

BEYOND EMERGING ARTISTS

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS:

LATIFA SAEED, ALMAHA JARALLA & SAMO SHALABY

CURATOR:

MORAD MONTAZAMI

MARIGNANA ARTE
DORSODURO 141
VENICE

16 APRIL – 15 MAY 2024

ABU DHABI ART BEYOND EMERGING ARTISTS

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Abu Dhabi Art is organised by the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi.
Beyond Emerging Artists (BEA) is an annual programme organised by Abu Dhabi Art.

ABOUT BEYOND EMERGING ARTISTS

Since 2017, Abu Dhabi Art's Beyond Emerging Artists (BEA) programme has provided three emerging artists in the UAE with a platform from which to develop their practice and create ambitious art projects. The artists participate in a year-long programme of workshops and studio visits with the support of a guest curator, before showcasing their works at the annual art fair in November at Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi. The curator for this edition of the BEA programme is art historian, publisher and curator Morad Montazami. BEA was designed to introduce emerging UAE-based artists to a global audience. This is Abu Dhabi Art's second iteration of BEA in Venice, and its fourth international presentation of the annual programme.

ABOUT ABU DHABI ART

Abu Dhabi Art expands beyond the notion of a traditional art fair, in placing strong emphasis on a diverse public engagement programme, including art installations and exhibitions, talks and events that take place in different locations throughout the year. The culmination of this year-long programme is the Abu Dhabi Art event in November, which provides an important sales platform for participating galleries whilst also offering these galleries an opportunity to showcase ambitious installations and site-specific works by their artists to a wide audience.

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ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND TOURISM – ABU DHABI

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) drives the sustainable growth of Abu Dhabi's culture and tourism sectors, fuels economic progress and helps achieve Abu Dhabi's wider global ambitions. By working in partnership with the organisations that define the emirate's position as a leading international destination, DCT Abu Dhabi strives to unite the ecosystem around a shared vision of the emirate's potential, coordinate effort and investment, deliver innovative solutions, and use the best tools, policies and systems to support the culture, creative and tourism industries. DCT Abu Dhabi's vision is defined by the emirate's people, heritage and landscape. We work to enhance Abu Dhabi's status as a place of authenticity, innovation, and unparalleled experiences, represented by its living traditions of hospitality, pioneering initiatives and creative thought.

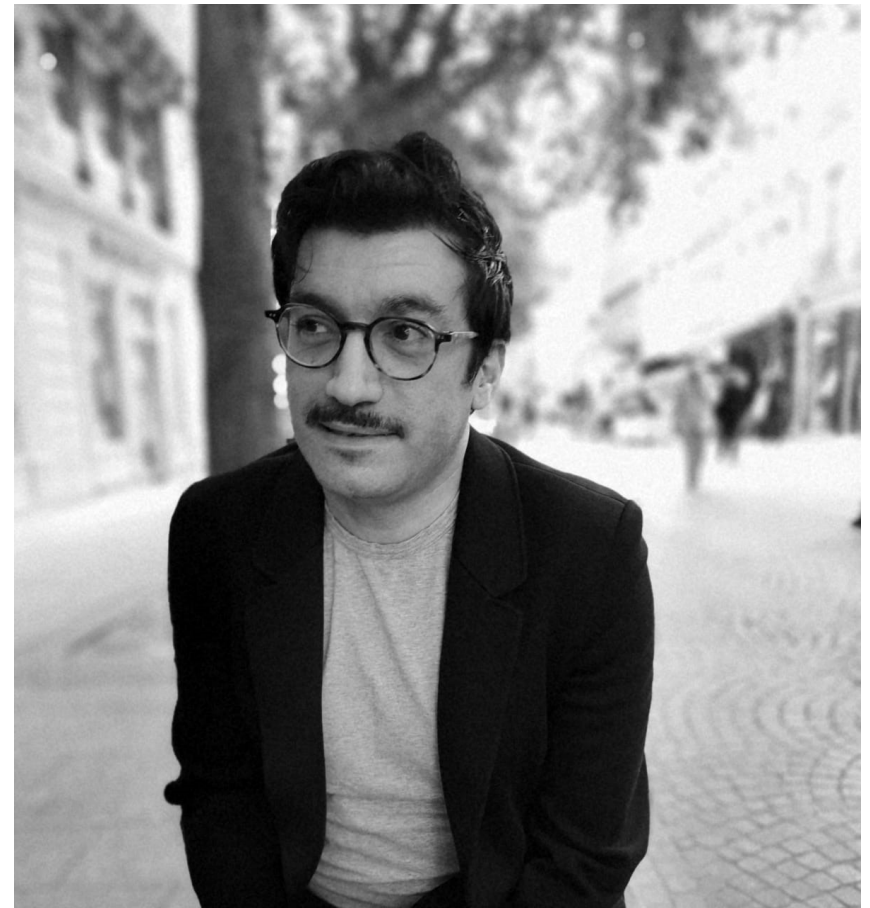
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Beyond their clear differences as individual artists, all three navigate an interesting path between historical issues and contemporary matters, private and public space, subjective and collective memory. They also embody a compelling and cosmopolitan vision of the Gulf region, in which cosmogonic phenomenon and ecological concerns exceed national borders. Although each artist presents new work that is unique and distinct, all three explore a new dialectic of daylight and nocturnal spaces. In a world where global warming brings us to reconsider our normal schedules and to invent new extensions of our lives, their installations propose a kind of third space, beyond day and night, seeking for a speculative realism.

