



## Hammad Nasar to curate the UAE's exhibition at the 2017 Venice Biennale

- Hammad Nasar is a curator, writer and currently Head of Research and Programmes at Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong
- He will curate an exhibition exploring aspects of play in contemporary art practice in the UAE
- National Pavilion UAE will participate in the 57<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition at la Biennale di Venezia (Venice Biennale)
- 2017 will mark the National Pavilion UAE's fifth presentation at this prestigious international event

### 18 October 2016, Abu Dhabi

The National Pavilion United Arab Emirates (UAE) has appointed Hammad Nasar to curate the UAE's exhibition at the 57<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition at la Biennale di Venezia (Venice Biennale).

The exhibition will explore the artistic practices of the UAE through the analogy of play. Through the lens of imagination and non-linear exploration in art-making, the exhibition will stage a "collective conversation" between projects from selected UAE-based contemporary artists.

The 57<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia (Venice Biennale) will run from May 13th to November 26th, 2017 (vernissage May 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>). The National Pavilion UAE is commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and supported by the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development.

In his curatorial approach, Hammad Nasar considers exhibitions as a form of inquiry often working collaboratively. He co-founded Green Cardamom, the London-based non-profit organization focused on art from South Asia, and is currently the Head of Research and Programmes at Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong. He was previously a Fellow at the Clore Leadership Programme and a Research Fellow at Goldsmiths College, London.

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 numerous international organizations including the Delfina Foundation (UK), Alserkal Avenue (UAE) and the Lahore Biennial Foundation (Pakistan).

Nasar has curated or co-curated numerous exhibitions at international institutions including: Asia Art Archive (2015-6); the Nasher Museum, Duke University (2013); Johnson Museum, Cornell University (2012); Pacific Asia Museum (2010); Whitechapel Gallery and Fotomuseum Winterthur (2010); British Museum (2009); Whitworth Art Gallery (2006) and the Asian Art Museum (San Francisco, 2006).

"The Venice Biennale is one of the world's most prestigious arts events, attracting a large international audience who, through our exhibitions, are able to engage with and learn about the cultural practices of the UAE," says Khulood Al Atiyat, Manager of Arts, Culture and Heritage at the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation. "Following the success of 2015's art exhibition *1980 – Today: Exhibitions in the United Arab Emirates*, a retrospective of works by fifteen Emirati artists, and the 2016 architectural exhibition *Transformations: The Emirati National House*, we are very pleased to invite Hammad Nasar to develop the art exhibition for 2017. Hammad brings deep curatorial expertise and extensive





international experience, and we feel confident that his exhibition will present a unique and interesting look at the art of the UAE.”

“It is an honor to be asked to develop the UAE’s exhibition at the Venice Biennale,” says Hammad Nasar. “As an emerging global center, the UAE is developing a dynamic and rapidly maturing arts scene in conversation with cultures around the world, but rooted in a sense of place. The exhibition I have conceived for the National Pavilion UAE explores the playful approach characteristic of iconic Emirati artists whose works draw on gestures, actions and schemes accumulated over time through creative experimentation – a distinctive approach which has become embedded as one prominent strand in the very DNA of artistic practice in the Emirates. The National Pavilion UAE’s exhibition for 2017 considers how this approach to art-making is reflected in the practices of a diverse group of contemporary artists practicing in the Emirates across the last four decades. It will build a playful set of conversations between complex artistic practices, diverse demographics, and the growing cultural ecology of the UAE.”

The current exhibition at the National Pavilion UAE’s permanent space in Venice is *Transformations: The Emirati National House*. Through a range of archival materials, photography, diagrams and scale models, the exhibition explores the changing architecture of *sha’bi* houses, which were built across the UAE from the 1970s to offer homes and modern amenities to a transient population. The houses were initially designed as a standard model, but over the years, residents made various modifications and personalizations to the basic structure, reflecting the changing needs and lifestyles of Emirati families. The exhibition has been curated by Yasser Elsheshtawy, Associate Professor of Architecture at the UAE University and a noted expert on regional architecture and urban planning, and is on display at the Venice Biennale until November 27<sup>th</sup> 2016.

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**For Press Inquiries:**

[press@nationalpavilionuae.org](mailto:press@nationalpavilionuae.org)

