



Five Artists Announced for 'Rock, Paper, Scissors: Positions in Play', the National Pavilion UAE's exhibition for the 2017 Venice Biennale

- Works by artists Nujoom Alghanem, Sara Al Haddad, Vikram Divecha, Lantian Xie and Dr. Mohamed Yousif will be included in the UAE's exhibition
- The accompanying publication will serve as an additional site of exhibition, with newly commissioned texts and creative interventions
- UAE institutions are invited to create public programs inspired by the exhibition's theme around the analogy of 'play'

16 January 2017, Abu Dhabi: The National Pavilion United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced the five UAE-based contemporary artists who will be participating at the 57th International Art Exhibition at la Biennale di Venezia (Venice Biennale). Commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and supported by the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development, the exhibition will run from May 13th to November 26th, 2017, with a preview from 10th to 12th May, 2017.

The exhibition, titled "Rock, Paper, Scissors: Positions in Play", will present works by five artists who are nationals and long-term residents who call the UAE home: **Nujoom Alghanem, Sara Al Haddad, Vikram Divecha, Lantian Xie and Dr. Mohamed Yousif.**

Curated by **Hammad Nasar**, this exhibition will explore a strand of artistic practice in the UAE through the analogy of play. Featuring existing works, re-fabrication of 'lost' works and new commissions, the exhibition will stage a set of nested questions: *Where does 'playfulness' in artistic practice come from? How and where is 'play' nurtured? What does 'play' do?*

"We are delighted to work with this group of contemporary artists in shaping an exhibition that stages an inter-generational conversation," says **Hammad Nasar**. "Through the artists' diverse and distinctive practices, we believe that this exhibition will bring to life wider cultural and societal ideas around how 'play' functions in the world – as a source of vitality and a method of navigation."

The accompanying publication will serve both as an additional site of the exhibition, and as its speculative expansion, with newly commissioned texts by contributors including: Aisha Bilkhair; Uzma Rizvi; and Murtaza Vali; with further contributors to be announced shortly. Artists, architects and creative writers have also been invited to intervene, and respond to the themes of the exhibition, with new commissions by: Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh & Hesam Rahmanian; Deepak Unikrishnan; and, WTD magazine.

In line with the curatorial premise, several cultural institutions across the UAE have been invited to act as interlocutors in exploring the themes of the exhibition. Some of the confirmed institutions include **Sharjah Art Foundation, The Art Gallery at NYU Abu Dhabi, Alserkal Programming, Tashkeel, Maraya Art Centre and Warehouse421.** By developing these themes in ways they deem relevant, this distributed mode of programming will extend, expand, critique, reflect and respond to the myriad issues that the exhibition may catalyze. More information on the institutions' programs will be announced soon; members of the public can also follow the story using the hashtags #positionsinplay, #uaeinvenice and #nationalpavilionuae.

“We see this exhibition as a contribution and extension to an ongoing conversation that continues beyond the time of the exhibition, and that the programming generated by each institution as a starting point for ongoing discussions,” says **Khulood Al Atiyat**, Manager of Arts, Culture and Heritage at the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation. “These events will take multiple forms, including artist talks, workshops, game sessions, a film series, or artist interventions.”

The International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale is one of the world’s most prestigious arts events and brings together countries from around the world, attracting more than half a million visitors to each edition. 2017 will mark the UAE’s fifth participation at the prestigious International Art Exhibition.

About the artists:

NUJOOM ALGHANEM

Alghanem is a poet, artist, scriptwriter and award-winning director from the UAE. She directed and produced several short fictions, and feature documentaries. In addition to producing her own films, she is also a film, media and cultural consultant to educational and professional institutes and organizations in the UAE. Some of her recent films were *Nearby Sky* (2014), which won Best Non-Fiction Prize in the Muhr Feature Competition at the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF), *Sound of the Sea* (2014), which was awarded a Special Jury Prize at the Alexandria Mediterranean Countries Film Festival and *Amal* (2011), which won several awards including a Special Jury Prize from the Beirut International Film Festival. In addition, some of Alghanem’s other documentary films include *Hamama* (2010), *Between Two Banks* (1999), and *Al Mureed* (2008), winner of the Best Documentary in the Gulf from the Abu Dhabi Film Festival. Also a poet, Alghanem has written eight poetry collections including *Asqoto Fi Nafsi* [I Fall Into Myself] (2012), *Layloun Thakilon Alla Allayle* [Heavy Night on the Night] (2010), *Malaikat Al-Ashwaaq Al-Baeeda* [Angels of Distant Longing] (2008), *La Wasf Lima Ana Feeh* [No Describing What I Am In] (2005), *Manazel Al-Jilnaar* [Homes of Pomegranate Blossoms] (2000), *Rawahel* [Journeyings] (1996), *Al-Jarair* [The Sins] (1991), and *Masaa Al-Janah* [Evening of Heaven] (1989).

She earned a Master’s degree in film production from Griffith University School of Film in Australia, and a Bachelor’s degree in television production from Ohio University.