Abu Dhabi-based Emirati visual artist (b. 1996) Almaha Jaralla's installation *Crude Memory* presents a fictional reenactment of the emblematic Al Ruwais location near Abu Dhabi and its ghostly traces in the present. The 1970s-80s architecture and housing bear a particular memory and experience of petro-modernity and cultures, which has developed between vernacular and postmodern forms. The intimate and domestic space comes across with the epic narrative of the oil industry and its economic quest. Investigating on the ruins of such forgotten heritage, she particularly looks into the remnants of plants and gardens, through radiant landscapes and lost futures.

Dubai-based Emirati visual artist (b. 1985) Latifa Saeed's installation *Dust Devils* offers a never seen before technological experience based on a fundamental cosmogonic narrative and poetics of science. Referring to the mysteries of nature, rooted in a cultural language that has evolved from the UAE's distinct desert landscape, it organises in three different devices: smoke machine, LCD screen and an electro-magnetic device. Each translates an atmospheric phenomenon that can be experienced in the desert, through various whirlpools and tornados, where water tornado, air tornado, electromagnetic sand tornado and fire tornado come together. *Dust Devils* offers a reminder of the fragility and resilience of the traditional landscape in the critical age of Anthropocene.

Dubai-based Egyptian-Palestinian visual artist (b. 1999) Samo Shalaby's installation *What Lies Beneath* unveils a theatrical and extravagant labyrinth of surreal visions inspired by various art historical movements from the Renaissance and Baroque art to the Pre-Raphaelites and Symbolism, in a contemporary reappropriation. His extremely refined and serendipitous paintings and jewels project the viewer into a beginningless and endless visual carnival, behind which lies a meditation on our multiple identities. His strategic and dramatic use of curtains as a motif in his work and for his installation in Abu Dhabi in 2023 alongside the almost metaphysical pattern of the fold function, stimulate our imagination toward a dreamscape of his making.



Morad Montazami

Director of Zamân Books & Curating, currently resident of the Villa Medici in Rome (Italy) and curator for Beyond Emerging Artists, Abu Dhabi Art 2023.



Latifa Saeed

I am excited about the opportunity to weave my narrative into the rich tapestry of Venice, a global cultural haven. For emerging artists, such opportunities are vital; they offer a global stage, fostering growth and dialogue. Visitors to Venice can expect my work to be a reflection and representation of my region's essence. I am showcasing a dissection of a natural phenomenon observed in the Gulf desert landscape under the title *Dust Devils*. In doing so I create a dialogue between nature and innovation. The experimental artworks evoke a sense of wonder and contemplation inviting viewers to explore nature's selective, intricate harmony of the four elements: air, fire, water, and earth.



Dust Devils
Installation view at Abu Dhabi Art November 2023

Dust Devils

Latifa Saeed works between installation, sculpture and design. Her environmental approach articulates different ecosystems including natural, urban and technological. Her works most often seek a specific poetics of science; inviting us to dwell between the city, the desert and the stars. Her new installation *Dust Devils*, offers a never seen before technological and sensory experience based on a fundamental cosmogonic narrative. Referring to the mysteries of nature in the age of global warming, rooted in a cultural language that has evolved from the UAE's distinct desert landscape, the installation organizes in three different devices: a smoke machine, LCD screen and an electromagnetic device. Each translates an atmospheric phenomenon that can be experienced in the desert, through various whirlpools and tornados, where water tornado, air tornado, electromagnetic sand tornado and fire tornado come together. These natural elements metaphorize in a special soundscape composed by the artist and spread at each side of the installation space. Saeed invites us into an sensory experience made of vibrations and spectral images more than anthropomorphic or recognizable representations. In doing so she presents a reminder of the fragility and resilience of the traditional landscape in the critical age of Anthropocene.



Samo Shalaby

As an artist, being invited to exhibit in Venice is both an honour and an exhilarating opportunity to showcase my work on a global stage. I'm particularly excited to present *What Lies Beneath*, my latest installation that debuted at Abu Dhabi Art in November 2023. Through a fusion of personal narratives expressed through painting, installation, antiquity, and multimedia elements, I aim to create an immersive experience that invites viewers to explore the complexities of identity and perception.

