

PRESS RELEASE

Abu Dhabi Art launches an initiative to support growing Emirati arts scene

Newly formed *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* will support *Beyond: Emerging Artists*,
launching at the 13th edition of Abu Dhabi Art Fair running from 17-21 November 2021

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 05 September 2021: Abu Dhabi Art today announces the formation of *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* – an initiative created to facilitate new models of public cultural philanthropy and help support the dynamic art eco-system in the UAE through Abu Dhabi Art. Launching with an inaugural group of more than 40 dedicated art enthusiasts, *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* will this year support Abu Dhabi Art's *Beyond: Emerging Artists*, curated by guest curators Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, Founders of *Art Reoriented*, a multidisciplinary curatorial platform

Dyala Nusseibeh, Director, Abu Dhabi Art, said: "We are hugely grateful to our *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* members, who will play an integral role in supporting emerging artists from the UAE this year and engaging the wider public with their work. As a group of cultural philanthropists brought together by a shared desire to support art in the Emirates, *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* will strengthen and enhance our existing *Beyond: Emerging Artists* programme this year in exciting new ways."

Anyone looking to actively support artists and the art ecosystem in the UAE can apply to join the initiative via the [webpage](#) as well. All members are required to pay an annual fee for membership, with funds raised enabling the commissioning of new art works through Abu Dhabi Art. Keystone members will act as an advisory group for *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art*, overseen by co-heads, **Nadine Maalouf**, Co-Founder of 81 Designs and **Nadia Sehweil**, CEO of Bodytree Wellness.

Commenting on the newly formed initiative, **Nadine Maalouf, Co-Head of Friends of Abu Dhabi Art and Co-Founder of 81 Designs**, said: "*Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* members are ready to support the UAE art ecosystem through this new platform and to play a part in enabling emerging artists from the UAE to develop their work and reach new audiences. We have all joined because of a commitment to supporting art in the UAE and we look forward to ensuring the wider community is engaged and connected to the thriving local art scene. Having attended a curatorial talk by Sam Bardaouil earlier this month I was impressed by their work and left excited to see what new conversations come out of their contribution this year."

Nadia Sehweil, Co-Head of Friends of Abu Dhabi Art and CEO of Bodytree Wellness added: "*Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* is not limited to financial support. It is an endeavor to encourage independent activity by community members for the benefit of the local art ecosystem. There is a need for the art and culture sector globally to find sustainable ways to recover and become more adaptable in a post-pandemic era. *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* will play a significant role in strengthening Abu Dhabi Art's programming, as well as provide a platform for funding, knowledge exchange, and networking initiatives for the different players in the sector through Abu Dhabi Art."

Benefits for membership include opportunities to attend private talks by appointed curators and artists, as well as artist studio visits and events, private tours at the Abu Dhabi Art Fair in November and the commissioning of new work in Abu Dhabi.

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Abu Dhabi Art announced earlier this month that **Sam Bardaouil** and **Till Fellrath** will commission three new works by emerging UAE-based artists; **Hashel Al Lamki**, **Maitha Abdalla** and **Christopher Benton**, for *Beyond: Emerging Artists*, which will be showcased at the fair in November. The annual Abu Dhabi Art programme has been chosen as the first initiative to be supported by *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* this year, signposting future engagement with both emerging and established artists in the UAE in future.

The fair's upcoming edition will open to the public at Manarat Al Saadiyat from Wednesday 17 November to Sunday 21 November 2021.

Strict precautionary and hygiene measures will be enforced at Abu Dhabi Art 2021 to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all participants and visitors. Details of these measures will be announced in due course.

For more information on Abu Dhabi Art 2021 and its year-round programmes, visit abudhabiart.ae and follow Abu Dhabi Art on social media: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

More information on how to apply and how to support the local art scene is available on the *Friends of Abu Dhabi Art* [webpage](#).

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Notes to Editors:

About Abu Dhabi Art

Abu Dhabi Art expands beyond the notion of a traditional art fair, in placing strong emphasis on a diverse public engagement programme, including art installations and exhibitions, talks and events that take place in different locations throughout the year. The culmination of this year-long programme is the Abu Dhabi Art event in November, which provides an important sales platform for participating galleries whilst also offering these galleries an opportunity to showcase ambitious installations and site-specific works by their artists to a wide audience.

About the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) drives the sustainable growth of Abu Dhabi's culture and tourism sectors, fuels economic progress and helps achieve Abu Dhabi's wider global ambitions. By working in partnership with the organisations that define the emirate's position as a leading international destination, DCT Abu Dhabi strives to unite the ecosystem around a shared vision of the emirate's potential, coordinate effort and investment, deliver innovative solutions, and use the best tools, policies and systems to support the culture and tourism industries.

DCT Abu Dhabi's vision is defined by the emirate's people, heritage and landscape. We work to enhance Abu Dhabi's status as a place of authenticity, innovation, and unparalleled experiences, represented by its living traditions of hospitality, pioneering initiatives and creative thought.

Beyond: Emerging Artists

An annual initiative that launched in 2017. The programme provides three emerging artists in the UAE with a platform from which to develop their practice and realise ambitious art projects. The selected artists are chosen by a guest curator each year. They undertake a year-long programme of workshops and studio visits initiated by the guest curator which leads toward the realisation of a project for the Abu

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Dhabi Art fair in November. The works remain on exhibition to the public for several months beyond the fair dates.

