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Art

10 Must-See Shows from Middle Eastern Galleries You Can View

Lizzy Vartanian Collier

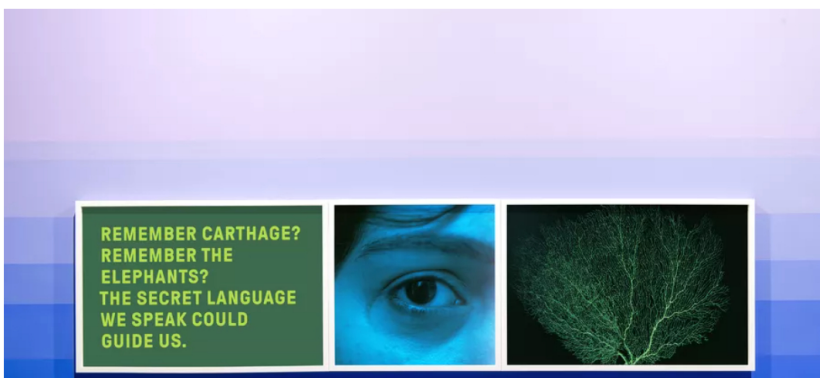
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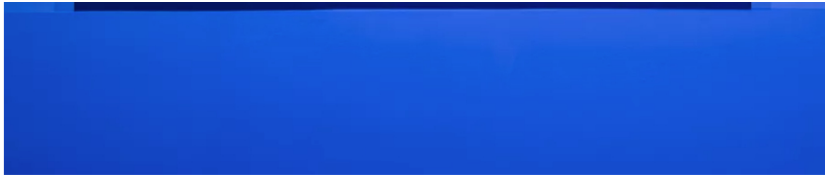


Rania Matar
Mariam, Khiyam, Lebanon, 2019
East Wing
Price on request

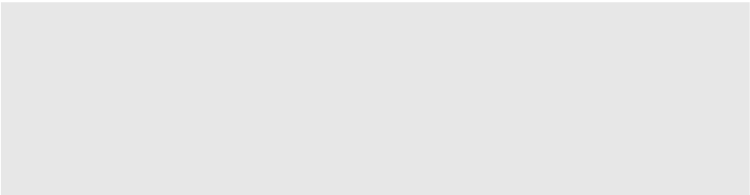
Over the past year, the art world has made a conscious effort to highlight voices beyond the narrow confines of the West, amplifying unheard voices and moving away from the long-dominant white male gaze. Perhaps one of the most exciting hotspots within our increasingly global art world is the Middle East. Southwest Asia and North Africa have long histories of art and culture, from Baalbek in Lebanon to Al Ula in Saudi Arabia. And these ancient traditions of visual culture persevere today, with the region's current fame for the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Jardin Majorelle in Marrakech, and so much more. To coincide with Artsy's spotlight on the region, [Middle Eastern Galleries Now](#), we're highlighting 10 standout shows, which are viewable online through the end of March.

Gypsum Gallery





Basim Magdy
Someone Tried to Lock Up Time (The Secret Language We Speak), 2018 -ongoing
Gypsum Gallery
€18,000



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Cairo's Gypsum Gallery presents a multidisciplinary selection of works from a multigenerational group of artists, with the subtle theme of time appearing throughout. Highlights include works by Ahmed Morsi, an artist whose career spans seven decades, and whose practice is described as offering "a mystical meditation of the remembrance and passage of time." An untitled 2016 painting by Morsi pictures three pairs of eyes, with a clock set to 9:00 in the background.



Taha Belal
MNMLs56 Series Vertical Whitener, 2020
Gypsum Gallery
US\$2,600



Ahmed Morsi
Untitled, 2016
Gypsum Gallery

This imagery is mirrored in Taha Belal's collage *MNMLs56 Series Vertical Whitener* (2020), which shows a Rolex advertisement alongside a man scaling a mountain. We are also presented with the work of Basim Magdy, who presents us with a satirical view of the world through spaces that are simultaneously retro and futuristic, existing beyond the confines of time as we know it.

[Browse Gypsum Gallery's online show.](#)

Hafez Gallery.





Joud Fahmy
The Happy Box, ca. 2021
 Hafez Gallery
 US\$4,000



Ali Chaaban
I Fought the Internet & the Internet Won 2, 2019
 Hafez Gallery
 US\$6,000

Hafez Gallery, which is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, is showcasing a wide array of artists. Notable works include Ali Chaaban's silkscreen Superman prints on Persian carpets and Joud Fahmy's *The Happy Box* (ca. 2021), a three-dimensional artwork that recalls the plastic toys we played with as children.

