

5 October 2026

The Best Art Exhibitions in the MENA Region This October By Amelia Dhuga

<https://www.gqmiddleeast.com/article/the-best-art-exhibitions-in-the-mena-region-this-october>



October brings the autumn art exhibitions season properly into focus, and this month many of the region's strongest shows are preoccupied with memory and the slippery idea of place. In Dubai, Nada Elkalaawy buries family photographs beneath translucent paint, while Consolidation is Reconsolidation in Abu Dhabi asks what happens every time a memory is recalled and subtly rewritten.

Elsewhere, geography becomes far less fixed than it first appears. Eman Haram considers an ancestral homeland from a distance, while Amir Khojasteh looks back towards Iran through the uneasy framework of the Persian garden. Even Olivo Barbieri makes familiar landscapes feel strangely uncertain. The result is a particularly thoughtful month of art exhibitions - one where looking backwards often becomes a way of understanding where we stand now.

[...]

In May the Tree No Longer Burn When I Wake, Iranian artist Amir Khojasteh presents his first body of work made after leaving Iran, looking back at his home country from an unfamiliar distance. The Persian garden becomes his starting point – a protected space surrounded by barren land, here transformed into something far more uneasy. Landscapes inspired by Van Gogh's Wheatfield with Crows appear beyond its imagined walls, while soft clay figures recline inside, their strangely serene smiles making them difficult to read. Khojasteh cleverly strips these bodies of the authority associated with Renaissance sculpture, however. Instead, they seem born from the ash left behind by destruction, suspended between powerlessness and whatever might come next.