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## Discover 12 Standout Works at Art Basel Qatar 2026

Under the creative direction of Wael Shawky, the fair emerges as an experiential sequence designed for deep engagement with artwork by both luminaries and up-and-coming talents hailing from the MENASA region

BY AISHA ZAMAN  
JANUARY 30, 2026



Art Basel Qatar 2026.  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF ART BASEL

In February 2026, Doha will not so much host an art fair as absorb one. Across the walk-friendly streets and civic spaces of Msheireb Downtown, Art Basel Qatar unfolds as a city-scale proposition, eschewing the familiar choreography of aisles and booths in favor of something more porous, deliberate, and slow. This inaugural edition marks Art Basel's first entry into the Middle East, and emerges as a recalibration grounded in place.

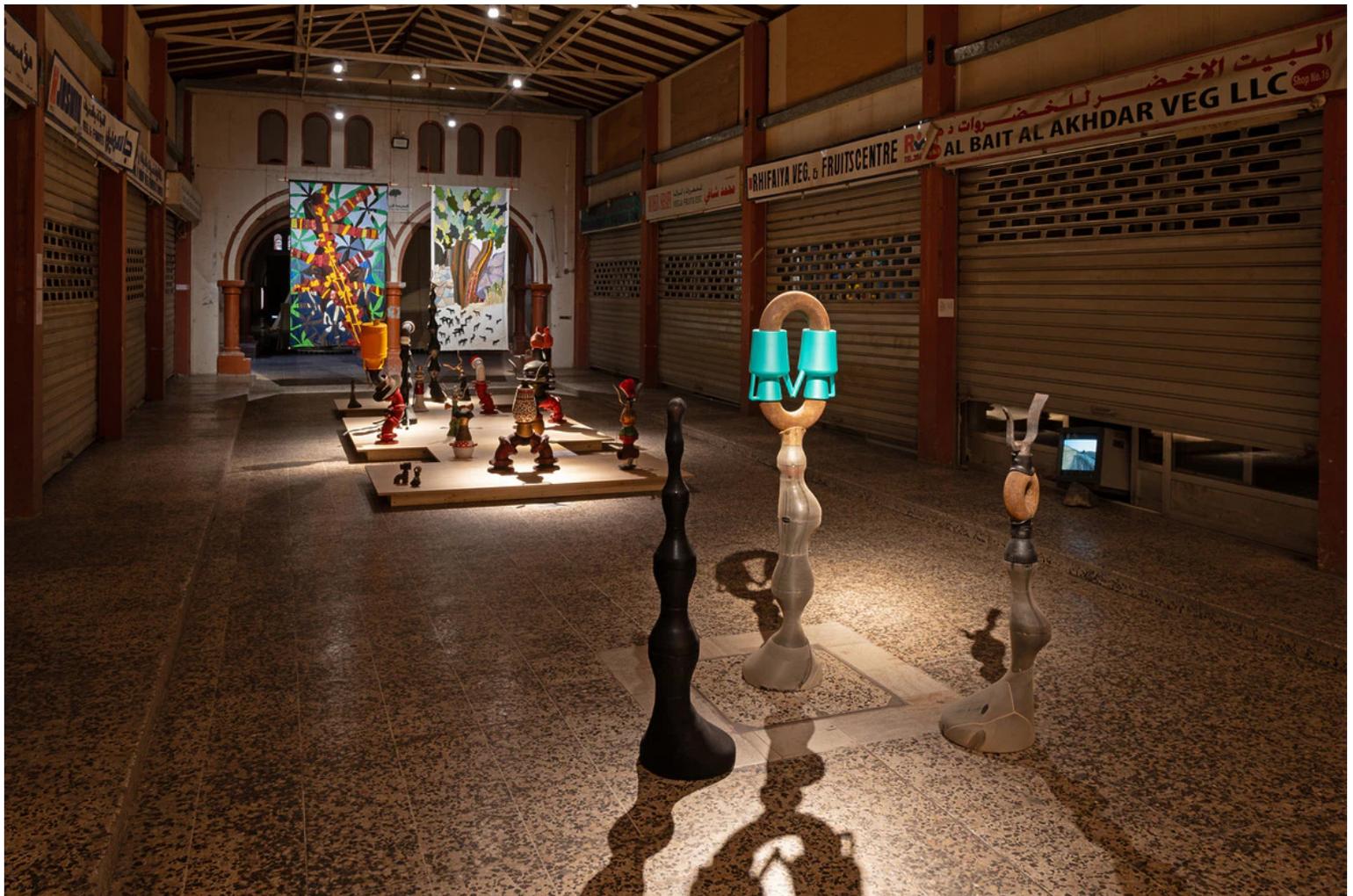
What distinguishes Art Basel Qatar is both geography and intent. Departing from the conventional booth-based model, the fair is conceived as a curatorial-driven experience, organized around a single thematic framework—Becoming—with each gallery showcasing just one artist. Solo-artist booths replace fragmented displays, allowing works to be shown with narrative coherence and contextual integrity. Artistic intent leads the framework, allowing the fair to function as a platform for meaning-making above all.



