



الجناح الوطني لدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
المعرض الدولي للفنون
بينالي البندقية

The National Pavilion of
the United Arab Emirates
The International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia

May 2013

For Immediate Release

THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES ANNOUNCES A LONG-TERM HOSPITALITY AGREEMENT REACHED WITH LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA FOR A "PERMANENT PAVILION" IN THE ARSENALE – SALE D'ARMI.

Abu Dhabi -21 May 2013 – la Biennale di Venezia has marked an important milestone in its long history by awarding the United Arab Emirates, the first Gulf National to participate in the Art and Architecture Biennale, with a long term hospitality agreement (permanent pavilion) in the Arsenale – Sale d'Armi. The agreement was finalized through the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs. la Biennale di Venezia is world-renowned for the biannual International Art Exhibition and Architecture Exhibitions, as well as the International Film Festival, and continues the great tradition of the Festivals of Contemporary Music and Theatre, now flanked by the Festival of Contemporary Dance.

Dr. Lamees Hamdan, Commissioner of the National Pavilion of the UAE, commented: "By securing a "permanent pavilion" for the UAE in Venice we hope to ensure that the focus of the nations international artistic programming remains centered on promoting and empowering our local Emirati talent at the highest level possible, through our ongoing participation in the offerings of la Biennale de Venezia."

Since 2011 la Biennale di Venezia has engaged in a dialogue with the foreign countries asking to participate with their own pavilion. Currently 30 out of the 86 National Participations (official figures – 2011) are housed in permanent pavilions, but a long-term hospitality agreement had not been awarded to any country since 1995. However with national participation increasing with each Art Biennale, la Biennale di Venezia has made it a priority to allow more space for new countries.

Commissioner Dr Lamees Hamdan with the support of the UAE Ministry of Culture, Youth & Community Development and the Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation facilitated the signing of the 20 year agreement for the new pavilion.

Established to endorse the UAE's art scene on an international platform and build on local projects, the National Pavilion will return to Venice to engage in vibrant cultural exchange - a significant part of the mission of the Office of the National Pavilion. "One of the main objectives of the Pavilion is to strongly communicate internationally the depth of contemporary art practices in the United Arab Emirates, and to provide a foundation to support the nation's diverse and developing art scene," says Dr Hamdan.

The new space will showcase the communication of Emirati visual arts and architecture. The farsightedness of this decision opens a myriad of opportunities for the UAE cultural scene which span art, architecture, film dance, music and theatre and cements the place of the UAE and its artists the forefront of international contemporary art.

The 2013 exhibition for the 55th International Art Exhibition will be curated by Reem Fadda, Associate Curator for Middle Eastern Art at the Guggenheim - Abu Dhabi Project, and will feature a solo presentation of the work of Emirati artist Mohammed Kazem. The National Pavilion has appointed the dynamic Emirati design house, Fikra, lead by Salem Al Qassimi, to produce the Graphic design elements of the exhibition.

The UAE has presented two widely acclaimed editions of the National Pavilion at the 53rd and 54th International Art Exhibitions. In 2009, the UAE became the first Arab gulf nation to present a National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. The exhibition "It's Not You, It's Me" was curated by Tirdad Zolghadr and featured the work of Emirati artist Lamya Gargash alongside the work of showcase artists Ebtisam AbdulAziz, Huda Said Saif and Tareq Al Ghossain. In 2011, the UAE presented its second National Pavilion curated by Vasif Kortun and featuring Emirati artists Reem Al Ghaith, Abdullah Al Saadi and Lateefa bint Maktoum.

The National Pavilion of the United Arab Emirates for 2013 has been made possible through the generous support of the Sheikha Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and the Ministry of Culture, Youth & Community Development.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The 55th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia Universally recognized as the world's most prestigious contemporary art event, la Biennale di Venezia (the Venice Biennale) dates back to 1895 when the first art exhibition was organized. It will present its 55th International Art Exhibition from June 1 through November 24, 2013. In recognition of the emergence of the UAE as a cultural hub, the Biennale has provided a large and highly visible site in the Arsenale for the UAE Pavilion. Additional to the art exhibition, la Biennale hosts Architecture Biennale, Film Festival, Music, Theater and Dance Festivals.

2. Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation The Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation works to contribute to the creation of positive futures for the citizens of the United Arab Emirates & the full realization of their potential and aspirations. To that end, it develops and supports charitable initiatives in the areas of education, arts, culture & heritage, and the environment. In the arts, the Foundation works toward three strategic goals:

- To support emerging and future Emirati artists in developing their talents at the earliest stages of their growth
- To educate and engage the public in art and to build new audiences in the UAE for the arts
- To introduce the international community to Emirati artistic talent

The Foundation was established by Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan in 2010.

3. Ministry of Culture, Youth & Community Development The Ministry of Culture, Youth & Community Development was launched in 2006 to highlight the UAE's fast-growing community & thriving youths while not losing sight of its heritage and cultural scene. The Ministry aims to revive the UAE's heritage by inspiring and encouraging the creative talents abundant among the youths of today.

It is responsible for promoting and investing in the energies of young people, inspiring them and adding to their artistic abilities. In doing so, the Ministry has raised much awareness towards the community's cultural practices and in turn, has promoted innovation and enrichment of cultural communication. It is constantly working at creating an integral framework for providing detailed information regarding the country's culture, youth & community development. In addition, the Ministry also organises ongoing activities and develops mechanisms to secure the necessary support required to achieve its goals.

4. Reem Fadda, (b.1979) Focusing on a number of projects in her native homeland of Palestine, Fadda was Director of the Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art (PACA) and worked as Academic Director to the International Academy of Art - Palestine, which she helped found in 2006. She co-curated and had been involved in many projects such as: "Liminal Spaces", a 4 year long artistic & political project, consisting of conferences, tours, art residencies and exhibitions in Palestine, Israel & Germany; "Ramallah Syndrome", a project showcased at the 53rd Venice Biennale; "Tarjama/Translation" which was an ArteEast program, showcasing 30 artists from the Middle East and Central Asia at the Queens Museum & Herbert E. Johnson Museum; and the "3rd RIWAQ Biennale", which she curated alongside Charles Esche in Ramallah. She is a member of the general assembly of both the International Academy of Art, and the Kamandjati Association, the selection jury of the Young Arab Theatre Fund and the steering committee of Decolonizing Architecture. Additionally, she was a recipient of both Chevening and Fulbright scholarships.

5. Mohammed Kazem, (b.1969) Kazem's works have been selected for Biennials and Exhibitions around the world for over two decades, including, Holland, Singapore, Germany, Switzerland, Egypt, Lebanon, Bangladesh, India, Spain, Japan, The USA, Uzbekistan, Russia, and Cuba. He has taken part in several Sharjah International Art Biennials and has been awarded first prize for installation. Kazem went on to curate the 8th Sharjah Biennial in 2007. Since then, he was the curator of The Flying House from 2007-2011, while simultaneously curating exhibitions in Spain, Switzerland, and in the UAE. Kazem has opened his own studio, Empty10, in Al Quoz, Dubai. Mohammed most recently graduated with an MFA from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, USA in December 2012.

6. Fikra Design Studio Fikra is a multidisciplinary design studio specialized in bilingual graphic design; Arabic and English. Founded by Salem Al-Qassimi in 2006, Fikra works across a variety of media, time-based and print including book design, data-visualizations, environmental graphics, bilingual typography; Arabic and English, identity creation, interaction design, and motion graphics. The studio's philosophy is deeply rooted in investigating new pathways for problem-solving through design exploration and education. Fikra gained its reputation as one of the leading graphic design studios in the UAE.

7. Venice Internship Program Initiated in 2009 in conjunction with the National Pavilion of the UAE at the Venice Biennale, the Venice Internship Program offers a range of opportunities to young Emiratis keen to engage with culture & arts at the highest international level. The program focuses on a 1 month internship opportunity for an elite group of Emirati nationals based on-site in Venice acting as custodians of the National Pavilion. These interns manage the exhibition and participate in a rigorous educational program utilizing the wealth of museums, galleries and cultural institutions found throughout Venice. The Program runs throughout the 6 month duration of the Art Biennale.