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بينالي البندقية

National Pavilion UAE  
La Biennale di Venezia

Press release

## Faysal Tabbarah, of the American University of Sharjah, to curate the National Pavilion UAE exhibition for the 18<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia in 2023

- *Faysal Tabbarah is the Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Architecture at the College of Architecture, Art and Design at the American University of Sharjah and co-founder of Architecture + Other Things (A+OT), an experimental architecture and design studio based in Sharjah*
- *Tabbarah was selected following the National Pavilion UAE's open call for proposals in August 2021, to curate the UAE's exhibition for the 18<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia*
- *The 18th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia will take place from 20 May to 26 November 2023*

**28 September 2022, Abu Dhabi, UAE:** National Pavilion UAE announces the appointment of Faysal Tabbarah, Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Architecture at the American University of Sharjah, as curator for the UAE's upcoming participation in the 18<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in 2023. The selected research proposal by Tabbarah aims to explore the relationship between architecture and *arid*, or dry, landscapes in the UAE and reimagine them as spaces of abundance and productivity.

Tabbarah was selected following the National Pavilion UAE's open call which invited designers, architects and thinkers based in the UAE and around the world, to develop proposals for the 2023 architecture exhibition. The applicants were tasked with exploring an intriguing aspect of the UAE's architecture or built environment that contributes to the discourse around architectural practice locally, regionally, and internationally.

Research findings by Tabbarah, to be exhibited in Venice and supplemented with an accompanying publication, aim to respond to the 2023 Biennale Architettura 2023's theme "The Laboratory of the Future", which is being curated by Ghanaian-Scottish architect, academic, educator and best-selling novelist, Lesley Lokko.

"My approach will rely on integrating technology with land-based materials practices and knowledge found in arid landscapes in the UAE," said curator **Faysal Tabbarah, Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Architecture at the American University of Sharjah**. "I am honored to have been selected as the curator for the National Pavilion UAE, and I'd like to thank the Commissioner, the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation for this opportunity to expand on research that is becoming increasingly crucial to the architectural

discourse globally. Aridity is a fast-approaching future condition for many regions, and through this exhibition, we'll explore their potential as spaces of abundance and productivity."

This exhibition will mark Tabbarah's first participation as a curator of a national pavilion at the International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, and his second participation in the Architecture Biennale as a whole, as he has previously collaborated with the Kuwait Pavilion's curators in 2021 for their presentation at the 17<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition, titled *Space Wars*.

Her Excellency **Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Youth** said: "We are happy to offer the support of the Ministry of Culture and Youth to this year's curator. The ministry leads the cultural and creative sector in the UAE, and works to strengthen the UAE's position on the global creative map. Tabbarah's project will certainly contribute to the development of a thriving architecture scene in the UAE. At the ministry, we believe in empowering our creatives for them to contribute to the country's holistic and sustainable development."

**Angela Migally, Executive Director at the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, said:** "The Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation is proud to continue its long-standing commitment and support to the UAE's creative and cultural ecosystem. Over the years, the National Pavilion UAE has been delivering substantial work in its mission of showcasing the best of the UAE's art and architecture practices through sharing curated stories at one of the most important global stages in the world, La Biennale di Venezia. The Pavilion has been a platform for thought-provoking research and exhibitions, and we look forward to exploring the outcome of Tabbarah's project, that addresses timely real-life challenges we see echoed around the world today, which are further exacerbated by the effects of climate change."

**Laila Binbrek, Coordinating Director, National Pavilion UAE,** said: "This year, we invite the world to discover another thought-provoking story from the UAE curated by Faysal Tabbarah that will add new resources to the UAE's architectural discourse. In supporting Tabbarah and his research we hope that the UAE will be able to provoke conversation with other communities around the world facing similar conditions of aridity, and possibly together find tools to make better futures. The team and I are incredibly proud of the role National Pavilion UAE is playing in contributing to the country's cultural and creative development since 2009, and we are committed to delivering on our mandate of telling the UAE's untold stories for years to come."

Alongside his role in academia, Tabbarah is also the co-founder of Architecture + Other Things (A+OT), an experimental architecture and design studio based in Sharjah, UAE. Tabbarah's teaching, research and practice interrogate the relationships between regional environmental and architectural imaginaries, or how people bring their natural surroundings to bear on how they understand and shape their world, to develop alternative building practices that are rooted in their surrounding material and cultural environments.

The National Pavilion UAE will present its exhibition for the 18<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition, from 20 May to 26 November 2023 (pre-opening 18 and 19 May).

2023 will mark the UAE's 12<sup>th</sup> exhibition at the Art and Architecture International Exhibitions organized by La Biennale di Venezia since 2009 and its 5<sup>th</sup> participation in the International Architecture Exhibition. The National Pavilion UAE won the Golden Lion award for the best National Participation in the 17<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia in 2021 for its exhibition *Wetland*. The UAE's current exhibition at the 59<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition in 2022 (Biennale Arte 2022) is *Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim: Between Sunrise and Sunset*, curated by Maya Allison, which showcases a room-filling sculptural form made up of 128 abstract and organic elements by Emirati artist Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim. It will remain on show until 27 November 2022.