Vincenzo de Bellis and Wael Shawky.  
PHOTO: JINANE ENNARSI. COURTESY OF ART BASEL

That recalibration is anchored in the fair’s thematic spine, *Becoming*, a framework that resists fixed conclusions. For Wael Shawky, the Egyptian-born artist appointed Artistic Director, the fair is structured as both a site of exchange and an experiential sequence. “The idea is to create an open, immersive environment that allows for slower looking and deeper engagement,” he says, framing the visitor’s journey as one guided by curiosity. In the Gulf, where historical memory, shifting identities, and future-facing ambitions converge at speed, the section unfolds as lived experience shaped by deep inquiries into continuity and the fractures that propel change.

That curatorial clarity is matched by institutional deliberation. For Vincenzo de Bellis, Art Basel's Chief Artistic Officer and Global Director of Fairs, the launch in Doha represents a strategic and philosophical expansion. "You cannot copy and paste a model from Basel or Paris into Doha," he notes. Developed in close partnership with Qatar Sports Investments and QC+, Art Basel Qatar is embedded within a broader cultural ecosystem supported by long-term investment. The ambition positions the region as a "new market" and a long-standing site of intellectual and artistic production that Art Basel can amplify without flattening.



Nida Sinnokrot, exhibition view at Sharjah Biennial 16, Old Jubail Vegetable Market, Sharjah, 2025.

PHOTO: © SHANAVAS JAMALUDDIN. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND THE SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

Nowhere is this more evident than in the fair's Special Projects program, which extends into public space across Msheireb. These large-scale installations and performances invite encounters beyond the art-literate audience, allowing works to meet residents, passersby, and first-time viewers without preconditions. As Shawky observed, when art is encountered unexpectedly, it has the potential to pause daily rhythms, provoke curiosity, and subtly recalibrate how people perceive their surroundings.

More than half of Art Basel Qatar's participating artists hail from the MENASA region. Its success will not be measured by scale alone, instead lying in whether the fair can sustain this slower, more intentional mode of engagement that treats the art fair as a living, responsive form still very much in the process of becoming.

Below, discover 12 must-see artist works:



Lina Gazzaz, *Tracing Lines of Growth*, (2024).  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF HAFEZ GALLERY.

## 1. Lina Gazzaz, *Tracing Lines of Growth* (2024) | Hafez Gallery

Working with discarded palm leaves hand-stitched through with fine red and black threads, Saudi artist Lina Gazzaz transforms organic remnants into subtle records of time, labor, and survival. The veined surfaces imitate calligraphic scores—part botanical study, part musical notation—that map growth, decay, and renewal. Rooted in Gulf ecologies and spiritual traditions, the work positions the palm as a witness and

participant in the continual redefinition of human agency.



