

“Second Time Around” - The United Arab Emirates Pavilion at the 54th International art Exhibition – La Biennale Di Venezia, 2011



UAE Pavilion in Venice Biennale 2011 - Installation general view.

The title refers to the UAE's debut appearance at the biennial in 2009. A newcomer to the “la Biennale di Venezia”, the UAE Pavilion found itself in a position of answering extensive and curious demands, which it addressed with a humorous self-criticality. The second Pavilion is, in turn, a sign of slowly coming of age as well as being purposefully modest referring to the barebones of the exhibition. The attitude adopted in choosing the title is also echoed in the approach to the exhibition, where each artist's work is presented in a dedicated setting.

In a statement about his curatorial concept, the curator, Vasif Kortun, elaborated, “The first years of the emergent art scene in the UAE have been of remarkable frenzy. This scene that had been earlier propelled by galleries, art fairs, museum projects and curious professionals is now developing into a more established set of structures, inline with the necessities

of a contemporary globalized hub. The effects of a vertical urbanization that every citizen has to answer day in and day out constituted the rapid transformation of the nation. Likewise, UAE artists were called upon to perform the role of chroniclers and represent the burdens of this sea of change. However, they are now negotiating and processing the complexities of what is becoming a predominantly visual culture.” He also added that “No longer contextualized in what have become the absolute clichés of the international reception of the UAE, the UAE Pavilion for 2011 does not aim to treat the exhibition as curatorial conceit; but rather chooses to realize the theoretical foundation in the immanence of the works in the exhibition”. The Pavilion is not “curated” around concepts but around artistic positions, as if three independent projects form a coherent exhibition structure pivoting around the works of three artists.

The Artistic fabrics

Second Time Around presents the work of three artists: One incorrigible artist who does not care one way or another if he is in any exhibition as long as he is able to work in his own precise way (Abdullah Al Saadi). The second artist whose installation practice speaks to the UAE in the most novel way probable (Reem Al Ghaith), and a third artist who has assimilated, and deconstructed the transformation of her environs (Lateefa bint Maktoum). The Emirati artists selected represent the UAE through displays of an installation, mixed-media sculpture, and photography. The curator created three independent yet equally sized exhibition “islands” which emphasize the unique practice of each artist without detracting from the common themes that underlie each of their works.

THE TEAM

Dr. Lamees Hamdan - Commissioner

Dr Hamdan is a native of Dubai, United Arab Emirates. A medical doctor by training, she graduated from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in 1998.

Dr Hamdan is the commissioner of the UAE Pavilion at the 2009 and 2011 Venice Biennale. She spearheaded this initiative that was the first participation in Venice from an Arab Gulf country. Dr Hamdan sits of the Advisory Board of the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture in Amman, and is the fund curator for the Daman Middle East Art Fund. She is an avid art collector boasting an extensive collection of contemporary Middle East art and a continuous supporter of various initiatives and publications on contemporary Middle Eastern art.

Dr Lamees Hamdan is a Board Member of the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, an official body established to promote culture and the arts in the Emirate of Dubai, and she is also a Board Member of the Dubai Women Establishment. Dr. Hamdan is the founder and CEO of “Shiffa”, a luxury skin and body care company that she founded in 2002. In 2005, she was chosen as Best Business Leader and Best Health and Wellness Company by the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Awards for Young Business Leaders. Dr Lamees lives in Dubai with her husband and her four children.

Vasif Kortun - Curator

Mr. Kortun is a writer, curator and teacher in the field of contemporary art living and working in Istanbul. He is the programs’ Director of Research and Programs, SALT, Istanbul, a new interdisciplinary institution to open in 2011 Istanbul. He was the founding director of several places including Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center [2001-04], Proje4L Istanbul Museum of Contemporary Art (2001-04), and the Museum of the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York (1993-97). Vasif Kortun was the chief curator of the Third (1992) and the co-curator of the Ninth Istanbul Biennials (2005). Among the other Biennials he has co-curated are Taipei (2008), Sao Paulo (1998), Tirana (2003), and Second Ceramics Biennial in Albisola (2003). Kortun organized the Turkish Pavillion for the 2007 Venice, and 1994 and 1998 Sao Biennials. He has curated numerous exhibitions in Turkey and abroad, and received the Ninth Annual Award for Curatorial Excellence given by the Center for Curatorial Studies in 2006. He has been working as an advisor to a number of institutions including the Middle East and North Africa Acquisition Committee of Tate Modern, Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art in Korea. He was as an advisor to the Guggenheim Museum, Van Abbe Museum, Walker Art Center, the Istanbul Biennial, E-Flux and others. Kortun has been on the board of the Foundation for Arts Initiatives, and magazines such as “Broadsheet” Germany and “Contemporary Practices Art Journal” Published in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

