



الإمارات العربية المتحدة  
جناح بينالي البندقية  
United Arab Emirates  
Venice Biennale Pavilion

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## **DR LAMEES HAMDAN BESTOWED THE ORDER OF THE STAR OF ITALIAN SOLIDARITY BY THE PRESIDENT OF ITALY**

*Award granted for work spearheading the first UAE National Pavilion at the 2009 Venice Biennale*

**ABU DHABI, UAE:** On June 19, 2010, Italian Ambassador to the UAE, His Excellency Paolo Dionisi, presented Dr. Lamees Hamdan with the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity for her work spearheading the first UAE National Pavilion at the 53<sup>rd</sup> International Art Exhibition – the 2009 Venice Biennale.

The order was officially bestowed on Dr. Lamees Hamdan as Knight of the Order by the President of the Republic of Italy, The Honorable Giorgio Napolitano by the signing of the Presidential decree in Rome, Italy. The order is granted to non-Italian citizens making a significant contribution to the country and was officially presented in a ceremony held on June 19, 2010. The prestigious award was granted in recognition of Dr. Hamdan's work in spearheading and organizing the first National Pavilion for the United Arab Emirates at the 53<sup>rd</sup> International Art Exhibition – the Venice Biennale 2009.

“We are proud of the work done by Dr. Lamees Hamdan on behalf of the United Arab Emirates” commented H.E. Abdul Rahman bin Mohammed Al Owais, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development on the occasion of the presentation of the award. “Our inaugural National Pavilion brought together the people of the United Arab Emirates and the people of Italy under the global language of art. This award,

granted by the Republic of Italy, has recognized the successful contribution of the UAE and Dr. Lamees Hamdan working on our behalf in deepening the cultural ties and strengthening the already strong bond that exists between our two nations."

Speaking on the occasion, H.E. Paolo Dionisi, the Ambassador of Italy to the United Arab Emirates remarked: "It was my pleasure to present this award bestowed on Dr. Lamees Hamdan by the President of the Republic of Italy. The award is given in recognition of her dedication and desire to bring Emirati art and artistic talent to the most high profile non-commercial art exhibition in the world - the Venice Biennale. Her efforts on behalf of the United Arab Emirates and the establishment of the inaugural United Arab Emirates Pavilion ensured a world class exhibition – something of lasting importance for both Italy and the United Arab Emirates."

Speaking after the ceremony, Dr. Hamdan said: "I am honored today to be able to have represented my country in accepting this award. The UAE Pavilion at the 2009 Venice Biennale has, in its debut, done much more than celebrate the emergence of the United Arab Emirates on the cultural stage. Through its exhibition, its physical design, live programs and events, it provided a challenging artistic and intellectual contribution to the Venice Biennale—one that reflected a global shift in critical thinking and artistic practice. I was honored to be given the challenge to establish our inaugural National Pavilion and was extremely proud of the efforts and contribution made by the entire team, and our dynamic, artists – all of which was made possible by the strong support given by our government and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development. We were pioneers representing our country and are delighted and very proud to be recognized by the Government of Italy for our contribution."

### **About the Venice Biennale and the UAE 2009 Inaugural National Pavilion.**

Widely recognized as the most prestigious and important non-commercial international global art fair, the Venice Biennale was established in 1895. Today, the Venice Biennale encompasses the official pavilions of more than 70 nations and is widely recognized as a critically important global event that showcases new and important emerging trends in international contemporary art.

In 2009, the United Arab Emirates was the first Gulf country to participate in the Biennale. Initiated and supported by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development, the UAE National Pavilion proved to be a big success with over 375,000 visitors; the exhibition enriched the cultural offering at Venice showcasing a unique insight into the modern UAE art scene, artists and artistic practices. The UAE National Pavilion strengthened the long standing commercial ties between the UAE and Italy by enriching the two countries cultural understanding and exposure to the UAE art scene which is fast emerging as a powerful new voice in the world of Arab art.

The UAE National Pavilion also organized an onsite information exchange program with more than 50 dedicated volunteers to ensure that visitors better interacted with the UAE artists and to promote a greater understanding of Emirati culture. The first UAE National Pavilion volunteer program was designed to create a legacy of highly skilled art practitioners in the UAE learning through interaction and exposure to top international artists and curators. Extensively covered by the international press and generating a new awareness of a previously quiet art scene, the UAE Pavilion enjoying positive critique in such prestigious publications as The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian, The New York Times, and The Financial Times but to name a few. The artists and various participants in the UAE Pavilion have all benefitted greatly from the experience and as a result are engaging in a range of new projects both locally and abroad.

The UAE Pavilion was enabled through the support of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development as well as the sponsorship of the Emirates Foundation and Dubai Culture. The volunteer program was sponsored by Takatof and Emirates Airlines. The first UAE Pavilion at the Venice Biennale was a truly national effort with enthusiastic and positive collaboration with Sharjah Museums, TDIC, Tashkeel, Shelter, many of the privately owned and operated UAE art galleries as well as the artists and individuals engaged in the UAE art scene.

## **The UAE National Pavilion – 2011 Venice Biennale**

The UAE's debut in the 2009 Venice Biennale highlighted the country's cultural agenda and commitment to the development of national artists and a national platform for artistic development. The inaugural UAE Pavilion at the Venice Biennale elevated the national art agenda to international heights and generated awareness around the multitude of activities scheduled for the future. The ongoing success of the long established Sharjah Biennale together with the growing international reputation of Dubai galleries and the ambitious endeavors of TDIC and the Abu Dhabi government with their Saadiyat Island and Performing Arts Centre projects, have placed the UAE on the global cultural radar.

On May 24th 2010, Vasif Kortun was named curator for the 2011 UAE National Pavilion. Detailed program plans have yet to be announced.

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