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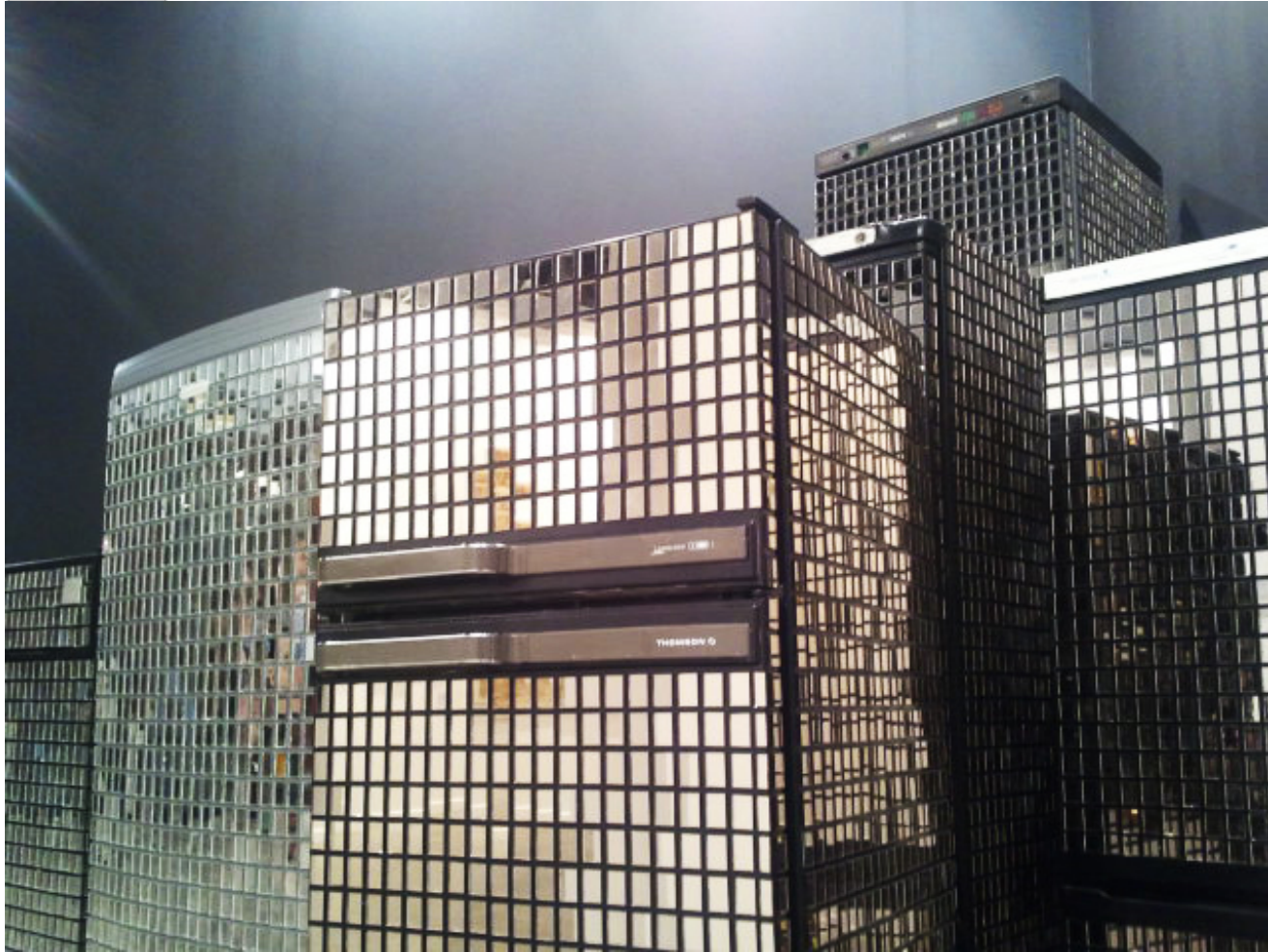
# Modern Painters at Art Dubai

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The latest edition of **Art Dubai** was held last week, and it capped off a busy arts week in the region that included the March Meeting in Sharjah as well as Dubai's own competition, the Global Art Forum. Art Dubai is certainly not an ordinary art fair—the Armory doesn't have enormous photorealist paintings of race horses in its entrance hallway, courtesy of Khadija Sultan Al Malik—and we heard more than a few rumors of galleries being forced to remove or replace art works that were deemed politically or religiously offensive. Yet there was plenty of quality art on display, especially from U.A.E., Lebanese, and British galleries. (That's a piece by **Kader Attia**, above, spotted at **Gallerie Continua**'s booth.) While we at *Modern Painters* don't normally put on our waders and go trudging through the cold swamps of the art market, sometimes the trip is worthwhile. Continue reading for more on Dubai.



Local gallery **Third Line** exemplified the cosmopolitan vibe of the region with work by **Amir H. Fallah** (above) and **Hayv Kahraman**. Fallah—who is Iranian, but now based in LA, where he runs the magazine *Beautiful Decay*—makes large-scale works using acrylic, oil, ink, and collage on paper which is then mounted on canvas. They're mostly (very offbeat) portraits of friends and family, rendered with plenty of attention to quirky detail and ample patterning. (Fans of fellow LA painter Jonas Wood will find plenty to celebrate here.) The gallery was also experiencing serious interest in the work of Kahraman, an Iraqi-born artist whose most recent series using map pins depicts “body landscapes...an internal dissection,” according to Laila Binbrek, Third Line's director. **Carbon 12**, also from Dubai, was getting excellent buzz from the work of **Olaf Breuning**, who recently joined the gallery's stable. His *Smoke Bomb 2* photograph hung near paintings by **Andre Bulzer** and a sculpture by **Sarah Rahbar**.

