

stories over art

middle east & beyond

April 2025
#10

ART & DESIGN | ARCHITECTURE | FASHION | INTERVIEWS | COMMENTARY | FILM | MUSIC | PERFORMANCE | PHOTOGRAPHY | FEATURES | REVIEWS

EDITOR'S NOTE



What we love most about participating in events like World Art Dubai (April 17–20, 2025) is the frenzy preparing for it! We love the process of creating what you put up on the empty walls and the act of being there hours before to set up your booth. What we love most is how all the participants become equal friends during the show — sharing and encouraging — and how the only thing that matters is creating and supporting one another.

For World Art, Dubai isn't just about painting, sculpting, writing, and curating. It is about strangers, friends, acquaintances, opponents, amateurs, professionals, rivals, and friends of friends trusting one another. Months of preparations later, everyone makes it to the show. Every contribution is significant. The guard at the entrance is essential. He ensures nobody walks in without a ticket. The backstage staff doesn't let the noise filter on stage. You trust the cleaner to remove the trash. You trust the person in the next booth to watch yours as you take a break to rush to the washroom. You trust the process! In this show, there is no rulebook for success. You don't lay down a contract and sign on the dotted line. You're a unit, falling and rising as one. You thoroughly enjoy the butterflies in the

tummy and the 'sold' labels!

This year, we are the show's 'Official Media Partner' and take extreme pride in this association.

Get ready for an unforgettable celebration of creativity at #WAD2025! From awe-inspiring installations to interactive experiences, WAD brings together artists, collectors, and art lovers for an inspiring experience. Join us as we explore bold ideas, discover new talents, and immerse ourselves in a world of artistic expression! Learn more at worldartdubai.com.

P.S: In an era of ChatGPT and Paywalls, we're daring to create original content and offer it to our readers without a fee. Your support would go a long way. Subscribe to the portal and meet us on social media as well.



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TABLE OF CONTENT

INTERVIEW: RITA CHEHAB	4
ART BEYOND BORDERS	8
THROUGH THE EYE OF AN ARTIST	9
ECHOES OF THE DESERT: BENJAMIN MALICK PAINTS THE UAE'S STORY	10
GOLD, SAGE, AND SOFT PASTELS: CREATE A WARM, WELCOMING EID AMBIANCE	12
ART MEETS LITERATURE: A CELEBRATION OF WOMANHOOD	16
FACES OF DUBAI	21
DUBAI'S ENACT DELIVERS A HEARTFELT DRAMEDY SERVED WITH HUMOR AND DEPTH	22

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RITA CHEHAB

Rita Chehab is an international artist from Lebanon, based in Dubai. Her paintings reflect her journey as a mother and a woman, celebrating female empowerment and the essence of femininity. Each piece carries a depth of emotion, weaving together wonder and introspection.

Through her art, Rita invites viewers to explore their dreams and regrets, creating a compelling paradox that resonates with the shared human experience. Her work transcends mere visuals, transforming into narratives, allowing the audience to enter her world and connect with its emotional depth.

What's your earliest memory of creating art?

One of my earliest memories of creating art is the deep joy and contentment I felt when turning a blank canvas into something meaningful. It was a powerful and almost surreal experience that left a lasting impact on me. Bringing life to an 'empty space' allowed me to tell a story and express emotions that had long been waiting to surface. The process of filling that blank canvas gave me an overwhelming sense of accomplishment and fulfillment.

If you could collaborate with any artist, living or dead, who would it be and why?

I would choose Salvador Dalí. His visionary approach to surrealism, rich with deep symbolism and unexpected elements, has always captivated me. Dalí's mastery of challenging reality and pushing the limits of imagination is something I strive to explore in my work. I deeply admire how his art evokes powerful emotions and sparks thought in unconventional ways. Collaborating with this Master of Surrealism would undoubtedly expand my creative boundaries and offer new perspectives on artistic expression.

What's the weirdest thing you've ever used as a medium/tool/ platform in your artwork?

The fabric was one of the most unconventional materials I've experimented with in my artwork. I incorporated it into the canvas and even adorned a headpiece with velvet and accessories. It was an

attempt to explore new dimensions in my work, but I soon realized this approach didn't truly resonate. Painting is most potent when it remains simple, clean, and honest. The depth and richness should come from the artwork, conveying its message through purity and direct expression.

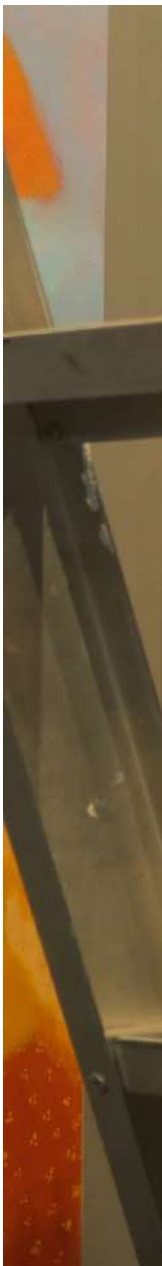
How do you come up with the titles for your pieces?

