

National Pavilion UAE announces publication of first comprehensive monograph for Emirati artist Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim

ABU DHABI, 28th February, 2022 (WAM) -- The National Pavilion UAE announced Monday the details on its upcoming publication accompanying its exhibition, Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim: Between Sunrise and Sunset, at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2022 (23rd April - 27th November 2022).

Titled Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim: Between Sunrise and Sunset / Works 1986-2022, the monograph will be the first comprehensive publication on the Emirati artist, covering his biomorphic abstraction paintings of the 1980s, his Land Art experiments and immersive installations of the 1990s, and the evolution of his papier-mâché sculptures over the last two decades. The monograph, co-edited by Maya Allison, curator of the National Pavilion UAE 2022 exhibition and Executive Director of The New York University Abu Dhabi Art Gallery, and Cristiana de Marchi, artist, curator, and poet, will be published by Kaph Books. The publication will launch with the Pavilion's exhibition in April.

Retracing Ibrahim's body of work to date, the publication contextualizes the artist within the UAE's contemporary art scene and his contribution to its development over the last four decades. Through a series of essays and interviews by prominent figures in the art world and in his own art community, the texts bring to life Ibrahim's journey, personality, and work process. The book tracks his early formation as an artist, framed against the historical backdrop of a country that came into being during his lifetime (the UAE was founded in 1971, a decade after his birth).

Arising from the contributors' in-depth research, and personal interactions with the artist, the authors trace his rise as one of the leading experimental artists of the UAE, and situate his work today in its local and global context.

Laila Binbrek, Coordinating Director, National Pavilion UAE – La Biennale di Venezia, said, "One of main missions at the National Pavilion UAE is telling and sharing the UAE's untold stories on a global platform that is the Venice Biennale. Over the years, we have carefully crafted our publications to document and make available new academic material about the UAE's cultural scene – ensuring our contributors' efforts sustain a greater impact beyond the exhibition itself. Our annual publications are an important aspect of the UAE Pavilion's legacy, as we proactively invest in contributing new researched materials to the local arts and architecture discourse. This year's publication features Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, a member of the UAE's first generation of contemporary artists, which includes Hassan Sharif, Abdullah Al Saadi, Hussain Sharif, and Mohammed Kazem, as well as uncovers interesting information about the UAE's art movement since the late 1980s."

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.

The upcoming exhibition, Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim: Between Sunrise and Sunset, marks Ibrahim and Allison's fifth collaboration together, with the accompanying publication becoming the third book that Allison has worked on that studies Ibrahim's work. Similarly, de Marchi's record of collaboration with Ibrahim dates back to 2008, beginning with her tenure as curator of The Flying House (a foundation for the promotion of Emirati conceptual artists) and since that time, has included him in a number of exhibitions, as well as edited four catalogues that featured his work.

Maya Allison said, "In the U.S., during my college years studying the history of art, access to art histories from non-European, non-North American regions was exceedingly hard to come by (when not routinely dismissed by those who didn't know better). It has been a great gift to work directly with Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim, to hear his history in his own voice, and to I hope be part of laying a groundwork to eventually fill the gap on the art history bookshelves, making visible and accessible the unique and complex history of contemporary art in the UAE, through the study of Mohamed's life and work. I'm particularly energized and humbled to read the many kinds of voices in this book, from across generations, from scholars to peers to his fellow travelers, whether poets, curators, or artists."

Cristiana de Marchi said, "I've had the great privilege to meet Mohamed and to work closely with him during a long period of evolution in his work. This has led not only to a structured knowledge of his practice but also to developing a deep admiration of his human qualities and a long-lasting friendship. As editors of this publication, Maya and I hope to contribute to creating awareness about his practice, in an academic yet lively documentation, and contextually to shed further light on moments and circumstances that have shaped the UAE's cultural life and art scene."

The first section of the book, "Sunrise," takes a scholarly and curatorial approach to documenting Ibrahim's practice and journey. The second part, "Sunset," includes essays and personal reflections on the artist over time, penned by Ibrahim's friends and close colleagues