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# Art Dubai 2023: Meet the Four Emirati Artists Bringing a Diverse Range of Disciplines to the Fair

by [JUMANA ABDEL-RAZZAQ](#)

*Introspective and bold, four Emirati artists are bringing a diverse range of disciplines – from food to architecture – to this year’s edition of Art Dubai.*



Moza Almatrooshi, Aisha Juma, and Nujoom AlGhanem. Photo: Ankita Chandra

A world-renowned platform for art and artists from the Middle East and surrounding region, Art Dubai returns this year for its 16th edition. Presenting more than 130

works from 43 countries, the showcase is one of the most diverse and expansive art selections in the world. With a display across four gallery sections, including Contemporary, Modern, Bawwaba, and Art Dubai Digital, this year the event will host 30 first-time participants. More than 60% of its gallery program from March 1-5 will be drawn from the region, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, all housed at the fair's main venue in Dubai's Madinat Jumeirah.



Asma Belhamar. Photo: Ankita Chandra

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“Art Dubai is a global fair, and the strength of the applications we received for our 2023 edition reflects its increasing importance as the region’s premier art event, and the maturing of the art market here in Dubai,” says the fair’s artistic director Pablo del Val. “We’re particularly pleased to welcome so many first-time exhibitors into our family.” What makes the fair truly distinctive is its focus on local and regional talents, notably those from the UAE, providing a platform for both established and up-and-coming creatives alike to present a wide array of disciplines from across the diverse fields of art. This year, four Emirati artists in particular are using the platform to spotlight their work – Moza Almatrooshi, Aisha Juma, Asma Belhamar, and Nujoom AlGhanem.

## **Edible solutions**



Photo: Ankita Chandra

Based in Sharjah, Moza Almatrooshi has used her passion for food research to bring together a wide variety of disciplines and media. Across audio, video, performance, food, land art, ceramics, and screenprinting, Almatrooshi works to best articulate her message. At this year's fair, the artist will participate with a new performance within Bawwaba, a section of the fair that comprises solo presentations by various artists, exhibiting works made in the past year or specifically for Art Dubai. "The curator of this year's edition, Vipash Purichanont, was interested in my practice and research on food politics and approached the gallery that represents my work, Hunna Art, to propose being part of this section," Almatrooshi says. "The performance that I will present is a continuation of a moving image



Evergreen

work called Glaze that was presented in Lahore Biennial 2020. Curated by Hoor Al Qasimi, it documented the hands and movements of bakery workers across the emirate of Sharjah." Her work later inspired a series of performances – both live and recorded – that looked at creating alphabets out of the recorded gestures of the various bakery workers. At Art Dubai this year, the alphabets will be materialized into bread and baked goods, and will be available for visitors to enjoy throughout the fair. "My practice relies on food research and thinking, namely food politics, which includes

rituals, histories, food work, and workers, and agricultural practices,” the artist says. “From there, the work unfolds in various mediums that communicate the research more appropriately – including performance, moving image, and other image making media, such as audio, text, and naturally, culinary activations.” Almatrooshi’s *The Agricultural School* and *Journey to Salsabeel* are currently displayed in Sharjah Biennial 15 and 421 Abu Dhabi respectively. “Being able to show different works across the UAE around the same time casts light on just how wide my research continues to expand and the myriad of ways it takes shape,” she adds.