The titles of my paintings naturally emerge as the piece nears completion, closely tied to the story or message I want to convey. The subject's portrait or facial expression often guides me, as if the character is trying to speak, searching for its voice. The painting's colors, mood, and overall essence also influence the title, reflecting the emotions I experienced during the creative process. I sincerely appreciate Spanish and Italian names, drawn to their meanings—especially in historical contexts. Additionally, I find inspiration in dance, particularly Tango, which mirrors the passion and movement I strive to capture in my art.

What's the most unusual source of inspiration you've ever had?

One of the most unexpected sources of inspiration I've drawn from is the concept of toxic people and negativity. Rather than seeing these as purely destructive forces, I sought to transform them into something meaningful. In my painting Colette, for instance, I depicted toxicity as smoke escaping from the mouth of a bold, provocative woman. As the smoke disperses into the air, it symbolizes the importance of releasing negativity and keeping it from infiltrating our lives. This idea was inspired by the belief that even harmful experiences can catalyze growth, turning adversity into a message of strength and resilience.

If you could only use three colors/instruments/





software for the rest of your life, which would you choose?

If I had to work with only three colors, I would choose white, blue, and green. White would be my foundation, essential for creating depth and harmony in a piece. Blue is indispensable, representing the sky and ocean—both deeply tied to freedom and vastness. Conversely, green symbolizes nature and the earth, grounding my work in the natural world.

I'd choose brushes for tools, as they allow me to shape, create, and bring my vision to life profoundly, personally, and intimately. As for software, I don't use digital programs in my artistic process since I don't create digital art. Instead, I'd replace it with

an easel—an essential part of my creative journey, providing the perfect surface to express my ideas fully.

What piece of art do you take the most pride in and why?

I am most proud of Perfect Imperfection. This painting represents a blend of new techniques, personal challenges, and a profoundly thought-provoking message, marking a significant milestone in my artistic journey. My technique—blending colors while merging a delicate floral style with a bold, almost raw approach—pushed me beyond my comfort zone.

The striking gaze of the woman in the painting compels viewers to question societal ideals of beauty and perfection. At its core, the piece challenges the pressure to conform to conventional beauty standards. True beauty lies not in perfection but in our unique imperfections—our authenticity, elegance, and individuality. This painting is more than an artistic shift; it reflects my evolution and how I perceive and express the world through art. It embodies everything I have learned—color, technique, and meaning—taking my creative journey to a new level.

Do you have any quirky rituals or habits when you're in your creative zone?

When I'm in my creative zone, one of my quirkiest habits is squeezing paint directly from the tube onto my brush. My husband finds it unusual, but it feels raw and honest to me. I occasionally use a wooden palette, but this method works for me—it's an extension of my creative process.

Creativity flows instinctively, especially when faced with a blank canvas. It's as if my emotions, hopes, and experiences spill directly onto it. While it may seem unconventional, I've discovered that my most inspired moments often happen in the afternoons, with my two daughters playing nearby. Despite the noise, their presence energizes me, and I find that their joyful chaos fuels my creativity in ways I never expected.

If your artwork had a soundtrack, what would be the top three songs on it?

For me, art in all its forms is inseparably intertwined with Tango music. The dance and the music are at the heart of my creative expression, and I always feel compelled to pair my Instagram posts of paintings with a Tango song. Even during my solo exhibitions, I play Tango music, as it perfectly captures the energy and essence of my work.

If I had to choose the three Tango songs that resonate most with my art, they would be *Scent of a Woman* (by Benjamin Samuel), *La Viruta* (by Luces de Buenos Aires), and *Un Tango Argentino* (by Manuel Canela). These pieces reflect the colors, shapes, and messages I strive to convey in my paintings. Tango embodies resilience, sensuality, femininity, discipline, strength, sorrow, and joy—all themes in my art. Its emotional depth and rhythm complete the story I aim to tell on canvas.

How do you deal with a creative block?

As an artist, I've learned creativity doesn't always flow constantly or intensely. Sometimes, I begin a painting but struggle to continue or feel unsatisfied with the progress. These moments are typical and often tied to our emotions, moods, and life circumstances. I've come to understand that it's okay to experience them.

When I hit a creative block, I allow myself to step away. I take a break, observe my surroundings, and often walk on the beach. This pause helps me reconnect with the idea behind the painting and gain a fresh perspective. Sometimes, I even start a new painting, which clears my mind. Later, I return to the original piece with renewed clarity.

