

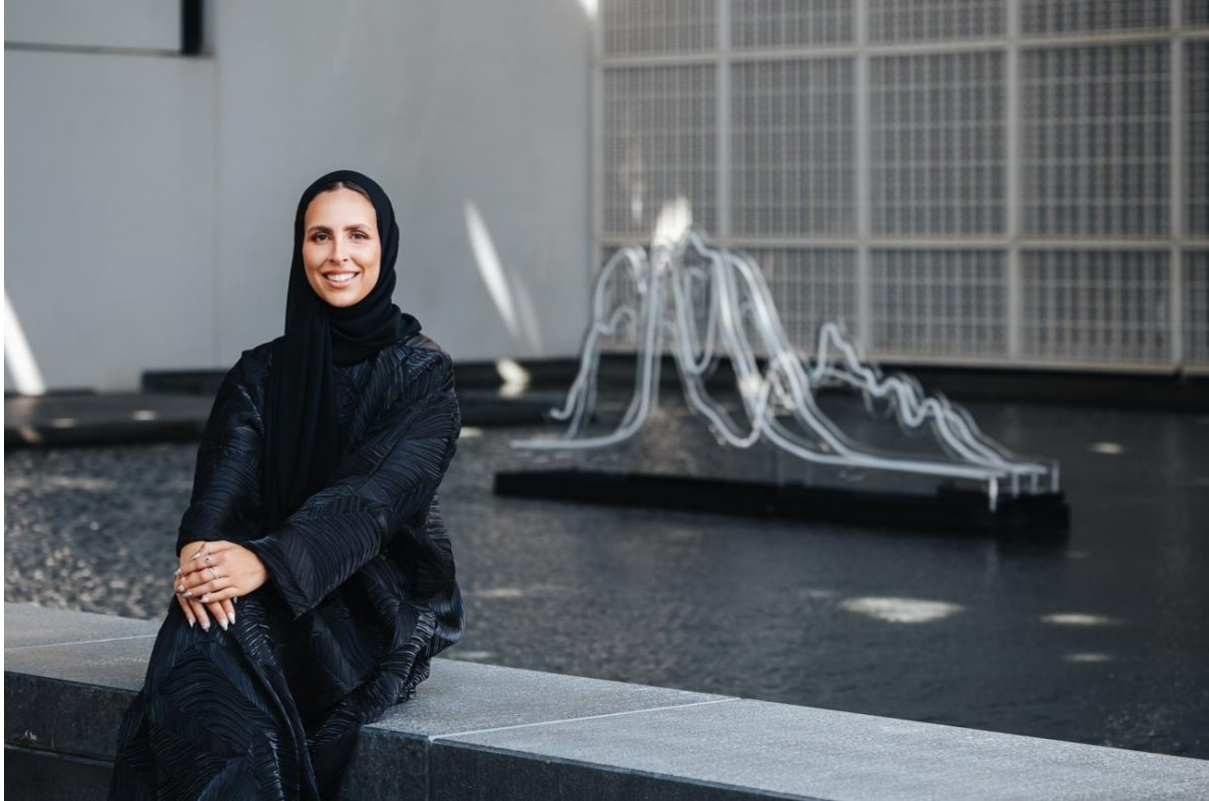
Aletihad

September 20, 2024

Louvre Abu Dhabi's 'Art Here 2024' showcases artistic 'awakenings' from GCC and North Africa

By Sara Alzaabi

<https://en.aletihad.ae/news/culture/4516331/louvre-abu-dhabi-s--art-here-2024--showcases-artistic--awake>



Louvre Abu Dhabi's "Art Here 2024" exhibition, running until December 15, features five artworks shortlisted for the Richard Mille Art Prize. The exhibition, which focuses on contemporary art from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and North Africa, explores the theme of "Awakenings."

Artists from the UAE, Tunisia, and Egypt are currently showcasing site-specific installations that move from unconsciousness to awareness, symbolising new beginnings and the fluid nature of time.

The featured works include Férielle Doulain-Zouari's "Tilling the Soil," a multi-dimensional exploration of memory and landscape; Lamya Gargash's "Debutante Ball," a sculpture crafted from UAE sand that symbolises Arab identity; Moataz Nasr's "The Brides of the Sky," a reimagining of historical structures to highlight women's bravery; Nicène Kossentini's "Landscapes," a poetic representation of disappearance through translucent wax; and Sarah Almehairi's "Shared Motion," which explores movement within stillness by depicting the word "wind" in Arabic, Farsi, Hindi, and Urdu.

Alice Querin, Temporary Exhibition Unit Head, shared with Aletihad some insight into the behind-the-scenes of the competition. She explained: "Typically, with Art Here, we hold a competition through a call for proposals for contemporary artists. Each year, we change the geographic focus for submissions. This year, we received over 200 proposals, and with the help of a jury of experts, we selected five artists to showcase their contemporary works."

Elaborating on this year's theme, "Awakenings," Querin noted that it encourages viewers to embrace new perspectives, explore new horizons, as well as engage with art in an open-minded and inquisitive way.

Discussing the inclusion of North African artists, she said: "We began with GCC artists but are now expanding to North Africa, which has a rich artistic heritage. Next year, we will explore other regions as well."

The shortlisted artists each interpret the theme of “Awakenings” in their own way. For instance, Lamy Gargash reflects on her childhood questions about her Emirati identity and has embraced and celebrated it through her artwork.

Regarding the Richard Mille Prize partnership, Querin stated: “Richard Mille is a great partner for us. They sponsor this exhibition, providing artists with the freedom to create. This support is invaluable, as it allows artists to develop their ideas and passions.”

Louvre Abu Dhabi acts as a bridge between the world and the UAE by showcasing international works while investing in Emirati and regional art, according to the Exhibition Unit Head. “We believe it is very important to support regional and Emirati artists because it is the foundation of where the museum is located,” she said.

On the subject of the exhibition’s impact on the regional art scene, Querin highlighted that it aims to inspire, showcase talented artists, and present work developed over decades.

Simon Njami, a Paris-based curator and critic, discussed his role as a judge for Art Here 2024 with **Aletihad**. On the topic of objectivity, he said: “Objectivity does not matter; only computers are objective. Different curators will select different artists based on their individual perspectives and experiences. My choices reflect my personal gaze, shaped by my background, rather than any notion of objectivity.”

Njami also highlighted the significance of including North African artists, noting: “Widening the selection to include North African artists broadens horizons. Encountering new practices and perspectives is crucial for expanding knowledge and understanding. The more diverse the interactions, the greater the impact.”

One of the selected artists, Sarah Almehairi, an Emirati artist and poet from Abu Dhabi, explores materiality, systems, and language through intuitive narrative and abstraction. Her installation, “Shared Motion,” is an audiovisual piece that delves into openness and translation across four major languages. It examines the evolution of language through maritime trade and represents it via light and sound waves, highlighting both similarities and subtle differences.

Reflecting on the year’s theme, she told Aletihad: “I am exploring ‘Awakenings’ through the idea of openness - openness in translation, through the sea, and the elements present in the work to facilitate that exchange.”

On how she included the themes of language and abstraction, she said: “Language is inherently complex due to its numerous forms and variations. In my work, language is represented through sound, the LED structure, sound waves, and natural elements.”

“Art today is no longer just one thing; it seeks to bridge various mediums, themes, and subjects. My work addresses this challenge by striving for harmony and cohesion,” Almehairi added, noting that showcasing similarities rather than differences in non-physical aspects is a beautiful and meaningful way to connect emotionally.