

الجنّاح الوطني لحولة الإمارات
بينالي البندقية

National Pavilion UAE
La Biennale di Venezia



La Biennale di Venezia

19. Mostra
Internazionale
di Architettura

Partecipazioni Nazionali

PRESS RELEASE

NATIONAL PAVILION UAE AT THE BIENNALE ARCHITETTURA 2025 ANNOUNCES *PRESSURE COOKER*, CURATED BY EMIRATI ARCHITECT AND SCHOLAR AZZA ABOUALAM.

- Titled *Pressure Cooker*, the exhibition is curated by Azza Aboualam, Emirati architect and Assistant Professor at the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises at Zayed University and Co-founder of Holesum Studio.
- The exhibition builds on archival research and fieldwork to examine existing food-growing infrastructures in the UAE, identifying an opportunity to create shared responsibility for local communities.
- *Pressure Cooker* explores how architecture can respond to the UAE's and the globe's food security challenges, resulting in a possible future in which these forms can be adapted, refined and integrated throughout our built and lived environments.
- The 19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia will open to the public in Venice, Italy, on 10 May and runs until 23 November 2025.

30 January 2025, United Arab Emirates

The Pavilion of the United Arab Emirates announces its forthcoming exhibition, *Pressure Cooker*, at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. Curated by Emirati architect and scholar Azza Aboualam, the exhibition investigates the evolving relationship between architecture and food production in the UAE, proposing innovative solutions for more sustainable food production at both individual and communal scales. Through a research-based approach, *Pressure Cooker* explores themes of self-sufficiency and introduces architectural solutions specifically designed for arid environments.

By reimagining the greenhouse for arid climates, the exhibition offers new perspectives on food security, an issue of growing urgency both regionally and globally. With climate change disrupting agricultural systems, traditional farming methods face mounting threats, from soil degradation to temperature extremes. Recent studies suggest that a significant portion of global food production could be at risk by the end of the century if emissions continue to rise. *Pressure Cooker* examines how local expertise in food production has adapted to the specific climatic and environmental conditions of the Gulf region over time. It situates the UAE's food production landscape within this global context, emphasizing the need for adaptable practices.

The exhibition builds on archival research and fieldwork to examine existing food-growing infrastructures in the UAE, located in resource-rich landscapes that are often obscured, overlooked, or physically separated from urban centers. The project explores local design solutions that were conceived under conditions of food scarcity over the years, ranging from the vernacular to the technologically sophisticated. By experimenting with a series of greenhouse assemblies, *Pressure Cooker* looks into how architecture can respond to the UAE's and the globe's food security challenges, resulting in a possible future in which these forms can be integrated throughout our built and lived environments.

بدعم من
Supported by



وزارة الثقافة
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

المفوض الرسمي
Commissioned by



مؤسسة سلامة بنت حمدان آل نهيان
SALAMA BINT HAMDAN
AL NAHYAN FOUNDATION

Research findings by Aboualam—to be exhibited in Venice and supplemented with an accompanying publication—will present the different ways in which food, architecture, and the built environment overlap.

The National Pavilion UAE continues to collaborate with local institutions, such as Zayed University in an ongoing commitment to support research of cultural practitioners, curators and scholars, within the UAE.

His Excellency Sheikh Salem bin Khalid Al Qassimi, UAE Minister of Culture, commented: “The UAE’s participation in the 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia reflects our nation’s steadfast commitment to fostering innovation in addressing critical global challenges. The exhibition highlights the intersection of architecture and food security, demonstrating how sustainable design can contribute to building climate resilience and enhancing resource management. This thought-provoking showcase exemplifies the UAE’s leadership in advancing architectural solutions tailored for arid environments while promoting a global dialogue on sustainability and self-sufficiency in food. We are proud to support this remarkable effort that celebrates Emirati ingenuity and inspires innovative pathways for a sustainable future.”

Angela Migally, Executive Director, Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, stated: “The Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation remains steadfast in its commitment to nurturing growth and fostering understanding within the UAE’s vibrant architecture, art, and culture community. Our longstanding partnership with the National Pavilion UAE reflects our shared vision of amplifying the country’s creative ecosystem and promoting meaningful dialogue. This collaboration not only elevates the UAE’s global presence but also inspires critical discourse that forges deeper connections between local and international communities.”

