



الجناح الوطني لدولة
الإمارات العربية المتحدة
المعرض الدولي للفنون
بينالي البندقية

The National Pavilion of
the United Arab Emirates
The International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia

WALKING ON WATER FEATURES A SPECIALLY COMMISSIONED INSTALLATION BY MOHAMMED KAZEM IN THE NEW NATIONAL PAVILION FOR THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AT THE SALE D'ARMI FROM JUNE 1 - NOVEMBER 24, 2013 (VERNISSAGE THURSDAY MAY 30, 3:30PM)

30 May - Venice, Italy, The National Pavilion of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development and with the support of the Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation presents "Walking on Water" for the 55th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia. Curated by Reem Fadda, "Walking on Water" features a solo exhibition by vanguard Emirati artist Mohammed Kazem under the leadership of Commissioner, Dr. Lamees Hamdan.

"Walking on Water" / الماء المشي على

Walking on Water presents "Directions 2005/2013", a specially commissioned immersive installation, by Mohammed Kazem, of a 360-degree projection of the sea within an enclosed chamber. The artwork recreates the experience of what it is to be lost at sea and, symbolically, to break down geographical borders and intangible barriers between people. By putting the viewers off-balance, Kazem engages them both conceptually and physically with his work, thereby inviting them to question and challenge their perceptions of openness and universality.

"Borders are imminent realities in our current 'global' age. Despite progress and acts of modernization, our world remains hindered with the ideas of boundaries and restrictions. Openness remains one of the phantasmal and illusive ideas of our times. The conceptual trajectory of Mohammed Kazem's practice has constantly been to confront boundaries and limitations, be it material or natural. These symbolic acts of breaking shackles and inhibitions are his way of asserting his humanity and existence. Through intuition and deliberation, he investigates the natural and physical restrictions, especially those of the sea, to not only question but also assert the right to roam free; spiritually, conceptually and materially," explains curator Reem Fadda on her selection of this work by Kazem.

Kazem makes use of artistic elements and methods that he has been working with for over 20 years, including drawing, light, color, photography and video, to create an experiential installation. Kazem worked with iGloo Vision and Complet Films to realize this work.

Directions 2005/2013 was conceived and exhibited in 2005 as a maquette, but wasn't realized due to financial and technical complications of producing such a large-scale work. Part of a much larger body of work, Directions is arguably Kazem's most emblematic conceptual series. In it, Kazem mainly utilizes Geographical Positioning System (GPS) coordinates to symbolically document his location. These coordinates have become an iconic trademark of his practice. Begun in 1999, the Directions series has continued to evolve for over a decade, all the while seeking to address political, sociological and personal issues related to his environment.

The Curator and Artist

Fadda is currently working as Associate Curator of Middle Eastern Art - Abu Dhabi Project at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation based in New York. She is also a PhD candidate at the History of Art and Visual Studies Department at Cornell University. From her curatorial concept, Fadda stated; "Mohammed Kazem, a pioneering contemporary artist and thinker from the UAE, represents a generation that emerged from an avant-garde legacy of arts and artists in the UAE and the surrounding region, one that has thrived since the mid-70s."

Kazem first studied art at the Emirates Fine Art Society, he then went on to learn music, attend national and international art workshops, as well as teach painting at Dubai Art Atelier. Widely known through numerous solo and group exhibitions in the UAE and abroad, his works have been collected by private institutions, international museums and collectors. A pioneer in the UAE contemporary art scene for his incorporation of video and new technologies, his interest in conceptual art and his progressive attitude towards medium and context is especially highlighted by his ongoing series "Directions."

Publication

A major publication on the artist accompanies this exhibition. Featuring essays by writers: Reem Fadda, Paulina Kolczynska, Hassan Sharif, Sultan Al Qassemi and Adel Khozam, this 320 page book charts Kazem's practice from the 1970's to present day. Designed by Fikra, published by the National Pavilion for the United Arab Emirates and printed by Damiani (Bologna, Italy)

Design

Fikra is a multidisciplinary design studio specialized in bilingual graphic design: Arabic and English. Founded by Salem Al-Qassimi in 2006, Fikra works across a variety of media, time-based and print including book design, data visualizations, environmental graphics and bilingual typography.

Location - Sale d'Armi

La Biennale di Venezia has marked an important milestone in its long history by awarding the United Arab Emirates, the first Gulf National to participate in the Art and Architecture Biennale, with a long-term hospitality agreement (permanent pavilion) in the Arsenale - Sale d'Armi. The agreement was finalized through the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs. La Biennale di Venezia is world-renowned for the biannual International Art Exhibition and Architecture Exhibitions, as well as the International Film Festival, and continues the great tradition of the Festivals of Contemporary Music and Theatre, now flanked by the Festival of Contemporary Dance.

