

Art Dubai 2021 leads the way back to normality: Fair marks return with robust sales throughout the week, and fully booked public days

Art Dubai is held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

- Amid international acclaim, **Art Dubai**, the Middle East's leading international art fair, concludes its 14th edition
- The fair was opened by **His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan**, UAE Member of the Cabinet and the Minister of Tolerance and coexistence and attended by **Her Highness Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, Chairperson of Dubai Culture & Arts Authority
- Held in a new safe and secure environment, Art Dubai was the world's first international, physical art fair of 2021
- Over 18,000 visitors attended the event held over six days at DIFC

Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 4 April 2021: Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai and hosted by Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), Art Dubai returned, signaling the resurgence of the Emirate and embracing the resilient spirit that Dubai embodies. The fair received international acclaim for reaffirming its conviction that art is best enjoyed in person, supporting the arts community and bringing people safely together.

Amongst the fair's visitors were **His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan**, UAE Member of the Cabinet and the Minister of Tolerance and coexistence and who opened the fair, **Her Highness Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, Chairperson of Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, **His Highness Sheikh Ammar Bin Humaid Bin Rashid Al Nuaimi**, Crown Prince of Ajman, **His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan**, **Sheikha Nawar Al Qassimi**, Vice President & Director of External Affairs Sharjah Art Foundation, **Her Excellency Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi**, UAE Minister of Culture and Youth, **His Excellency Saif Ghobash**, Director General Abu Dhabi Executive Office, **His Excellency Zaki Nusseibeh**, Cultural Adviser to the President of the UAE.

Taking place over six days between the 29 March and 3 April, the fair introduced a number of innovations to safely welcome over 18,000 visitors over the course of the event, with tickets sold out prior to the fair opening to the public. These included a new booking system to help ensure social distancing, a remote participation programme for galleries unable to travel to Dubai to attend the fair and a new payment model to help galleries participate.

Galleries saw robust sales across the week, with artworks being placed in major private collections and international institutions and many more in process of negotiation.

William Lawrie of Dubai-based Lawrie Shabibi gallery said: "Art Dubai pulled off something amazing, at a time that much of the rest of the art world is at a standstill. I was stunned by the number of collectors who had come from all corners of the world, despite travel restrictions and red tape. There was a concentrated energy throughout the run of the fair, lots of excitement and some great sales."

Victoria Cooke, Director of Gallery 1957 in Ghana said: “Beyond Art Dubai showing a much-needed stride of confidence, we sold to important collectors and made new introductions in a region that continues to be very important to our gallery; a reminder that in-person connections are integral to the art market.”

Maimiti Cazalis, Senior Director of Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris said: “We’ve been extremely delighted to be back at the Art Dubai fair, after a gap of 5 years. On many levels, this fair has been a success. We sold artworks from all the artists presented on our booth and have been very impressed by the quality of the visitors attending the fair. We are thrilled to develop sales and projects with the artists in the region.”

Art Dubai, which is now in its 15th year, is the highlight of the region’s cultural calendar and, despite current travel restrictions due to COVID-19, saw many international travelers visit the city to attend the fair and the creative districts such as Alserkal Avenue and the contemporary museum Jameel Arts Centre. These included groups and representatives from the Garage Museum Moscow, Tate Patrons, patrons from Aga Khan museum and Museum of Contemporary Art in Cleveland USA.

Antonia Carver, Director of Art Jameel, commented: “The return of the UAE as an international destination for curators, artists, gallerists and patrons was felt more keenly than ever this week, given the past year of global isolation. We’ve seen a rise in local visitors to Jameel Arts Centre through 2020 — and to share our exhibitions now with the international crowd was a joy.”

Art Dubai 2021 was hosted by Dubai International Financial Centre and sponsored by Julius Baer. The Dubai Culture & Arts Authority (Dubai Culture) is the fair’s strategic partner.

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Notes to Editors

A broad range of sales

Custot Gallery Dubai sold two works by **Ian Davenport** in the price range of \$120-150,000 each; **Lawrie Shabibi Dubai** sold five works by Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, a leading figure in Emirati art, between \$15,000 and \$20,000 each; **Gallery 1957 from Ghana** sold four works by Ivory-Coast based artist **Joana Choumali** in the price range of \$10-16,000 each. First time exhibitors **Comptoir des Mines Galerie from Morocco** sold a work by Moroccan-born artist Fatiha Zemmouri for \$32,000 and **Albarrán Bourdais from Spain** sold a **Beltran Lavier** for \$80,000. **Continua Gallery from Italy** sold a series of **Shilpa Gupta** works to an institution for \$50,000 and **Perrotin from France** sold a **JR** work for \$65,000 and a **Daniel Ashram** for \$45,000. **Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery from UK** sold a number of works by Iraqi-born artist **Afifa Aleiby** for \$50,000 each.

