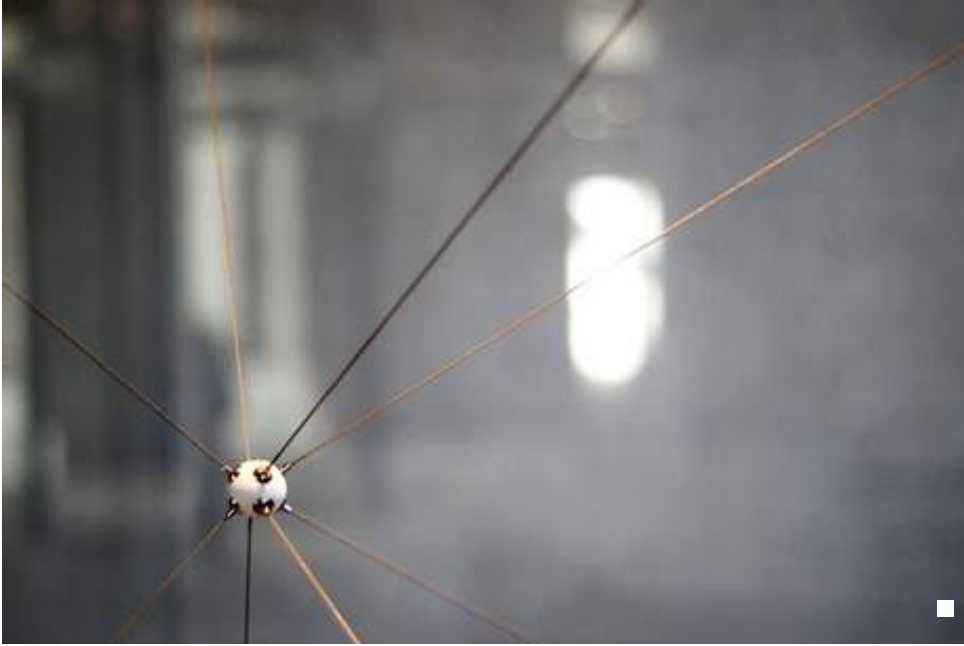


TheNational



Abu Dhabi Art: rain didn't stop play

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We saw art from every corner of the globe, collaborations in performance and an intervention from the weather that was impossible to anticipate. But all the obstacles were overcome.

Although the talking point for many at the fair was the weather's disruption – heavy wind and rains caused it to close temporarily on Thursday and also meant that 22 of the galleries had to relocate from the Norman Foster-designed UAE Pavilion to the former storage area at the rear of Manarat Al Saadiyat – the sales were still robust and the public programming managed, for the most part, to continue despite the inclement conditions.

Here are some of the highlights of the fair.

Fly (2011) at Galerie Brigitte Schenk

From Random International, the artists who brought us the Rain Room, Galerie Brigitte Schenk presented this interactive installation, clever as well as captivating. The fly, actually a small round ball hooked up to a customised pulley system, was trapped inside a glass box and its movements mirrored those of a real fly. It senses the presence of an observer and changes the pattern of its behaviour accordingly. The work comments on the notions of freedom.

Meem Projects 2013

Meem, one of our favourite galleries in Dubai, launched the second instalment of the publication project that it began last year. This limited-edition book presents the key contemporary and modern artists of the region. To represent the content of its booth at the fair, the book contains the work of three contemporary artists: Khaled Hafez, Jeffar Khaldi and Mahmoud Obaidi, who all created commissioned works under the title How Do You Sleep At Night?

We love this part of the foreword, where Charles Pocock, the managing director of the gallery, writes: "If Meem Projects 2013 successful in encouraging people to engage with the art of the region, I will be able to sleep very well indeed."

Admaf booth

One of many community booths that were placed outside and so bore the brunt of Thursday's storm, the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation (Admaf) booth was one of the most impressive. Designed by two interior design students from the University Sharjah's College of Fine Art and Design, the booth was also the launch of the new Admaf Design Award, an annual

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competition for students and recent graduates. Hoda Al Khamis-Kanoo, the founder of Admaf, says that the new award is to inspire "the country's future innovators" and to show Admaf's commitment to "the growth and development of the UAE's visual arts industry".

Julius Bar Lounge

The Swiss bank Julius Bar was the sponsor of this year's fair and we were impressed with its efforts to integrate itself fully within the artistic spirit. "Instead of bringing bank brochures we decided to bring some of our art," explained Christian Zingg, the curator of the Julius Bar collection, which numbers more than 5,000 pieces and is usually reserved for its guests or clients. Inside the lounge, situated close to the entrance, the work of Monica Studer and Christoph van den Berg was on display. The art was mostly digital prints from a virtual hotel that the artists created in 2000 as a way of expressing what they call a "collective memory" of their homeland.

Public sculptures