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**NATIONAL PAVILION UNITED ARAB EMIRATES LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA  
ANNOUNCES FEATURED ARTISTS FOR THE  
56TH INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION – LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA**

*Curator Sheikha Hoor Bint Sultan Al Qasimi selects work by 14 Emirati artists:*

*Ahmed Al Ansari, Moosa Al Halyan, Mohammed Al Qassab, Abdul Qader Al Rais, Abdullah Al Saadi, Mohammed Abdullah Bulhiah, Salem Jawhar, Mohammed Kazem, Dr. Najat Meky, Abdulraheem Salim, Hassan Sharif, Obaid Suroor, Dr. Mohamed Yousif, and Abdulrahman Zainal*

***1980 – Today: Exhibitions in the United Arab Emirates*** will explore the emergence of contemporary art practices in the UAE over the past four decades.

**28 January 2015 – Abu Dhabi, UAE.** Drawing upon extensive historical research, Sheikha Hoor bint Sultan Al Qasimi, curator for the National Pavilion United Arab Emirates (UAE) la Biennale di Venezia and President and Director of the Sharjah Art Foundation, will present a diverse assemblage of work by key figures in the country’s art history at the 56<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia. Titled *1980 – Today: Exhibitions in the United Arab Emirates*, the exhibition features 14 featured artists, including Ahmed Al Ansari, Moosa Al Halyan, Mohammed Al Qassab, Abdul Qader Al Rais, Abdullah Al Saadi, Mohammed Abdullah Bulhiah, Salem Jawhar, Mohammed Kazem, Dr. Najat Meky, Abdulraheem Salim, Hassan Sharif, Obaid Suroor, Dr. Mohamed Yousif, and Abdulrahman Zainal. The National Pavilion UAE la Biennale di Venezia is commissioned by the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation, and supported by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development.

This exhibition will present a selection of works from different decades highlighting the emergence of art practices in the UAE. The Emirates Fine Arts Society, a non-profit association that was formed in 1980 in Sharjah, has served as a main point of focus and inspiration for research.

*“The opportunity to curate the National Pavilion of the UAE has allowed me to reflect on and honor a significant period of the UAE’s art history,”* said Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi. *“Looking back at exhibitions from the 1980s, I have come across a number of interesting art works, mainly sculptures and paintings by now-established artists, as well as works by lesser known ones. It is important to state here that the focus is on the art works not the artist. My aim is to show the diversity of art practices, and the history of the art scene in the UAE at this period in time.”*

*1980 – Today: Exhibitions in the United Arab Emirates* is built upon extensive research involving archives of newspaper articles, artists’ writings, and catalogues, as well as interviews with artists and cultural practitioners. Reflecting personal and geopolitical trajectories, the research focused on the underexposed historical record and evolving practices of some of the UAE’s most important modernist and contemporary artists.



*“Over the last decade the UAE art scene has experienced a surge in international recognition and appreciation, however many are still not aware of the depth and diversity of our artists, who have been working decades longer than the current art boom,” noted Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan, Founder of the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation. “This exhibition represents an opportunity to document, share, and expand upon a key period for the country’s art history.”*

A publication including previous writings and articles on the art scene in the UAE since the 1980s, as well as some personal memoirs from a number of artists will be presented alongside the exhibition. The 56th Venice Biennale runs from 9 May–22 November 2015, with a preview from 5 May–8 May. Further details about the pavilion and the artists involved will be announced in early 2015.

### **The Curator**

Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi is President and Director of the Sharjah Art Foundation. She is a practicing artist who received her BFA from the Slade School of Fine Art, London (2002), a Diploma in Painting from the Royal Academy of Arts (2005) and an MA in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London (2008). In 2003 she was appointed curator of Sharjah Biennial 6 and has continued as the Biennial’s Director since that time. She is Chair of the Advisory Board for the College of Art and Design, University of Sharjah; and Member of the Advisory Board of both the Khoj International Artists’ Association, India and the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing. She serves on the Board of Directors for MoMA PS1, New York; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; the International Biennial Association, Gwangju; and Ashkal Alwan, Beirut. Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi is the first Emirati to be appointed as the curator for the National Pavilion UAE la Biennale di Venezia.

### **National Pavilion UAE la Biennale di Venezia**

The National Pavilion UAE was established to endorse the UAE’s contemporary art practices on an international platform and provide a foundation to support the nation’s diverse and developing cultural scene.

The UAE’s participation at la Biennale di Venezia commenced in 2009 with a national pavilion at the 53rd International Art Exhibition, and has continued in subsequent editions of the art exhibition since. In 2013, the National Pavilion UAE presented at the 55<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition. 2014 marked the UAE’s first participation at the International Architecture Exhibition.

For more information visit [www.nationalpavilionuae.org](http://www.nationalpavilionuae.org)

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## NOTES TO EDITORS:

### 1. National Pavilion United Arab Emirates la Biennale di Venezia

Initiated in 2008, the National Pavilion United Arab Emirates la Biennale Di Venezia manages the UAE's participation in various offerings of la Biennale di Venezia. The UAE has been participating at every edition of the International Art Exhibition since 2009, and debuted participation at the International Architecture Exhibition in 2014.

The office also organizes the Venice Internship, offering a range of opportunities to young Emiratis keen to engage with culture and arts at the highest international level through a 1 month internship on-site in Venice acting as custodians of the National Pavilion. These interns manage the exhibition and participate in a rigorous educational program.

### 2. Commissioner: The Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation

The Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation's mission is "to invest in the future of the United Arab Emirates by investing in its people." To that end, it develops and supports strategic initiatives in the areas of education; arts, culture, heritage; and health. The Foundation is the family foundation of Sheikha Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan and was founded by Her Highness in 2010.

### 3. UAE Ministry of Culture, Youth & Community Development

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development was launched in 2006 to highlight the UAE's fast-growing community and 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 and community development. In addition, the Ministry also organizes ongoing activities and develops mechanisms to secure the necessary support required to achieve its goals.

### 4. The 56<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia

Universally recognized as the world's most prestigious contemporary art event, la Biennale di Venezia (the Venice Biennale) dates back to 1895 when the first art exhibition was organized. It is the oldest non-commercial art exhibition devoted to contemporary art in the world. It will present its 56th iteration in 2015. In addition to the International Art Exhibition, la Biennale hosts the International Architecture Exhibition, Film Festival, Music, Theater and Dance Festivals.