Raqib Shaw *Echoes Over Arabia I*, (2025).  
PHOTO: EVA HERZOG. © RAQIB SHAW

## 2. Raqib Shaw, *Echoes Over Arabia* (2025) | Thaddaeus Ropac

Conceived for Doha, the London-based Kashmiri artist Raqib Shaw's latest body of work draws on the ornate borders of illuminated manuscripts, translating their devotional luminosity into densely patterned, calligraphy-free worlds. Referencing Kashmiri Sufism and the symbolic weight of Arabia as both place and idea, the paintings meditate on beauty, transcendence, and inner life. Even when addressing conquest or collapse, the works retain a contemplative stillness offering thresholds between memory and imagination.

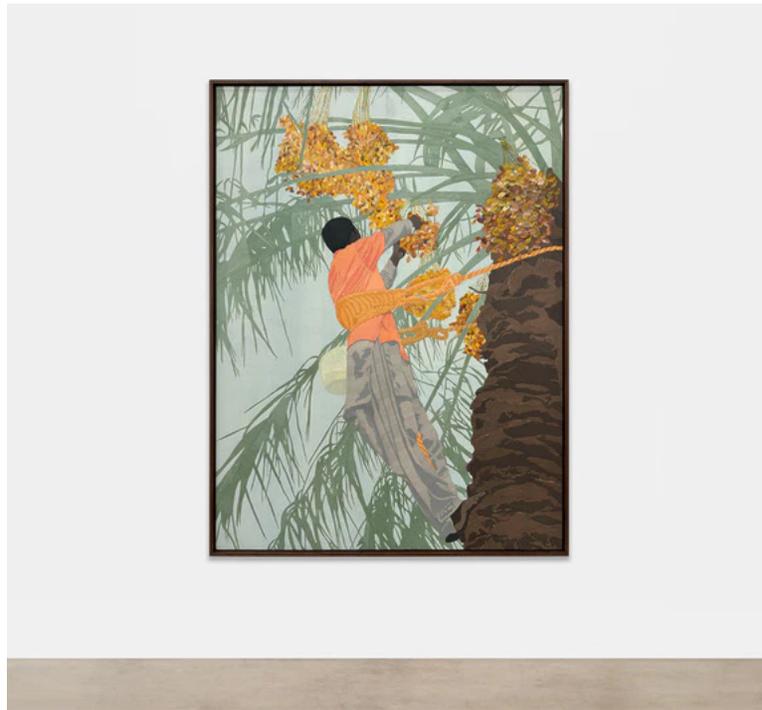


Lynda Benglis, *Elephant Necklace Circle* (2016)

PHOTO: BRIAN BUCKLEY. © LYNDA BENGLIS / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

### 3. Lynda Benglis, *Elephant Necklace Circle* (2016) | Pace

Installed directly on the floor, American artist Lynda Benglis's 37-part glazed ceramic sculpture coils into a continuous loop of knotted, biomorphic forms. A seminal figure in post-war sculpture, Benglis captures what she has described as a “frozen gesture”—bodily movement arrested in clay. Monochrome yet palpable, the work balances playfulness with a primordial charge, reflecting her enduring investigation into material, motion, and the physical intelligence of sculpture. Crafted in Taos, New Mexico, the installation reads as a tactile study of movement, matter, and sculptural vitality.



Hugo McCloud *untitled*, (2025).

PHOTO: © HUGO MCCLLOUD COURTESY THE ARTIST AND SEAN KELLY, NEW YORK

### 4. Hugo McCloud, *Pollinated Migration* (2026) |

# Sean Kelly

Created specifically for Art Basel Qatar, American artist Hugo McCloud's latest works extend his investigation into migration, labor, and global trade through scenes of fruit markets and agricultural exchange. Using single-use plastic bags as both material and subject, McCloud maps the unseen networks that bind ecology, commerce, and human movement. What results is a political meditation on the circulation of goods, bodies, and environmental consequences.



Philip Guston, *Conversation*, (1978).

