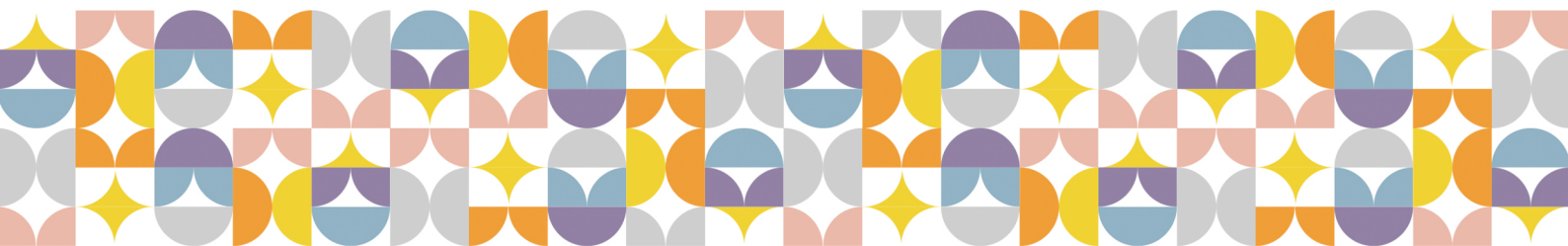


**THE ART CIRCLE AWARD 2021  
SHORTLISTED ARTWORKS**





## LAYLAT KHAMIS (THURSDAY NIGHT)

*oil on canvas*

The painting takes its title from the song “A Thursday Night” "ليلة خميس" by Saudi artist Mohammed Abdu. The emotionally packed poem is a true testimony of his love. Abdu uses romantic and delicate words that sound smooth and soothing to describe the joy of meeting his loved one at 8 o'clock that night. Abdu's highly charged words gush about his feelings using delicate imagery:

كان الندى موعود مع رمش الزهر.. والليل من فرحه عريس

The night is happy as a groom; The dew is promised to the petal

The receiver on the other end of the poem, what looks like the figure of a seated woman fades into blue; we cannot see her expression or understand what it means. How can we describe it? An unreadable face, an inexplicable emotion ... Sadness? Regret? Coldness? Unease? Alienation? All we are allowed to see are her hand gesture and her bourgeois imperious pose, evocative of the famous Florentine lady of the smirk.

Cool calm and collected, at polar opposites with the singer's gushing sentimentality. It is this aesthetic of contradictory convergence that my painting is trying to describe.

The Surrealists view love as 'mad love', mad, because it is passionate beyond all limits of reason, and resonates with their undoing every idea of the rational in favor of a present subconscious state of expectation and chance. Abdu's anticipated encounter with his beloved is sufficient to nourish an entire lifetime of obsessive imagination. It is this mingling of contraries: Abdu's poem on one hand vs the receiver on the other, this notion of opposition is what I am trying to describe.

## Abir Tabbarah

Born in Como, Italy

Lives and Works in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Shortlisted for the 4th edition of the International Emerging Artist Award (IEAA) 2016.

Graduated from the Lebanese American University in Beirut (L.A.U.) with a Bachelor of Science degree in Interior Design.

Recently her work was collected by:

- His Excellency Zaki Nusseibeh, Abu Dhabi. Painting; "Golden Fingers on Ultramarine"
- Kenny Schachter, Curator and Art Dealer, New York, USA. Painting: "The Impermanence of Permanence"



## KITES AND ARROWS

*Acrylic & Collage on canvas*

Work aligned to an extract from 'The Prophet': "You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth. He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far."

It talks of the theme of parenthood - one that unites all humans and cultures: while nurturing each generation through present and future, each generation must face the challenge of sending their children as far as possible into the future.

For decades in the UAE, international styles and customs have created a unique balance of tolerance and sharing. Indeed, for this, the UAE is exemplary. Symbolised in 'Kites and Arrows' and the aligned quotation is one of the strongest concepts that connects humans - a concept that transcends cultural and geographical divisions: the nurture and sacrifice each parent must commit to, to send their child as far as possible into the world.

