

National Pavilion UAE Opens at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia

Venice, Italy – May 27, 2016 — The National Pavilion United Arab Emirates la Biennale di Venezia was officially opened at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition, marking the UAE's second participation at the Exhibition.

The National Pavilion UAE la Biennale di Venezia is commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, and supported by the UAE Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development.

Inaugurated by H.E. Falah Mohamed Al Ahbabi, Director General of Urban Planning Council, the National Pavilion UAE presents *Transformations: The Emirati National House*, an exhibition curated by Yasser Elsheshtawy, Associate Professor of Architecture at UAE University, which explores the transformative aspect of the housing model of Emirati national homes, known as 'Sha'abi' (Folk) houses.

H.H. Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan, Founder of the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, commented that the UAE is known for its rich culture and unique architecture that adapts to its lifestyle and climate, adding that the Foundation's vision is to share the country's vibrant arts and architectural landscape with an international audience.

H.H. added that the National Pavilion UAE aims to shine a light on distinctive elements of the country's history, such as the cultural, architectural and social evolution and transformation of the national housing.

The 15th International Architecture Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia runs from May 28 – November 27, 2016. The National Pavilion UAE is located in Venice's Arsenale – Sale d'Armi.

Notable guests at the opening ceremony included: **Mr. Abdulla Al Sahi**, Executive Director of Planning and Infrastructure at Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council; **H.E. Noura Mohamed Juma**, General Consul, General Consulate of the UAE in Milan, Italy; **H.E. Afra Al Saberi**, Undersecretary, Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development; **H.E. Hakam Al Hashemi**, Undersecretary for Culture and Arts Sector, Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development; **Abdallah Harib Al Teneiji**, Director of Project Management, Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development; and **Zainab Saber**, Deputy Director of Government Communication, Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development.

The Curator

Yasser Elsheshtawy is Associate Professor of Architecture at the United Arab Emirates University, where he has taught since 1997. His scholarship deals with urbanization in developing societies, urban history and environment-behavior studies, with a particular focus on Middle Eastern cities, and Elsheshtawy also runs UAE University's Urban Research Lab.

Elsheshtawy has produced more than 70 texts in leading international journals and publishing houses, including his authored book *Dubai: Behind an Urban Spectacle* and his edited books, *The Evolving Arab City* and *Planning Middle Eastern Cities*, which have become key references on urbanism and architecture in the region.

He has been invited to present his research at international institutions such as Columbia University, Harvard Graduate School of Design, the ETH/Zurich, the Louvre Auditorium/Paris, NYU and the Canadian Center of Architecture/Montreal, and his multimedia work has been exhibited at the Guggenheim Museum and New York University.

National Pavilion UAE la Biennale di Venezia

The National Pavilion United Arab Emirates la Biennale di Venezia was established to support the UAE's contemporary art and architecture practices on an international platform through participation at la Biennale di Venezia, and to promote a cultural dialogue between the UAE and the international community.

The UAE's participation at la Biennale di Venezia commenced in 2009 with a national pavilion at the 53rd International Art Exhibition, and has continued in subsequent editions of the art exhibition. 2016 will mark its second participation in the International Architecture Exhibition.

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