

Cultural fatigue? Never.

Design columnist **CYRIL ZAMMIT** wants us to be thankful for culture...even when there's a lot of it



If you've lived in the Gulf for a while, you'll have heard of the concept of March Madness. It's a time of year where you could feasibly go to an event or exhibition for every day of the month, until the Holy month of Ramadan starts. Once that is all done, we fall into 'summernation'—which is a term I may have made up, but it is a portmanteau of 'summer' and 'hibernation'.

This year, as the Holy month of Ramadan arrives in March, it has led March Madness to shift earlier into February or, to be honest, late January. It is a lot. How much? Well, let's start with a quick rundown of some events that happened and others that are coming up.

In Dubai, the Alserkal Avenue AI Quoz Fest had a remarkable attendance of 80,000 people daily, and was followed closely by the Emirates Literature Festival. Then there was the Biennale of Islamic Art in Jeddah; the 15th edition of the Sharjah Biennale; the Arts AIIUa Festival with the 'Fame' exhibition dedicated to Andy Warhol; Sikka; Middle East Film and Comic Con; Art Dubai; the March Meetings... I'm sure I'm forgetting a few. You could almost complain of 'cultural event fatigue.' But should you?

Even if it might feel overwhelming, there can never be such a thing as cultural overdose. Culture plays such an important role in our societies that we can never have too much of it. As part of the happy few who are privileged to attend all these event openings and are extremely well taken care of by the organizers, we have an option if we're tired: excuse ourselves, stay home and not complain.

Culture needs to speak to and reach everyone, regardless of social status. Art should be everywhere—and certainly initiatives in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have made that clear.

Culture is invigorating. Your brain is challenged and refreshed by curiosity and discovery. Quite recently still seen as an exclusive luxury for elites, there has been a strong shift in culture as it has become a popular and universal source of enlightenment, accessible to everyone through either technology or the prevalence of public art projects.

Speaking of technology, it has been perhaps the most vital accelerator of cultural equity—through global platforms where everyone can be discovered and break even the most traditionally gate-kept parts of the art world.

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A recent market analysis claimed that there were 50 million 'creators' out there. Does it make them all 'artists'? Not necessarily, but at least they can be considered for what they create and not who they know to become famous.

So this month—whether you decide to go to an exhibit or enjoy the work of a digital creator—my advice to you is to explore. Try things out and discover talents from around the world. Most cultural events have free streaming feeds on their websites if you prefer not to spend your money on culture (although a ticket to an art fair costs less than a fancy pizza in a restaurant). Cultural participation is part of your role as a citizen in whatever city you call home. Through your curiosity and your steps into cultural institutions, you signal to the people running these cities that cultural is important. And you'll get even more culture. I promise, you'll never get tired of it. 🍷