The gallery is also presenting a number of paintings, including vibrant still lifes by Nasser Al-Mulhim and figurative works by Ibrahim El Dessouki, who is known for his use of negative space. The latter artist's works featured here focus on gated communities, the fauna and flora within them, and the people who work and live there.



Suliman El-Salem
What The next Ensuing State Will Be, 2019
 Hafez Gallery
 US\$4,000



Ibrahim El Dessouki
Series of Gated Communities -Waiting Eight AM - pentaptych 2/5, 2020
 Hafez Gallery
 Sold

Another notable piece is a neon light work by Suliman El-Salem titled *What The next Ensuing State Will Be* (2019) — a statement that resonates with the current moment, as we imagine the future in the wake of a very surreal year.

[Browse Hafez Gallery's online show.](#)

Carbon 12



Sara Rahbar
Animals #17 (Framed), 2020



Anahita Razmi
LEADERS/DEALERS (Black/White), 2018

Dubai's Carbon 12 presents a selection of international artists working across genres. Particularly striking are Iranian artist Sara Rahbar's mixed-media collages in which the American flag immediately stands out among images of soldiers and minority figures. The images are completely arresting as the world continues to feel the impact of George Floyd's death and the Black Lives Matter movement. These artworks reflect the artist's earlier "Flag" series (2005-15), where she explored the iconography of the American flag, the concept of the American dream, violence, power, and her own connection to her home, Iran.



Anahita Razmi
This is not Iranian, 2015
Carbon 12



Sara Rahbar
Animals #72 (Framed), 2020
Carbon 12

Also drawing on heritage, Iranian-German artist Anahita Razmi mines her Iranian cultural heritage and brings it into a new context. Her photograph *This is not Iranian* (2015) shows the artist's arm tattooed with the same phrase in Farsi. Meanwhile, Razmi's lenticular prints also use semiotics to play with notions of representation, misunderstandings, and shifting perspectives.

[Browse Carbon 12's online show.](#)

1x1 Art Gallery



Chittrovanu Mazumdar
Untitled, 2021
1x1 Art Gallery
US\$31,000-US\$34,000



G. Ravinder Reddy
Bust Relief, 2011
1x1 Art Gallery
Sold

1x1 Art Gallery has been presenting South Asian modern and contemporary art to the United Arab Emirates for two decades. The artists in its group show present paintings, sculpture, and photography, including some particularly noteworthy works that comment on the perception of women within Indian society.

Ravinder Reddy's bronze female busts with wide eyes, strong features, and garishly colored skin are inspired by Pop art portraits and modeled after both traditional religious statuary and local women. The works function as celebrations of the female form, while also parodying the ideal of feminine beauty in Indian culture.



Pushpamala N
Apaharana/Abduction - Nightmare/Odalisque, 2012
1x1 Art Gallery
Price on request

Similarly, Pushpamala N's prints from the "Apaharana/Abduction" series also focus on female stereotypes. The images reenact historical representations of women to subvert them. And in Sonia Mehra Chawla's mixed-media works, the viewer's attention is again drawn to the shadow of the female form. Chawla's work is not necessarily gender-centric, however, but rather comments on the human figure's connectedness to its natural and urban surroundings; some works mix biomorphic forms with flora and fauna to explore the effects of nature on the individual.

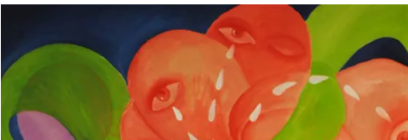
[Browse 1x1 Art Gallery's online show.](#)

Tabari Artspace



Alymamah Rashed
I Caress My Ayn Every Now and Then, 2020
Tabari Artspace

Kuwaiti artist Alymamah Rashed is featured in a solo presentation by Dubai's Tabarai Artspace. Rashed's paintings are a mix of oils on canvas and watercolors on paper. The artist describes herself as a "Muslima Cyborg" of the post-internet generation, fluctuating between the East and the West. Rashed's surreal paintings investigate her own body on multiple levels: the fleshed body, the thobe (the prayer garment), and a combination of the two.