At the booth of Istanbul's **x-ist**, two works by Turkish painter **Ali Elmaci** stood out. Entitled *Save Me From Your Fire I* and *II*, they depict a vacuously smiling woman (in I) and a young politician holding an octopus (II). The first reads “There's no need for panic, there's no need for sadness” in Turkish; the second, “I Am Your Father You Have To Do What I Say,” in English.





French powerhouse **Galerie Perrotin** took part in Art Dubai three years ago before taking a hiatus. They “wanted to come back strong” in 2012, explained the gallery’s Soizic Oger. That meant a centrally-located, sprawling booth with plenty of access points and a nearly 19-foot tall work by **Wim Delvoye** in the center: *Tower Brussels*, in lasercut steel, with an asking price of slightly more than \$1,000,000. Nearby were equally flashy works by French duo **Kolkosz**, who make “paintings” out of ornate frames, one set in the next, finished in goldleaf. Also on offer: a unique **Takashi Murikami** dog sculpture (\$700,000USD) and a lamp, one of 7 pieces made for the artist’s installation at Versailles (\$250,000USD), as well as decorative Murano-glass bead sculptures by **Jeane-Pierre Othoniel**, and additional works by **Piotr Uklanski**, **Farhad Moshiri**, **Bharti Kher**, and others. (If you’re wondering—we dithered over taking home the Delvoye, before finally determining that it’d be a bit hard to display it properly in our run-down East Williamsburg digs.)

**Galleria Continua**—with outposts in Italy, China, and France—presented a booth that, at first glance, exemplified everything gauche about Art Dubai. After speaking with Mario Cristiani of the gallery, we’d like to think that it was actually the most subversive installation of the weekend. **Kader Attia**’s *Untitled (Skyline)*, 2012, a set of 7 fridges covered in grids of mirrors, was meant as an “ironic skyline” that nodded to Dubai itself.

The fridge-buildings are able to “conserve the life inside,” Cristiani said, suggesting that enormous skyscrapers are little more than containers for human beings. Nearby, Egyptian artist **Moataz Nasr**’s “The Key,” 2011—a crystal key that vaguely resembled an ice sculpture some Middle Eastern billionaire might have at his daughter’s 16<sup>th</sup> birthday party—rested beneath a sculpture by **Shilpa Gupta**, the words TODAY WILL END spelled out in white lights. We appreciated the way Continua seemed to be playing both sides: Appealing to the shiny, flashy side of Dubai while offering a subliminal critique of the same. (Perhaps that’s just wishful thinking on our part.) **Lombard Fried** of New York brought works by **Mounir Fatmi**, including a sculpture, *Assasins*, composed of 50-70 shishas huddled together in a circle. Also in the booth: a work in Astroturf by **Haig Aivazian** that read, in Arabic, “How great you are O son of the desert,” the words reportedly spoken by a reporter to Zinedine Zidane after returning home from his infamous headbutting incident. Also from New York, **Leila Heller Gallery**, which just moved to Chelsea from uptown, presented work from three gallery artists: **Ayad Alkhadhi**, **Kezban Arca Batibeki**, and **Shiva Ahmadi**, whose nightmarishly poetic, figurative visions (pictured below) look like they might have literally been painted using blood. We’re hoping that’s not actually the case.



London-based galleries were especially strong at Art Dubai. **Pilar Corrias** dedicated the lion’s share of its booth to Iraqi-born painter **Tala Madani**. They had sold an uncharacteristically large painting from 2012, *Dirty Nozzle*, for around \$55,000. At **Nettie Horn**’s booth there was a double presentation from **Sinta Werner** and Indonesian artist **Yudi Noor**. The latter’s collage assemblages, sculptures, and paintings incorporating textiles were a stand-out for the fair in general. (That’s Noor’s sculpture, *Waiting on the Fence*, below.)





**October Gallery** brought excellent sculptures of “faces” made using low budget found items by **Romuald Hazoume**. And **Paradise Row** gave one prominent wall of its booth to *The Prestige of Terror*, a text-based work in English and Arabic by conceptual photographers Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin. (One panel of the series is pictured below.) “The work was made in 2010 for an exhibition at the Townhouse in Cairo and is seen by the artists as a ‘collaboration’ with the short-lived and long since past, Art and Freedom group – also known as the Egyptian Surrealists who were active from 1938 – c.1946,” writes gallery director Nick Hackworth. “Despite their vitality their present day legacy is minimal. Broomberg & Chanarin created this work to, in their own personal and limited way, help redress that balance. It takes quotations from texts written by the Surrealists and develops them as contemporary text works.”

# A CLOUD PASSING OVER CAIRO.

سحابة عابرة فوق القاهرة

A fair report wouldn't be complete without a bit of bitching, and thankfully, it wasn't hard to choose the absolute worst work on display. That would be a large photorealist painting by **Khalil Rabah** at the booth of **Sfeir-Semler Gallery** entitled *Art Exhibition: Damian Hirst, Zott*, 2011. It depicted, a la Thomas Struth, a group of museumgoers gazing into the shallow depths of a spot painting. Here was truly an echo chamber of bad taste and easy cash. It made us think back to A.A. Gill's handy summation in a truly excellent and [worth reading article](#) on this Emirati city: "...if you ever wondered what money would look like if it were left to its own devices, it's Dubai."

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