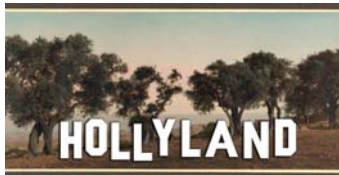


# daily Canvas

21-22 NOVEMBER 2019 | ISSUE 2 | ABU DHABI ART EDITION



## Slow and Steady

Opening sales pick up after a slow start, revealing a robust local offering

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## When Picasso went to Palestine

We discuss Khaled Hourani's work with Zawyeh gallery

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## Islamic Art with a Contemporary Twist

The new Al Burda Endowment showcases the latest talent at ADA

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## ALL EYES ON CHINA

While artistic director Jérôme Sans can enter a room and own it, it's the debuted works from China that stole the show at Abu Dhabi Art's *New Horizons: China Today*.

Our encounter began with a hurried invitation into what curator Jérôme Sans called his "secret room". The private viewing space, set back from the walkways of the fair enclosed one of the more provocative works; Xu Zhen's *Alien 2* (2017-2018). The other works of Sans' selection for *New Horizons: China Today*, however, remain in full view.

For Abu Dhabi Art, the renowned curator, art critic, and co-founder of Palais de Tokyo, introduced ten contemporary Chinese artists that he claims encapsulate the region's relentless momentum. "There's a clear-sightedness of expression and rich dynamism that's only just being acknowledged," says Sans. "When I was invited to curate this show I said that these two emerging countries have so much to share that no one can fully comprehend yet. It's a huge platform for dialogue."

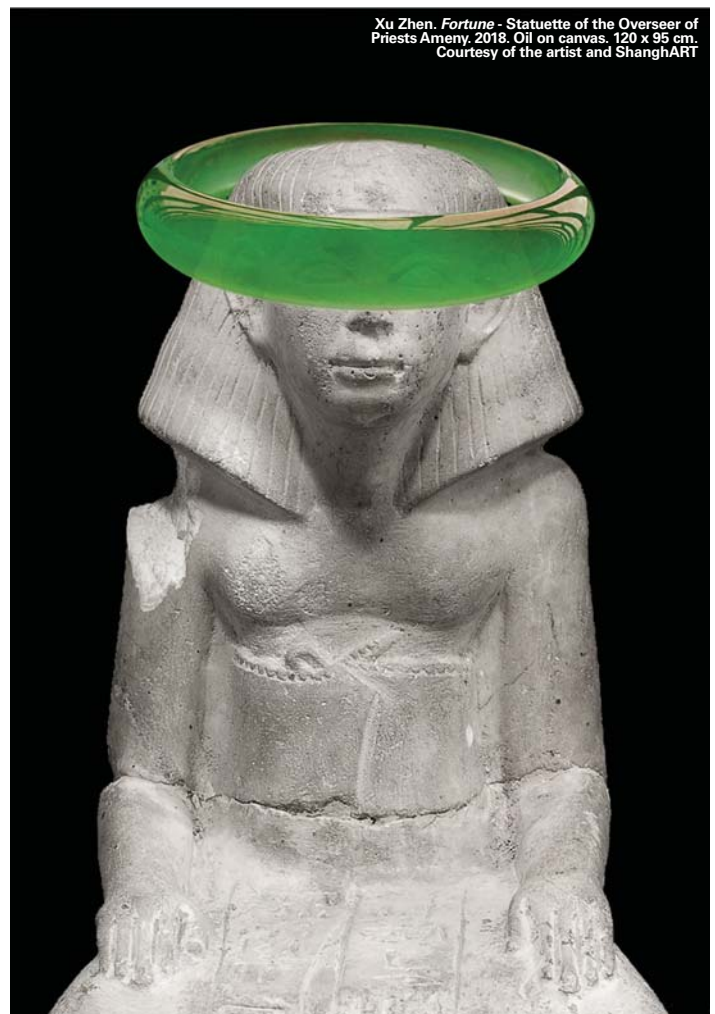
Li Qing's multimedia practice, for example, oscillates between global and local dialogues. Two pieces on display, *View From The Pangu Hotel* (2017-19), and *Curve and Straight* (2017-19), invite the viewer to gaze through the artist's 'windows for observation'. Qing's wooden frames, recovered from the streets of Shanghai are re-painted in artificial shades of turquoise and fuchsia. Through Qing's intervention, they become portals into tangible and imagined realities – the collages inside critique the universal burden of consumerism and the hypocrisy of beauty via a local lens. "I introduce multiple perspectives through the imposition of digital images uploaded by social media users as is the case with the manipulated Bird's Nest stadium image in *View From The Pangu Hotel*," says the artist.

