful attention to detail is met with conceptual rigor; the transparency of her white clothing, literally as if she is ghost-like, is met with the male figure who is completely saturated in dark browns.

Gouider Triki:



Galerie Elmarsa, Gouider Triki (Tunisian, b. 1947), Ballet dans le desert, 2000, Gouache on paper, 53.3 x 38.2 cm

I was absorbed into the world of Tunisian artist Gouider Triki in *Ballet in the Desert* for its playfulness in form and color and sense of organized chaos. Presented with the delicate work on paper, I am overcome with an overwhelming soothing meditative state despite the overall cacophony of shapes, corrugated and staccato lines that inundate the composition. In his works, figurative elements and mystical symbols are drawn from Islamic and Berber traditions. Pulsating colors and rhythmic lines are met with figurative characters that appear as if animals, humanlike, or ghosts, bordering on magical and mystical symbols and floating within a dreamlike and imaginative state. Trained as a painter and engraver, today the artist splits his time between farming, herding and painting in Tunisia.

Nabil Nahas:



Agial Art & Saleh Barakat Gallery, Nabil Nahas, Fractal series, 2020, Acrylic on canvas, 51 x 47cm

This is a beautiful 'bite size' *Fractal* work from the Lebanese artist Nabil Nahas, its relatively small size compared to the much larger pieces that open a window into an underwater world of tropical coral reefs and natural landscape that are created out of ground pumice and acrylic. I love these smaller fractal works in their ability to feel as if 'regenerated' from his larger works that measure nearly 2 meters wide. Variations of tone and layered surfaces appear as if they are growing with biomorphic shapes with bright and deep blues and oranges, becoming a representation of the world in microcosmic scale that are based on Fractals. The theory of fractal geometry was first formulated in the 1970s by **Benoit Mandelbrot**, describing random events in nature derivative of departing from the ideal Euclidean geometry; finding these patterns in rough or fragmented geometric shapes that are split into parts, each of which is approximately a reduced size copy of the whole.

Afifa Aleiby:



Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Afifa Aleiby, *Casta Diva*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 100 x 90 cm, Courtesy of the Artist/Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

A captivating solo dedicated to the Iraqi artist Afifa Aleiby and her recent works was on display at Kristin Hjellegjerde's booth. Here we are transported into **Afifa**'s world of beautiful depictions of female characters. Studying her formal training at the Surikov Institute, **Aleiby** lived between Aden, Moscow and Florence, and presently in the Netherlands. Inspired by iconic Renaissance painting and religious icons and social realism, women and the female figure are a recurring figure in her works. Here we are presented with a selection of women in graceful demure, lost in thought and far from reality, completely dominating the composition. In *Casta Diva*, there is a relative tenderness to the way this regal, beautiful woman is presented, enveloped within the deep greens, and vibrantly charged yellows. Hard-edged lines are met with supple, curvaceous forms, including her attention to detail in the way the hair rests within her hands.

Yazan Abu Salameh:



Zawyeh Gallery, Yazan Abu Salameh

In need of playing with some Lego blocks on the pavement? An assortment are encapsulated within Palestinian artist Yazan Abu Salameh's work that appear as if a petrified remnant of a childhood's past. Exploring themes of home and separation while living in Bethlemlen, **Salameh** uses a mixture of materials such as concrete, pebbles, wires in addition to Lego blocks and drawings. In this piece, smooth and rough textures of concrete are met with these playful blocks, highlighting contradictions in society and the fragility of life. Marking certain spots of the work by drawing a circle, **Salameh** presents a sort of magnifying glass, or the focal point of the piece, sharing almost miniature maps within the artist's own creative process and the lives of many Palestinians today. **Salameh** has taught art at several community centers including the Aidya Reugee Camp in Bethlemlen and participated in several workshops including scenography at Al Quds College in Beit Jala.

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Header image via Art Dubai: Suzy with Hoda Tawakol's work at Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde's booth

All image courtesy indicated in captions

SUZY SIKORSKI

Suzy Sikorski is an art researcher in Dubai running Mid East Art, a digital storytelling platform covering modern art analysis and contemporary practices. The platform's overarching emphasis seeks not only to contextualize the contemporary within regional modern art history, but also in bridging both Western and Middle Eastern audiences and thinking critically within global art historical discourse.



In 2016-2017 Suzy received a Fulbright Scholarship to the UAE and shares her research in regional publications and institutional collaborations, most recently in a digital programming with the UAE Embassy in Washington, DC. She is currently an Associate Specialist at Christie's in their Middle Eastern Modern & Contemporary art department.

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