Alymamamah Rashed
I poured myself endlessly behind your eyes (a place you cannot see), 2021
 Tabari Artspace



Alymamamah Rashed
Come Closer To Recollect Traces of You, 2020
 Tabari Artspace

Rashed's cyborg is not a piece of mechanics, but rather a visual representation of spiritual intelligence. *I Caress My Ayn Every Now And Then* (2020) is particularly striking as a gentle black figure wraps its arms around a peach-colored form that has been painted inside of it. The inclusion of "ayn," the Arabic word for "eye," seems to comment on how we view ourselves. The poetic titles of Rashed's paintings are inspired by her own writing and feed into what she produces on canvas. Another noteworthy piece, *Come Closer To Recollect Traces of You* (2020), is a blue-yellow watercolor display of forms coming together, illustrating a sense of fragility and romanticism that flows throughout Rashed's work.

[Browse Tabari Artspace's online show.](#)

Zawyeh Gallery.



Nabil Anani
IN PURSUIT OF UTOPIA #6, 2020
 Zawyeh Gallery



Nabil Anani
IN PURSUIT OF UTOPIA #15, 2020
 Zawyeh Gallery
 Sold

Based in Ramallah, Palestine, Zawyeh Gallery is presenting a solo exhibition of landscape paintings by Nabil Anani, titled "IN PURSUIT OF UTOPIA." Anani's works show uninterrupted, perfectly manicured landscapes, which represent the picturesque hills of Palestine without the ever-increasing Israeli interventions into the land.





Nabil Anani
IN PURSUIT OF UTOPIA #17, 2020
Zawyeh Gallery
Sold



Nabil Anani
Olive Groves #6, 2020
Zawyeh Gallery
Sold

The paintings appear quiet and idyllic, emanating an air of calm in a region not known for its tranquility. A key founder of the contemporary Palestinian art movement, Anani is famous for pioneering the use of local media like henna, leather, and natural dyes and incorporating them into his work. In the featured paintings, he introduces straw and dessicated plants to allow the viewer to get a feel for the Palestinian landscape, where olive trees thrive. His depictions of olive groves can be interpreted as a metaphor for Palestine, as the olive tree remains rooted in the earth, despite adversity.

[Browse Zawyeh Gallery's online show.](#)

East Wing



Rania Matar
Alae - 2, Beirut, Lebanon, 2021
East Wing
Price on request

Doha's East Wing is particularly known for its photography exhibitions, which is exactly what it is presenting at Middle Eastern Galleries Now. Among the works on show are a series of photographs of female figures by the eminent Lebanese artist [Rania Matar](#). Revered for her sympathetic depictions of women, Matar is famous for her images of female adolescence and womanhood. Her contributions to the East Wing presentation are focused on women in Lebanon. The photographs of Mariam and Alae in the Lebanese town of Khiyam are particularly striking, as both women are pictured with their eyes closed gently, while embracing the landscape.





Christo & Andrew
How to Speak to Spirits, 2016
 East Wing
 Price on request

East Wing is also exhibiting captivating work by Christo & Andrew, an artistic duo based between Doha and Copenhagen, who produce surreal still-life portraits. One such arresting image is *How to Speak to Spirits* (2016), showing long manicured talons clutching at what looks like a crystal ball, giving us a glimpse into an indefinable future.

[Browse East Wing's online show.](#)

Wadi Finan Art Gallery.



Saoud ABDALLAH
Girl, 2020
 Wadi Finan Art Gallery



Rasmi Al Kafaji
Untitled, 2019
 Wadi Finan Art Gallery
 Sold

At Amman's Wadi Finan Art Gallery, the figurative works of Saoud Abdallah invite the viewer to consider his female figures. These women almost always appear turned away from the audience and draw them in with their thick black hair, composed of natural sand on canvas in an unknown setting.



Rita Hassouani
Get out of my head, 2019
 Wadi Finan Art Gallery
 Price on request



Saoud ABDALLAH
Reader, 2020
 Wadi Finan Art Gallery

The gallery also presents a series of bronze and wood sculptures by Rita Hassouani, whose bronze figures are depicted trying to escape their wooden enclosures. The presentation finishes with Rasmi Al Kafaji's series of monochrome acrylic paintings, which appear to comment on the cosmos and spirituality, something many of us have been embracing over the past 12 months.