While Qing's practice unpicks human habits, for Lu Chao, groups of people become ominous masses. Haunting and morbid, in *Black Light No. 4*, (2016) bodiless heads form a worm-like trail writhing through a forest, expanding endlessly across the 2.5-metre canvas. *Mineral Ancestry* (2019) by Li Shurui, on the other hand, is more optimistic. The artists codifies seminal moments in human evolution with boldly coloured, acidic spheres, or what she describes as "black holes" set against a backdrop of purple rice paper. Shurui, typically works in large-scale format and

**"There's a clear-sightedness of expression and rich dynamism that's only just being acknowledged."**

is fascinated by light and its spectrum. "Nature was man's first religion," she says. Across the wall her circles of varying colours and textures form chronological markers of time and space. At one point, a cluster of blue spheres mirror the colour codes once imposed upon the Chinese population to remove individual thought. "Right now, we're returning to nature," she says. "We're seeking natural foods and a connection

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Xu Zhen, *Fortune - Statuette of the Overseer of Priests Ameny*, 2018. Oil on canvas. 120 x 95 cm. Courtesy of the artist and ShanghaiART

## MAKING IT RAIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

In terms of international galleries, interestingly they seemed to mostly report selling artists from the region. Galleria Continua sold two pieces so far, including Moataz Nasr's matchsticks on wood titled *Burning* (2019) between \$55,000 and \$80,000. Istanbul-based Galerist sold three works to a private collector from Burcu Yağcıoğlu's pencil on paper series *Acaibu'l Herberium* (2019). Officine dell'Immagine sold two pieces to a private international collector, with one of Jalal Sepehr's photographs from the *Red Zone* series (2013-2015) going for \$8,500. The other sold work reached a sale price of roughly \$17,500. Hong Kong's Hanart TZ reported a number of reserved pieces across their exhibition, but without any final sales to date.

Even with the sparsely populated gallery floor for the first public day, traditional mediums of painting drew in some of the big buyers – the mixed media and sculptural works sold but for lower price ranges. It seems as if the capital's appetite is evolving, as the sales reflect, and as Abu Dhabi Art continues to grow. As for tomorrow, it brings the promise of sunshine and increased footfall over the weekend. [▲](#)

**Bernhard Buhmann. *Glorious Bastards*. 2019. Oil on canvas. 200 x 290 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Carbon 12**



## FRESH FACES

Dubai-based Green Art Gallery's bold approach to showcasing lesser known talent occupies both ends of the generational divide.

As a regular participant of FIAC, Frieze London and Liste, in addition to appearances at The Armory Show, Artissima and Art Basel, Green Art Gallery is active on the international fair circuit. With a savvy and accessible curatorial approach, it embraces under-represented artists and is mindful in selecting who to showcase when, and to which audience. In the case of Abu Dhabi Art this year, the gallery is bringing Iranian-American artist Kamrooz Aram and Emirati artist Afra Al Dhaheeri, while its Alserkal Avenue base exhibits works by Lebanese sculptor Chaouki Choukini (on view until 11 January).

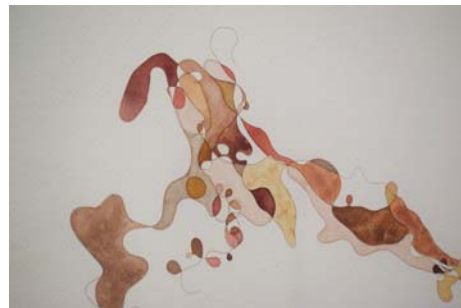
One of the first galleries in the city, the space's markedly modern, minimal installation approach is often immersive or relational, and

the gallery isn't afraid to spotlight newcomers, such as Al Dhaheeri, at premier platforms. "I'm not interested in 'being the first', but I'm certainly not interested in showing artists who are always part of the same conversation," says gallery director Yasmin Atassi. "I am very much drawn to artists who make me scratch my head and have layers of complexity."