He was on the International of Jury of several events such as the Velasquez Prize, The 50th International Venice Biennial, Internationaler Kunstpreis der Kulturstiftung Stadtsparkasse Munchen, Querini Stampalia FURLA Prize for Art, 26th Biennial of Graphic Arts in Ljubljana, and others. Kortun has taught graduate courses at Bilgi, Yildiz and Bilkent Universities in Turkey as well as Helsinki Fine Arts Academy, HISK, Netherlands Institute of Fine Arts, Konstfack, University College of Arts Crafts and Design, Stockholm as well as at the curatorial programs such as De Appel, Center for Curatorial Studies, and the Royal College.



Reem Al Ghaith, "What's left of Her Land", Installation.

THE ARTIST

Reem Al Ghaith holds a BSc, in Visual Communication from the School of Architecture and Design, American University of Sharjah, UAE. Her work examines changes in the urban and social landscape of the UAE, often with sophisticated all-around installations that relate to tradition and history, yet do not fall into banal representations and fascinations of the subject. The intertwined structure of her work deliberately places itself far away from being representative.

Abdullah Al Saadi holds a degree in English Literature from United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain. From 1994 -1996 he studied Japanese painting at Kyoto Seika University in Japan. He lives and works in Khorfakan, outside the art world and untethered by its demands and daily routines. His work is a daily practice of recording, inventing normative groupings, and documenting species that are beyond "scientific inquiry."

Lateefa Bint Maktoum holds a B.A. in Visual Arts from Zayed University, Latifa College. Her practice largely consists of composite, digitally manipulated images based on highlighted, enhanced, and conflated realities from her immediate memories as well as the distant past. Her compositions combine an aestheticism of British painting with enhanced local fauna and flora that sit in stark opposition to images of urbanization. Maktoum is also a curator and Founder and Director of Tashkeel, a public studio providing specialist facilities for artists and designers living and working in the UAE.

The Supporting Personnel & Bodies

The UAE Pavilion has been initiated and supported by His Excellency Abdul Rahman bin Mohammed Al Owais, UAE Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development.



Abdulla Al Saadi, "Naked Sweet Potato", Installation.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth & Community Development

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.

The Emirates Foundation for Philanthropy

www.emiratesfoundation.ae

The foremost philanthropic organizations. It offers financial and technical support to projects that enrich the lives of people in the Emirates, particularly in the areas of youth development, knowledge creation, and society and culture.

The Foundation facilitates links between commercial businesses and the public sector to devise new projects and strengthen existing nonprofit initiatives throughout the country. Its funding comes from program-rated contributions and a capital reserve supported by the Abu Dhabi government and private companies.

Launched on April 12, 2005 by H.H Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, its Board of Directors is chaired by Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs.



Lateefa Bint Maktoum, Installation.

Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC) is a master developer of key cultural, residential and tourism destinations in Abu Dhabi. The principal goal of its cultural program, including the creation of the Saadiyat Cultural District - the world's largest single concentration of premier cultural institutions - is to establish an international platform in the UAE for arts and culture. Unprecedented in scale and scope, the Saadiyat Cultural District will include museums such as Zayed National Museum, Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

One of TDIC's missions is to engage the community in the capital's urban, cultural and artistic development and help build professional skills and knowledge in the community through a dialogue with representatives from the world's leading cultural organizations. Alongside this, TDIC presents a diverse series of art exhibitions and public programs to further engage audiences in the Saadiyat Cultural District institutions, vision and concept.

Möbius Design

Founded in 2010 by a group of female designers, all graduates from the American University of Sharjah,

UAE, from different parts of the Middle East, whose expertise range from visual communication, multimedia design, and architecture. The studio is based in Tashkeel Art Center, Dubai. Their interest in the design field encompasses research, concept development, mapping information, typography, identity, spatial and structural design for exhibitions, in addition to multimedia and time-based design. The main approach they use to tackle design projects is based on the notion of experimental processes, conceptual and formal investigations.

Superpool

A multidisciplinary design firm based in Istanbul. In addition to the UAE Pavilion, the firm is currently engaged in TailorCrete, a European Commission funded research grant for incorporating robotics into concrete construction technology. Superpool has recently completed Mapping Istanbul book with nearly a hundred maps and information graphics. The book is a resource for architects, planners and policy makers invested in the city's future.