For emerging artists such as myself, platforms like this are vital spaces where we can push boundaries, challenge conventions, and offer fresh perspectives on art and culture. As a Middle Eastern artist, especially in the current socio-political climate, it's crucial to elevate diverse voices and bring them to global attention. I am grateful to the BEA platform for their support and advocacy for emerging artists, and I look forward to sharing my vision with audiences in Venice and beyond.



What Lies Beneath
Installation view at Abu Dhabi Art November 2023

What Lies Beneath

Samo Shalaby reinterprets art historical movements such as the Victorian, Pre-Raphaelite or symbolist periods, with a sense of eccentricity, magic and humour. Through painting, photography and video, his work expands into fields such as stage design, costumes, jewelry, and couture. His new installation *What Lies Beneath* unveils a theatrical and extravagant labyrinth of surreal visions, inspired by various mythologies, in a contemporary reappropriation. While his curtain paintings seem to work like theatrical devices for hiding the truth/unveiling the mask, his stage paintings comprise an infinity of interactions debunking the possibility of one single truth or history; just as his mesmerizing collection of jewels or micro-paintings divert us from a stable and grounded vision. His strategic and dramatic use of the curtains stimulates our imagination toward a dreamscape of his making, unfolding irrational and tormented visions.



Same Shataby
Fantôme Fête, 2022
Detail



Almah Jaralla

My 2023 exhibition and related artworks titled *Crude Memory* developed from an investigation of the architectural creativity that flourished in the 1970s and 80s in Abu Dhabi. In those early years Abu Dhabi was a young city and the vernacular for building houses was unburdened by past architectural tradition. It was therefore incredibly inventive, playful and authentic. My work considers how to memorialise a rapidly transforming local architecture, developed by petro-modernity. More widely, it is about how to keep the past with us. I fictionalise a particular history, that of the fishing headland Al Ruwais which was transformed into an industrial 'new town' to better serve employees of the nearby oil refinery and later, other facilities, through photographs of now abandoned domestic spaces (shown in the first iteration of this exhibition) and through these oil paintings about crude oil. The installation is a way of bringing Al Ruwais back into our time.

Showing in Venice is really interesting for me because of the history of pearl trading between our part of the world and Europe – in particular Venice. Pearl diving was crucial for our economy before the oil boom that was to change our urban fabric. As our towns and cities transform even further, how will we remember the architectural remains of our not-so distant past, that are already disappearing? Venice, like Abu Dhabi, is an island but whilst we grapple with radical change, in what seems an incredibly short time frame, Venice has suffered centuries of flooding and damage to its building and architecture. I think there are interesting conversations to be had about the architectures of both places, about the context of showing *Crude Memory* in Venice.



Almah Jaralla
Hajer, 2023
Oil on textile
90 x 90 cm

Hajer

For Jaralla, architecture is a concrete portrait of a society, one that offers her endless sources of inspiration. *Hajer* is part of a series of works that draw from the artist's own archival family portraits taken in Abu Dhabi during the 1980s. Jaralla understands these intimate portraits as a window into the essence of the city during a period of rapid social and physical transformation in the Gulf. Jaralla's work highlights the fashions and familial dynamics of that era, a moment when parks and beaches were key physical spaces that shaped the community, and when large family outings were commonplace. The artist suggests that the pre-digital era was a time when in-person contact, time spent as a collective and inter-generational bonds were more prolific than the individualism that she witnesses today. Jaralla's work establishes a sense of connection to the past while foregrounding the dramatic evolution of the city that she inhabits today.

Crude Memory

Almah Jaralla works between installation art, painting and photography, reflecting on the history of the UAE and the Gulf, with emphasis on local architecture that oscillates between vernacular and postmodern forms. Her new installation *Crude Memory* presents an (almost) fictional re-enactment of the emblematic Al Ruwais location near Abu Dhabi. As in a science-fiction movie or an archaeological site, one loses sense of the spatial and temporal borders defining our past, present and future. Through Jaralla's painting work, the intimate and domestic space alludes to the epic narrative of the oil industry and its economic quest and radiant landscapes. Suggesting an abandoned territory, close to become ruins, the installation translates a sense of nostalgia.



ALMAHA JARALLA
CRUDE MEMORY

المها جارالله الذاكرة الخام

المها جارالله هي فنانة عربية من مواليد 1985 في دبي، الإمارات العربية المتحدة. درست الفنون الجميلة في جامعة نيويورك في نيويورك، حيث حصلت على بكالوريوس الفنون الجميلة في عام 2010. عملت في مجال التصميم الداخلي لمدة عامين قبل أن تتركه لتتفرغ للفن. تتميز أعمالها بالتركيز على الذاكرة والتاريخ، حيث تستخدم مواد خام مثل الخشب والخرق والفضة في تركيباتها. تتناول أعمالها مواضيع تتعلق بالهجرة والتراث الثقافي، وتعتبرها من الفنانين الشباب الواعدين في المشهد الفني العربي المعاصر.

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