The gallery aims to stimulate intellectual discourse through delicate provocation. In the main space, Choukini's unique – and largely overlooked – sculptural language unfolds in an encounter with materiality, landscape and the human imprint. "His work feels very contemporary even when it was made in the 1980s," explains Atassi of Choukini's oeuvre, which readily queries timelessness versus contemporaneity and craftsmanship versus 'high art'.

Meanwhile, the work at ADA considers practices of drawing. You'll find Aram's structured and decorative compositions in muted colours and gestures as well as Al Dhaheeri's organic, undulating line drawings in fleshy hues, which trace out wisps of her own hair. The presentation engages with the act of drawing and its increasingly performative role, serving as a means to materialise the invisible. "When we were discussing the fair's *Focus* section, *Drawing, Tracing, Mapping* with curator Omar Kholeif, it was clear that he was thinking about drawing not as a technique but more as a tracing and mark-marking mechanism," Atassi remarks.

This cerebral thread can be found throughout the gallery's generationally diverse artists irrespective of where they are in their career. While Aram belongs to the gallery's stable of artists, Atassi outlines how recent joiner Al Dhaheeri's preoccupation with time and mutability, coupled with the art scene's return to drawing, makes the timing just right to present her work to a wider audience. Meanwhile, Choukini was an amazing discovery, as someone whose artistic output was largely unknown. "I was looking at an old book in our library, saw his name and immediately started looking online but found very little information. I flew to Paris to see him and came across this incredible body of work piling up, revealing a deeply hermetic artist who still had a lot to say." The steady burn of Choukini's career has been encapsulated in a tome – a collaboration with Kaph Publishing. "Not only does Chaouki finally have a monograph under his name, but Kevin Jones' wonderful essay has managed to truly reveal who Chaouki Choukini is, in all his sensitivity and sharpness," Atassi continues.



**Afra Al Dhaheeri. *Hair Drawing 4*. 2019. Hair and watercolor on paper. 26 x 36 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Green Art Gallery**

**"I am very much drawn to artists who make me scratch my head and have layers of complexity being acknowledged."**

"I hope this will serve as a valuable tool for scholars and historians to further develop that conversation."

Working to broaden the discourse around under-the-radar artists, Atassi adds, "One thing you can certainly say – and I hope think – about Green Art, is that our programme is dynamic and different, but still relevant to our region and times." [▲](#)



**Kamrooz Aram. *Ornament for Indifferent Architecture*. 2017. Oil, wax, oil crayon and pencil on canvas. 213 x 182 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Green Art Gallery**

## FROM EINDHOVEN TO RAMALLAH

At Abu Dhabi Art, Zawyeh Gallery presents five prominent Palestinian artists – Wafa Hourani, Nabil Anani, Sliman Mansour and Tayseer Barakat along with Khaled Hourani. The latter caught our attention for his work laden with sociopolitical complexities.

Khaled Hourani's 2011 *Picasso in Palestine* project brought Picasso's 1943 iconic *Buste de Femme* to Ramallah in a collaboration between Eindhoven's Van Abbemuseum and International Academy of Art Palestine. This work is particularly significant because, at the time, it spoke of the Palestinian plight through the female form, which, post-Nabka, symbolised homeland, culture and identity. The journey was also intended as a solution to the heavy restrictions that affect the access to resources, explains Ziad Anani, founder of Zawyeh Gallery, and to instigate a Modernist discourse about building a contemporary art scene – confined for the past 30 years by controls on creation and social gatherings.

Yet the project turned into a two-year process wherein socio-political complexities illuminated the fickle relationship between art and power. What should have been a standard procedure for a loan was mired in new legal frameworks inextricably linked to the volatile territory of the West Bank and its concomitant complications with regards to transportation and insurance.