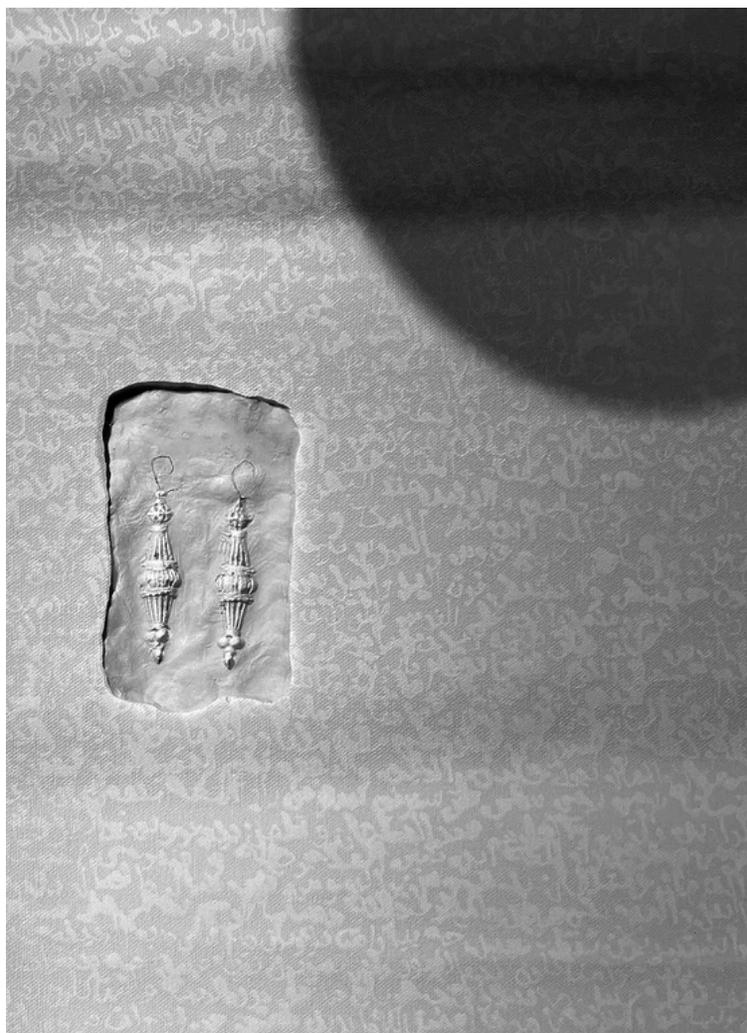
PHOTO: JON ETTER. © THE ESTATE OF PHILIP GUSTON COURTESY THE ESTATE AND HAUSER & WIRTH

## 5. Philip Guston, *Conversation* (1978) and *Sign* (1970) | Hauser & Wirth

Hauser & Wirth presents an intimate encounter with one of the great luminaries of 20th-century art, Philip Guston, through his late, psychologically charged paintings, in which cartoonish figures and recurring symbols emerge from thick, instinctive brushwork. Works like *Conversation* collapse autobiography and social critique into a visual language that resists fixed interpretation, recasting painting as an unflinchingly human site of reckoning.



Bouthanya Al Mu3ah, *Living: Architectures of Memory*, (2026).  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF AL MARKHIYA GALLERY



Bouthanya Al Mu3ah, *Living: Architectures of Memory*, (2026).  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF AL MARKHIYA GALLERY

## 6. Bouthayna Al Muftah, *Living: Architectures of*

## *Memory* (2026) | Al Markhiya Gallery

Rooted in Qatari heritage, Bouthayna Al Muftah's installation transforms a traditional thobe into a living archive woven from natural materials, braids, and inherited forms of adornment. Drawing on oral history, women's labor, and familial memory, the work resists cultural erasure through acts of care and preservation. Positioned as an inhabitable space, it asks how memory can be carried forward without being fossilized.



Aiza Ahmed *Band practice*, (2026).

