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ROXANE ZAND | EXPLORING THE ART OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Art Dubai: The United Nations of Art

BY: ROXANE ZAND | MARCH 20, 2013 9:22 PM

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Absolut Art Lounge, 2013. Courtesy of Art Dubai.

DUBAI - Off to a buzzy start, [Art Dubai's](#) 7th edition did not disappoint. More galleries than last year, a wider diversity of cultures, greater numbers of fair visitors, must all have made Fair Director Antonia Carver a happy lady. She has been the strongest advocate of the Global Art Forum and ensured a healthy educational programme around what is by now the longest standing of the regional fairs. Inevitably the warm, sunny welcome of Dubai adds to the attractions of a fair and a city that now has a playground appeal to an international following.

Museum-quality works rub shoulders with less important choices, giving the Fair its diverse scope—there is something for every taste. Sales in the mid-range values were healthy and the usual suspects—pioneering gallerists [Rose Issa](#) and [Leila Heller](#) bringing some of the most market-relevant works and selling at a fast pace.

For me, the poignancy of Farida Lashari's work based on Goya (Heiler gallery) was especially endearing. To the last, this extraordinary artist and woman gave to the world an unassailable legacy, which I hope one day will be made into a biopic. Other eye-catching works included a piece by El Anatsui and large photos by Ahmed Mater.

As if the Fair itself weren't enough, adjunct events have mushroomed in the style of established fairs—lunches, dinners, charity events and so on. Sotheby's held a cocktail reception and travel exhibition of its Doha sale highlights (April 22!), followed by a Collectors Lunch on the sunny terrace of the Royal Mirage the next day which pushed away all memory of rain and sleet in London!



Nermine Hamam's *Hitch-Hiking*, 2012. Courtesy of The Artist and Rose Issa Projects.

I had to run to everything on offer so as luck would have it, I was able to tour the Design Fair with top collector and interior designer Yassi Ghandehari and Sotheby's CEO Robin Woodhead (briefly on loan from a heavy London schedule!). Fair Director Cyril Zammit showed us a host of fascinating works—again reflecting the same range of quality as seen at the main fair. Some exceptional works such as *Time Dubai by Humans Since 1982*, sat next to more preliminary attempts at design exploration. I loved the energy of this fair, some of the wit and cleverness, the use of re-cycled materials... Surely this has a real significance for the future. If Leonardo could make enduring artworks from sketches of ugly and deformed subjects, I can't see why re-cycled and discarded materials cannot be the artistic future of a greener planet.

Firmly established in the art calendar, Art Dubai now has its own pulse and identity which those of us involved in the regional art market can only hope will continue to flourish.

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