Azza Aboualam, Curator, commented: “*Pressure Cooker* will exhibit research that speaks to one of the most pressing challenges of our time: food security. The exhibition examines the intersection of architecture, innovation, and sustainability to address critical issues shaping our shared future. The curatorial approach is rooted in contemporary research, linking the UAE’s unique cultural and architectural identity to pressing global challenges, offering grounded, technical, and imaginative perspectives on food systems and sustainability. Ultimately, *Pressure Cooker* asks: Using the UAE as a case study, how can architecture be mobilized towards greater food security?”

Laila Binbrek, Director, National Pavilion UAE – La Biennale di Venezia, added: “The National Pavilion UAE is committed to sharing the country’s untold stories on a global stage, bridging the UAE’s rich cultural heritage with international discourse. This year, we are honored to present the pioneering work of Emirati architect and scholar Azza Aboualam, whose exploration of sustainable food systems reflects the UAE’s dedication to addressing global challenges with creativity and foresight.”

The National Pavilion UAE will present its exhibition for the 19th International Architecture Exhibition from 10 May to 23 November 2025 (pre-opening on 8 and 9 May). The Biennale Architettura 2025 will be curated by Italian architect, engineer, and educator Carlo Ratti with the title *Intelligens. Natural. Artificial. Collective*.

The National Pavilion UAE is commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation and supported by the UAE Ministry of Culture 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 or follow the National Pavilion UAE on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#).

—END—

بدعم من
Supported by



وزارة الثقافة
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

المفوض الرسمي
Commissioned by



مؤسسة سلامة بنت حمدان آل نهيان
SALAMA BINT HAMDAN
AL NAHYAN FOUNDATION

About Azza Aboualam, Curator

Azza Aboualam is an Emirati architect and curator of the National Pavilion UAE for the 19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in 2025. She is an Assistant Professor at the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises at Zayed University, Dubai, UAE, and a Co-founder and Director of Research at Holesum Studio, an interdisciplinary architecture and design practice based between New York, USA, and Sharjah, UAE. She co-founded the studio in 2021 a few years after graduating from the Yale School of Architecture.

Her scholarly interests include the intersection of memory, architecture, and society in the Middle East and North Africa region. Aboualam worked with the UAE Ministry of Culture's Architecture Initiative, and her field research, sketches, and writing were published in the book *In Search of Spaces of Coexistence: An Architect's Journey* (2019), edited by Dr. Alamira Reem Al Hashimi and Adina Hempel. She also contributed research to *Building Sharjah* (2021), edited by Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi and Todd Reisz, and *Showpiece City: How Architecture Made Dubai* (2020), written by Todd Reisz. While working in Sharjah's Department of Public Works, Aboualam managed the design and construction of large-scale projects such as the Aga Khan Award-winning Wasit Wetland Center. In 2014, Aboualam was a Venice Intern at the National Pavilion UAE's debut participation at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia with the exhibition *Lest We Forget: Structures of Memory in the UAE*, curated by Dr. Michele Bambling.

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 organised 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, the National Pavilion UAE's exhibitions have explored the nation's cultural evolution, including experimental twentieth-century artists and the diverse contemporary scene. In 2021, the National Pavilion UAE's exhibition, titled *Wetland* and curated by architects Wael Al Awar and Kenichi Teramoto, was awarded the Golden Lion for best National Participation at the 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 two hundred interns, many of whom are now working in the cultural sector.

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

بدعم من
Supported by



وزارة الثقافة
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

المفوض الرسمي
Commissioned by



مؤسسة سلامة بنت حمدان آل نهيان
SALAMA BINT HAMDAN
AL NAHYAN FOUNDATION

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 to support them to unlock their full potential.

Supporter: The UAE Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture, in line with its vision of "A culture that inspires the world and empowers young people to create the future," is committed to enriching the cultural sector in the United Arab Emirates. The Ministry achieves this by supporting Emirati cultural, artistic, and heritage institutions, providing a platform for creative and talented individuals across various fields, and promoting dialogue between different cultures. Additionally, the Ministry collaborates with strategic partners to deliver impactful outcomes that reflect the UAE's vibrant and diverse cultural scene at the local, regional, and global levels.

Please find high-res images and the full press releases here: [2025 Media Downloads](#)

For media enquiries

Jan-Willem Marquardt, Send/Receive

jan@sendreceive.eu

+49 178 149 8629

Dana Al Sadek, National Pavilion of the United Arab Emirates

dana@nationalpavilionuae.org

+971 55 140 0876

nationalpavilionuae.org

[Instagram / Facebook / X](#)

بدعم من
Supported by



وزارة الثقافة
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

المفوض الرسمي
Commissioned by



مؤسسة سلامة بنت حمدان آل نهيان
SALAMA BINT HAMDAN
AL NAHYAN FOUNDATION