## Annabelle SMITH BIGNO

CURRENT SERIES: INTERCONNECTED

Annabelle has painted and exhibited in private venues and galleries in France, Oman, Venezuela, the US and the UAE for the past 22 years.

Her painting is an exploration and dance of energy and emotions, depicting subject-matter that resonates deeply for her - both as human and parent. These symbols are interwoven into a complex landscape of texture, threads and washes. A multitude of threads provide both movement and connect the focal point to its energetic backdrop. Her work contains important conceptual messages that appear through the chosen subject matter. We see the symbols of key human values, whatever their geographical or cultural origins - and a reminder that in remaining aligned to these we can maintain inner balance and respect for one another. To illustrate these themes, her pieces are often aligned to the quotations of Khalil Gibran - in particular those that speak of parents, children and nature.

The local context is an illustration of how we can respect these priorities despite our different origins - in a country that successfully hosts a multitude of interconnected cultures - in an atmosphere of balance and status quo.



## LE FUMEUR DE NARGUILE

*Oil painting on canvas on board*

Exhibiting a man in an oriental atmosphere smoking Narguile.

## Ashraf KESSAISSIA

Ashraf Kessaissia is a French born artist and Algerian by roots. He currently lives in the UAE after travelling North Africa, Europe Middle East and South East Asia. He is a Photojournalist and painter before he decided to add clay to his means of expression. His work finds sources of inspiration in the symbols and iconography that traveled centuries, be it in Oriental or Western geographies.



## A MORNING AT WADI NAQAB

*Oil on linen*

This work of art is developed based on a plein air study done at Wadi Naqab, Ras Al Khaimah, U.A.E. Going to the wadi early in the morning by off-road and hiking almost one kilometer to the spot with easel and painting materials is a real challenge. But it's worth the effort as you spend the whole day in this magnificent mountain streams to create as many as three quick studies before the sun goes down.

## Bonny MATHEW

Born in Kerala, a southern state in India Bonny Mathew has been drawn to drawing and painting right from childhood.

Over the years he became a self-taught artist in watercolour paintings and oil paintings. His inspiration in art has been various, be it a cast shadow on a sunny morning, waves of the ocean, clouds, people or still life.

During student days and in work place, he has found opportunities to make figurative sketches and caricature. Works of world masters in oil and watercolor have had a great influence on his philosophy of perceiving subjects and transferring them to paper and canvas.

He loves to travel and explore new locations and subjects, and it has become his passion to capture the mood of the scene in light and shade, with subtle color schemes. He loves to work en plein air whenever weather permits.



## UNTITLED

**Behnaz GHASEMI**

**Water colour(pardaz technique), colour pencil and pencil on paper**

A piece representing 'The Rose and the Nightingale' theme whilst focusing on atypical elements associated with the theme to establish my own rendition.

Upon familiarizing myself with the 'The Rose and The Nightingale', it quickly absorbed my attention and has thus become the main body of my work. The imagery became a distinct form of iconography that surfaced in decorative materials ranging from ceramics, lacquer to illuminated manuscripts. Consequently, it became an important constituent of the Iranian cultural repertoire that during the late Qajar era Iran was referred to by the West as 'The Kingdom of the Rose and Nightingale'. In the three months, self-imposed residency in Isfahan in 2014 I intensely focused on the traditional rendition of the theme, while the work took a different direction in the following years in my studio in Dubai. However, as I explored, the more I was intrigued and began evaluating the concept of beauty, ultimately influencing me to evolve my approach and perspectives throughout the years. This is corroborated by my acknowledgement of the undeniable beauty of the work, but questioning the conceptual notion of the term 'beauty' and how the implicit connotations of that can modify.

Furthermore, there was a period in which I eradicated many of the traditional elements that were associated with 'The Rose and The Nightingale' and began to focus on the components which were more organic to me. Most notably, I began focusing on the expression and direction of the nightingale's gaze which was critical in orchestrating the overall composition. Simultaneously, utilizing lines/strokes across the page to challenge the image of perfection that is associated with 'The Rose and The Nightingale', which was fundamental in exploring my interpretation of the matter.