These moments of pause are a natural part of the creative

process: reflecting, interpreting, observing, and eventually creating. Creativity doesn't always unfold in a straight line, and allowing space for reflection and growth is essential.

What's the most memorable reaction someone has had to your work?

When I was invited to the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris, I vividly recall how the curator was deeply impressed by my work style. She described it so eloquently, saying that my artwork is "filled with emotion, and what's truly captivating is how viewers can not only see but also feel those emotions, connecting with their own stories through mine." Her words have stayed with me ever since, continuing to resonate deeply.

If you could turn any book into a piece of art, which one would it be

I would choose *The Prophet* by Khalil Gibran. The book's lyrical prose, rich with profound philosophical insights and vivid imagery, makes it a perfect candidate for visual interpretation. Its themes of love, freedom, and the interconnectedness of life could inspire a series of expressive, symbolic artworks, merging abstract and natural elements to capture the spiritual and emotional depth of the text.

What's one piece of advice you'd give to ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE aspiring to replace ARTISTS?

For me, art is fundamentally human. It stems from the emotions, experiences, and connections we share with others. These emotions directly fuel our creativity, something that AI can never truly replicate. While I'm not opposed to AI in art, I believe it should enhance human creativity through technique, technology, or exploration rather than trying to replace the artist. AI is merely a data collection tool that lacks the depth and richness of human experience. AI will never replace the value of a true artist.

What would you be doing if you weren't an artist?

I hold a degree in economics and have spent many years working in that field. However, my true artistic journey began after I became a mother. My art reflects my experiences as a mother, an artist, and a woman. I believe the artist within me has always been there, as I've always been drawn to languages, music, and Tango dance. To me, being an artist means tapping into the essence of life and sharing that with others. Whether through art, writing, or philosophy, I would still follow a path that allows me to connect, inspire, and reflect deeply on the world around me. Today, I am an artist by heart and in practice, and I can't imagine being anything else. But if I had to choose something else, it would be a dancer—specifically, a Tango dancer—because dance is another form of artistic expression that conveys the messages I aim to express in my paintings.

As for the strangest place I've ever found inspiration, I often find it on the road, particularly in crowded spaces filled with cars, buses, metros, and pedestrians—especially in countries different from mine. In these bustling environments, an underlying emotion is hidden beneath people's fast-paced movement. I'm always captivated by the



contrast between the chaos around me and the silent stories unfolding within each individual. This contrast sparks ideas for works that explore the intersection of personal worlds within public spaces, where profound and often unnoticed emotions and stories emerge even in the most ordinary and busy moments.

Can you describe your art in three words?

My art is deeply emotional, highly expressive, and ultimately transformative.

What's your favorite part about the process of creating art?

My favorite part of the creative process is when everything begins to come together—the shapes, forms, and colors. It's when I can feel life and emotion flowing onto the blank canvas. That moment when I transform these emotions into pure expressions is truly special. The artwork starts to take on a life of its own, and I connect with it in a way that goes beyond technique. There's something magical about seeing raw emotions and thoughts evolve into something tangible that resonates with others.

If you could have your artwork displayed anywhere in the world, where would it be?

I would choose the Vatican in Rome for its rich

history and profound cultural significance. It's a place where art and spirituality intersect, and having my work displayed there would be an honor, linking it to a tradition of artistic excellence and profound human expression.

What's one thing people would be surprised to learn about you as an artist?

One thing people might find surprising about me as an artist is that I didn't begin my art career. I spent several years working in a completely different field as an economist. It's fascinating how life and experiences can shape who we become and how we often don't realize our true potential until we push ourselves to achieve something. Today, I'm not just an artist but a multi-award-winning one. As Picasso once said, "Everything you can imagine is real." This journey has proven to me that anything is possible with determination and an open mind.

A solo exhibition by Lebanese artist Rita Chehab, titled *Immortality*, is running at RAW's Coffee Company, Warehouse No. 10, Al Quoz, Dubai, until April 8. This collection is the artist's way of expressing the beauty and transformation that arise from our quietest, most vulnerable moments. She hopes the pieces transcend time, forming a lasting connection with the human spirit.

ART BEYOND BORDERS

Dubai artist Kristel Bechara creates an art piece that weaves a cross-cultural narrative connecting the UAE and the Maldives through art and sustainability

This April, the breathtaking shores of InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort becomes the canvas for an extraordinary artistic collaboration. Dubai-based artist Kristel Bechara, renowned for her bold patterns and expressive colors, brings her vision to life in a unique residency that celebrates the Maldives' natural splendor and the resort's deep-rooted commitment to conservation.