[Browse Wadi Finan Art Gallery's online show.](#)

Janet Rady Fine Art



Soudah Davoud
Taq-e Bostan Swamp, 2021
Janet Rady Fine Art
US\$11,000

Janet Rady Fine Art presents a solo show of works by Soudah Davoud titled "HALF OF ALL," exclusively online through March 30th. Davoud's paintings and mixed-media works highlight the place of Iranian women in their communities today, while exploring Iran's natural and mythical past. The works show female figures together among colorful Iranian landscapes and sites of mythical poems and legends from such sources as the Shahnameh (the Persian "Book of Kings") as well as ancient sites like the Taq-e Bustan ("Arch of the Garden").



Soudah Davoud
Like a mountain, 2021
Janet Rady Fine Art
Sold

Within these vibrant, colorful works, Davoud draws together myth

From these vibrant, colorful forms, Davoud draws together myth and reality, with her female characters swimming together joyfully in *Taq-e Bostan Swamp* (2021), or physically lifting each other up in *Like a mountain* (2021), and dancing hand in hand in an untitled work on paper. Mixing traditional materials like pencils with airbrushing, Davoud brings fresh media to represent the exploration of old and new ideas, cementing the importance of understanding our past while moving into the future.

[Browse Janet Rady Fine Art's online show.](#)

Artscoops



Katya Traboulsi
Tunisia, ca. n/a
Artscoops

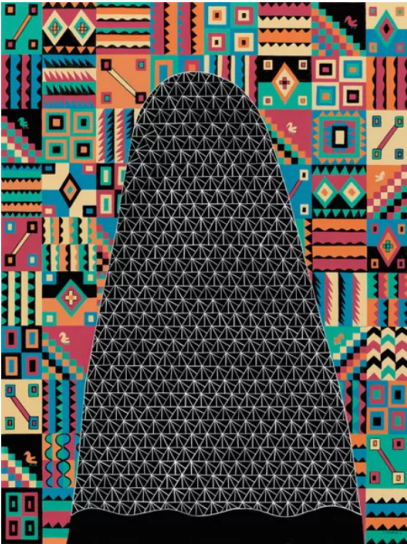


Helen Zughaib
Spring Exodus, 2012
Artscoops
US\$8,500

Beirut-based Artscoops presents a group show of contemporary female artists from the Middle East. Among the highlights are the sculptural vessels of Katya Traboulsi. In 2018, Traboulsi presented a series of hand-crafted replicas of Lebanese war bomb shells adorned with colorful patterns, transforming destructive military objects into beautiful vessels. *Tunisia* and *Turkey* are porcelain structures reminiscent of missiles, but decorated with delicate and ornate patterns, subverting how we might initially interpret the objects.



Malekeh Nayiny
Moment of Grace, 2010
Artscoops



Helen Zughaib
Woven In Exile, ca. n/a
Artscoops

Meanwhile, Helen Zughaib's *Woven In Exile* may be understood as a commentary on the experiences of Arab women living in the United

States. Other standout works are by [Malekeh Nayiny](#), whose paintings are created by manipulating personal photographs to create images that collapse her diverse geographic background—covering Iran, New York, and Paris—into single compositions. Her most arresting work is *Moment of Grace*, which, though produced in 2010, is strikingly reminiscent of the famous photograph of the Lebanese nurse Pamela Zeinoun cradling newborn babies in the immediate aftermath of the August 4th Beirut explosion.

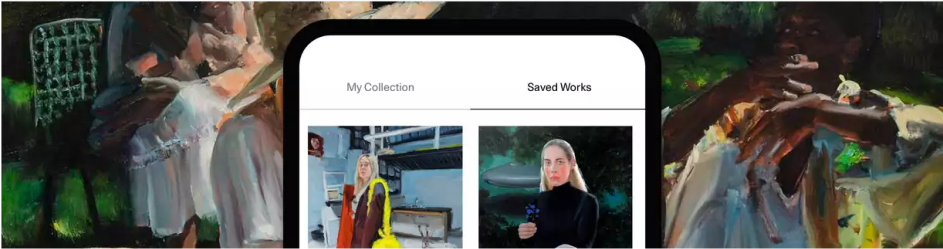
[Browse Artscoops's online show](#) ■

Lizzy Vartanian Collier

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Jenna Gribbon, Luncheon on the grass, a recurring dream, 2020. Jenna Gribbon, April studio, parting glance, 2021. Jenna Gribbon, Silver Tongue, 2019

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