

Press release

National Pavilion UAE issues open call for proposals to curate its exhibition for the 19th International Architecture Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia

- *Proposals for the National Pavilion UAE participation at Biennale Architettura 2025 will need to showcase an untold story from the UAE's architectural discourse*
- *Architects, designers, artists, historians, and researchers who have worked or studied within the UAE or the MENASA region are invited to submit proposals*
- *Applications close at midnight UAE time (GMT+4) on 24 September 2023, all details and submission guidelines are available on <https://nationalpavilionuae.org/open-calls/>*
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17 July 2023, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: The National Pavilion UAE has issued an open call for proposals to curate the UAE's upcoming exhibition for the 19th International Architecture Exhibition (Biennale Architettura), at La Biennale di Venezia, which will run from May to November 2025.

Potential curators –including architects, designers, artists, historians or researchers with experience working or studying in the UAE, Middle East, North Africa, or South Asia (MENASA) regions – are invited to submit a concept proposal for an exhibition that showcases an untold story from the UAE, while reflecting the La Biennale's reputation as a platform for the dissemination and exchange of ideas. Concept proposals should present an exhibition theme with a clear narrative that contextualizes a research idea that resonates with local, regional, and global industry discussions related to architecture and our lived environment.

Applications are open to everyone including non-UAE residents. Applicants will need to demonstrate local expertise, experience, and understanding when submitting their proposal.

H.E. Sheikh Salem Al Qassimi, the UAE Minister of Culture and Youth, said: "The International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale is one of the most awaited events on the international architectural calendar. It is an ideal platform to raise awareness about the importance of the UAE's national heritage underlining its centrality in shaping our national identity. This participation is an opportunity to highlight the efforts of various local authorities who have contributed to the spread of the UAE's heritage on a global level.

"Over the years, National Pavilion UAE has been showcasing innovative ideas, projects and research that have drawn international attention to the country's valuable national heritage. In the hope that the UAE's participations over the years have accomplished their goal, we renew our

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commitment to foster more innovative architectural practices that will enhance the country's position as an incubator and accelerator for creative ideas. Our current participation is a testimony to the UAE's unwavering efforts in the field of heritage preservation to become a leading player on the international artistic and cultural map." H.E. added.

"We take each opportunity of our open call process to broaden our reach and invite new voices to tell the next untold story from the UAE at La Biennale. For our 2025 pavilion we are searching for stories that explore, investigate, question our built environment, and reflect on the important questions of our time.," **said Laila Binbrek, Director of the National Pavilion UAE.** "Proposals that are experimental yet process driven and solution based are usually well viewed by the selection committee."

Applications will close at midnight UAE time (GMT+4) on 24 September 2023. Selected finalists will be invited to present a full proposal for the second round of the process. Full details and submission guidelines are available on <https://nationalpavilionuae.org/open-calls/>.

Over the years, the National Pavilion UAE has participated in five exhibitions at the Biennale Architettura. The current exhibition, *Aridly Abundant*, curated by Faysal Tabbarah, investigates what architectural possibilities can become possible when we reimagine arid landscapes as spaces of abundance. The exhibition is on show until 26 November 2023, and a [virtual tour](#) of the exhibition is available to view on the National Pavilion UAE website.

National Pavilion UAE – La Biennale di Venezia's participation in the Biennale Architettura started in 2014, and in 2021 saw it win the Golden Lion for best National Participation.

For further information on previous architecture participations please visit www.nationalpavilionuae.org.

The National Pavilion UAE is commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and supported by the Ministry of Culture and Youth.

For more information on the participation of the UAE at La Biennale di Venezia over the years and the open call process, please visit nationalpavilionuae.org or follow the National Pavilion UAE on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#).

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To join the conversation follow National Pavilion UAE on [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#) and use the hashtag #UAEinVenice

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Notes for press

For all press releases and images, please visit the digital press kit [here](#). Media downloads are also available on National Pavilion UAE's [website](#).

Previous architecture exhibitions presented by the National Pavilion UAE over the years include:

- *Wetland*, curated by Wael Al Awar and Kenichi Teramoto, where the exhibition presented a prototype of an environmentally friendly salt-based cement alternative from recycled industrial waste brine, which could reduce the impact the construction industry has on the environment. The exhibition won the Golden Lion award for Best National Participation at La Biennale Architettura for 2021.
- *Lifescapes Beyond Bigness*, curated by Dr. Khaled Alawadi in 2018 highlighted the role of architecture and urban design in forming the choreography of people's daily routines in the UAE.
- *Transformations: The Emirati National House*, curated by Yasser Elsheshtawy in 2016 explored the transformative aspect of the housing model of Emirati National Houses known as sha'abi (folk) houses.
- *Lest We Forget: Structures of Memory in the UAE*, curated by Dr. Michele Bambling in 2014, examined how public and residential architecture shaped the newly established UAE.

National Pavilion UAE – La Biennale di Venezia

The National Pavilion UAE is an award-winning pavilion that curates' 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 who presented research into an innovative sustainable cement alternative inspired from salt minerals found in the UAE's Sabkha heritage sites, was awarded the Golden Lion for best National

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Participation at the Biennale Architettura 2021, coinciding with the National Pavilion's 10th participation in the International Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia.

For 2023, curator of the National Pavilion UAE's participation in the 18th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Faysal Tabbarah, is exploring the relationship between architecture and arid, or dry, landscapes in the UAE and reimagining them as spaces of abundance and productivity.

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

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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.

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