The Venice Internship Program

The third iteration of this specialized program was launched in November 2012. The specially selected candidates were drawn from across the UAE through a nation-wide recruitment campaign. After a rigorous screening and interview process, the selected fellows are now participating in an extensive training program aimed at enabling them to engage fluently with the content of the exhibition in Venice.

This year, the Venice Internship Program is partnering with the prestigious Ca'Foscari University in Venice, which facilitated the inclusion of six specially selected Italian interns working side-by-side with the Emirati fellows. This partnership has been developed to foster a true exchange of cultures between the interns and to allow Emiratis to engage further with Italian customs, language and knowledge thus enhancing their local experience in Venice.

You can follow their developments and their blog posts on the Venice Internship Program Blog:

<http://uaepavilion.wordpress.com/>

Follow them also on Twitter: @veniceinterns

Location and Public Hours

The National Pavilion of the UAE is located in the Arsenale – Sale d'Armi, first floor.

The exhibition is open to the public from 1 June – 24 November, 2013

10 am – 6 pm

Closed on Monday, excluding 3 June, 18 November.

For more information and press materials visit:

www.uaepavilion.org

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The 55th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia Universally recognized as the world's most prestigious contemporary art institution, la Biennale di Venezia (the Venice Biennale) dates back to 1895 when the first art exhibition was organized. It will present its 55th International Art Exhibition from June 1 through November 24, 2013. In recognition of the emergence of the UAE as a cultural hub, the Biennale has provided a large and highly visible site in the Arsenale for the UAE Pavilion. Additional to the art exhibition, La Biennale hosts the International Architecture Exhibition, Film Festival, Music, Theater and Dance Festivals.

2. Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation The Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation works to contribute to the creation of positive futures for the citizens of the United Arab Emirates & the full realization of their potential and aspirations. To that end, it develops and supports charitable initiatives in the areas of education, arts, culture & heritage, and the environment. In the arts, the Foundation works toward three strategic goals:

- To support emerging and future Emirati artists in developing their talents at the earliest stages of their growth
- To educate and engage the public in art and to build new audiences in the UAE for the arts
- To introduce the international community to Emirati artistic talent

The Foundation was established by Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan in 2010.

3. Ministry of Culture, Youth & Community Development The Ministry of Culture, Youth & Community Development was launched in 2006 to highlight the UAE's fast-growing community & thriving youths while not losing sight of its heritage and cultural scene. The Ministry aims to revive the UAE's heritage by inspiring and encouraging the creative talents abundant among the youths of today.

It is responsible for promoting and investing in the energies of young people, inspiring them and adding to their artistic abilities. In doing so, the Ministry has raised much awareness towards the community's cultural practices and in turn, has promoted innovation and enrichment of cultural communication. It is constantly working at creating an integral framework for providing detailed information regarding the country's culture, youth & community development. In addition, the Ministry also organises ongoing activities and develops mechanisms to secure the necessary support required to achieve its goals.

4. Reem Fadda, (b.1979) Associate curator Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum – Abu Dhabi Project, Fadda was Director of the Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art (PACA) and worked as Academic Director to the International Academy of Art – Palestine, which she helped found in 2006. She co-curated and has been involved in many projects such as: "Ramallah Syndrome", a project showcased at the 53rd Venice Biennale; "Tarjama/Translation", showcasing 30 artists from the Middle East and Central Asia at the Queens Museum & Herbert E. Johnson Museum; and the "3rd RIWAQ Biennale", which she curated alongside Charles Esche in Ramallah. She is a member of the general assembly of both the International Academy of Art, and the Kamandjati Association, the selection jury of the Young Arab Theatre Fund and the steering committee of Decolonizing Architecture. Additionally, she was a recipient of both Chevening and Fulbright scholarships.

5. Mohammed Kazem, (b.1969) Kazem's works have been selected for Biennials and Exhibitions around the world for over two decades, including, Holland, Singapore, Germany, Switzerland, Egypt, Lebanon, Bangladesh, India, Spain, Japan, The USA, Uzbekistan, Russia, and Cuba. He has taken part in several Sharjah International Art Biennials and has been awarded first prize for installation. Kazem went on to curate the 8th Sharjah Biennial in 2007. Kazem opened his own studio, Empty10, in Al Quoz, Dubai, 2011. Mohammed most recently graduated with an MFA from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, USA in 2012.

6. Venice Internship Program Initiated in 2009 in conjunction with the National Pavilion of the UAE, the Venice Internship Program offers a range of opportunities to young Emiratis keen to engage with culture and arts at the highest international level. The program focuses on a 1 month internship opportunity for an elite group of Emirati nationals based on-site in Venice acting as custodians of the National Pavilion. These interns manage the exhibition and participate in a rigorous educational program utilizing the wealth of museums, galleries and cultural institutions found throughout Venice. The Program runs throughout the 6 month duration of the Art Biennale