



Award-winning poet and filmmaker Nujoom Alghanem to represent the United Arab Emirates at the 2019 Venice Biennale

Curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, the solo exhibition will present a major site-specific video installation commissioned for the National Pavilion UAE

29 January 2019, Abu Dhabi: Curators of the National Pavilion UAE at the 2019 Venice Biennale, Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, have invited award-winning poet and filmmaker Nujoom Alghanem to represent the UAE with a major site-specific video installation commissioned for the Pavilion.

Nujoom Alghanem is a renowned poet and filmmaker who is considered a leading voice of her generation. With eight critically acclaimed volumes of poetry to date, she is highly regarded for her contributions to new forms of contemporary Arabic poetry. As an award-winning filmmaker, she has directed a number of features and documentaries that further the discourse around gender issues and societal norms. Her films include *Nearby Sky* (2014), *Sounds of the Sea* (2015), *Honey, Rain and Dust* (2016), and most recently, her feature documentary *Sharp Tools* (2017), a tribute to late Emirati artist Hassan Sharif.

“Nujoom Alghanem is a driving force behind some of the most innovative literary positions and bold cinematic practices of the UAE and the Gulf,” said curators **Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath**. “Her evocative work is as profoundly concerned with expanding the formal components of her practice, mainly poetry and film, as it is with capturing the complexity of the human condition through telling remarkable stories about exceptional characters. We are confident that the site-specific commission with which she will be representing the UAE at the 2019 Venice Biennale will confront the international arts community with a truly unique, multidisciplinary artistic position.”

Nujoom Alghanem said: “The forms and subjects of my practice have been shaped by my personal experience within the context of a rapidly-transforming society. The individual approach in which I have had to resolve the tension between tradition and modernity, has deeply impacted the content of my work as an artist, and is embedded in my writing and filmmaking. As a woman, I have found it fulfilling to focus on extraordinary female stories from our society or the Arab world that are worth being highlighted. I am excited to be working on this new commission in collaboration with the curators and the team of the National Pavilion UAE – La Biennale di Venezia.”

“Nujoom Alghanem is a true embodiment of the cultural inventiveness of the UAE,” said **Khulood Al Atiyat, Manager of Arts, Culture and Heritage at the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation**, commissioner of the National Pavilion UAE. “It is very fitting that this year’s curators have selected her to be the solo artist representing the UAE at the Venice Biennale. Her poignant poetry and cinematic imagery have such a vivid impact that will make for a truly memorable pavilion”

The 58th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale will take place from 11 May to 24 November 2019, and brings together more than 80 National Pavilions under the overarching title of ‘May You Live in Interesting Times’. One of the world’s most prestigious arts events, the Venice Biennale attracts more than half a million visitors to each edition.



The National Pavilion UAE is commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and supported by the UAE Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development. The UAE has participated in the International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale since 2009 and maintains a permanent pavilion in the Arsenale – Sale d’Armi. 2019 will mark the UAE’s sixth participation at the International Art Exhibition.

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, curators of the 2019 National Pavilion UAE, are Founders of the multidisciplinary curatorial platform Art Reoriented in Munich and New York, Chairmen of the Montblanc Cultural Foundation in Hamburg, and Affiliate Curators at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin. Bardaouil and Fellrath have jointly curated numerous critically acclaimed exhibitions at renowned museums and institutions worldwide, and have held teaching positions at universities including the London School of Economics and New York University. They are award-winning authors with contributions to academic journals, books, newspapers and art magazines.

About the Artist

Nujoom Alghanem is an award-winning poet, filmmaker, and artist from the UAE. She has directed and produced several short art and fiction films in addition to feature documentaries. She is also a film, media and cultural consultant to educational and professional institutes and organizations in the UAE.

Her work was previously featured at the National Pavilion UAE in the 2017 group exhibition ‘Rock, Paper, Scissors: Positions in Play’.

Some of her recent films were *Sharp Tools* (2017) which won around ten regional and International awards, *Honey, Rain and Dust* (2016), *Nearby Sky* (2014), which won Best Non-Fiction Prize in the Muhr Feature Competition at the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) and Best Documentary from GCC Film Festival, 2016, Abu Dhabi, *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 Video Production from Ohio University, USA.

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