Kristel's journey begins in her Dubai studio, where she will lay the foundation for a stunning masterpiece inspired by the resort's idyllic setting. Then, from April 5th, she will step into the landscape that fuels her imagination, immersing herself in the island's beauty to add the final touches. Drawing inspiration from the resort's vibrant wildlife and marine conservation efforts, her work will capture the essence of this paradise, culminating in an exclusive unveiling on April 9th.

Beyond showcasing her talent, Kristel invites guests to be part of the creative experience. Visitors can explore her distinctive techniques through complimentary workshops, experiment with colors, and create their own art under her expert guidance. For those who prefer to observe, live art sessions throughout her residency offer a rare window into her artistic process—watch as brushstrokes transform into a masterpiece before your eyes.

This collaboration is more than an art residency; it's a cultural bridge between the UAE and the Maldives, a fusion of creativity and conservation, and a



celebration of nature's boundless beauty. Whether by painting alongside Kristel or witnessing her vision come to life, guests will experience art in an immersive, inspiring, and unforgettable way.

For over a decade, award-winning contemporary artist Kristel Bechara has built an impressive career in the UAE. She took her creativity to a global level by exhibiting her vibrant collections at galleries across Tokyo, Milan, London, Côte d'Azur, Miami, and Brussels. Her artistic vision has led to collaborations with global brands like TEDx, Lenovo, and Samsung, showcasing her profound influence on art. She also made headlines as the first Middle Eastern artist to launch paintings through blockchain, redefining the intersection of art and technology.

THROUGH THE EYE OF THE ARTIST

AKNEYE has partnered with artist Sacha Jafri for a groundbreaking collaboration, “Through the Eye of the Artist,” combining a sold-out physical sculpture with an exclusive NFT collection

AKNEYE, the innovative contemporary art platform that bridges the physical and digital realms, has announced a monumental collaboration with artist Sacha Jafri. The “Through the Eye of the Artist” project combines Jafri’s influential physical art with a cutting-edge digital NFT collection, resulting in a sold-out physical sculpture and a highly successful NFT offering. This collaboration, unveiled during the prestigious Venice Biennale 2024, pushes the boundaries of artistic expression by blending traditional sculpture and digital technology. The physical sculpture, a striking “raw canvas” eye-shaped piece brilliantly and creatively reimagined by Jafri, has already been sold, making it one of the most coveted art pieces of the year.

In addition to the physical masterpiece, an exclusive NFT collection featuring unique digital pieces, each corresponding to segments of Jafri’s artwork, will soon be launched in Dubai to much interest. One of the most notable aspects of this collaboration is the integration of Sacha Jafri’s deeply personal ethos of the ‘Reconnection of Humanity,’ which draws inspiration from human emotion.

The central piece of the collaboration between AKNEYE’s raw canvas eye sculpture and Jafri’s artistic license serves as both a canvas and a lens, guiding viewers on a meditative journey through layers of human emotion. Beneath the sculpture, an intricate canvas symbolizes the interconnectedness of the world’s continents and cultures, capturing

humanity’s potential for unity through empathy and shared experiences.

This partnership marks a significant milestone for AKNEYE and Sacha Jafri, known for his unprecedented artworks, including the record-breaking painting “The Journey of Humanity” and his collaboration with Rolls-Royce. This physical and digital combination allows Jafri to retain his integrity as an artist while cementing his place in the infinite realms of blockchain technology and NFTs. The ftNFT Phygital Space in Dubai Mall is one of these landmark spaces, offering visitors a unique opportunity to experience art in an immersive, interactive format that incorporates traditional art and NFTs.

The AKNEYE Venice 2024 NFT Collection, featuring 120,000 NFTs on Ortak.me, sold out at 10 FTN per NFT. Showcasing digital counterparts of

sculptures from the Venice Biennale 2024, the collection blends global cultures and artistic expression. Artists include Sacha Jafri, Sayan Baigaliyev, Rafael Megall, Adam Handler, Elene Metreveli, Sarko Meené, Fatma Zeynep Cimen, Natalya Gudovich, Stephany Sanossian, Mako Lomadze, Anahit Margaryan, Roman Reznitsky, Alpha ODH, Miroslava Romanova, Satenik Ghulijanyan, Rafayel Nersesyan, and others.

AKNEYE continues to redefine how art is experienced and collected, making this collaboration with Jafri a landmark moment for the global art community. With the NFT market evolving, AKNEYE’s integration of physical and digital art sets a new precedent for artists and collectors alike.





