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ART AND CULTURE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND ARAB WORLD

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Khaled Samawi. © Canvas Archives.



Hisham Samawi. © Canvas Archives.

KHALED & HISHAM SAMAWI

The Samawi cousins kicked 2013 off with a bang, launching two new branches of Ayyam Gallery: London in January and Jeddah in February. As their home country, Syria, continues to suffer in the throes of political unrest, the directors of Ayyam Gallery indefatigably support and promote their artists all over the world and have transformed the gallery's Damascus and Beirut spaces into studios for their artists. For their inaugural show in Jeddah, the Samawi duo chose to stage a solo show of portraits by Mohammad Orabi and in doing so, sought to push the boundaries of exhibiting figurative work in a conservative country. Following from its Dubai model, Ayyam held its first *Young Collectors Auction* in Jeddah in November last year, but the sale did not happen without controversy and censorship restrictions. Despite facing resistance, Khaled has vowed to hold another sale in the Red Sea port city and is working on altering laws pertaining to art censorship policies.

CYRIL ZAMMIT

From 20 galleries at its inaugural edition in 2012 to 34 spaces just two years later, Design Days Dubai (DDD) has taken the region by storm. Its director, Cyril Zammit, had identified a gap in the city's art week market and so DDD was born. Not only has the fair grown in size, but its programming has also expanded, most recently adding the *Discover* section, an annual focus on design from a select country – Zammit's native France is first on the agenda. He has no qualms about taking risks by presenting emerging designers and pays special attention to nurturing designers from the region; this year's edition features 10 galleries from the Middle East. With a genuine passion for design, Zammit has introduced a new platform in the region and has contributed to Dubai's positioning as a leading regional cultural hub.



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Image courtesy Kashya Hildebrand Gallery, Zurich/London.



KASHYA HILDEBRAND

After Kashya Hildebrand relocated from Zurich to London last year, so did her eponymous gallery, which has since put on shows by some of the region's top Contemporary artists, such as Lalla Essaydi, Marwan Sahmarani and Reza Derakshani, whose show, *The Pink House Stories*, marked the launch of her new space last June. With the move to the British capital, the ex-Wall Street banker joined the handful of galleries that promote regional art in London. The

relocation also saw the implementation of a tighter curatorial strategy that the gallery intends on maintaining and expanding upon. One of the space's core principles is participation at international art fairs and this has seen Kashya Hildebrand take part in fairs in Singapore, Miami, Abu Dhabi, London and Basel, among others, where works have been placed in private collections and institutions alike. The gallery returns to Art Dubai this year with works by Essaydi and Simin Farhat.