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# THE ART NEWSPAPER

## Art Dubai: 16/03/2017

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Modern surges ahead and dealers report healthy sales in contemporary art

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### ➔ Syrian art at Concrete

A renewed focus on Syrian art at Alserkal's ambitious new OMA-designed venue reframes the discussion on Syria

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The Abraaj Group Art Prize winner on her award-winning work and where her practice will go next

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### ➔ Dali in The Room

Atfal Ahdath's Dali-inspired 12-course menu is an immersive dining experience

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# Modern Renaissance

## Demand is growing for 20th-century art

One of Art Dubai's most significant success stories, now in its third edition, Art Dubai Modern features 15 galleries, showing solo or group exhibits of 20th-century art from across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

Since its inception in 2014, the programme has thrived. Whilst the canon of Western art history is rooted in a history of millennia, the local scene emerges from hazier narratives, often lost in the mists of time and unknown to many outside academia. But over the past decade, the boom in contemporary art across the region has naturally precipitated interest amongst local and international collectors in revisiting lesser-known names from the past, pioneers and adventurers, who synthesised European and Arab ideas in search of new forms of expression.

The work of these artists also speaks of turbulent times, periods of profound social and cultural change, nationalistic identities and questioning ongoing tensions

with colonialism, domestic power struggles and deep-rooted issues of Islamic identity. Many Arab artists in particular studied abroad during the 1930s and 1940s, absorbing Western concepts such as surrealism, Cubism and abstraction and returned home to marry them with traditional local forms such as Islamic geometry, calligraphy and less commonly, figurative painting.

All these factors retain their relevance today. As increasing numbers of collectors are aware, the market value of names such as Syrian painter Louay Kayyali, Iranian Sohrab Sepehri, Egyptian Mahmoud Said and Turkish Azade Köker, has rocketed at auctions, with six-figure sales not an uncommon occurrence. Meanwhile, record-breaking artist Said has just seen a significant monograph published by SKIRA.

Drifting around the Art Dubai Modern's booths, in its Mina A'Salam home, is a pleasant and enlightening

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A detail of Mahmoud Said's *Bergères à Alamein* (1959)



Issam Fares, Lebanon (2016)

## Talking point

### Aga Khan mentors architects in Dubai

The most recent initiative of the company EngageME is The Young Architect and Design Program under the mentorship of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA). Based between Dubai and Toronto, the education and culture entity developed this project to positively encourage the youth and offer guidance through the practical and theoretical issues, questions and challenges of architecture and its implications. With a pop-up exhibition in Alserkal Avenue (on show until 14 April) displaying the projects from the most recent cycle of the international Award (October 2016), The Young Architect and Design Program will work to identify and promote building that considers development, landscape architecture, urban planning and historic preservation in relation to the arts and humanity at large. K.K.

IMAGE COURTESY CHRISTIE'S; AGHA KHAN AWARDS FOR ARCHITECTURE

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