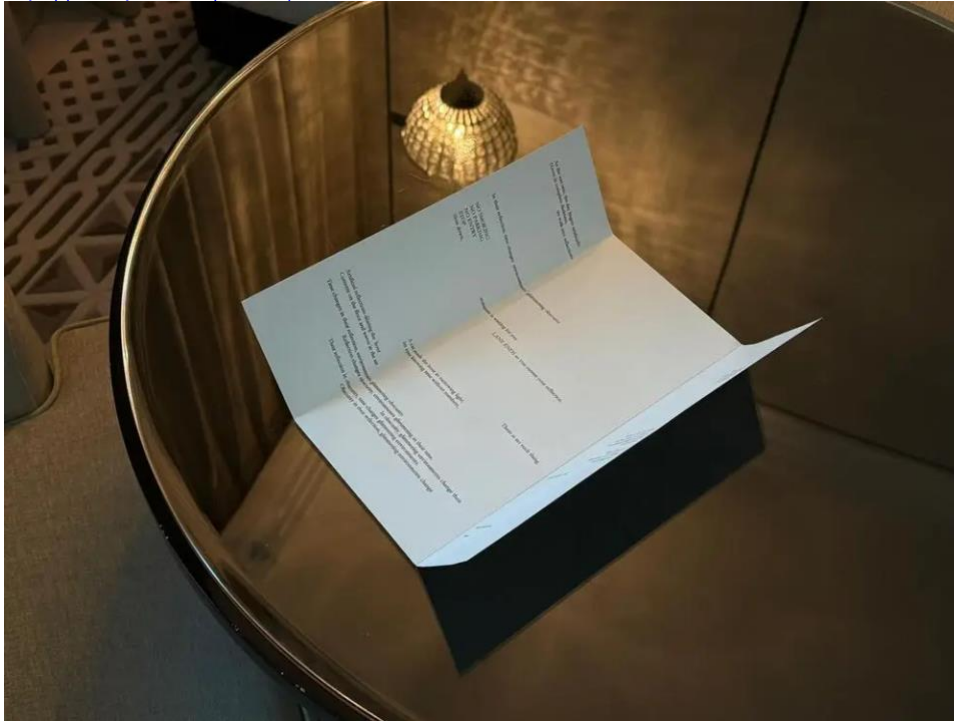


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## Art Dubai 2026 Had a Secret Show. What Was It? By Alexandra Mansilla

<https://sandytimes.ae/culture/4874-art-dubai-2026-had-a-secret-show-what-was-it>



Jumairy — one of the most enigmatic figures in the Gulf art scene — rarely shows his face, builds works that are simultaneously silent and theatrical, and carefully controls what is revealed and what remains hidden.

Beyond his artistic practice, he is also a curator. During Art Dubai 2026, he staged perhaps the fair’s most elusive exhibition — not inside the fair itself, but in a hotel room, walking distance from the fair. The project, titled Nexus, lasted only one day. There were no official invitations, no public location, no visible signage. Visitors had to message the curator directly to receive the room number, then make their way upstairs — sometimes slipping past confused hotel staff — to enter an exhibition.

Featuring works by Augustine Paredes, Dana Dawud, Khalid Jauffer, Nadine Ghandour, Rashed Qurwash, and Sarah Al Mehairi, Nexus unfolded as an intimate reflection on Dubai as both container and catalyst. The hotel room became a metaphor for the city — a space of arrival and departure, of people passing through, staying briefly, or trying to build a life in between.

“As a city, Dubai has so many people and souls that have crossed through it or passed through it,” Jumairy says. “I wanted to think about this idea of passing through — what happens, and what stories can we tell?”

We spoke with Jumairy about what Nexus actually was, why secrecy became such an essential part of the project, and how a hotel room (in a hotel that had no idea what was happening) turned into one of Art Dubai’s most intimate exhibitions.

**Jumairy, so what was Nexus? Why was it a secret? And why did you decide to dedicate the show to the city?**

— Yes, I kept it a secret from everyone. I wanted it to be one of those things that we discover as we go.

I also limited it to just one day because of this idea of transience. Dubai, as a city, has so many people and souls that have crossed through it or passed through it — whether from the day they were born until the day they die, or even just for a day or a week. Some people stay here for years, while others are only in transit for a few hours at the airport.

That is why I kept thinking about this idea of passing through — what happens during that process, and what stories can we tell through it?

And because the exhibition itself was set inside a hotel room, I also wanted things to unfold naturally. The hotel obviously had no idea what was happening. We simply checked in, installed the works with the artists, ordered tea, coffee, and juice, and waited for people to come.

**How did it work? Was it invitation-only, or could anyone attend?**

— So this is the thing: I didn't invite anyone. We just relied on the exhibition being listed on the Art Dubai program app. There was a disclaimer in the description of the show itself that said, "If you'd like a viewing of this show, reach out to the artists, or the curator." And literally anyone who reached out to us on WhatsApp, we would send them instructions: this is the room number, come over.

But we were also gauging it because it was really funny — some people were stopped by the hotel, and there was confusion about where they were going. And basically, we weren't going to come down and save someone or convince the lobby to let them up. We also wanted the participants to play along with this and see if they could get away with coming up.

And we had so many people come through, actually. Only two people got stopped. But it was ok — it was part of the journey.

**Why did you choose the hotel room as a place for the exhibition?**

— The hotel room was very significant in telling the story of travel and transience. It is temporal by its nature. We could have had it in an apartment, in someone's house, or even at the fair, but it still wouldn't have continued the story from the exhibition to the location itself.

I also wanted it to be that specific hotel because it is very close to the fair. So you had people leaving the fair to come to this room, trying to sneak in.

**And why Nexus?**

— Because a nexus is a focal point — it is a connection, a starting point. I always think about how you speak to people when you visit different countries, and some people tell me, "Oh, I visited Dubai, but I was only in transit for an hour or two." And I am like, that isn't really visiting Dubai.

So I wanted to speak about how the artists themselves may have crossed paths in the past, how there was a meeting point at some moment in their lives. And maybe Nexus is that meeting point for them

**And if we look at the works of these six artists as a whole, how would you describe the portrait of the city that they created together?**

— I think, honestly, it is more a representation of time spent in the city.

For example, there is Sarah Al Mehairi's work representing smaller movements, which is based on her walks around neighbourhoods, specifically her own neighbourhood and documenting these observations through her writing.

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