ECHOES OF THE DESERT: BENJAMIN MALICK PAINTS THE UAE'S STORY

“Tales of Sarab” is an invitation to experience a new artistic vision that bridges cultures, questions conventions, and celebrates the complexities of identity, history, and progress

Ongoing at La Ville Hotel & Suites, Dubai, is Benjamin Malick’s highly anticipated art exhibition, Tales of Sarab. Malick, a multidisciplinary artist with Algerian and Tunisian roots, recently established his studio in Hatta’s serene and inspiring surroundings in the Hajar Mountains, 130km southeast of Dubai. From this location, Malick has found the space, resources, and perspective to develop his major work, Tales of Sarab, which documents his experiences and connection to the UAE’s rich culture and traditions.

The La Ville Hotel & Suites exhibition introduces viewers to the first two chapters of Tales of Sarab. It offers a selection of completed works that delve into the complexities of the UAE’s modern landscape and its fusion of the natural and artificial worlds. The collection includes striking three-dimensional multimedia pieces featuring Malick’s signature photographic style, light mapping, and projected images. The works create a dreamlike, psychedelic experience, inviting the viewer to contemplate the paradoxes of the UAE — its arid desert landscapes juxtaposed with modernist skyscrapers, intricate mosques, and rapid construction.

He explores themes of reflection and connection, focusing on his emotional responses to his environment and the people he has encountered. The exhibition captures the essence of the UAE through innovative display methods, including the use of found materials such as concrete slabs and reclaimed wood, all of which tell their own stories.

Running until 28 April, this exhibition marks a significant milestone in the artist’s ongoing exploration of his personal experiences in the UAE. This endeavor has been evolving since he arrived in 2020.





GOLD, SAGE, AND SOFT PASTELS: CREATE A WARM, WELCOMING EID AMBIANCE

From home Eid tents to table scaping and décor ideas for the holy month, Nahel Selo, creative director, Sedar Global, gives his top tips on how to get your interiors Eid ready

Ramadan is a time of reflection, togetherness, and reviving cherished traditions across homes in the region. It's also a season to gather with loved ones, creating warm and celebration spaces. This Eid, transform your interiors with festive touches—from atmospheric lighting to Arabesque-inspired accents, reimagined majlis settings, and elegant table décor.

Create a Memorable First Impression: Set the tone for your guests when they step inside by sprucing up your entrance. A statement chair or bench with festive cushions adds an instant touch of Eid elegance. Whether centrally placed or against a wall, a console table can be styled with a decorative metal tray of dates, an incense burner or diffuser for a fragrant welcome, and floor lanterns or candle stands to illuminate the path to Iftar softly. This is a temporary addition to your home, so it can be as subtle or elaborate as you choose. Select three primary color tones and one metallic or wood finish to maintain a cohesive feel, and carry this theme throughout your space.

Define Your Interior Style: Contemporary, Rustic, or Khaleeji-Inspired: Before beginning your Eid décor transformation, choose a style and color palette that best reflects your vision.

Contemporary Chic: This season's favored hues include soft pastels and sage greens paired with gold accents for a refined, modern look.

Minimalist Bedouin Elegance: Layer contrasting textures with Arabian geometric-patterned throws, rugs, and pillows to create a cozy, understated aesthetic.

Moroccan Charm: Infuse vibrant colors and intricate motifs with tile, ogee, and latticework patterns, complemented by indulgent drapes and bold decor elements.

Khaleeji Heritage: Introduce subtle Turkish

influences with accessories inspired by Islamic architecture, incorporating rich materials like silk and brocade.

Rustic Organic Modern: Inspired by Dubai's desert and cityscape, this style features earthy tones, natural fabrics, weathered wood, brass, and faded gold for a warm, contemporary feel.

Reimagine Your Eid Majlis: Transform your home with a majlis-inspired setup, bringing the spirit of traditional gatherings into a modern setting. You can easily create an Arabesque-style lounge without a significant investment, especially since Eid falls during a season when both indoor and outdoor setups are enjoyable. For a simple indoor or garden setup, craft a cozy tepee using sheer or linen curtains. If the budget allows, enhance your outdoor space with a pergola or awning installation. Opt for low seating



arrangements like ottomans, poufs, or oversized floor cushions laid over a statement rug to recreate an authentic majlis.