SARA AL HADDAD

Al Haddad is an artist based in Dubai, whose work comes from a very personal space and embodies internal struggles. With vulnerability, she abstractly depicts private emotions through a practice that seeks self- acceptance by dealing with emotions, fears, doubts, and insecurities. Translating emotional states into artworks, she re-navigates those feelings to produce objects that are delicate and change according to each new space they occupy. She has had two solo exhibitions, *i Know, i Knew* at the Gallery of Light in 2013 after completing a two-month residency at the Dubai Community Theatre & Arts Centre (DUCTAC), and *Bursting at the Seams* in Pavilion Downtown Dubai in 2012. Her recent group exhibitions include *ACADEMY 2016*, Connersmith, Washington, DC (2016); *Ramadanization*, Gallery of Light, Dubai (2016), *not really here*, Platform Gallery, Baltimore (2016); and *Beyond*, Abu Dhabi Art (2015), among others.

Al Haddad received her Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), Baltimore, USA, sponsored by the Fulbright Foreign Exchange scholarship in 2016. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communications, with a concentration in Graphic Design from the American University in Dubai (AUD) in 2011.

VIKRAM DIVECHA

Vikram Divecha (born 1977, Beirut) is a Mumbai-bred artist based in Dubai, UAE. His work addresses labor, time and value, interrogating specific environments and challenging socio-economic structures. His practice has developed around what he calls 'found processes'—those forces and capacities at work within state, social, economic and industrial spheres. Constantly negotiating for existing material, space and labour, he navigates communities in deepening dialogues with potential participants. His engagements translate into public art, sculptural installations, video and drawings. Exhibitions include Binary States India-UAE, Kochi (2016), Portrait Sessions, Tashkeel, Dubai (2016); White Cube... Literally, Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai (2016); Warehouse Project, Alserkal Commission, (2016); DUST, Centre for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (2015); Accented, Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah (2015), among others. Recipient of the 2014 Middle East Emergent Artist Prize, he has also created projects for The Arab Fund For Arts and Culture's public art commission InVisible in 2014.

LANTIAN XIE

Lantian Xie (born 1988) is an artist from Dubai who makes images, objects, stories, and situations. Xie holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is editor-at-large at Dubai-based publishing practice THE STATE.

Recent exhibitions include the 11th Shanghai Biennale, curated by Raqs Media Collective, and the 3rd Kochi-Muziris Biennale, curated by Sudarshan Shetty.

MOHAMED YOUSIF

Yousif (born 1953, Sharjah) is a founding member of the Emirates Fine Arts Society, and was previously Chairman of its Board of Directors for several terms. Motion and stillness feature prominently in Yousif's works, and have been exhibited in art events around the world. He participated in all exhibitions organized by the Emirates Fine Arts Society since its inception in 1979; and previously showcased one of his works at the *1980-Today: Exhibitions in the United Arab Emirates*, the National Pavilion of the United Arab Emirates at the 56th International Art Exhibition la Biennale di Venezia.

He received a PhD in Fine Arts from Manav Rachna International University, India, a Master's degree in Fine Art from Webster University, Missouri in 2000, and a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art from the Cairo College of Fine Arts, Egypt, in 1978.

About the curator:

HAMMAD NASAR

Nasar is a Lahore-born, London-based curator and writer, and most recently served as Head of Research and Programmes at Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong (2012-2016). He earlier co-founded Green Cardamom, a London-based, not-for-profit organization with a focus on art from South Asia and a commitment to exhibition-led enquiry. Nasar has curated or co-curated numerous international exhibitions, including: *Lines of Control: Partition as a Productive Space*, Johnson Museum, Cornell University (2012, Ithaca, NY) and Nasher Museum, Duke University (2013, Durham, NC); *Drawn from Life*, Abbot Hall Art Gallery (2011, Kendal); *Beyond the Page: The Miniature as Attitude in Contemporary Art from Pakistan*, Pacific Asia Museum (2010, Pasadena, CA); *Where Three Dreams Cross: 150 Years of Photography from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Whitechapel Gallery and Fotomuseum Winterthur (2010, London and Winterthur); *In the Milieu of Fatah Halepoto*, Sindh Museum and VM Art Gallery (2010, Hyderabad and Karachi); *Safavids Revisited*, British Museum (2009, London); *Who Are You? Where Are You Really From?* Whitworth Art Gallery (2006, Manchester); and *Karkhana: A Contemporary Collaboration*, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (2005, Ridgefield, CT) and Asian Art Museum (2006, San Francisco, CA).

He serves on the Editorial Board of Tate's journal (Tate etc), on the juries for the V&A's Jameel Prize 4 and Art Basel's crowdfunding partnership with Kickstarter; and on advisory panels for a number of arts organizations internationally, including Delfina Foundation (UK), Alserkal Avenue (UAE) and Lahore Biennial Foundation (Pakistan). Nasar was a Fellow of the UK's Clore Leadership Program and a Research Fellow at Goldsmiths College, London. Prior to entering the art world, he worked in professional and financial services.

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