

Robust sales on the opening night of Abu Dhabi Art please gallerists and are evidence of strong local interest.

Saleh Barakat of Beirut-based **Agial Art Gallery (C12)** could not hide his excitement at the sale of Nabil Nahas's fractal 272 x 458.5 cm mixed media work to Qatar's Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. "Of course I am happy!" exclaimed the Beirut-based gallerist, "it went to Mathaf!" Nahas, whose work featured at his retrospective showcased this summer at the Beirut Exhibition Center, "found its rightful place in Mathaf" and was displayed alongside another work by the Lebanese-born artist, priced at \$120,000. While it attracted a lot of interest from Arab collectors, the other fractal work remained unsold at the time of press. Another early sale occurred at **Haunch of Venison (C7)**. The untitled Ahmed Alsoudani piece went for \$200,000 to an international collector familiar to the gallery. "There has been a lot of interest in his work," said the gallery's Robert Goff. "With his participation in next year's Iraq Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, people are really excited and I think his work is genuinely great." Iran's **Silk Road Gallery (A7)** and Dubai's **The Third Line (B4)** also reported sales from Iranian collector Farbod Dowlatshahi, who has lent some of his works to the *Opening the Doors* exhibition, on show at Gallery One, Emirates Palace. *Tangled Web*, by Amir H Fallah at The Third Line, bought by Dowlatshahi, features the artist's usual "collage-based" signature which, when combined with painting, "brings a completely different meaning", said the gallery's Tarané Ali Khan. A work by Iranian artist Laleh Khorramian was on reserve at the gallery to a Middle Eastern collector for between \$30,000-35,000. Syrian **Atassi Gallery (B15)** did very well through eight sales from a booth dedicated to Modern Syrian art. Early works at the Damascus-based gallery date from 1931 and include pieces by Syrian Modern masters Michel Kurche, Saïd Tahsin and Sobhi Shouaib, among others. "Let's not jump before we know the history of Syrian art," said the gallery's Mona Atassi, "for collectors who follow a movement, they must understand the origins of Syrian art." Amongst the pieces Atassi sold was one to an Emirati collector for \$8000. Neighbouring **Ayyam Gallery (B11)** had a work by Palestinian-born artist

information," said the gallery's Amal Traboulsi on the interested collectors. No sales were reported by Zurich-based **Galerie Andrea Caratsch (B9)**, but at neighbouring **Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac (B7)**, buyers bought works on paper by Contemporary Iranian artist Rokni Haerizadeh for between \$5000-8000 and reserved a work by his brother, Ramin, priced at between \$13,000-15,000. "It's a good fair, it's so dynamic," said the gallery's Victoire de Pourtales, "It's clear a lot of effort has been put in and the quality is excellent." Beirut and Hamburg-based **Galerie Sfeir-Semler (A8)** was happy to report on institutional interest in the works of Lebanese Walid Raad and Akram Zaatari and Syrian Marwan, but could not confirm sales. "I am happy that we have come, we have received attention from very prominent patrons," said the gallery's Andrée Sfeir-Semler, "it's great that the works of our artists have been recognised." Tunisia-based **Galerie El-Marsa (B16)** sold a work by Nja Mahdaoui for between \$90,000-95,000 to an Emirati collector and six works by Algerian artist Rachid Koraïchi were reserved for between \$700,000-\$1 million. "There are a lot more people this year," said the gallery's Moncef Mskani, "and much more interest." Dubai-based **traffic (B18)** met attracted attention with the works of Saudi Abdalnasser Gharem and American James Clar, but no sales were reported at the time of press. Its neighbouring Dubai-based **Opera Gallery (B17)** reported however on a steady stream of sales, with works by Bernard Buffet sold for around \$200,000, Danaeifar Vahhid for \$2724 to an Iranian collector and a work by Dalí for \$550,445 to a French collector. "I love the quality of exhibitors and I am happy to be here," said the gallery's Bertrand Epaud of the fair. New York's **Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller Gallery (C9)** sold four works by Iranians Soody Sharifi for \$8000 each, one by Afsoon for \$5000 and one by Shiva Ahmadi for \$20,000; all sold to Emirati and Iranian collectors. "There's a lot more traffic this year and more collectors from Dubai and many more Europeans," said the gallery's Leila Taghinia-Milani Heller. Iran's only participating gallery, **Silk Road (A7)**, sold a painting by emerging Iranian



Ahmed Alsoudani. (Detail) *Untitled*. 2010. Acrylic on canvas. 248.9 x 164.1 cm. Courtesy Haunch of Venison, London.

\$75,000 to a prominent collector. "It combines different religious symbolisms" explained Molliet, "and I think that intrigues people." Abdi's *Ouverture des Idées* went for \$3200, while Baddor's *Two Fish* sold for \$16,500. *East Meets West*, by Mantello, went for \$3000 to a prominent Iranian collector, who found its symbolism reminiscent of a similar work by Shirin Neshat. At Turkish **Dirimart (D4)**, the impressive *Lilly*, a large 150 x 250 cm stitched fabric mounted on canvas by Ramazan Bayrakoglu, went to a prominent Middle Eastern collector for \$50,000. "There is also strong interest in the works of Ebru Uygun and Peter Zimmerman," said the gallery's Lara Ogel. **Almine Rech (B8)** was pleased with the evening's turnout. With several other pieces on hold, the gallery achieved a sale with German artist Anselm Reyle's 2010 *Straw Bale* going for \$12,000 to a Dubai-based international collector; it is one of three unique pieces with two still available. **Hunar Art Gallery (C8)** started the fair well with both local and international interest in 20-year old Emirati Maitha Demithan, who saw two works sold for just over \$4000 each. They also sold a recent untitled oil on canvas work by Dr Najat Makki to a Gulf collector for just over \$13,000. At **Xerxes Art (C13)**, a gallery rep said he was "generally happy" with the sales of the evening, with interest equal interest in works by all the gallery's artists, selling for between \$5000-750,000. "The energy is very good," commented one Dubai collector.