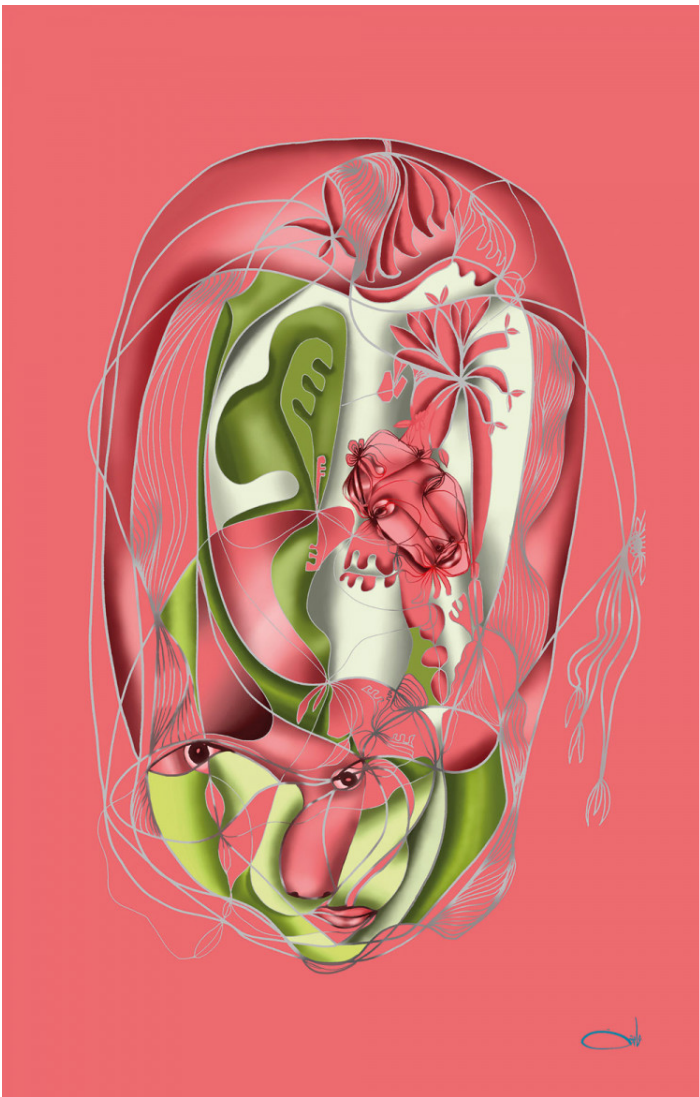
## Digital revolution



Photo: Ankita Chandra

Taking a multidisciplinary approach to her art, Dubai-born Aisha Juma is presenting a number of digital portraits at the fair this year. She brings three pieces selected from a larger series of artworks that have evolved over several years, transforming from manual drawings to digital paintings. Represented by Morrow Collective, Juma

began her career as an NFT artist in 2022 and has worked as an art educator and visual creative in the UAE. Driven by existential questions, Juma's work has recently been influenced by spiritual practices, creating what she calls "automatic drawings" or "channeled drawings," which emerge from a deeper level of consciousness and are practiced in a state of meditation. "At Art Dubai, there is an opportunity to meet local and international NFT professionals," states the artist. "Within the digital gallery section and the Morrow Collective booth, I will be collaborating in a digital artwork that combines a number of artists to create a newly unique computer-generated piece. It is an interesting new experience and I am excited to witness the outcome that is going to emerge as people interact with the project."



Pink girl and her spiritual guide, Digital Automatic Portrait

As one of the earliest Emirati creatives to explore art as a profession in the UAE, Juma believes that the country has taken great leaps in the development of the

medium, and more specifically, the visual arts field. “Yet, there is still a way to go,” she says. “I believe that other forms of art need to grow alongside the visual, including music, theater, architecture, literature, and history, as well as art education.” She adds, “Art and science should be reunited in creative educational programs and multi-disciplinary studio areas with the latest technology facilities available.”

## Film culture



Photo: Ankita Chandra

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An Emirati artist, poet, and multi-award-winning film director, seasoned Dubai-based artist Nujoom AlGhanem has produced around 20 films, including short fiction and documentaries, art films, and seven feature-length documentaries across her 30-year-long career. In 1985, she co-founded the Aqwas group with artist Hassan Sharif;

Youssef Khalil, the late Sudanese storyteller; and Khalid Albudoor, the poet, researcher, and translator. She went on to be part of the emergence of the contemporary art scene in the UAE. This year, she is bringing past work to life through NFTs and visual art at Art Dubai Digital. “Participating with Morrow Collective for the second time, I’ll be presenting NFT excerpts from my film Sharp Tools, which is an ode to my friend and late Emirati artist Hassan Sharif,” she says.



Sheltered by Water

An intimate portrait of the founder of the conceptual art movement in the UAE, Sharp Tools in one of two film excerpts to be displayed at the fair this year in an impressive showing of representational art. AlGhanem will be part of an expanded 2023 edition of Art Dubai Digital, which this year welcomes a selection of participants with innovative new media programs, a range of digital platforms building virtual art spaces alongside artist collectives, new institutional models, and more traditional brick-and-mortar galleries. Together, these platforms are challenging and pushing forward new models for artistic production and support. “The cultural and artistic institutions, platforms, and sectors are making great strides to promote the arts and present them in different forms,” AlGhanem explains. “There is a remarkable and sustained interest to support artists in the country, but they themselves need to use these tools to build their skill and knowledge to promote greater advancement in the sector.”

## Architectural forms





Photo: Ankita Chandra

“I knew I wanted to pursue a career as an artist when I visited my relative’s ceramic studio when I was six years old,” says Dubai-based Emirati artist Asma Belhamar. “Since then, I started creating fun things with commitment.” An interdisciplinary artist whose practice frequently confronts the visual memory of local landscapes, Belhamar has used this anchoring theme to merge architectural and organic elements to inform her practice. As a result, her works are largely observational, offering insight into the chronological history of architecture and responding to notions of perspective, time, and spatial memory. Presenting a collection of drawings and ceramic sculptures at Art Dubai, Belhamar’s art explores the visualization of space through time.



Phoenicia grand hotel

Inspired by motion to create fragile moments, where flat structure starts to manifest into a multi-surfaced object while in flow, she begins drawing the seconds in layered frames to capture what she calls a “magical phenomenon.” “I got approached by Aisha Alabbar Gallery, where we had the chance to collaborate and select some works to showcase at this year’s fair,” she recounts. “The collaboration is especially exciting for me as I have witnessed Art Dubai’s growth from when I was a student. I’m grateful to be a part of this year’s edition, as it presents other informative programs that elevate the art scene in the UAE, including governmental initiatives, educational workshops, and talk sessions,” she adds. Besides teaching full-time as an

assistant professor of visual arts at Zayed University, Belhamar recently exhibited in the latest edition of the Sharjah Biennial with a site-specific installation, highlighting the architecture of Al Dhaid, Sharjah. She has a planned solo exhibition this October at Warehouse 421 Abu Dhabi.

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