Zawyeh Gallery revisits questions of power via Hourani's probing of art transportation mechanisms and the obstacles that alienate populations. Complicated exponentially as the loan was requested through a terrain deemed

a "risk environment" with – at the time – no museum to host the work, it also necessitated navigating Israeli-West Bank protocols. The paper trail, which proved more challenging than raising the \$200,000 funding needed for the project, was exhibited as an artwork at Jerusalem's Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art. While a sensational set of circumstances incurred equally sensationalised readings, it paved the way for building systems to jumpstart a 'normalised', rather than improvised, cultural infrastructure.

"Hourani succeeded in highlighting the exceptional nature of the Palestinian reality and the many layers of restrictions," says Anani. "Displaying such a painting in Palestine put theory into practice and tested the waters. After all, it was the different representations of power that allowed the artwork to reach the exhibition hall and be enjoyed." But how relevant is it in an environment that lacks the foundation to contextualise it? "It was the only time a priceless painting was exhibited in Palestine to an audience who never dreamt of seeing one – some thought it was a joke or a trick," he recalls. Anani says that his aim in bringing a work with such a storied history to an art fair is to spread awareness about the significance of Hourani's project.



Khaled Hourani. *Picasso in Palestine*. 2011. Courtesy of the artist and Zawyeh Gallery

"It's important that audiences know the difficulties faced working in arts in restricted places subjected to colonialism," he continues. "Many in Palestine cannot travel to access art. So why not bring art from around the world to them when possible? This helps in breaking the siege and isolation from the world."

## A RETURN TO FORM

Carbon 12's showcase at ADA features a trio of artists paying full homage to the integrity of materials and the power of colour-blocking.

Dubai-based gallery Carbon 12 is a gallery for artists, collectors and viewers who gravitate towards the whimsical, tongue-in-cheek humour, and painterliness. Bringing predominantly contemporary European artists to the region, its recent exhibitions have focused on materiality. At Abu Dhabi Art, this comes in the form of a painting by Austrian artist Bernhard Buhmann, woodcut prints by prominent Swiss artist Olaf Breuning and a series of collages by Guatemala-based Austrian artist Elisabeth Wild.

With disparate but complementary practices that emphasize formalism in varying degrees of abstraction and scale, this playful visual approach that characterises Carbon 12's aesthetic persuasion is more than meets the eye. Though conceptually unassuming, the works belie a deft entry point into weightier themes: Buhmann's graphic, rounded geometrics in precise tonal gradation is riddled with layers of sociological connotations; Breuning's sly humour necessitates a second, then third look at what looks like a simple print but is actually commentary on the climate crisis; and 97-year-old Wild has honed a long practice that lends a wisdom in her deconstructions and subversions of consumer culture via magazine cutouts and collages.

With this trio touching on the Bauhaus school and Post-Modernism to academic approaches and contemporary portraiture, Carbon 12 inadvertently presents a brief survey of the movement's evolution, which "brings an interesting energy," says Carbon 12 co-founding director Kourosh Nouri. "Even though the artists are from different generations, their sensibilities are complementary, and it looks like they could have worked together at some point in time." However, despite tracing an art historical thread and showcasing works with accessible (but visually subtle) meanings, Carbon 12's philosophy of minimalist installation always reorients the viewer to the final product: the artwork itself and the means through which it exists.



All images are courtesy of the artist and Carbon 12

Elisabeth Wild. *Untitled (171)*. 2018. Collage on paper. 25.6 x 18.5 cm.

Elisabeth Wild. *Untitled (176)*. 2018. Collage on paper 24.5 x 18.5 cm.

Elisabeth Wild. *Untitled (184)*. 2018. Collage on paper 23.5 x 19.1 cm.

Olaf Breuning. *Raining*. 2019. Wood cut print, gesso, acrylic on canvas. 194 x 149 cm.

Olaf Breuning. *Tree*. 2019. Wood cut print, gesso, acrylic on canvas. 184 x 141 cm.



