

Art Connects Women 2022 Review

Art Connects Women, the annual initiative by *ZeeArts*, has been known to be an hallmark all-women art event which rides on the commemorative spirits of the International Women's Day held on 8 March. This year, with the arrival of 115 artists and a grand total of 115 artworks on display, such the grandiose art show is more than ready to take on the world.

Year on year, the number of women artists registering for **Art Connects Women** continues to grow, but alas, one rule remains: there can only be one female artist representing her own country with one work of her own making. That being said, this year's application numbers saw a whopping 350 entries, of which 115 artists were selected by the curatorial committee to represent the 115 countries. The exhibition occupying the grand foyer of the Al Habtoor Palace stood as the nucleus of the 4-days extravaganza dedicated to the artists who flew in as ambassadors of their home countries.

Following an uplifting speech by founder and director of *ZeeArts*, Zaahirah Muthy, the vernissage opened up into a night of entertainment for the women to network and exchange cultural understandings, and that was the night when all political boundaries dissipated into the depths of dances and music as every artist had their fill of merrymaking and intermingling. Apart from the official unveiling of the art Book, "*Women Artists Around the World Vol. 3*" by *UNESCO*, the exhibition hall was yet another bustle with artists creating conversations with the patrons on their art and practices. As should every art bear a story that is to be told, the hall was, then, a book chaptered with the 115 stories narrated by the artists present, and that was indeed the most organic mode of reception for the audiences to widen perspectives on the world.

Upon having the exhibition's doors opened to the public on the second day, the artists were invited for an excursion at the Expo2020 Dubai, where they would be able to experience a sliver of art, technology, and human brilliance from their own countries – a slice of home thrown into the mix. There, their immersive cultural experiences were kicked up a notch when the women could pay an introductory visit to each new country and further discover what makes each of them so unique.

The third day proved to be most riveting in its offering of art world knowledge and the practical know-hows to navigate it. Hosted onboard the *Queen Elizabeth 2* and under the patronage of *UNESCO*, guests had the opportunity to attend a full-day conference within the decommissioned ocean liner, now turned into a floating hotel.

In response to the debilitating effects of the pandemic, the conference, helmed by speakers of diverse backgrounds, delved into the potentials of capacity-building in this new era while also rendering assistance to one another in finding a reliable footing. With only a shot towards progress, the artists were guided on how to ride new waves in the global market trends to generate more avenues in sales channels and creative output. The dialogue was also opened to the floor for any questions to be answered and doubts to be addressed. Such organically

segmented analyses aimed to empower and enhance the capabilities of the women to tackle the future as leaders before entrepreneurs.

As do all things good, the event, too, came to a close on the fourth and final day, but not before the **Art Connects Women's** customary award ceremony. An imposing occasion deserves an equally impressive location, and the world-renown *Atlantis, The Palm* resort came through as the accommodative site for the gala night. In recognition of the creative flare within the female artists congregated upon Dubai's sands, each of them was presented a certificate of participation to honour their relentless creative energy and desire to push for a better tomorrow regardless of adversities. In collaboration with *Shenannz Fashion*, "*The Art of Meraki*" was an exclusive fashion show demonstrating designer couture which fuses wearable art with modern street wear, and its curated fashion catwalk kept the festivities ramped up through the night. Later on, the artists, sporting their country's traditional costumes, sashayed down the aisle as the closing segment of the gala night.

The artists had themselves treated to a delectable dinner, a fashion show, an award ceremony, and great party music to dance to, all in celebration of their undying efforts to remain visible and relevant as artists, powerhouses, leaders, and most importantly, women. The four days of festivities and cultural exchanges will prove to be one of the most memorable exhibitions for the attending artists throughout their careers, and **Art Connects Women** will return next year for its 6th Edition to empower even more female artists on a global scale.