

# The National

Arts & Culture Art



Some of the best submissions will be displayed at galleries in Singapore, Istanbul and Marseille. Photos courtesy IEAA

## Emirati nominations for Emerging Artist Award

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### One-page article

Leading global art galleries and institutions are increasingly targeting artwork from the UAE, seen as "exotic" inclusions to their collections, according to the director of the International Emerging Artist Award (IEAA), Rebia Naim. Now in its second year, the award has more than tripled in registration size, bringing this year's total, from artists around the world, to approximately 1,500. Eight Emirati artists are shortlisted, along with 74 others from 30 countries, in the international category.

The award, under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Wafa Hasher Al Maktoum and supported by the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, provides tangible career development opportunities.


The prize winners, who will be revealed on March 18 at FN Designs during the Alserkal Avenue Art Night event, will exhibit their contemporary work at prestigious galleries Vue Privée, Singapore in May, The Empire Project, Istanbul in July and Galerie Gourvenec Ogor, Marseille in December.

"Submissions were phenomenal, so we doubled the shortlist. We're already strategising how we can make next year bigger," says Naim, whose work includes art consultancy projects at Saadiyat Island and The Louvre Abu Dhabi. "The award gives further credibility to emerging artists. We had to fight for it to be where it is today."

The award now includes mixed media, video and digital art, 3D sculpture and

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photography. Art is not just about the aesthetic but the concept - how it inspires and contributes to positive social and economic change, says Naim.

"This year, we're introducing a high profile online gallery of some of the best submissions because we believe the work deserves to be shown," she says. "This is also the first award providing Emirati artists the opportunity to officially promote projects abroad. For international galleries, to have Emirati work is seen as something exotic."

The IEAA is also in talks with a reputed London-based organisation to introduce the first emerging art fair in Dubai, to further promote applicants. Art has more meaning when shared and artists themselves are "ambassadors" of their culture, says shortlisted Emirati artist Nassra Al Buainain, who submitted an art installation.

"Each culture evokes certain feelings in artists and these can be sensed in their artworks. It's that kind of influence I want to see with an international audience when my artwork is exposed to them," says the 29-year-old from Abu Dhabi.

For Areej Alhammedi, who submitted an interactive comic, the award is fundamental in showcasing the UAE as an international hub for emerging artists.

"I come from a family of artists, so I grew up with art in my household," says the 26 year-old from Sharjah. "The IEAA organisers are creating opportunities for talented artists in the UAE to participate in showcasing the great potential in the region."

Being part of this growing art community and providing a platform for others is important for 26 year-old Khawla Darwish from Dubai, specialising in medical art.

"I'm really thankful and appreciate such opportunities giving us as artists a great chance to compete beautifully against each other and actually grow by looking at each others works," she says.

Nicknamed 'qurtas' (sheets of papers), 31-year-old Hamdan Al Shamsi, from Al Ain, says: "Such initiatives help enhance the creative fields in the UAE, and displaying work around the world grants you the title of 'international artist'."

Fatima Alghafli, a 26-year-old from Umm Al Quwain who submitted her photography to the competition, believes, "If there's no great, active, motivating and inspiring events for artists, there'll be no art movement in the country."

Also submitting photography is Hamad Al Falasi, from Dubai, who says the IEAA has become an instant attraction for UAE-based artists.

"Our culture has many details barely explored in the art scene. I hope with my dedication, I will raise cultural values through artistic mediums internationally," says the 33-year-old. "I always like to go by a personal quote; 'Don't just get yourself out, stand out'."

Working with recycled material, Zeinab Alhashemi says the award has created "energy". "I use contemporary techniques but often take my subject matter from the cultural traditions native UAE. That's why an initiative like this is important and I hope will be on a bigger platform next time so more artist can participate," says the 26-year-old from Dubai.

Shamma Buhazza, a 19-year-old artist from Abu Dhabi who explores "undiscussed" social issues, believes the Emirati artistic expression has not been exposed internationally, but through initiatives such as IEAA, things will change.

For more information, visit [www.emergingartistaward.com](http://www.emergingartistaward.com)  
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