

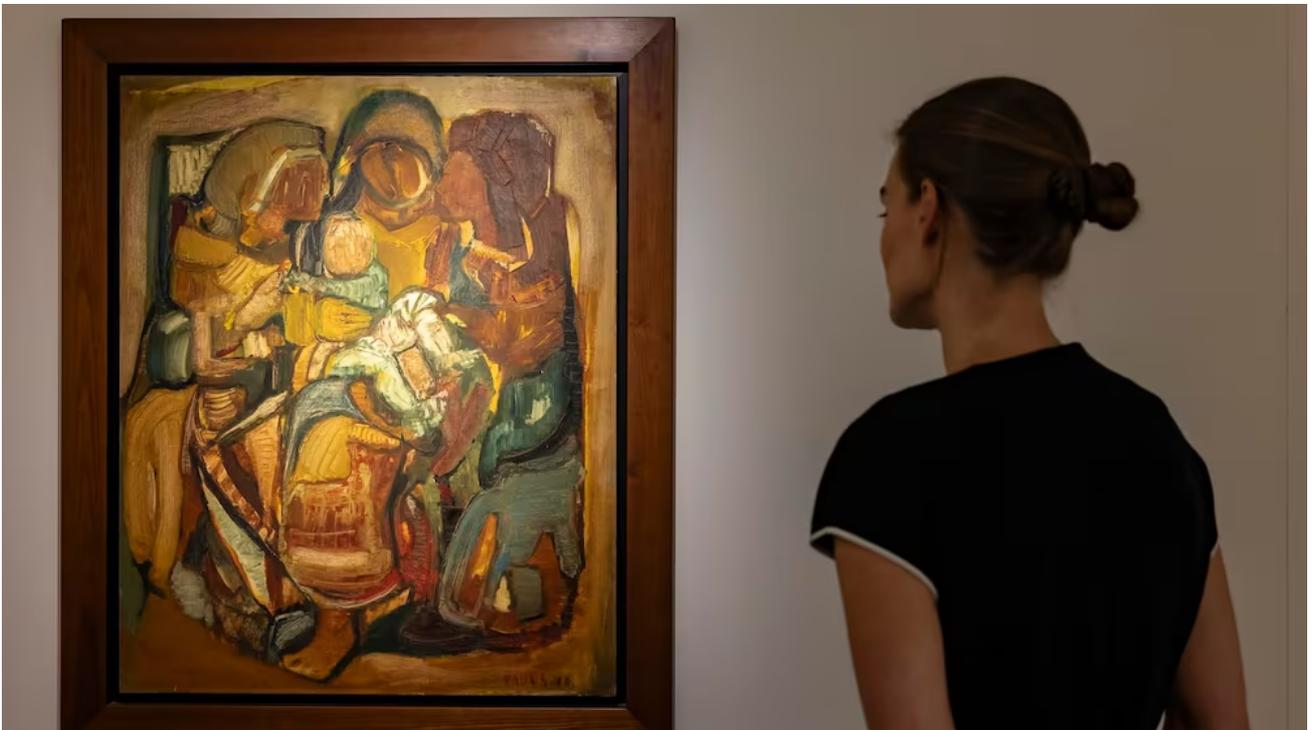


# ART & DESIGN

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# Masters of regional modern art in frame at Christie's sale in Dubai

► After successful launch last year, auction house brings back free exhibition promoting diverse artists and shared ideas



Highlights from Christie's Modern and Contemporary Art Dubai will be on show in the DIFC until May 31. Antonie Robertson / The National



**Maan Jalal**

May 23, 2024



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The rich artistic dialogue between modern and contemporary artists from the Middle East is being celebrated by Christie's.

**T** After a successful exhibition and sale last year, the auction house is running a second Modern and Contemporary Art Dubai event until May 31. It brings together works that reflect the region's diverse creatives and their practices.

"The carefully selected offering is reflective of Dubai developing into a hub for the wider Global South as well as the demand for a wider representation of artists by collectors from the region," Marie-Claire Thijsen, Christie's head of sale, tells *The National*.

"We feel it is pertinent to present the core focus of our Dubai sale platform such as Modern and Contemporary Middle Eastern Art, in a new light and foster cross-cultural dialogue and exchange between the various geographies relevant to the region."