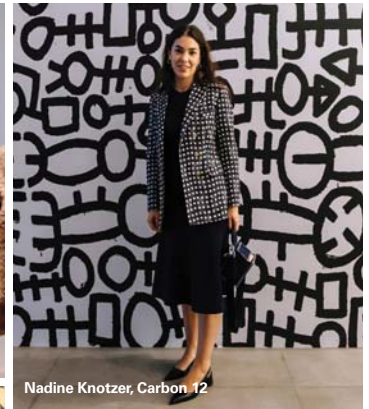
# VERNISSAGE

Highlights of who was there for Abu Dhabi Art's opening night

Dyala Nusseibeh, Director of ADA. HE Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of DCT



Lorenzo Fiaschi from Gallery Continua. Artist Pascale Marthine Tayou. Curator Jérôme Sans



Nadine Knotzer, Carbon 12

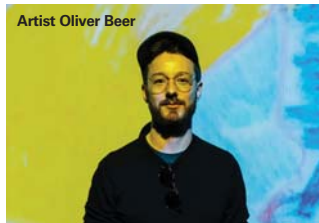
Senior Project Manager at Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Maisa Al Qassimi



Artist Sarah Al Agroobi with guest



Alia Gilbert, Sultan Al Ramahi and fair-goers at the Gateway exhibition, next to Kiki Smith's work



Artist Oliver Beer



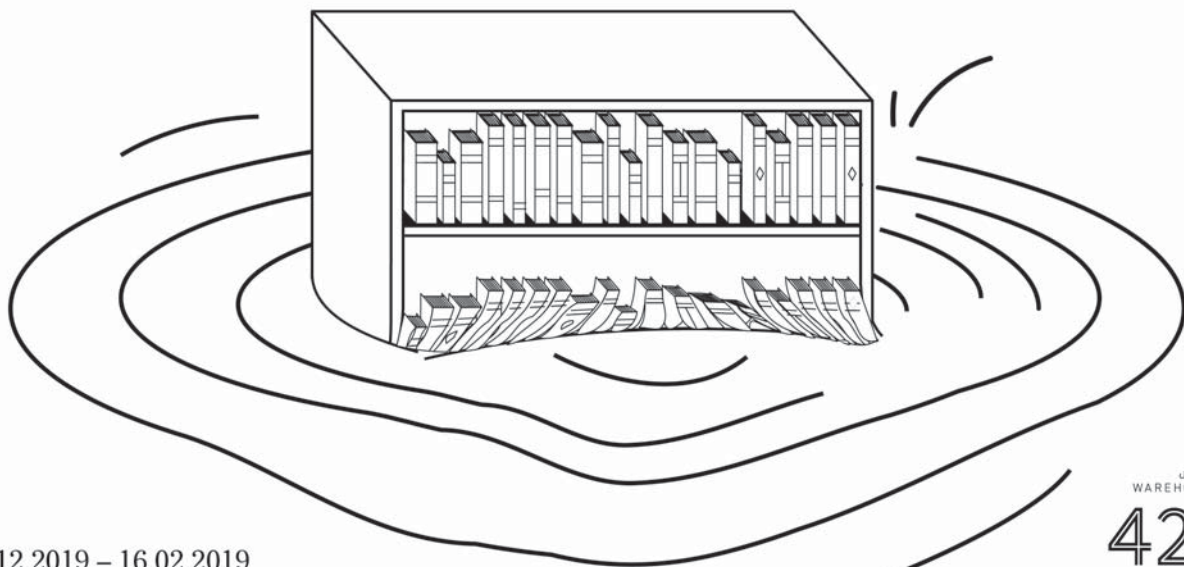
Artist eL Sead and co-founder of 81 Designs Nesrine El Tibi Maalout



Dahran Karimi, Nazy Beglari, Peter Scarlet, Patricia Millins.

## Warehouse421 presents its upcoming exhibition: How to maneuver: Shape-shifting texts and other publishing tactics

Curated by Kayfa ta / Maha Maamoun and Ala Younis



10.12.2019 – 16.02.2019

Warehouse421, Mina Zayed, Abu Dhabi

From Hussein Nasserredine's "The Complete Uncredited Works" 2018 – ongoing.

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