The National Pavilion UAE is commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and supported by the Ministry of Culture and Youth and has a permanent pavilion at La Biennale Di Venezia's Arsenale – Sale d'Armi. For more information on the participation of the UAE, please visit [nationalpavilionuae.org](http://nationalpavilionuae.org) or follow the National Pavilion UAE on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

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**About Faysal Tabbarah**

Born in Aleppo, Faysal Tabbarah is an Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Architecture at the College of Architecture, Art and Design at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), and co-founder of the experimental architecture and design studio, Architecture + Other Things (A+OT), which is based in Sharjah. Tabbarah is also the curator of the National Pavilion UAE for the 18th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in 2023.

Tabbarah's work, across teaching, research, and practice, explores the relationships between regional environmental and architectural imaginaries, or how people bring their natural surroundings to bear on how they understand and shape their world, to develop alternative building practices that are rooted in their surrounding material and cultural environments. To achieve this, Tabbarah's work moves between computational tools, emergent technologies, materials research and historical archives.

Tabbarah has published and exhibited globally. In 2020, Tabbarah's course at AUS, Architecture and Environmental Orientalism in the Arab World, received an Honorable Mention for the Course Development Prize organized by Columbia University's Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

A+OT's recently completed projects include Water in the Green, the winning entry for Sabeel Water Fountains competition at Expo 2020. He has previously held the position of Assistant Professor at the Aarhus School of Architecture in Denmark.

**National Pavilion UAE – La Biennale di Venezia**

The National Pavilion UAE is an award-winning pavilion that curates the untold stories about the UAE's arts and architecture through its participation in the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions organized by La Biennale di Venezia and provides a high-profile platform for curatorial concepts that address critical international conversations from a distinctive local perspective.

For every participation in the International Art and Architecture Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia, one of the world's most significant and rigorous cultural platforms, the National Pavilion UAE appoints and works with curators, artists, and contributors to conceive, research and develop an exhibition and accompanying publication that advance and preserve understanding of the UAE's cultural landscape.

Since 2009, National Pavilion UAE's exhibitions have explored the nation's cultural evolution from 20th-century experimental artists to the diverse contemporary scene. In 2021, National Pavilion UAE's exhibition titled *Wetland* curated by architects Wael Al Awar and Kenichi Teramoto, was awarded the Golden Lion for best National Participation at La Biennale Architettura 2021, coinciding with the National Pavilion's 10th participation in the International Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia.

In parallel with its exhibitions in Venice, the National Pavilion UAE engages with communities in the UAE to support the growth of the local cultural and creative industries, through public programming and professional opportunities. Alongside an extensive pool of artists, curators, researchers and partners who have contributed

to its exhibitions over the years, the UAE's Venice Internship program has provided training and hands-on experience to more than 200 interns, many of whom are now successfully working in cultural fields.

The National Pavilion UAE is an independent non-profit organization, commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and supported by the UAE Ministry of Culture and Youth.

### **Commissioner: The Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation**

The Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation (SHF) is a private not-for-profit foundation committed to the cultivation of a more creative, connected and thriving UAE community. Based in Abu Dhabi, SHF oversees a diverse portfolio of not-for-profit programs and initiatives spanning the arts, culture, heritage, human development and early childhood development in the UAE and internationally. Underpinning SHF's activities is a common ambition to invest in the knowledge and capabilities of the UAE people in order to support them to unlock their full potential.

### **Supporter: Ministry of Culture and Youth**

The Ministry of Culture and Youth works to enrich the cultural ecosystem in the UAE through initiatives and policies that stimulate the development of the cultural and creative industries and its contribution to the country's GDP, developing new legislation and policies that promote integrated media growth in the country and creating avenues for the youth to invest their capabilities in the aforementioned fields.

The Ministry of Culture and Youth is responsible for empowering and engaging the youth in the UAE by enhancing their leadership skills, involving them in decision-making process and programs, and giving them opportunities to contribute to the creative development of the country.

### **La Biennale di Venezia**

La Biennale di Venezia was established in 1895 and is today acknowledged as one of the most prestigious cultural institutions. La Biennale di Venezia stands at the forefront of research and promotion of new contemporary art trends and organizes events in all its specific sectors: Arts (1895), Architecture (1980), Cinema (1932), Dance (1999), Music (1930), and Theatre (1934), alongside research and training activities. The history of La Biennale di Venezia is documented in its Historical Archives located at Marghera Venice and in its Library at the Giardini's Central Pavilion. The International Art and Architecture Exhibitions have had a new structure since 1998. In recent years, La Biennale promoted new educational activities, training programmes (Biennale College), conferences and panels in its headquarters at Ca' Giustinian, close to San Marco square.