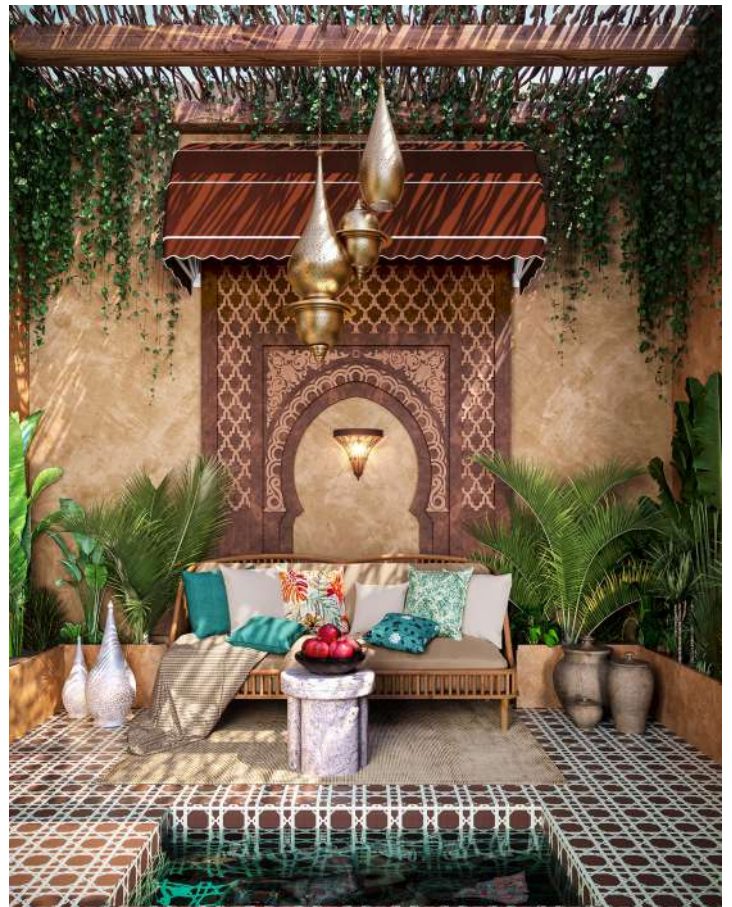
Arabesque Accents for a Festive Home: Consider temporary wall art, such as Arabic calligraphy–inspired brass accessories or mirrored objects that reflect light beautifully. Lanterns, decorative cushions, and plush throws enhance comfort while adding a festive touch. For a stylish blend of tradition and trend, incorporate gold or brass finishes alongside contemporary turquoise, royal blue, or dusky pink palettes. Gold and brass are timeless in Eid décor, but for 2025, a worn, antique–inspired finish adds an earthy, contemporary twist.

Creative Table Styling & Ambient Lighting: Elevate your Iftar and Eid dining experience with carefully curated tablescapes. Metallic and Arabesque–inspired elements can be introduced through cutlery, napkin rings, and dinnerware, while jute placemats, table runners, mini lanterns, and fresh or dried florals add texture and warmth. Lighting

plays a crucial role in setting the mood—from fairy lights and lanterns to wax candles and tea lights, layering different lighting elements creates a warm and inviting atmosphere throughout Ramadan and Eid.



Catering to the window and wall décor industry for over 130 years, Sedar Global offers curtains, wallpaper, awnings, blinds, folding doors, curtain accessories, pillows, and upholstery solutions from Marco Polo, Fujikawa, Amazona, Antarcticaa, as well as internationally renowned names including Jannelli & Volpi, Armani/Casa, Swarovski, Versace, Somfy and York Weave amongst others. Sedar has over 30 showrooms across 11 countries including the UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Egypt, Iraq and is in the process of expanding across further territories worldwide.





ART MEETS LITERATURE: A CELEBRATION OF WOMANHOOD

And as the echoes of “The Things She Carries” continue beyond the gallery walls, the weight of womanhood—its burdens, beauty, and boundless strength—remains an ongoing story that we carry forward

As the final day of SHE Canvas drew to a close at Conrad Dubai, the air was thick with emotion, conversation, and a profound sense of solidarity.

The exhibition’s centerpiece, “The Things She Carries,” had transformed into a powerful, unfiltered testament to women’s burdens, expectations, and triumphs. Curated by author Purva Grover and art curator Bhairavi Mistry, this evolving installation invited visitors to contribute everyday objects that symbolized the societal roles women navigate—heels, lipstick, degrees, baby bottles, planners, dumbbells, and even vacuum cleaner attachments. By the end

of the event, what began as an open question—What does a woman carry?—had materialized into a striking visual narrative of womanhood, each object a whispered story, a shared reality.

Beyond the installation, SHE Canvas unfolded as a multidimensional tribute to femininity, blending art, literature, and interactive experiences. Mistry’s “Noora, the Divine Spark,” an immersive exhibit, brought an ethereal perspective to the theme, while Grover’s acclaimed book SHE—translated into seven languages—anchored the event’s literary connection.

Among the highlights were — “The Things



Art by Ukraine Artist Tetiana Kruchynina



She Carries,” an evolving installation that engaged visitors as co-creators; SHE by Purva Grover—an introduction to the book and discussion on the narratives of womanhood; a curated art exhibition featuring 22 + works by Emirati and international artists, creating a visual dialogue on identity, strength, and resilience; and a spotlight on emerging talent, including child artist Raagaanshi Kukumuri, alongside male artists who supported the SHE Canvas initiative.