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SARGENT'S DAUGHTERS

## 7. Aiza Ahmed, *Footnotes* (2025) | Sargent's

# Daughters

A New York–based, Pakistani contemporary artist who works primarily in painting and drawing, Aiza Ahmed's practice revolves around themes of South Asian identity and culture, both real and imaginary. Inspired by the daily Wagah–Attari border ceremony at the border of Pakistan and India, Ahmed's site-specific installation focuses on the overlooked musicians who animate nationalist spectacle from the margins. Suspended muslin paintings and plywood figures invite viewers to move through, around, and between images—crossing borders that are rendered fluid. Playful yet politically sharp, the work reframes performance, power, and visibility through gesture and repetition.



Wassef Boutros-Ghali *Untitled*, (2008).  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND LEILA HELLER GALLERY

## 8. Wassef Boutros-Ghali, various works | Leila Heller Gallery

Spanning decades, Egyptian artist Wassef Boutros-Ghali's abstract paintings balance

architectural rigor with painterly intuition. Bathed in Aegean-inspired deep blues and shifting planes, the works evoke light and movement without narrative anchoring. Rooted in modernist ideals yet shaped by a life lived between cultures, the canvases sustain a subtle push-and-pull between order and flux.



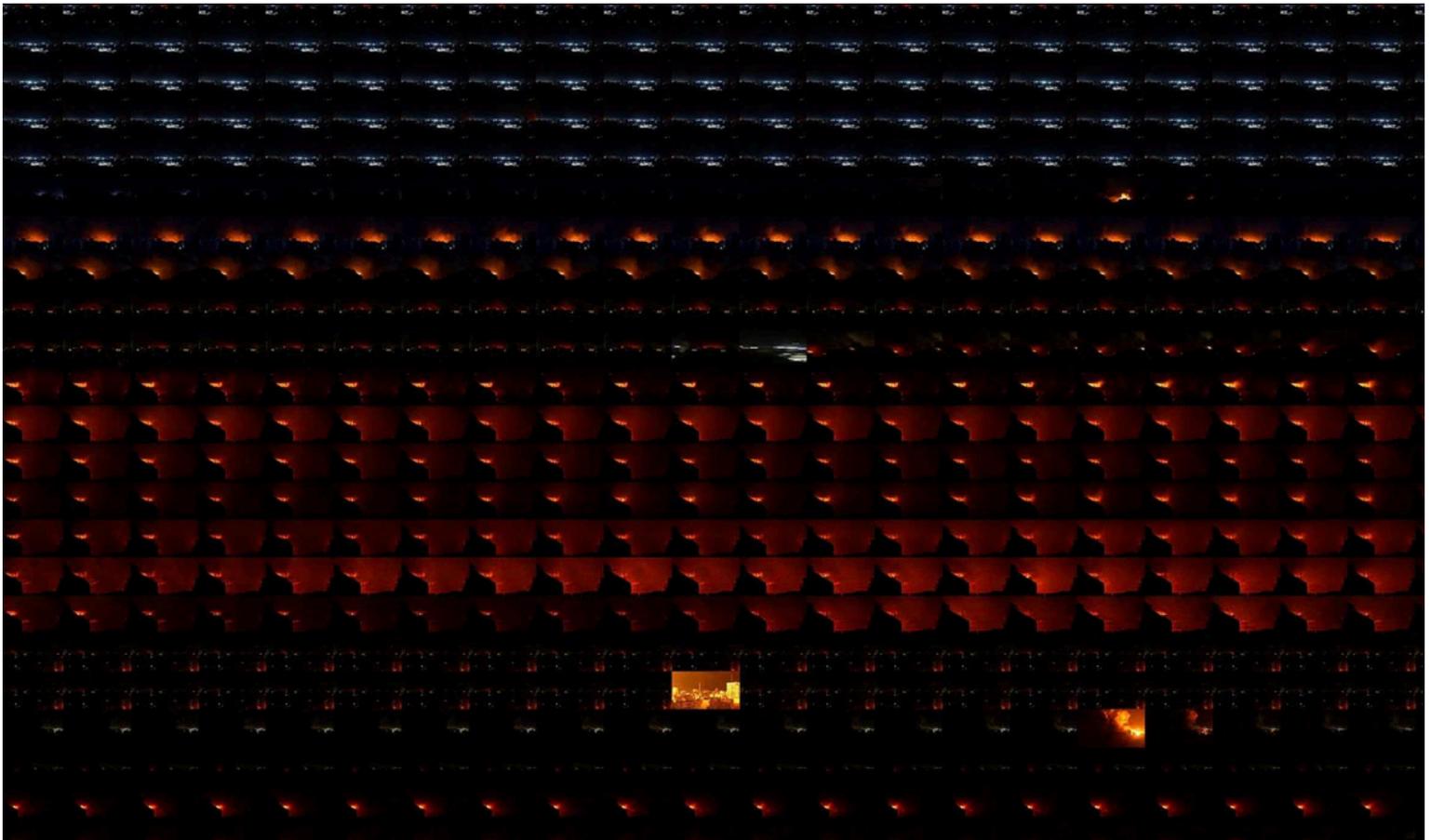
Mohamed Monaiseer I, *Pet Lion (Tanks Arena)*, (2023).  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GYPSUM



