

MIDDLE EASTERN ART ON THE INTERNATIONAL ART FAIR CIRCUIT

ART FAIRS

SEPTEMBER

ABC

art berlin contemporary (17–20 September) is an international Contemporary art platform in what is widely regarded as one of the world's most progressive art capitals. This is mirrored in the format of the fair itself, which has experimented with several approaches in an attempt to clearly define its voice and place in the international art market. 2015 had abc take on a "quieter, cleaner, more structured look," says fair director Maïke Cruse, in contrast to previous years where scaffolding and raw or abandoned walls left visitors occasionally wondering: what was the building and what was art? While choosing to 'finish' the space more clearly, the fair still possessed a free-roaming atmosphere for gallerists to show their largely solo-show presentations. Another change that occurred in 2015 was the introduction of a formal application process instead of the select invitation-only method previously in place, allowing for a broader range of galleries to exhibit, again shifting the mood away from festival-like with heavy numbers of performances and events and towards a more strictly art-focused fair. The 100 represented galleries from over 17 countries were visited by nearly 30,000 visitors and included works by artists such as Algerian-born Saâdane Afif at Mehdi Chouakri (Berlin), Saudi Arabian Abdullah Al-Othman from Athr Gallery (Jeddah) and Tunisian artist Nidhal Chamekh of Selma Feriani (Tunis), among many others.



Installation view of Saâdane Afif's works from his *Là-bas* exhibition, 2014, at Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin. Image courtesy abc.



Booth view of Carbon 12. © Kristina Kulakova. Image courtesy Carbon 12, Dubai.

SEPTEMBER

VIENNA CONTEMPORARY

Vienna hosted Austria's first-ever viennacontemporary (24–27 September) bringing 99 galleries from 25 countries, including Dubai's Carbon 12, to the event filled with over 20 talks, tours, screenings, and even their own prizes supported by the Vienna Chamber of Commerce: Best Booth Award (granted to Martin Asbaek Gallery of Copenhagen), International Gallery Prize (also to Martin Asbaek Gallery), and The Austrian Gallery Prize (to unttd contemporary). It was deemed a highly successful start: 28,000 visitors, with 25 of the 99 gallery participants being first-timers in Vienna. Furthermore, a special section called *Reflections* consisted of a new kind of gallery presentation format underlining the curatorial aspect of works on view from 37 participants. *Zone1* featured 12 spaces for young international artists, and there was even a platform dedicated to Bulgaria. "More visitors, more international collectors and good sales of the participating galleries," concluded Director Christina Steinbrecher-Pfandt of the fair, which underwent a complete rebranding from its prior iteration as Vienna Fair. "All of this perfectly confirms our decision to reposition viennacontemporary. The international art fair at Marx Halle Vienna has clearly exceeded our expectations."