The event brought together an extraordinary lineup of regional and international talent, showcasing works from Emirati Artists Ghia Haddad, Hanan Alwahedi, and Reem Alfalasi; international Artists Daria Avdeeva (Russia), Tetiana Kruchynina (Ukraine), Tanya Micallef (South Africa), Ymke Hordijk Evans (Netherlands), Ria Shankar (Bahrain), Meena Meher (India) and male artists Supporting SHE CANVAS: Avigyan Bhattacharya, Kiran Kumar, Andrew Thompson.





Art by Ghia Haddad - Emirati - Dubai

stories over art



(L-R) Magdalena Fischer, Conrad Dubai) Bhairavi Mistry (art curator and Founder, Noora Bhairavi), Kiran Kumar (participating artist), Purva Grover (author), Elizabeth Fajardo (Founder, Sellah Events & Consultancy) and Michael Schmitt (General Manager, Conrad Dubai)



Bhairavi Mistry,
art curator,
SHE Canvas



Purva Grover, author,
She, translated into seven
languages &
editor of *stories over art*

WE WANTED TO CREATE SOMETHING THAT WASN'T JUST AN ART PIECE BUT A CONVERSATION IN MOTION. WATCHING THE INSTALLATION GROW, WITH PEOPLE ADDING THEIR OBJECTS AND STORIES, WAS INCREDIBLY MOVING. IT SHOWED HOW DEEPLY THESE SYMBOLS RESONATE ACROSS CULTURES, BACKGROUNDS, AND GENERATIONS.

As the final object was placed onto the installation and the last visitors lingered, reluctant to leave, one thing was clear—SHE Canvas was not just an exhibition. It was a movement. At the same time, Michael Schmitt, General Manager of Conrad Dubai, highlighted the hotel's commitment to amplifying women's voices, particularly during Ramadan. Elizabeth Fajardo, founder of Sellah Events, emphasized the power of purpose-driven experiences.

And as the echoes of "The Things She Carries" continue beyond the gallery walls, the weight of womanhood—its burdens, beauty, and boundless strength—remains an ongoing story that we carry forward.

The exhibition, which opened on March 18, ran until March 27 in Conrad, Dubai. Supported by Sellah Events & Consultancy, Conrad Dubai, and stories over art, the exhibition was more than an artistic showcase—a dialogue, reflection, and connection space.

FACES OF DUBAI

Pedro captures the rich diversity of women who define Dubai's essence—each portrait a tribute to the quiet confidence, individuality, and allure that make this city an international hub of elegance and sophistication



Dubai is more than a city—it is a crossroad where cultures, identities, and expressions of beauty intertwine. The Warehouse, Al Quoz, presents 'Faces of Dubai,' a solo exhibition by Swiss-based artist Pedro Martin Rojo.

In this collection, Pedro captures the rich diversity of women who define Dubai's essence—each portrait a tribute to the quiet confidence, individuality, and allure that make this city an international hub of elegance and sophistication. Through bold textures and luminous contrasts, these works celebrate the many faces of Dubai—where heritage and modernity, tradition and innovation, blend seamlessly. More than just paintings; these are reflections of a city where beauty has no single definition, only infinite expressions.

Pedro is based in Zurich, Switzerland, and has exhibited at prestigious venues such as Art Basel 2018 (Braswell Arts Center), BVLGARI, FIVE Hotel, ART- Innsbruck, and Katapult Basel. His expressive

paintings exhibit a raw, dynamic force, bursting with vital energy in search of the essence of beauty. He has also been commissioned to create portraits for numerous celebrities. Pedro will be at the vernissage on April 12 to engage with art enthusiasts and collectors alike.

A homegrown brand powered by the creative minds of local and expatriate communities, The Warehouse, Al Quoz continuously curates a dynamic rotation of exhibitions, offering a platform for artists to showcase their work. This showcase will run from April 12 to April 29.



DUBAI'S ENACT DELIVERS A HEARTFELT DRAMEDY SERVED WITH HUMOR AND DEPTH

EnAct's latest theatrical production, *Hold the Mushrooms*, served a layered narrative that blended humor, emotions, and thought-provoking themes. With a relatable storyline, a well-cast ensemble, and a balance of comedy and drama, the production left the audience reflecting on relationships, value systems, and the complexities of family life.

The title *Hold the Mushrooms* is cryptic, sparking curiosity before the curtains even rise. What's being served—a hearty platter with mushrooms on the side or without? As we stepped into live at play, the newly opened performance space in Al Quoz, Dubai, we had little idea what to expect. The storyline was a mystery, and the talent on stage unfamiliar. Yet, after successful runs in Bangalore, Chennai, Singapore, and New Delhi, the production arrived in Dubai with high expectations by EnAct by Rashmi Kotriwala.