Mohamed Monaiseer I, *Pet Lion (The Royal Crown)*, (2022).  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GYPSUM

## 9. Mohamed Monaiseer, *I, Pet Lion* (ongoing series 2024-2025) | Gypsum Gallery

Through embroidered textiles and painted surfaces, Egyptian artist Mohamed Monaiseer examines how militaristic imagery seeps into everyday life, from children's board games to national heraldry. By juxtaposing beauty, play, and violence, the work exposes how power is aestheticized and normalized. The salon-style presentation echoes the logic of military museums, inviting viewers to question how history, identity, and authority are visually constructed.



Rashid Rana, *Fractured Moment*, (2025).  
PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND CHEMOULD PRESCOTT ROAD

## 10. Rashid Rana, *Fractured Moment*, 2025 | Chemould Prescott Road

Composed from sequential CCTV stills printed on wallpaper, *Fractured Moment*

constructs the illusion of a single suspended instant: a night sky over Gaza rendered at an immersive scale. Drawing conceptual lineage from Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*, Rashid Rana reworks its austere gravity into a field of darkness intermittently ruptured by flashes of airstrikes. Though the image appears still, time is relentlessly inscribed as the camera records each passing second. The starless expanse becomes an image of endurance informed by absence and loss.

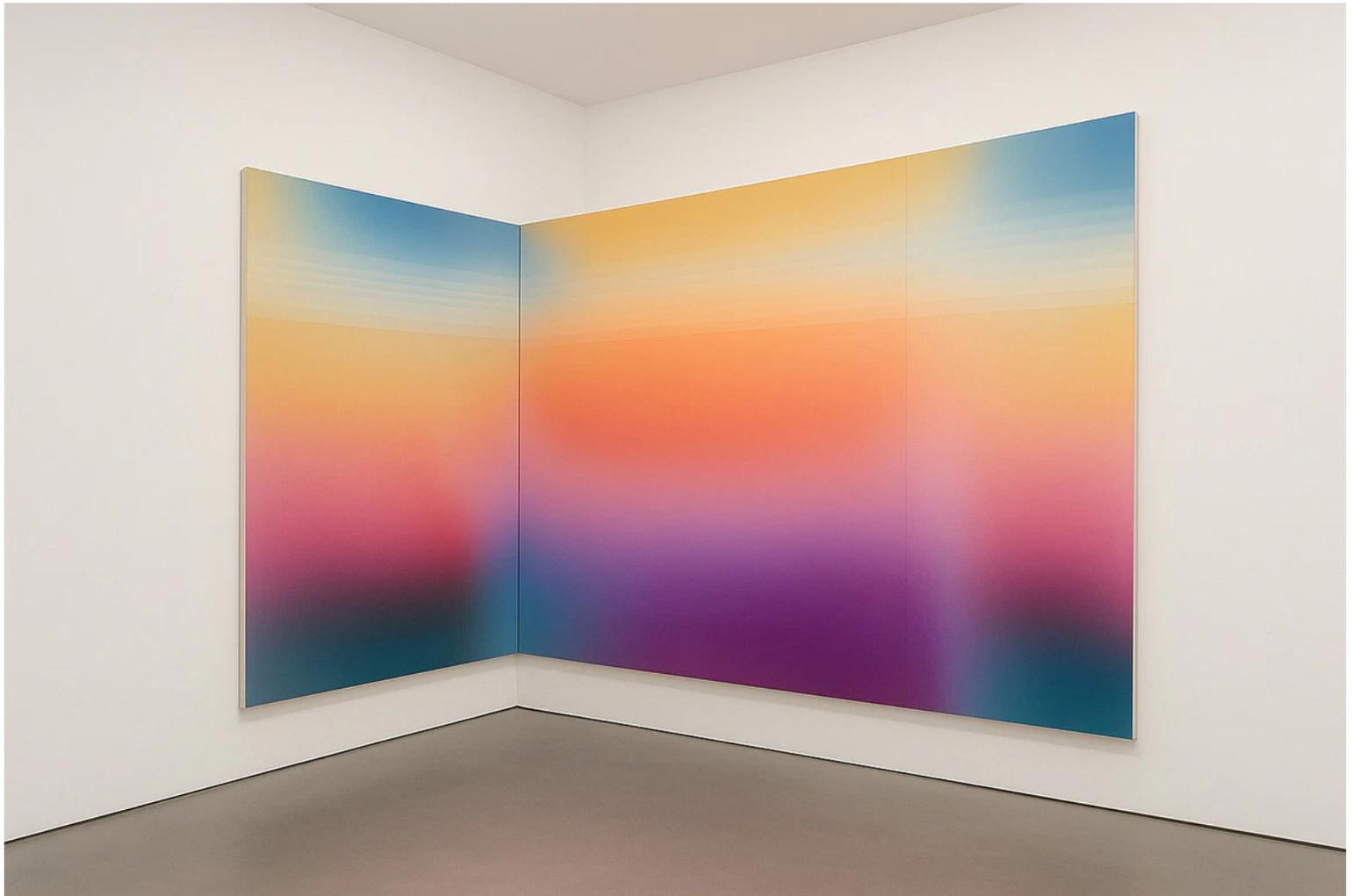


Manal AlDowayan, *The Awakening of the Recline*, (2026).

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SABRINA AMRANI