Christie's Modern and Contemporary Art Dubai sale includes pieces across various mediums such as painting, sculpture, photography and works on paper. Pictured: Untitled by Helen Khal. Antonie Robertson / The National

Comprising more than 90 works, the sale includes works by artists from 20 countries, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Given the growing interest in the region, the exhibition also encompasses works from artists in Turkey, Latin America and South Asia.

Of the works on the sale, 33 are currently on show in Christie's DIFC gallery.

"It has been a great pleasure to bring together such a strong, diverse and exciting group of artists and artworks to our Dubai sale platform," Thijsen says. "Some of the works have not been shown or sold in Dubai previously for which we have been receiving a very positive response during our exhibition."

The sale and exhibition showcase pieces across various mediums such as painting, sculpture, photography and works on paper ranging from the 1950s to the 2020s.

One of the highlight pieces of the sale is a rare work by renowned Iranian artist [Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian](#). Mostly known for her mirror-mosaic sculptures and works that fuse modern western geometric abstraction with traditional Persian techniques, Farmanfarmaian's work *Untitled* is exemplary of this style.

Another significant work is of Saudi artist Ahmed Mater's *Evolution of Man*. The series of lightboxes comment on the environmental and social consequences of the oil boom in Saudi Arabia.

Considered one of the most important contemporary artists of his generation, Mater will also be having his first mid-career retrospective titled [Ahmed Mater: Chronicles](#) with Christie's London from July 17 until August 22.



Moucharabieh, Blue on Black by Mohamed Melehi and Untitled by Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian. Antonie Robertson / The National

Working with similar themes to Mater is Yorubian artist and sculptor Romuald Hazoume from Benin.

In his sculptural pieces, Hazoume repurposes discarded gasoline canisters and other found objects to create masks resembling those used in the ceremonies of Yoruba culture. Like Mater, he is also commenting on his country's cultural values under the effects of globalisation and consumerism.

These are only some of the interesting parallels between the artworks in the sale.

"The artworks offered have been carefully and strategically selected and demonstrate shared ideas across borders on themes of identity, community, conflict, postcolonialism, globalisation, nature and religion," Thijsen says. "Besides drawing thematic parallels, the works in the sale also showcase similar approaches and experiments into figuration, abstraction and materiality."

Significant works from the Mena region also make up the bulk of the exhibition, many of which showcase the artistic heritage of modern masters and their works.

There is Iraqi modern master [Dia Al Azzawi](#)'s *Red Landscape No 1*, which was painted in the 1990s. Influenced by one of his trips to Morocco, Azzawi became more interested in the decorative arts from the Arab world. This caused a shift in his colour palette from bold colours that represented his homeland to brighter and more intense hues similar to those of Bedouin textiles he saw in Morocco.

Another highlight is a painting by Moroccan modernist painter [Mohamed Melehi](#) called *Moucharabieh, Blue on Black*. Painted and exhibited during Melehi's final year, the work demonstrates the recurring motif of waves, which was central to his work, and his focus on colour exploration, complex geometry, modernism and Islamic influences.

Melehi died in Paris in 2020 aged 84 from Covid-19-related complications.



Evolution of Man by Ahmed Mater. Antonie Robertson / The National

There is also a strong presence of female artists, including paintings and works on paper by Lebanese modernists [Etel Adnan](#), Juliana Seraphim and [Helen Khal](#). Works by prominent Turkish-Jordanian artist [Fahrelnissa Zeid](#), contemporary Saudi Arabian artist [Manal Al Dowayan](#), Palestine's Laila Shawa and Iranian-American artist Tala Madani also feature.

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“This online sale celebrates cross-cultural dialogues between modern and contemporary artists from the Middle East and the wider Global South, reflecting the

region’s dynamic and diverse cultural environment,” says Thijsen. “It brings together museum quality works alongside works on paper, editions and photographs with more accessible price points to attract new collectors. Christie’s exhibitions are open and free to all, which provides a wonderful opportunity to view, learn and discuss a great variety of artworks.”

*Highlights from Modern and Contemporary Art Dubai will be on show at Christie’s, the DIFC, until May 31*

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