

RECONSTRUCTED LANDSCAPE

Alongside a wall in Dubai's Madinat Jumeirah is an unusual site: a jumble of large-scale black-and-white photographs, human debris, and the remains of one fallen tree. The installation, the work of three artists, makes for an improbable presence in the strenuously groomed grounds in which it sits. Walking by, the sight exerts an unmistakable cosmic energy: a call for pause, reflection.

The artists Shaqayeq Arabi, Fereydoun Ave, and Dariush Zandi have been in dialogue for some fifteen years, each of them preoccupied with the swiftly shifting conditions of the Anthropocene: an earth under duress, an earth throttled, pilfered, and abused by rapacious humans. "A tribute to what was and what may soon only be seen in museums and galleries," is how Ave describes the installation in Dubai.

As it happens, Dubai is a prime staging ground for this experiment in collage. A locale which has become the avatar of the new in the global consciousness—land of unbridled capital, hallucinatory growth—even if, in fact, it has communities and traditions

stretching back for centuries, communities which one may be hard pressed to access without a dose of curiosity and effort. Arabi and Zandi, in their capacity as artist and city planner respectively, and through the workings of their pioneering nonprofit gallery space Courtyard, have long been invested in these lost, vernacular histories. In his work as an architect, Zandi often incorporates local traditions and modes—ancient cooling systems, doors, and more—into his contemporary designs. At the installation at Madinat Jumeirah, his largescale photographs capture an Emirati landscape—desert, rock, mountain—under threat. Meanwhile, Arabi, an inspired scavenger, often surveils the same landscape for traces of what once was. Dried up vegetation she has gathered becomes sculptural as she plants these traces of nature under duress in rusted paint buckets—themselves marked by the sediment of time and the ravages of a warming earth. The pair's work, it could be said, are monuments to a fading world.

Ave, meanwhile, has long been invested in the question of roots. Where do things come from? How did we become so divorced from

our origins and, by extension, the four sacred elements? He knows this dynamic well; in Tehran, where he spends part of the year, the old is routinely wrecked to make way for the new. Borjsazee, or the construction of high-rises, is a ubiquitous feature of the urban landscape with historical buildings, gardens, and nature at large routinely destroyed in the name of progress, industrialization. A process, one might say, that began in the 1960s and only accelerated after the Iranian Revolution.

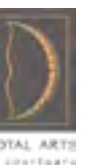
A fallen tree marks Ave's participation, a victim of an irregular weather pattern in the form of a violent storm. Said tree has been chopped up, rendered a series of stumps, parts of them painted in splashes of red. The red, inevitably, suggests blood. Which is to say, theatricality abounds here. Stepping back, Reconstructed Landscape has the energy of a film set, with its intentional lighting, its artifice, its strenuously constructed nature. Here is a film about a future that is increasingly our dark present.

Negar Azimi

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Originally presented outdoors during Art Dubai 2025, the work is now reinstalled within an interior space at Total Arts, where the architecture itself becomes part of its ongoing transformation. Re-encountered through light, movement, proximity, and spatial conditions, each iteration generates new relationships.

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Collaborative installation by Fereydoun Ave, Shaqayeq Arabi, and Dariush Zandi, commissioned by Art Dubai 2025 for Lower Water Terrace, Mina Salaam. Represented at Total Arts at the Courtyard, June to Sep 2026