A dramedy, *Hold the Mushrooms* revolves around a close-knit family of three whose dynamics shift when the daughter introduces her boyfriend into the mix. The play delves into relationships, value systems, and prejudices with humor and poignancy.

The minimalist yet effective stage setup evoked a home many could relate to, setting the scene for an unfolding narrative. One of the production's strengths was its well-matched cast—both in age and performance depth. Evidently, each actor had been given time to inhabit their character truly. As veteran theatre director Kotriwala noted, she enjoys working with new actors for their discipline, passion, and hunger to prove themselves—qualities she knows how to channel effectively.

The story unfolds in layers, beginning with natural family banter and comedic touches before venturing into deeper emotional territory. Just as a lump forms in your throat, the script reminds you to smile—much like life itself. Credit goes to writer Binoy Mohan, who was present in the audience that evening (February 2025), for his skillful handling of complex emotions and situations. Without giving too much away, the interplay between revelation and restraint in addressing themes of prejudice, loss, coping mechanisms, and family dynamics was both sensitive and impactful. Kudos to both Binoy and Kotriwala.

Shahana Raza, making her Dubai theatre debut as the

mother, delivered a poised and compelling performance. She navigated emotions seamlessly, switching from dialogue to monologue with ease. Her body language was on point, and her chemistry with the actress playing her daughter felt natural. As the father, Amlan Sengupta balanced the emotional weight of the role well, especially the pauses and the inner turmoil. While his comic timing was sharp, some moments felt slightly overplayed. Harshita Kauchhur, a film graduate from Dubai, made a strong debut as the daughter, portraying her character with nuance and authenticity. Her mannerisms and dialogue delivery captured the essence of the 'girl next door.' Meanwhile, Midhann Ahuja, playing the boyfriend, had limited stage time but left an impression with his brief but effective dialogues and stage presence. The family dynamic felt well-cast and convincing. That said, the mother's monologues could be tightened to maintain the show's pacing, and while the father's humor lightened heavy moments, some instances bordered on excess.

Overall, *Hold the Mushrooms* was well-executed, leaving audiences eager for more from EnAct. As for the venue, while it offers an intimate setting, its seating could be more comfortable for longer performances, and the acoustics need some fine-tuning.



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FESTIVAL

The third edition of BRED Abu Dhabi, presented by Hypebeast, is set to take over Yas Island from April 23 to 27, showcasing the region's neo-culture through music, fashion, sports, and art rooted in Arab identity. In this edition, BRED Abu Dhabi returns to the streets where neo-culture started, bringing together Arab subcultures from the Levant, North Africa, and the GCC, emphasizing collaboration, creativity, and driving the regional music scene forward. Staying true to the event's mission, the 2025 edition aims to become a platform for emerging artists, empowering them to showcase their talent on a global stage. Tying in with this year's theme of street culture, BRED Abu Dhabi is releasing its track inspired by cypher rap, showcasing some of the region's brightest rising and established talents, each given complete creative freedom. The first edition highlighted Abu Dhabi's rich cultural diversity, featuring streetwear, art, food, basketball, gaming, and global music performances that are quickly gaining popularity. The second edition built on this foundation, delivering a powerhouse lineup with world-class acts like AJ Tracey, Aitch, Offset, Metro Boomin, and TY Dolla \$ign, alongside rising local and regional stars. Now, the third edition promises to outdo them all. While the lineup is yet to be announced, guests can expect fresh collaborations, iconic performances, and a deeper dive into Abu Dhabi's thriving contemporary culture scene. You won't want to miss the ultimate neo-culture takeover!



EVENT

Art Dubai 2025 edition's (Madinat Jumeirah, 18 – 20 April, with invitation-only previews on 16 and 17 April) highlights include: a new series of performances and site-specific interventions by Mexican artist Héctor Zamora, marking the launch of a new multi-year co-commissioning partnership between Art Dubai and Alserkal Avenue; a major new digital commission by leading Emirati artist Mohammed Kazem, presented by Julius Baer; a series of experiential commissions and installations examining the transformation of nature through technology and human experience, including site-specific works by Ania Soliman and Total Arts at the Courtyard; a series of new site-specific digital installations debuting at Art Dubai Digital, including by Ouchhh Studio, Breakfast, Jacopo Di Cera and Hybrid Xperience; the first details of Art Dubai's flagship transdisciplinary summit, the Global Art Forum, entitled 'The New New Normal,' commissioned by Shumon Basar, and curated by Y7; and the second edition of Art Dubai's Digital Summit, entitled 'After the Technological Sublime.

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