

How the Arab world is represented at Venice Biennale 2022



Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, one of the UAE's most important artists, will represent the country at the Venice Biennale 2022. Photo by Augustine Paredes / courtesy National Pavilion UAE La Biennale Di Venezia

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Mar 25, 2022

This year's [Venice Biennale](#), which runs from April 23 to November 27, will be the first of the major biennials to be held after the disruption caused by the [Covid-19 pandemic](#).

Delayed a year after the 2020 architectural event was postponed, this year's art exhibition is curated by Cecilia Alemani, while the national pavilions will display a mix of single representations and solo shows.

Here are some of the highlights from the Mena region to look forward to in Venice.

Khor Fakkan goes global

In the UAE pavilion, the Khor Fakkan artist [Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim](#) will represent the UAE. A historically important artist, Ibrahim was one of the "Five" who coalesced around Hassan Sharif and the Emirates Fine Arts Society in the

1990s and 2000s – and has remained active since, appearing in numerous exhibitions as well as a widely acclaimed retrospective at the Sharjah Art Foundation in 2018.

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More importantly, his work, with its mix of outsider art, Land Art and folk motifs is both historical and non-contemporary. Time and again, it is sui generis Ibrahim, with monochrome and lurid colours – pinks and greens and yellows – and its suggestions of a landscape of fantastical animals. It is warm-hearted too: his well-known chairs series, which depicts a seated figure in varying shades of bright pinks, reds and blues, portrays Sharif, the artist who helped pave the way for contemporary art in the UAE –

and who helped Ibrahim personally after the infamous incident in 1999 when Ibrahim, discouraged by public and critical opposition to his work, burnt the contents of his studio in the desert. Afterwards, he drove to Sharif's house and stayed there for days, before regaining the courage to work.

Ibrahim's pavilion will be curated by Maya Allison, the executive director of the [NYUAD Art Gallery](#), with whom he has collaborated in the past. Both remain tight-lipped about what he will produce: what colours he might bring to Venice's brilliant blue skies and grey-green canals, or what repeated forms he might emblazon across the UAE pavilion's bricked, cavernous interior in the Arsenale.