



Clockwise from top left: *Kite* by India's greatest living painter MF Husain, who turned his back on his homeland and accepted Qatari citizenship. Courtesy Grosvenor Vadhra Gallery; *Men at Work* by Abdulnasser Ghareem. Courtesy Galerie Caprice Horn Berlin; A panel discussion during the Global Art Forum in Doha. Courtesy of Art Dubai; *Book of Flight* by Khaled Hafez, one of an interesting mix of artists at Germany's Galerie Caprice Horn. Courtesy Galerie Caprice Horn Berlin

'There's a time for principled reticence and a time to turn heads. This is the latter'

→ Art Dubai, continued from 1

The Saudi conceptualist (and army major) Abdulnasser Ghareem shares a bill with the Egyptian pop-artist Khaled Hafez, the British-Iranian painter Sacha Jafri and Canada's hi-tech artist Daniel Canogar. Dubai's own Carbon 12 is coming out with its usual cast of international talents: a splashy fashion rage from the painter Katherine Bernhardt, spooky theatre interiors from Gil Heitor Cortesao and Sara Rahbar's satirical textile collages among them. Clearly there's still room for the something-for-everyone approach.

One group show is guaranteed to upstage the solo performances, though it will be a surprise if it adds up to more than the sum of its parts. Three artists from across the MENA region (Middle East, North Africa and South Asia) have received Dh750,000 apiece from the Abraaj Capital Art Prize (ACAP), the largest art award on the planet. For the last six months they have been trying to produce a trio of ambitious new artworks. Kader Attia, Hala Elkoussy and Marwan Sahmarani (from Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon respectively) are the artists in question and Art Dubai will see the unveiling of their creations. The size of the prize alone means that the new work will be subject to close, and perhaps rather envious,

scrutiny, and that puts the artists in a tricky position. They know they'll be facing the crowd of their lives.

Last year when the prize had its debut, the completed works were interesting and thoughtful, but not spectacular in the way that the grand outdoor presentation seemed to demand. Zoulikha Bouabdellah's pagoda, in which a mirrored floor reflected a stylised representation of the night sky, might have been

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enchanting in a dimly lit gallery. Alas, the effect got lost in the glare of the Jumeirah spring. Nazgol Ansarina's rug design showed a quiet wit, but quiet wit and a horde of journalists looking for a headline make uneasy companions. Nothing much seemed to happen in Kutlug Ataman's film. Altogether the reception was polite rather than rapturous or (even better for a new prize on the make) outraged.

Unusually in the art world, the ACAP is awarded on the strength, essentially, of the artist's pitch. Selectors have a vague idea of what they're going to get and artists can trim to the wind. Will the award committee have opted for more theatrical proposals this year? Will the artists sacrifice depth for impact? They should. It would be good for the prize and good for them, too: there's a time for principled reticence and a time to turn heads. This is the latter. Of the three winners, Kader Attia seems the most likely to pull off a PK coup. Elkoussy works with photography and Sahmarani is a painter, so it isn't even clear how they plan to get through their giant bursaries. Attia, a sculptor with a spooky sense of humour and talent for monumental effects (he is best known for the Snatchi-anointed *Ghost*, a room full of faceless and kneeling robed figures made out of tin foil) could well have some-

thing appropriately startling up his sleeve. Watch this space. Everyone else will be.

The curatorial wing of *Bidoun* magazine is staging an exhibition of its own, titled *A New Formalism*, which brings together four artworks by four artists (or artistic entities, I should say: one of them is the collective US). The others are Hazem el Mestikawy, Iman Issa and Mahmoud Khaled, all of whom are intriguing enough alone. *Bidoun* is also commissioning material especially for the fair: the Emirati conceptualist Ebtisam Abdul-Aziz and the Lebanese interactive artist Vartan Avakian will both be showing off new works courtesy of *Bidoun*. *Bidoun* is also presenting Farhad Moshiri's ice sculptures and recreating a 1970s kinetic sculpture by Alice Aycock, among other projects.

The most intriguing of these is that it is enlisting artists to act as tour guides to the fair. Daniel Bokhkov, Sophia Al Maria and Khalil Rabah will be the purported experts exploring "the pure subjectivity of interpretation", presumably by busking the most tendentious readings they can think of on the spur of the moment. Whether the tours end up functioning as off-beat criticism or open-ended theatrical improvisation, they sound like an enjoyable game, and they're open to all the fair's visitors daily.

As it did last year, Art Dubai will become a staging post on the rolling discussion series called the Global Art Forum. This time around Doha, cover several topics that perhaps you always wanted to know about and never dared ask. Titles include "Palestine Syndrome", "Corporate Collecting: Why and How?", and "Is There A Crisis In Arts Writing?" and among the panelists are Hans Ulrich Obrist, the director of International Projects at the Serpentine, Omar Ghobash, the UAE's ambassador to Russia, and the terrific Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui. Judging by last year's discussions, the tone will not be too polite to be interesting, so roll up your sleeves and wade in.

Finally, it wouldn't do to finish without noting one of the most interesting events to take place in Art Dubai's wide penumbra. If the Madinat Jumeirah just seems too exhaustingly blue-chip, shoot across town for the Bastakiya Art Fair, a fertile fringe to the main attraction, boasting shows from XVA, Majlis, Teskeel and various independent curators, plus performances, talks and readings. It's a rougher scene, and perhaps slightly more experimental. Still, if everyone at Art Dubai is selling prestige, where else are you going to find a bargain?

* ones to watch

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