Dubai is a city of incongruities and complexities. Last week, it played host to its annual Art Week — a boost to the regional market with fairs like Art Dubai and Design Days Dubai, as well as a series of openings and celebrations centered around Alserkal Avenue, a growing gallery district located in the industrial neighborhood of Al Quoz. (The first art space opened there in 2008.) Helmed by its founder and chief fundraiser Abdelmonem Bin Eisa Alserkal, the circumscribed cluster of barebones, high-ceilinged metal sheds are home to heavy-hitting locals: Larawie Shalaby, Tashkeel, and Carbon 12; the latter two are run by Alserkal and Jurkute, who were once employees of Alserkal's parent company, MAF Group. Art Dubai has its own space here, called Art Dubai Gallery, which specializes in emerging artists from the Middle East and South Asia, including the nameless, Pardis Khosravi — sculptures in twisted metal; assemblages made of rope or reclaimed car parts; and a series of delicately beautiful sculptures and drawings by Hossein Valamanesh from the '80s incorporating wood, metal, and oil. It makes it easy (if one doesn’t mind dodging truck traffic and the blaring sun) to take in a dozen or more gallery exhibitions in one mostly-pleasantly-friendlier afternoon.

While the district is expanding, Alserkal and Jurkute stress that it’s not just about building bigger, but a necessary integration in a region where, with enough money and the right whiffs, it’s probably possible to build the world’s largest-building-shaped-like-a-rotating-banana in less than 12 months. At odds with the rest of Dubai’s shiny, mirrored, sinuous skyline and destination malls, can feel like a fever dream that jumbles upended. Spending time in Dubai, with its almost psychotically futuristic cityscape and capitalism. I interviewed Alserkal artist Nadia Kaebe-Linke, the actor T.J. Miller of HBO’s “Silicon Valley”) wandered in, spending over an hour with the works on view, which are mostly to do with the architectural and bodily remnants of personal and political violence. Patron, artist, and gallerist Rami Farook, was omnipresent through it all. Showing a video series at a pop-up hosted by Third Line — an irreverent work equally concerned with ping-pong and Muslim prayer — and handing out stickers of himself bearing a pineapple (which has no special resonance in Arab culture, but which, in the Middle East, can symbolize Dubai’s uneven mix of old and new influences. There were Anselm Kiefer and James Turrell monographs next to a copy of Eddhart Tolle’s “The Power of Now” — issue 3 of Emirati Diaries, its cover graced by Dubai’s nightlife for Dubai is a city of incongruities and complexities. Last week, it played host to its annual Art Week — a boost to the regional market with fairs like Art Dubai and Design Days Dubai, as well as a series of openings and celebrations centered around Alserkal Avenue, a growing gallery district located in the industrial neighborhood of Al Quoz. (The first art space opened there in 2008.) Helmed by its founder and chief fundraiser Abdelmonem Bin Eisa Alserkal, the circumscribed cluster of barebones, high-ceilinged metal sheds are home to heavy-hitting locals: Larawie Shalaby, Tashkeel, and Carbon 12; the latter two are run by Alserkal and Jurkute, who were once employees of Alserkal’s parent company, MAF Group. Art Dubai has its own space here, called Art Dubai Gallery, which specializes in emerging artists from the Middle East and South Asia, including the nameless, Pardis Khosravi — sculptures in twisted metal; assemblages made of rope or reclaimed car parts; and a series of delicately beautiful sculptures and drawings by Hossein Valamanesh from the ‘80s incorporating wood, metal, and oil.

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