About Dyala Nusseibeh

Dyala Nusseibeh has been the Director of Abu Dhabi Art since 2016. Having graduated with a BA from Cambridge University and an MLitt (with Distinction) from Glasgow University, she spent a year at the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi followed by four years at the Saatchi Gallery in London as Head of Education. In this capacity she organised annual student shows, the education programme at the gallery and a travelling exhibition of works from the Saatchi collection to Ipswich in order to broaden outreach. In 2013, Nusseibeh became founding Director of ArtInternational Istanbul, managed by leading fair organisers Angus Montgomery, a position she held until 2016 when she joined the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi.

About Nadine Maalouf

Born in Beirut, Nadine has lived in Riyadh, Florida, Montreal and New York before settling in the UAE. She graduated from Pratt Institute in New York City with a degree in Art Direction and a Minor in Art History. She is the Co-Founder of 81 Designs, a social enterprise that brings both art and humanity together by showcasing the talents of refugee women artisans. She is also the Founder of Sawtouna and Peak Advisory Group, an advisory board member of Art Dubai, Co-Chair of the Abu Dhabi Dream Ball and Co-Head of Friends of Abu Dhabi Art.

Nadine was awarded Young Achiever of the Year in 2011 by the Arab Woman Awards and has been a board member of the Arab Woman Awards organisation since 2012 which is now presented in association with UN Women.

Nadine is married with two children and resides in Abu Dhabi.

About Nadia Sehweil

Nadia Sehweil is a mother of three and a leader of the wellness community in Abu Dhabi, UAE. She is the CEO of Bodytree Wellness, Abu Dhabi's first premier holistic movement, health and wellness facility, established in 2007. She is the Co-Founder & CEO of Nectar Bites, a healthy eatery concept, Co-Founder & Owner of the Emirates School of Dance and Co-Founder of The Wellness Collective, a collaborative movement whose aim is to provide accessible health education and uniquely curated wellness experiences and retreats. Nadia is also an angel investor in businesses in the wellness and food industry. She is Co-Chair of Sawtouna and The Abu Dhabi Dream Ball and a Board Member of the Palestinian Museum in Ramallah.

About Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath are Founders of Art Reoriented, a multidisciplinary curatorial platform launched in 2009 in New York and Munich. They are Curators of the Lyon Biennale in 2022, and Affiliate Curators at Gropius Bau in Berlin.

As an independent voice, Bardaouil and Fellrath have collaborated with more than 70 institutions worldwide, including Centre Pompidou, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Tate Liverpool, Moderna Museet, Reina Sofia, ARTER, and the Montblanc Cultural Foundation. They are internationally recognized curators and award-winning authors whose practice is rooted in global contemporary art, as well as in the field of modernist studies.

In 2016 they were part of the team of curatorial attachés of the 20th Biennale of Sydney. At the Venice Biennale, they were curators of the National Pavilions of Lebanon in 2013 and the United Arab Emirates in 2019, and they are Curators of the French Pavilion in 2022.

Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath are co-curators for *Beyond: Emerging Artists*, Abu Dhabi Art 2021.

About Hashel Al Lamki

Hashel Al Lamki was born in the UAE, where he has experienced not only the rapid industrial and architectural growth of Dubai and the rest of the Emirates, but also the cultural complexities and dynamics that came as a result of the construction boom. In 2007 Al Lamki joined a BFA programme

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at Parsons the New School for Design In New York City. During the artist's time in New York City, he nurtured his passions and enriched his practice through multidisciplinary collaborations. Currently, he infuses these vibrant perspectives to bring them into his practice, which focuses on social innovation, sustainability, environmental & philanthropic practices. Al Lamki's most recent exhibition is his first solo show, "The Cup and The Saucer", at Warehouse421.

About Maitha Abdalla

Born in 1989, mixed media artist Maitha Abdallah oscillates between the diaphanous, vibrant and surreal; her art is always marked by an atmosphere of reminiscence and nostalgia. Her paintings and mixed-media work often evolve into series and articulate strong cultural narratives; they are assemblages of memory, travel and human interactions. Informed by exchanges and experiences, her socially driven commentaries on the human condition reveal astute, intuitive observations on the world around her in a narrative form. A particularly influential encounter was with children at an orphanage where Abdallah taught English and art. The motifs of childhood began to permeate her work after this time, becoming an eloquent vernacular in which she further explores the difference between the imaginary and the real; mapping the liminal space between these interconnected worlds, she plays out many questions of social and cultural identity.

Abdallah is a graduate of the Salama Bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship, in partnership with the Rhode Island School of Design, and is also one of the founders of Bait 15, an artist-run gallery and studio in Abu Dhabi, and plays an active role in the Contemporary art scene in the UAE. She participated in Abu Dhabi Festival 2019 Visual Arts Residency Programme in Vaduz, Liechtenstein and Vienna, Austria.

About Christopher Benton

Christopher Joshua Benton (b. 1988) is a UAE-based American artist working across sculpture, photography, and film. Christopher works closely with communities and neighborhoods to instigate collaboration and share stories of power, labor, and hope. His practice explores how the working-class uses culture and innovation to stage resistance to post-colonial and neo-liberal forces. Past work has been presented at Dubai Design Week, the Fikra Graphic Design Biennial, and Jameel Arts Centre. He is currently pursuing his MS in Art, Culture, and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, through the support of Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation.