

## Art Dubai 2013: An international identity crisis explodes to life

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Art Dubai 2013 displays a wide variety of artistry and galleries and runs until March 23. (Al Arabiya)

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### Saffiya Ansari, Al Arabiya -

Artists are being refreshingly honest at this year's Art Dubai.

The pervading sense of a crisis of identity is evident, raw commentary on the human situation and the quest to find oneself, to discover one's roots, was portrayed in visual form.



'Where souls dwell' by artist Laila Shawa. (Al Arabiya)

From 'Pressurized world,' an atlas carved in a gas tank, to a gem encrusted Kalashnikov adorned with butterflies; the entire exhibition was a comment on the fragile nature of mankind. Artists attempted to beautify violence and make witty visual remarks on the tense state of world affairs.

The fair consists of a maze of gallery outlets, a range of art that draws the viewer in with interesting, memorable pieces.

## Conservative graffiti

Traditional Japanese figures depicted in bubbling, vibrant colors; Tomokazu 'Matsu' Matsuyama's creations caught my eye.

Torn between conservative Japanese painting and the free-for-all that is modern urban art, Matsu's work is a reflection of his life. Born in Japan, raised in California and currently residing in New York, this artist is on a perennial quest to sew together his traditional, contemporary and global influences and does so with startling clarity.

"He is portraying his search for identity," says Wendi Norris of San Francisco's Wendi Gallery, "jumping from country to country can leave a person feeling lost, his art is cathartic, it makes sense of his life."

Matsu metaphorically fits together the puzzle pieces of his life by spray painting figures onto a canvas, he also uses acrylic paint.

In the visual feast that is 'Mothership,' Matsu depicts a flute player on one curved canvas, and a pair of fishermen on another. The figures themselves would not look out of place in traditional Japanese wood block prints; a nod to history. Their clothes, however, are covered in neon polka-dots and brightly colored, thick stripes; homage to New York's young graffiti artists.

## 'Pure comedy'

Depicting the human situation has been a common artistic theme for centuries, a particularly funny installation piece by artist Rachel Lee Hovnanian did just that.

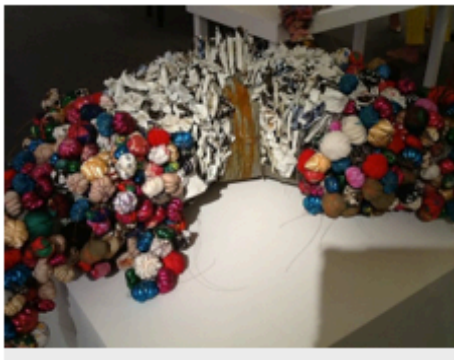
A banquet table is set up with untouched golden plates and a decadent centerpiece, a man and a woman sit at either end, the distance perhaps an indication of their fading relationship.

What's more, the man and the woman do not look up at each other during their artificial 'meal,' they are busy in conversation but their heads are bowed. It is a position all too familiar to us- they are on their technological devices; pings, message alerts, ringing and disconcerting buzzes play out over a speaker.

What makes the piece so appealing is that it is instantly relatable, "oh I get it," laughed one woman, "that is pure comedy, I'm always on my phone too" she exclaimed.

A final salute to the idea that technology is taking over our lives; the people aren't people at all, just heads on a screen that has been affixed to each chair.

## 'Truncated'



Iranian artist, Bitay Fayyazi, one of the founding members of the country's contemporary performance and installation movement, created an engaging series of work entitled 'Truncated.'

Abstract, disembodied legs portray the, sometimes, ravaging effects that life can have on people.

“Truncated’ by artist Bita Fayyazi, exhibited by the Isabelle Van Den Eynde Gallery. (Al Arabiya)

Smothered in an array of candy colored wool bobbles and cracked pottery, the legs symbolize the various memories we pick up through the journey of life.

“Mosaic and shattered porcelain signify how we, as humans, are all scarred by our past, we are all broken in some way,” said Minnie McIntyre from the Isabelle Van Den Eynde gallery.

The sculpture is just one of a wide variety of art on show, in an event which “has grown to include so many different categories and media,” according to Norris.

This edition of the art fair features 75 galleries from 30 countries, and exhibits the latest works by over 500 artists.

Art Dubai, which runs until March 23, is marking seven years since its conception. Over the last six years the event has grown to become a cornerstone of the region’s booming contemporary art community.