## Forêt V, 2021

### *Acrylic, Enamel and Mixed Media on Wooden Panel*

Focusing on the highly symbolic theme of the Primary Forest, the artist presents 'Forêt V' a mixed media wooden panel, in which she seeks to understand the ambiguous connection between man and nature today. The exotic forest awakens our visceral fears and questions our power of destruction vs protection. It also feeds our need for imagination, escape, freedom and self-discovery. The forest and its remarkable biodiversity are this moving, devouring and fascinating entity which becomes for the artist a metaphor for humanity in all its complexity, with its beauty and greatness, but also ugliness and imperfection.

Driven by retrieved fragments of childhood memories from colourful Peruvian folklore, particularly the vivid traditional Quechua weavings, the artist builds bold and complex luscious flora compositions using a unique layering process of unusual mixed media materials (enamel, ceramic, vitrail) on wooden board. Raised as French with 'forgotten' Peruvian origins, she tackles the notion of lost and found identity and invites the viewer to also 'lose and find himself' in this forest and question his own connection with nature.

## Bénédicte Gimmonnet

Bénédicte Gimmonnet's ongoing fascination for her natural environment is the very source of her creative process and inspiration. Since the beginning of the pandemic, she has been exploring symbolism within the rainforest, delving into the ambiguous connection between man and nature today. Experiencing contradictory feelings and emotions, she questions our power of destruction and protection. The insolent beauty of the primary forest, its complex luxuriance and variety awakens indeed her desire for freedom and imagination, but also her visceral fear of the unknown. The forest becomes for her a metaphor for humanity, infusing each tree and plant with a consciousness, imbuing them with human feelings and thoughts.

To build her forest and complex flora compositions, the artist uses a layering process of mixed media materials, including enamel, ceramic, vitrail paint, on wood or aluminum panels. Her strong psychedelic-inspired palette comes from fragments of her childhood memories of the colourful Peruvian folklore, particularly the vivid traditional Quechua weavings. Raised as French with 'forgotten' Peruvian origins, this pandemic time encouraged the artist to address her lost and found mixed identity, linking her origins to the magnificence of nature.

Bénédicte Gimmonnet was born in Clermont-Ferrand, France. She graduated in Fine Art Painting from the Wimbledon College of Arts (UAL) and undertook a number of projects in Europe and United States. She lives and works in the UAE since 2009: she is a member of Emirates Fine Art Society and she teaches painting, drawing and History of Art. Her work has been showcased in numerous exhibitions in the UAE -Sharjah Art Museum, Salwa Zeidan Gallery, UAE Ministry of Culture, French Institute- and her paintings belong to private and corporate collections across the world and the Women's Museum in Dubai.



## SAND ROSES

*Oil painting, ink resin on canvas*

The landscape is recomposed. It is not a specific view, but a combination of elements that suggest a place. The painting will interact with a viewer who will have his own interpretation by activating certain images that will allow him to recognize a space or evoke others. It is important to me to let everyone travel in their own geographical and temporal areas, letting the painting only act as a trigger.

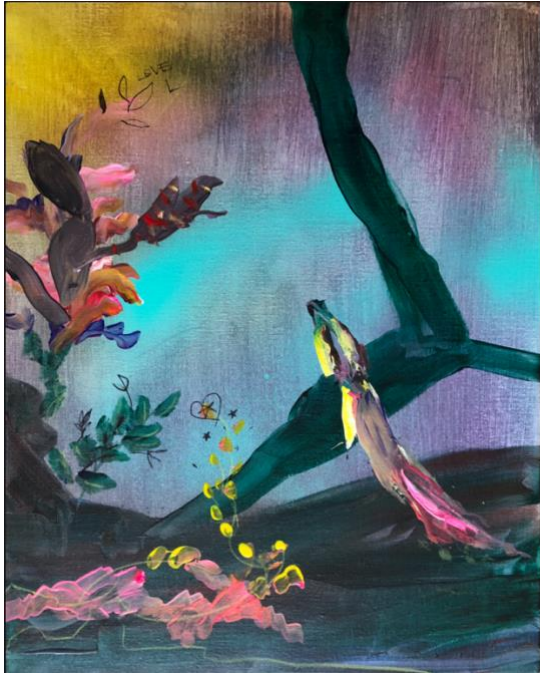
Ornamentation, mashrabiya and arabesques are a graphic alphabet that evokes the Oriental palaces, the tales of the thousand and one nights. The embroidery and brilliance of contemporary abayas glued to the canvas contribute to the texture. The painting is a world where networks of organic and geometric lines blend together in relationships of influence. The shades of pinks of architecture and nature merge between the different plans questioning the relationship to space. . The image emerges between the painted trace and the reserve in search of a gaze to perceive the environment. It is the materialization of a way of thinking that works by formal analogy.

