

## Her Excellency Noura Al Kaabi opens National Pavilion UAE exhibition *Passage* at the 58<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

The exhibition presents a new video installation by acclaimed poet, filmmaker and artist Nujoom Alghanem, and is now on view at the National Pavilion UAE until November 24, 2019

**8 May 2019, United Arab Emirates**

Her Excellency Noura Al Kaabi, the UAE's Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development, today opened *Passage*, the National Pavilion UAE's exhibition at the 58<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. Curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, *Passage* is a single-work exhibition presenting an immersive, 26-minute, two-channel video and twelve-channel sound installation by acclaimed poet, filmmaker and artist Nujoom Alghanem.

**H.E. Noura Al Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development**, said: "The National Pavilion UAE at the Venice Biennale is a real point of pride for the nation, and every year its exhibitions bring to the world stage diverse aspects of the country's dynamic cultural scene. Through our participation we showcase our rich contemporary culture to this global audience, as well as the unbridled talent of those who call the UAE home."

**Angela Migally, Executive Director, Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, commissioner of the National Pavilion UAE**, said: "Nujoom Alghanem's intriguing power of telling stories through words and images is innate to the work she creates across multiple disciplines. Her powerful new video installation is a perfect encapsulation of the Venice Biennale's overall curatorial theme for 2019, 'May You Live in Interesting Times', and explores the human condition through a non-linear thematic narrative that is both universal and deeply personal."

Bringing together more than 90 countries, the Venice Biennale is one of the world's most popular and highly-regarded cultural events with over 600,000 visitors attending the last edition of its art exhibition. The inauguration of the National Pavilion UAE was attended by H.E. Salem Al Qassimi, Assistant Undersecretary for Arts and Heritage at the UAE Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development; H.E. Abdullah Al Shamsi, UAE Consul General in Milan; Mrs. Rana Al Dhaheri, Second Secretary of the UAE Embassy in Rome; H.E. Sheikha Hoor bint Sultan Al Qasimi, President and Director, Sharjah Art Foundation; H.E. Hala Badri, Director General, Dubai Culture and Arts Authority; H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, Chairman, UAE Unlimited; and Angela Migally, Executive Director, Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation.

Filmed in the UAE and Venice, the site-specific work *Passage* has been closely conceived and developed with the curators, Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, and incorporates contemporary Arabic poetry into the language of film, providing a poignant reflection on the experience of displacement. It is structured along two distinct narratives, one "real," the other "fictional," simultaneously projected on the opposite sides of the same screen. The "real" narrative depicts the efforts of Nujoom and Amal, a Syrian actress residing in the UAE, to create a film for the Pavilion. The "fictional" narrative is an aestheticised portrayal of Falak, a displaced woman on an arduous journey. *Passage* will be on view inside the permanent space of the National Pavilion UAE at the Arsenale - Sale d'Armi until November 24, 2019. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated artist book under the same title, edited by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath and available in two separate English and Arabic language editions.

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 this year marks the UAE's sixth participation at the International Art Exhibition.

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**Images:**

<http://bit.ly/npuaemedia2019>

**Artwork Caption**

Nujoom Alghanem, *Passage*, 2019. Site-specific, 2-channel video and 12-channel sound installation, 26 minutes.

Commissioned for the National Pavilion of the United Arab Emirates on the occasion of the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

**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 as well as feature documentaries.

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).

Some of her recent films are *Sharp Tools* (2017), which won around ten regional and international awards, *Honey, Rain and Dust* (2016), *Nearby Sky* (2014), which won Best Non-Fiction Feature in the Muhr competition at the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) and Best Documentary at GCC Film Festival, Abu Dhabi, 2016, *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 at the Beirut International Film Festival. 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.

Alghanem's work was previously included in the group exhibition 'Rock, Paper, Scissors: Positions in Play' at the National Pavilion UAE at Biennale Arte 2017. She holds 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.

**About the Curators**

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, curators of the 2019 National Pavilion UAE, are internationally recognized independent curators and academics. Their curatorial practice is equally rooted in the field of modernist studies and in global contemporary artistic practices. They are Founders of Art Reoriented, a multidisciplinary curatorial platform based in in Munich and New York. They are Chairmen of the Montblanc Cultural



Foundation in Hamburg, and Affiliate Curators at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin. Bardaouil and Fellrath have held teaching positions at various universities, including the London School of Economics and New York University. Award-winning authors and editors of numerous publications, they have contributed to a broad range of academic journals, books, newspapers and art magazines.

Over the past decade, Bardaouil and Fellrath have jointly curated several critically acclaimed exhibitions including *Art et Liberté: Rupture, War, and Surrealism in Egypt (1938 – 1948)*, *When Process Becomes Form: Dansaekhwa and Korean Abstraction*, *Staging Film*, *Tea with Nefertiti*, *Mona Hatoum: Turbulence*, and *Ways of Seeing*. Their exhibitions have been shown in museums and institutions worldwide such as Centre Pompidou in Paris, Arter - space for art in Istanbul, Reina Sofia in Madrid, Gwangju and Busan Museums of Art in South Korea, Tate Liverpool, Villa Empain in Brussels, and the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. In 2013, Bardaouil and Fellrath were curators of the Lebanese National Pavilion at the 55<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, and in 2016 they were part of the team of curatorial attachés to the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney.

[www.artreoriented.com](http://www.artreoriented.com) / Instagram: @sbardaouil and @till.fellrath

