



## Bridging Societies Through the Language of Art: Abu Dhabi receives its first International Sculpture Symposium this coming Winter

'I believe that public art is not so much about understanding what the individual works mean, but more that the society in which it resides is one that is open to creation, open to bewilderment.' Konstantin Dimopolous (Australian artist and participant in ADISS 2010)

Sculpture Symposia as a world-wide cultural initiatives have been around since late 1950s motivated by the need for cross-cultural dialogue and shared experiential knowledge between the international sculpture community. Locations are often selected to reflect the readily available resource or industry - Schoodic Sculpture Symposium, for example highlights the historic importance of the local stone-working traditions or Aswan (Egypt), a place synonymous with its wealth of granite resources.

### So, why Abu Dhabi?

"We wanted to do something special for this amazing city and its people. With all the International attention on Abu Dhabi's planned cultural developments, it is important to introduce local audience to the benefits of daily exposure to art and the sense of ownership and pride that comes with that,"

says Salwa Zeidan, the Symposium's director.

ADISS 2010 is held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the U.A.E. Armed Forces, who is dedicated to establishing Abu Dhabi as the cultural center of the Middle East, in line with his 2030 vision.

The inaugural event is brought to Abu Dhabi under the direction of His Highness Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan – the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and President of Zayed University.

In fact, as a foundation to the educational goals, ADISS 2010 will be held under the umbrella of Zayed University – an Internationally accredited university with campuses in Abu Dhabi and Dubai – in collaboration with Salwa Zeidan Gallery, one of Abu Dhabi's eminent contemporary art spaces. "Having Zayed University accepting this initiative, further re-affirms its significance, especially considering their historic commitment to high profile events and advancement of art and architecture department", says Salwa Zeidan, the Symposium director.

The six-week symposium will run from February 25th to April 7th 2010 and will reveal the works of some of the most talented international artists who were carefully selected to give the Symposium an International and multi-cultural context.

Each artist was asked to submit three proposals for sculptures that were inspired by the U.A.E., its history, and its culture, and were also linked to the theme of ADISS: "Bridging Societies Through the Language of Art". During the symposium, visitors will have the opportunity to watch the selected international artists at work, as they create the sculptures commissioned for Abu Dhabi. There will also be an opportunity to attend a series of lectures and workshops by the visiting artists, which have been organized by Zayed University and include topics such as 'Art and Environment', 'Originality and Identity in Public Sculpture' and 'Public Works on the streets of Japan'.

Aside the veteran Symposia participants such as Yoshin Ogata (Japan), Gheorgi Filin (Bulgaria) and John Barlow Hudson (U.S.A), ADISS organizers have decided to introduce two young sculptors with extraordinary talent so that their designs can be realised through collaboration with skilled suppliers and guidance from their peers. For 2010 the two emergent artists are Hussam Chaya (Lebanon) and Wasel Safwan (U.A.E).

At the conclusion of the Symposium, the new monumental sculptures will be permanently placed at selected public spaces throughout Abu Dhabi, which will complement Sheikh Mohammed's vision for a cultural city with artistic landmarks.

The organizers and patrons of Abu Dhabi International Sculpture Symposium are acutely aware of the scale of such undertaking, which is why they are proud and excited about this landmark cultural event. As Rino Giannini, an international sculptor said, "When people can see the process of stone becoming a monument, sculpture enters the collective consciousness. People begin to understand, sometimes for the first time, what sculpture is."

In addition to marble and granite carving, close to half of the ADISS participating artists will be working in stainless steel and composite materials, such as fiberglass. This extension to traditional carving symposium concept meant achieving a diverse and dynamic collection of the first public sculptures to grace the cityscape of contemporary Arabian city, Abu Dhabi is set to become.

Text and images courtesy of the Salwa Zeidan Gallery

*The ADISS website: [www.adiss-aub.com](http://www.adiss-aub.com) soon to be launched will feature the complete list of participating artists and their selected proposals, but should the roads lead the sculpture fiends to Abu Dhabi in February or March 2010, this would be an extraordinary event to visit and experience in person.*