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Syrian Art at Abu Dhabi Art Fair

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In late November, the international art community gathered at the 16th edition of Abu Dhabi Art, where more than 90 art galleries from around 30 countries participated. Fairgoers felt positive about the event, praising its liveliness and noticeable diversity in artistic offering. As always, there was a rich showcase of contemporary and modern works, varying in mediums, by artists from the Arab world and its diaspora communities.

In particular, Syrian art, produced by emerging and established artists, had a surprisingly strong presence too. Though in Syria there has famously been artistic production, including contemporary visual arts, since time immemorial, it tends to be underrepresented in the global art scene. Delving into abstraction, figuration, still life and landscape art, their humane works often reflect the difficulties they endured as a people impacted by political instability in recent history.

From Fann A Porter, founded as a homegrown art community space in Dubai in 2006, there was a display of artworks by Ahmad Kasha and Rabee Kiwan. Born in the 1990s, Kasha has developed an expressionistic style of painting, manifested through impassioned brushstrokes, where he usually employs on his canvases vulnerable animals that represent different emotional states. At the fair, Kasha's abstract artworks, which were produced in 2024, depicted explosions of color with hints of figuration. Meanwhile, the figurative artist Rabee Kiwan had on display a series of glazed ceramic sculptures and dishes that were made of Syrian clay. They depict human faces painted with comical and shocked facial expressions.