



Pavilion of *the* United Arab Emirates at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

Artworks Announced for ‘Rock, Paper, Scissors: Positions in Play’, the National Pavilion UAE’s exhibition for the Biennale Arte 2017

- Artworks by UAE-based artists **Nujoom Alghanem, Sara Al Haddad, Vikram Divecha, Lantian Xie** and **Dr. Mohamed Yousif** will be included in the UAE’s exhibition
- Artists **Rokni Haerizadeh, Ramin Haerizadeh** and **Hesam Rahmanian**, writer **Deepak Unnikrishnan** and **WTD Magazine** have been commissioned to contribute to the exhibition publication, which serves as an additional site of exhibition
- The exhibition explores the theme of playfulness in artistic practice as a source of vitality and inspiration, and a mode of experimentation with movement, sociality, times and places

12 April 2017, Abu Dhabi: The National Pavilion United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced the selection of artworks to be displayed in its exhibition at the 57th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, as well as additional commissions to be included in the accompanying publication and a series of activations and projects with cultural institutions in the UAE.

Curated by **Hammad Nasar**, the exhibition, titled “Rock, Paper, Scissors: Positions in Play”, will explore the concept of ‘playfulness’ as a connecting thread across multiple generations of artistic practice in the UAE. It attempts to address a set of nested enquiries: *Where does ‘playfulness’ in artistic practice come from? How and where is ‘play’ nurtured? What does ‘play’ do?*

Commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and supported by the UAE Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development, the exhibition will run from May 13th to November 26th, 2017, with a preview from 10th to 12th May, 2017.

The exhibition will present a mix of new commissions, existing works and re-fabrications of ‘lost’ pieces by five artists who call the UAE home: **Nujoom Alghanem, Sara Al Haddad, Vikram Divecha, Lantian Xie** and **Dr. Mohamed Yousif**. Their exhibited works approach play through movement, rhythm, form, time and place. The accompanying publication and program serve as additional sites of play.

“Play and playfulness are vehicles through which we as children learn to understand the world around us and navigate our place in it. This exhibition foregrounds a selection of artists whose practice takes this process of understanding and navigation as a source of inspiration and vitality,” says **Hammad Nasar**. “These artists fit within an artistic trajectory in the UAE of play and playfulness as a mode of creation. They variously experiment with materials, sound, texts and physical and social processes as part of their artmaking.”

“With more than half a million visitors attending each edition, the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia is one of the world’s most prominent cultural events. The UAE is proud to be participating in the Art Exhibition for the fifth time with an exhibition that captures a snapshot of the



diverse cultural and creative conversations to which our nation is home,” says **Khulood Al Atiyat**, Manager of Arts, Culture and Heritage at the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation.

Nujoom Alghanem will present *Between Heaven & Earth, the Body I Borrowed*, a sound installation based on a poetry performance, *Space*, a visual poem, and a reproduction of *Silsilat Al Ramad*, Volume 1, a self-published journal produced by the artist and other members of the *Aqwas* collective in 1985.

Sara Al Haddad will contribute three crocheted textile installations, including one existing work *as you try to forget me* and two new commissions: *don't you ever leave me alone*, a hanging screen, and *can't you see how i feel*, which Haddad sheaths one of the black steel pillars supporting the pavilion in different sized crocheted layers of pink yarn.

The works by Vikram Divecha are *Degenerative Disarrangement*, an existing work made from bricks which will be “relocated” in a new iteration, and *Bathing Boulders*, a commissioned video work which documents the process of washing large rocks as they were installed as part of Divecha's 2014 work *Boulder Plot*.

Lantian Xie presents a selection of ‘things’ throughout the pavilion space, including existing works *Hassan's Ashtray*, *Half Cup Saffron* and *Taxidermy Peacock*, as well as a major commission titled *A rumble interrupted our chat* – a series of objects and happenings which will unfold inside and outside of the pavilion throughout the Art months of the Biennale.

Dr. Mohamed Yousif has refabricated two previous works which were no longer in existence: *Al insiyabiyya bil majadeef taht al maa*, a large-scale installation of wooden oars, and *Al Shawahid*, an assemblage of anthropomorphic spoons looking on a burial mound, with a small mirror affixed in its center.

Dubai-based artists **Ramin Haerizadeh**, **Rokni Haerizadeh** and **Hesam Rahmanian** have been commissioned to contribute a 30 page series of paintings and collages conceived as a creative playground for the publication, which will go beyond the exhibition's contents to explore the curatorial concept from additional creative perspectives, both visual and textual. **Deepak Unnikrishnan** has written a series of contemporary fables for the publication, while **WTD Magazine** contribute a project mapping informal spaces of play in the UAE; both contributions will also have a physical presence within the exhibition space. These creative responses to the exhibition's themes will sit alongside a series of essays. Art historian **Murtaza Vali** explores the artistic genealogy of play in the UAE with a focus on the works of Hassan Sharif and Abdullah Al Saadi. **Uzma Rizvi** will write about fluidity and spaces of belonging, as journalist **Osman Samiuddin** contributes a piece on cricket, its history and stories within the UAE. Ethnomusicologist **Aisha Bilkhair** analyses Afro-Emirati music and folkloric games, and **Reem Fadda** and **Maisa Al Qassimi** write about the research on Abu Dhabi's social clubs they incorporated in their curation of *Emirati Expressions 2015*.

