



National Pavilion UAE exhibition opens at the 57th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale

11th May 2017, Venice, Italy: The National Pavilion United Arab Emirates (UAE) exhibition *Rock, Paper, Scissors: Positions in Play* opened yesterday at the 57th International Art Exhibition la Biennale di Venezia (Venice Biennale).

The exhibition was inaugurated by H.E. Dr. Zaki Anwar Nusseibeh, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Cultural Advisor, Ministry of Presidential Affairs; in the presence of H.E. Saqer Nasser Alraisi, UAE Ambassador to Italy; His Excellency Abdullah Hassan Al Shamsi, Consul General of the United Arab Emirates in Milan; Her Excellency Afra Al Sabri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development; His Excellency Hakam Al Hashemi, Assistant Undersecretary for Arts, Culture and Antiques; and Ms. Angela Migally, Executive Director and General Counsel, Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation.

Curated by Hammad Nasar, the exhibition explores the concept of 'playfulness' as a connecting thread across multiple generations of artistic practice in the UAE through the work of a group of artists including **Nujoom Alghanem, Sara Al Haddad, Vikram Divecha, Lantian Xie and Dr. Mohamed Yousif.**

Commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, with the support of the UAE Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development, the National Pavilion UAE is located in Venice's Arsenale – Sale d'Armi.

2017 marks the UAE's fifth participation in the International Art Exhibition, which will be open to the public from May 13th to November 26th, 2017, and expects to attract more than half a million visitors.

Commenting on this year's participation, Her Highness Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan said that the UAE is known for its rich heritage and strong arts scene, reflecting the country's national identity, which continues to be passed on from one generation to the other. She added that the UAE's participation in the Venice Biennale is important in presenting works of art that reflect the country's true cultural essence.

Her Highness also reinforced that the UAE's exhibition this year features five artists across different generations who call the UAE home. Their work is diverse, but shares unifying themes and approaches which create a nuanced and intriguing narrative about contemporary art practice in the country. Her Highness then highlighted how the Venice Biennale is a prominent moment in the art world, and the participation of the Emirates offers the opportunity to tell the untold stories of the UAE to an influential and knowledgeable international audience.

This year, Emirati artists Hassan Sharif and Abdullah Al Saadi have been featured in the Biennale's central exhibition, *Viva Arte Viva*, curated by Christine Macel, reinforcing the UAE's reputation as an emerging global arts capital.



Notable guests who were welcomed at the opening included: Staff Brigadier General Essa Rashid Obaid Al Ali, UAE Military Attache in Italy; Mr. Hmoud Buzinjal, Director of Undersecretary Office at the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development; Mr. Waleed Al Jalaf, Director of the Office of Internal Audit, Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development; Ms. Zainab Al Saber, Media Consultant, Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development; Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi, President and Director of Sharjah Art Foundation; and Ms. Khulood Al Atiyat Manager of Arts, Culture and Heritage, Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation.

Throughout the duration of the Biennale, the National Pavilion UAE will be staffed by participants in the Venice Internship, an ongoing program which offers experience and training opportunities to young residents of the UAE.

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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* [Journeys] (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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