

CULTURE

6 Emerging Female Arab Artists You Need to Know

Ranging from all parts of the region

BY RAWAA TALASS
January 15, 2025

Photo: Dora Dalila Cheffi

Contemporary female artists from the Arab region have a lot to say about the world they live in today. Their daring and psychological art delves into personal and collective narratives, expressed through compelling abstraction, figuration, and collage work. Here are six millennial artists you need to keep on your radar.

Dalya Moumina



Photo: Dalya Moumina

Born to a Saudi father and Filipina mother, Dalya Moumina is a New York-based artist, who makes bold landscape paintings, full of sharp shapes, representing flowy rivers and mountains, executed in an experimental palette of colours. With a touch of surrealism, her utopian landscapes are isolated and quiet, inspired by her imagination, as well as the natural scenery she remembers viewing from her earlier years spent in Saudi Arabia and the Philippines.



Dora Dalila Cheffi

Photo: Dora Dalila Cheffi

Another emerging artist who isn't afraid of experimenting liberally with colour and form is Dora Dalila Cheffi, who is based between Tunis and Helsinki. She started off her career with painting, but has recently tried her hand at sculpture, installation, textile and video art. Her snapshot-like works are about personal memories and everyday encounters – whether it be a breakfast spread, women in the street, or a drink stall in Tunis. Most of all, Cheffi is known for her atypical brightly coloured portraits, which are memorable and playful compositions.



Maitha Abdalla

Photo: Maitha Abdalla

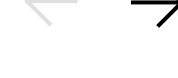
Hailing from the UAE, Maitha Abdalla's figurative practice includes painting, drawing, sculpture, and performance art. Inspired by memory, family stories, and regional folktales, Abdalla's passionate work contains theatrical and fantasy elements. She commonly utilises animals, such as the rooster or pig, to humanise certain traits and feelings, as well as draw abandoned landscapes that tap into dark themes relating to the self.



Mariem Abutaleb

Photo: Mariem Abutaleb

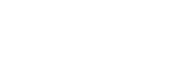
The Egyptian artist and graphic designer Mariem Abutaleb is a creative who thinks outside the box. She bases her mysterious practice on Arabic lettering, modernising it and taking it to new heights. Whether on paper, canvas or fabric, she creates a monochromatic sea of detailed (sometimes illegible) writings that take on bold shapes and symbols. Some of the themes she has addressed in her pieces include defending the Palestinian cause, documenting personal thoughts, and honouring Islamic sayings.



Nour Malas

Photo: Nour Malas

Educated in London and based in Brooklyn, the Syrian-Canadian artist Nour Malas is influenced by the complexity of human relationships, the experience of life, and the current political climate when it comes to painting her expressive, free-flowing canvases. By using dark and intense hues, she builds her painting layer by layer, injecting them with fading figures and gestural markings. Malas allows her inner world to emerge and her hand to take the lead in her intuitive process.



Samaa Emad

A young artist from Gaza, Samaa Emad works mostly in evocative mixed media and collage works. She employs and manipulates scraps of everyday material to make work that addresses "the complexities of home, the resilience of humanity, and the transformative power of oral history," reads her artist statement. Due to the ongoing Israeli bombardment on Gaza, Emad has been displaced but continued to make some work, reflecting the difficulties of displacement. One of her most poignant projects is her black-and-white "Reimagining Homeland" series, where she thoughtfully blends archival imagery with old maps of Palestinian cities and villages.



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