## Karine ROCHE

Born in France. She graduated in spatial Design from the National College ENSAAMA, Olivier de Serres in Paris. She has been based in the UAE since 2009.

Her work has been presented in spaces including Sharjah Art Museum, Museum of Decorative and Folk art (Moscow), Tashkeel, Proart gallery (Dubai) and art Sawa (Dubai), as well as Art Fairs such as Art Paris, Art Elysée, Star't .

Her works are part of private and corporate collections, including the city of Vitry-Sur-Seine (France), the Colas Foundation Colas (France), West Lake Museum (Hangzhou, China).



## **BIRD OF PARADISE ON DALMA ISLAND**

*Acrylic, spray and marker on canvas*

The painting addresses the search for spirituality in both the natural world and in artificial environments, drawing on anthropomorphism, ritualistic values of nature, and visual research of the digital space. Layering a range of media to explore the crossing of materiality in an imaginary environment, such as a bird on Dalma island, the elements draw on ancestral notions about the divine, tensions between spirituality and practicality, and the border between reason and imagination. The work starts with a geometric structure that serves as the basic anchor and organization for the image. From that point on, the method is intuitive: adding and subtracting abstract representations of fauna and flora according to the painting's resolution. Collections of colors and textures are rendered into organic, fluid shapes and assembled into a unique world that is at once surreal and familiar, sweet and violent, and chaotic and elegant, the work takes on a role of social commentary questioning spirituality, self-perception, and reality.

## **Laura XENOPOL**

Laura Xenopol is a UAE-based visual artist whose mixed-media practice addresses the complexities between the ancestral nature of the world and the digital environment. Her work revolves around visual research to visualize invisible forces in both the physical world and in digital environments, drawing on anthropomorphism and symbolic values of nature.





## LAST OF THE O'HARA'S

*Oil on linen*

A painting of some O'Hara roses bathed in sunlight, the last surviving roses from a workshop I was running on painting flowers. Capturing the feeling of natural light in my paintings is essential to my practice, and this painting is a testament to that.

## Matt RYDER

Matt is an award winning British artist living and working in Dubai, UAE. A lifelong painter inspired by the natural world, and the beauty of nature.

Matt moved to Dubai in 2005, and after taking the leap to professional artist has quickly established himself and gained critical acclaim for his landscapes and florals both locally and internationally.

Matt is committed to documenting the beauty of the world, be it land, sea or sky and highlighting the changing landscape that surrounds us through the medium of oil paint. With a true love for the outdoors Matt's paintings often start as small onsite studies, painting Plein-Air in the deserts and mountains in order to capture true light and colour that can be transferred to the studio for larger work. Being predominantly self-taught has enabled Matt to develop a technique that is very unique to him with a particular emphasis on bringing the feel of natural light into his work.

He has taught and exhibited in the UAE, USA and Ireland.



## PEOPLE I SEE PASSING EVERYDAY

*Watercolor on paper*

Invisible hands, blue clothes, blue skies, blue shadows. Dubai landscape is made of these: people we see passing in front of us.

## Sofia BASTO-RIOUSSE

Colombian-French self-taught artist, based in Dubai since 2015. Former Lawyer, fed up with codes and paperwork, more into nature contemplation and social dynamics observation. Her art path started back in Colombia with big-format mural paintings.

After a long break (well! She never really stopped drawing and writing) She decided to move her brushes again, watercolors and acrylics mainly. Embroidery and decoupage can be found in her collages and paintings, always accompanied by a botanical touch, which reminds of the mountains and jungle she grew up surrounded by.