## 11. Manal AlDowayan, *The Awakening of The Recline*, 2026 | Sabrina Amrani

Manal AlDowayan unveils three large-scale tapestries from *The Awakening of The Recline*, extending her long-standing inquiry into women's visibility and agency within shifting cultural frameworks. Rendered on linen with acrylic interventions, the reclining female form appears multiplied, mirrored, and destabilized. Loose threads and unfinished edges interrupt the surface, underscoring identity as something perpetually in formation. The works resonate as quiet but insistent meditations on how bodies absorb, resist, and reimagine the social codes that shape them.



Mustapha Azeroual , *The Green Ray #5, Arabian Sea*, (2025).

PHOTO: COURTESY OF LOFT ART GALLERY

## 12. Mustapha Azeroual, *The Green Ray #5 (Arabian*

## *Sea), Radiance, and Hélique Mobile #3* | Loft Art Gallery

For its inaugural Art Basel Qatar presentation, Loft Art Gallery introduces an immersive constellation of works by Moroccan-French artist Mustapha Azeroual, whose practice treats light as subject and material. Spanning lenticular photography and sculptural installation, the presentation collapses the photographic instant into sequences of shifting perception, activated only through the viewer's movement. In a region defined by velocity and transformation, Azeroual offers an embodied meditation on perception, instability, and becoming.

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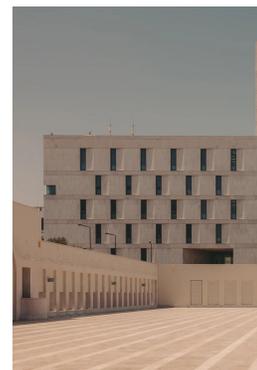
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