In line with the curatorial premise, several cultural institutions across the UAE have been invited to join the conversation around the themes of the exhibition with activations in their own programming. Some of the confirmed institutions include **Sharjah Art Foundation**, **The Art Gallery at NYU Abu Dhabi**, **Alserkal Programming**, **Tashkeel**, **Maraya Art Centre**, **Warehouse421** and London-based art school **Central Saint Martins**.



Dubai based artist **Hind Mezaina** has been commissioned to develop a program for the National Pavilion UAE exploring the curatorial concepts through her own practice.

Research for the publication was done in collaboration with **Art Jameel**.

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.

IMAGES AND PRESS MATERIAL: <http://bit.ly/npuaemedia2017>

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ARTWORK IMAGES CAPTIONS (ADDITIONAL IMAGES ARE ON THE LINK ABOVE)

| Nujoom Alghanem | |
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| <p><i>Between Heaven & Earth, the Body I Borrowed</i>, 1994. Text, documentary photographs of performance, sound (sound rerecorded 2017). Images courtesy of the artist.</p> |  |
| <p><i>Space</i>, 1984. Typed manuscript. Image courtesy of the artist.</p> |  |
| <p>Page from <i>Silsilat Al Ramad</i>, Issue 1, 1985 (reproduced 2017). Photocopied zine with poetry, writing, and drawings by Khalid Albudoor, Nujoom Alghanem, Yousif Khalil, and Hassan Sharif. Image courtesy of the artists.</p> |  |
| Sara Al Haddad | |
| <p><i>as you try to forget me</i>, 2015. Yarn, metal rings, cardboard; dimensions variable. Images courtesy of National Pavilion UAE.</p> |  |
| Vikram Divecha | |
| <p><i>Degenerative Disarrangement</i>, 2013. Interlocking pavement bricks; dimensions variable. Relocated from Al Fahidi Historical Neighborhood, Dubai, 2017. Uprooted from Al Ghubaiba bus stand, Dubai, 2013. SIKKA 2013, commissioned by Dubai Culture & Arts Authority. Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery Isabelle van den Eynde, Dubai.</p> |  |










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| <p><i>Degenerative Disarrangement, 2013.</i></p> <p>Original site of pavement bricks Al Ghubaiba bus stand, Dubai. Image courtesy of the artist.</p> |  |
| <p><i>Degenerative Disarrangement, 2013.</i></p> <p>Pavement bricks being installed Courtyard, House 33, Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood, Dubai. Image courtesy of the artist.</p> |  |
| <p><i>Bathing Boulders, 2017.</i> Video stills from HD video.</p> <p>Video stills from HD video, silent, color, single channel, 04:24 min. Washing Assistant: Helal Thakur Titon Thakur; Videography: Vikram Divecha, Swapna Kurup; Editing (Blacktop Films): Dominique Petrot; Post Production (White Light Studio): Nuttacha Khajornkaiatsakul (Colorist), Sorawich Khunpinij (Digital Conform), Nathamon Thatthanakan (VFX Artist), Max Tersch (Post Supervisor), Siripun Sangjun (Post Producer).</p> <p>Commissioned by the National Pavilion of the United Arab Emirates for the 57th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia.</p> |  |
| <p>Lantian Xie</p> | |
| <p><i>Half Cup Saffron, 2016.</i> Saffron, Rainbow condensed milk, Lipton tea, styrofoam cup, hot plate. Collection of Art Jameel.</p> |  |
| <p><i>Hassan's Ashtray, 2014.</i> Ashtray, ashes, cigarette butts, lighter. Courtesy of the artist and Grey Noise, Dubai.</p> |  |





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| <p><i>Taxidermy Peacock</i>, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and Grey Noise, Dubai</p> |  |
| <p>(Excerpt from) <i>A rumble interrupted our chat</i>, 2017. Things that happen; live band, group of friends, party, painting, object. Researcher: Michelle Wong. Commissioned by National Pavilion United Arab Emirates - la Biennale di Venezia.</p> |  |
| <p>Mohamed Yousif</p> | |
| <p><i>Al Shawahid</i>, 1981 (refabricated 2017). Handmade aluminum spoons, wood, mirror, plaster, emulsion paint. Dimensions variable. Image courtesy National Pavilion UAE.</p> |  |
| <p><i>Al insiyabiyya bil majadeef taht al maa</i>, 1995 (re- fabricated in 2017). Wood, rope. Image courtesy National Pavilion UAE.</p> |  |
| <p>Rokni Haerizadeh, Ramin Haerizadeh and Hesam Rahmanian</p> | |
| <p><i>Untitled</i>, 2017. Ink, collage, binder, gouache, watercolour and gesso on printed paper. A 30-page series, each spread 23 x 34 cm each. Images courtesy of National Pavilion UAE.</p> |  |