Sculpture Park

A curated Sculpture Park surrounding the DIFC Gate Building featured eleven large-scale installations by ten artists including; Iraqi painter and sculptor Dia Al-Azzawi, Saudi Arabian artist Rashed Al Shashai, Indian architect Tarik Currimbhoy, pioneering conceptual Emirati artist Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, Algerian sculptor, print-maker and ceramicist Rachid Koraïchi, contemporary Mozambican artist Gonçalo Mabunda, Argentine-French multidisciplinary artist Pablo Reinoso, Emirati artist Hussain Sharif, Greek conceptual sculptor Costas Varotsos and French conceptual artist Bernar Venet.

50 Years United by Ramesh Shukla

To mark 50 years since the founding of the UAE, '50 Years United' an exhibition of photography by Ramesh Shukla dating back to 1971 was exhibited at the DIFC Gate Avenue. The exhibition detailed portraits of the Founding Fathers, historical landmarks as well as traditional customs and heritage.

Video Art Programme

As part of this year's curatorial projects, Art Dubai presented a Film Programme comprising of screening stations located along DIFC's Gate Avenue, featuring single-channel films produced by over 20 regional and international artists. Each thematically categorised to curate a specific experience for the viewer that included: Nature, Journeys, Dystopias, Conversations, Performances and Animations, among others. A station was dedicated to Art Dubai Portraits, an ongoing film series in partnership with BMW Middle East that provided a look into the lives and workspaces of artists connected to the fair.

Campus Art Dubai 8.0

Campus Art Dubai is part of Art Dubai's extensive year-round programming and aims at providing artists with educational and professional opportunities. Curated by Munira Al Sayegh, an exhibition titled *Plants, Animals, Minerals* presented the culmination of Campus Art Dubai 8.0, that was supported by Dubai Culture & Arts Authority and hosted by A.R.M. Holding. The latest edition of the six-month seminar and residency programme - providing Emirati and UAE-based artists with educational and professional opportunities - featured five selected artists' responses to the theme of symbiotic life in a parasitic world. The participating artists were: Aameena AlJarman, Layan Attari, Nahla Tabbaa, Zahra Jewanjee, and Zena Adhami.

Ithra Art Prize

The winner of the third edition of the Ithra Art Prize is Saudi-based Fahad bin Naif, for his installation 'Rakhm', which means 'incubation' in Arabic. His work was unveiled at Art Dubai 2021, and it was the first opportunity for the public to enjoy it. The installation aims to conceptually preserve a nursery as both an urban typology and its 'incubates', as an environmental micro-economy. Mirroring both the sensitivity and urgency of the content, safely and carefully incubating an intelligent green infrastructure, *Rakhm* is a polytunnel nursery that mimics the existing urban nurseries in the Kingdom with endemic plants and flowers instead of conventional foreign houseplants.

The full Art Dubai 2021 gallery list can be viewed [here](#).

Visit artdubai.ae and follow @artdubai | #ArtDubai2021 on social media to stay updated.
For any press enquiries, please contact: press@artdubai.ae

About Art Dubai:

Art Dubai is the Middle East's leading art fair for the local, regional and international art world. Since 2007 Art Dubai has championed art and artists from across the Middle East, MENASA (Middle East, North Africa & South Asia) and the Global South, broadening conversations about art beyond traditional Western-led geographical scopes and narratives.

In keeping with Dubai's reputation as a hub for innovation, incubation and knowledge exchange, Art Dubai provides a sustainable platform for artists and meaningful engagement with the rich cultural heritage and contemporary art practices of the region. Featuring Contemporary and Modern gallery sections, annual artist-driven commissions, collector and education programmes and artist residencies, the fair fosters a culture of discovery and new global perspectives.

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For further information, please visit artdubai.ae

About Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)

Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) is one of the world's most advanced financial centres, and the leading financial hub for the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA), which comprises 72 countries with an approximate population of 3 billion and a nominal GDP of USD 7.7 trillion.

With a 16-year track record of facilitating trade and investment flows across the MEASA region, the Centre connects these fast-growing markets with the economies of Asia, Europe and the Americas through Dubai. DIFC is home to an internationally recognised, independent regulator and a proven judicial system with an English common law framework, as well as the region's largest financial ecosystem of around 27,000 professionals working across over 2,900 active registered companies – making up the largest and most diverse pool of industry talent in the region.

The Centre's vision is to drive the future of finance. Today, it offers one of the region's most comprehensive FinTech and venture capital environments, including cost-effective licensing solutions, fit-for-purpose regulation, innovative accelerator programmes, and funding for growth-stage start-ups.

Comprising a variety of world-renowned retail and dining venues, a dynamic art and culture scene, residential apartments, hotels and public spaces, DIFC continues to be one of Dubai's most sought-after business and lifestyle destinations.

For further information, please visit difc.ae