



**Rebia Naim**  
Founder  
*Emerging Scene*



It has been a long journey from starting out as one of the first champions of the UAE art scene to joining this collaboration with Al Tamimi & Company after I was contacted by the Financial Crime team. When I landed in Dubai on a hot and humid evening in September 2004, I was full of anticipation for the future, facing a journey that, at that time, I had no idea would unfold into such an exhilarating experience. I was 23, French born of Syrian-Bolivian origins and the recipient of a Master's degree in Arts & New Technology of Communication from the University of Nice, Sophia Antipolis (France), and eager to start my foray into all the Middle East's art scene had to offer.

After spending some time as a successful marketing professional, in 2008 I was offered an irresistible opportunity to launch the first art gallery dedicated to emerging photographers in Dubai's industrial area known today as Alserkal Avenue. Despite the timing, during the turbulence of the economic crisis, I had an insatiable passion for art which I still harboured since leaving the French Riviera and I threw myself into the opportunity. As the collective of creatives and artists based in Dubai flourished, I was privileged to witness the power of art first-hand; showing insights into the world we live in, cultural diversity, and unique expressionism.

In 2011, I founded Emerging Scene with a single initiative; the International Emerging Artists Award, which was the UAE's first contemporary art award open to visual artists, providing world class recognition for both Emirati and international emerging artists and career development on the global art scene. In 2016, after five successful years, the award blossomed into more inclusive events based on art calls such as group shows at local and international galleries, brand collaborations, participation in art festivals, community activations at key landmarks and government entities. The vibrancy of these initiatives including Quoz Art Fest and DIFC Art Night, as well as the support of companies such as Meraas and the central government, particularly through the Ministry of Culture and Youth Development, are invaluable to the continued growth of the UAE art scene.

One of the developments that I have sponsored through Emerging Scene is the advancement of digital art shows, which originally were a means to highlight the work of artists that had been sidelined by limited gallery space. Back in 2011, Elevison Media, the UAE's largest broadcast network of digital screens had just been created, and we took the leap together to transition to digital platforms for art. In 2020, particularly in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic, this risk has paid off. Our steady partnership has led us to the creation of the largest digital art gallery, curating the work of 120+ emerging artists on 1,000+ digital screens located in Dubai's and Abu Dhabi's key landmarks, business and residential buildings.

In the 15 years that have elapsed since that first autumn evening, the UAE's creative industry has thrived, and evolved into an unrecognizable hive of artistic talent. Looking back at the development, I am proud to have had a role in this part of history, both as a witness and as an active player in fostering an open canvas for creative and ambitious entrepreneurs to fill with life and opportunities.