

Zawyeh Gallery's Inaugural Dubai Show Explores Resilience Through Palestinian Art

In its inaugural Dubai show, Ramallah-based Zawyeh Gallery showcases new works by pivotal Palestinian figures, who speak to the concept of 'sumud' and the perseverance of resistance



Prognostic of the global rise of political mobilisation, in Alserkal Avenue's warehouse #44, Zawyeh Gallery has opened its first international space with the inaugural show, 'Palestinian Art: Resilience and Inspiration, now extended until 30 September.

Offering [contemporary](#) depictions of the brutal occupation, in a time of waning international support and Trump's hostile administration, the

exhibition features pioneering artists Sliman Mansour, Khaled Hourani, Nabil Anani, Tayseer Barakat and Wafa Hourani, and will see three legacies of the New Visions Collective come together once more. In their recent work, the artists demonstrate deeper understandings of women's roles in the resistance, while still largely abiding by established modernist styles of painting.



Nabil Anani. Mother. 1995. Oil on canvas. 124x105cm

Established in 1989, the influential New Visions Collective used local

materials such as henna and earth. Politicising and tying the very process of art-making to Palestinian land, the techniques of the New Visions Collective became a foundation for later generations of [Palestinian artists](#), such as Khaled Hourani, whose work is also featured in the exhibition.

Sliman Mansour's iconographic *Revolution was the Beginning* (2016) is the centrepiece of the show, where the larger-than-life painting plays out a chronological and immersive history of the Palestinian Nakba in the tradition of socialist realist murals.

With an incredible command of composition, figures move leftwards, as scenes of mass displacement, [refugee](#) camps, imprisonment and martyrdom unfold in a shared apocalyptic, mud-like setting, alluding to Mansour's earlier use of material. The apartheid wall is recalled through the manipulation of the painting's horizon line, gaining solidity as the narrative unfolds, with the only figure managing to obscure it an IDF soldier holding down a jail cell.



Sliman Mansour. Letter y. 2009. Oil on canvas. 83x92cm

Mansour breaks through the static image of the maternal, peasant woman as the symbolic 'mother' of the nation that had often permeated modern [Middle Eastern](#) art, and instead, depicts the diverse and active roles women have held throughout resistance. Enveloped in swirling smoke and shadows, young women march with pens, books and keys in their hands, and share the jail cell of their male peers.

An elderly man and woman's bodies cement the centre of the painting, and

both loose their bodies to encase Palestinian motifs such as Al Aqsa Mosque and fertile orchards. At the end of the painting, on the left-hand side, a man and woman holding the Palestinian flag in union march defiantly towards the unknown. The artists also remind viewers that the most vulnerable refugees are [women](#) and children, as a small crowd of women and children stare out uneasily from the receding rows of tents.



Sliman Mansour. Woman Picking Olives. 2018. Oil and acrylic on canvas.

77x67cm

Similarly, in Nabil Anani's *Demonstration* (2016) series, androgynous figures link limbs and look to each other as they form a protective net. Faceless, and standing strong despite being swayed by multiple forces, they demonstrate the need of building [inclusive](#) and resistive communities.

The exhibition is now open until 30 September at Zawyeh Gallery, to all members of the public adhering to COVID-19 regulations, and can also be accessed via Alserkal online

Images courtesy of the artists and Zawyeh Gallery

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