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Abu Dhabi Art 2021 to host UAE debut of *Passage*, the National Pavilion UAE's 2019 exhibition created for the Venice Biennale

Taking place from 17 - 21 November 2021, Abu Dhabi Art will present Passage, an immersive video and sound installation created by artist Nujoom Alghanem, as part of its Gateway section

Passage will also be exhibited as part of Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation's upcoming exhibition, Portrait of a Nation II, open from January until April 2022

This three-way collaboration will mark the first time Passage will be shown in the UAE, allowing new audiences to experience this important work outside of Venice

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 11 November 2021: Abu Dhabi Art, in partnership with Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation (ADMAF) and the National Pavilion UAE – La Biennale di Venezia, will be showcasing [Passage](#), a groundbreaking installation by artist Nujoom Alghanem, as part of the *Gateway* section of Abu Dhabi Art Fair 2021, which will take place from 17 to 21 November at Manarat Al Saadiyat. Next year, *Passage* will also be shown as part of Abu Dhabi Festival's 2022 flagship exhibition, *Portrait of a Nation II*.

Passage is an immersive video and sound installation created by acclaimed poet, filmmaker and artist Alghanem and features actress Amal Hawijeh. Filmed in the UAE and Venice, *Passage* was conceived and developed for the National Pavilion UAE's exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia, with the 2019 pavilion curators Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, co-founders of multidisciplinary curatorial platform *Art Reoriented* and co-directors of the Hamburger Bahnhof museum. The work responds to the theme of La Biennale for that year, *May You Live in Interesting Times*, and explores themes of displacement and journeying. Bardaouil and Fellrath are also co-curators for this year's Abu Dhabi Art *Beyond: Emerging Artists* programme.

Passage will premier in the UAE as part of Abu Dhabi Art's *Gateway*, an annual section of the fair that highlights local and international artists through globally relevant curatorial frameworks. For the most recent *Gateway*, in 2019, guest curator Paolo Colombo was invited to present *Fragments, Yesterday and Today*, which looked at the relevance of archaeological and anthropological artefacts through contemporary artworks.

Dyala Nusseibeh, Director of Abu Dhabi Art, said, "We are delighted to be collaborating with ADMAF and National Pavilion UAE on presenting this seminal work by Nujoom Alghanem, first presented at the Venice Biennale in 2019, at Abu Dhabi Art 2021. *Passage* addresses the subject of displacement through contemporary Arabic poetry and the art of film. Following its international debut in Venice, this is the first time it is being shown back home in the UAE and in my view, this is an unmissable,

beautiful work for visitors to experience at the fair. Our collaboration with ADMAF and National Pavilion UAE also speaks to the close ties that connect all our local cultural institutions and our united efforts to support the local art ecosystem through all our endeavors.”

Laila Binbrek, Coordinating Director of the National Pavilion UAE, said, “Following an outstanding response to *Passage* at the 2019 Venice Biennale, we are pleased to be presenting this thought-provoking video installation in Abu Dhabi. Through poetry and film, Nujoom Alghanem articulates a unique perspective on the universal experience of displacement. Our ten participations to date at the Venice Biennale are a testament to the National Pavilion UAE’s mission of telling the untold stories of the UAE and reflecting the growth and maturity of our local creative industries. Our participation in La Biennale has enabled us to use our platform for dialogue across interwoven communities. The UAE premiere of *Passage* was made possible thanks to the support of our partners, Abu Dhabi Art and the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation, and we are looking forward to presenting this body of work here in the UAE.”

In a cross collaboration with ADMAF, *Passage* will also be presented in ADMAF’s *Portrait of a Nation II* exhibition. Part of ADMAF’s annual Abu Dhabi Festival, the exhibition offers insight into the creative practices of nearly 60 contemporary artists who call the UAE home. Key themes of the exhibition include collaboration, cultural mapping and innovation, all of which reflect on the UAE’s history, identity and progressive art scene. The exhibition will take place from January until April 2022.

H.E. Huda I. Alkhamis-Kanoo, Founder of the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation and Founder and Artistic Director of Abu Dhabi Festival, said, “ADMAF has a long history of collaboration with the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi which is at the heart of the mission we both share to nurture creativity in unity with our nation’s art ecosystem. We are pleased to partner with Abu Dhabi Art and the National Pavilion UAE to present *Passage*, Nujoom Alghanem’s unique use of fiction and reality to explore the universal experience of displacement. Bringing the Emirati artist’s seminal work to be shown for the first time in the UAE reflects ADMAF’s 25 years of dedication to cultivating and supporting artists in the UAE.”

Passage is shown in the form of a two-channel video presenting two distinct narratives – one real, one fictional – simultaneously projected on opposite sides of the same screen. The “real” narrative follows Alghanem and Hawijeh, a renowned Syrian actress who resides in the UAE, as they create a film for the Pavilion. The “fictional” narrative portrays Falak, a displaced woman played by Hawijeh, as she travels on an arduous journey that culminates in her arriving at the National Pavilion UAE’s permanent space in Venice. The two films are bound by one shared soundtrack, which evokes a different meaning for each narrative. At several moments, Alghanem’s voice is heard reciting segments from her poetry.

Nujoom Alghanem said, “After waiting more than two years, *Passage* finds its way back home where it was founded as an idea, developed, and the majority of it produced before it was finalised and premiered in Venice. Thanks to Abu Dhabi Art and Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation for their collaboration to provide all the resources and support for the project to be introduced to the audience in the UAE. I would also like to thank Sheikha Salama Bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation for commissioning the project and the Ministry of Culture and Youth for their support.”

She added, “As an artist I am grateful that I had the opportunity to produce this film in collaboration with two remarkable curators such as Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath for the National Pavilion UAE in a time that felt unpredictable when it comes to displacement and shifting realities. However, taking note of the current events around the world, the concept of *Passage* is a symbolic portrayal of the stories many displaced individuals have experienced. It demonstrates that art has the ability to be a witnessing eye to reflect on current issues and the ability to create parallel realities that are beyond imagination.”

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated 136-page publication under the same title, edited by Bardaouil and Fellrath. The publication is available in English and Arabic language editions and includes an essay by the curators, an interview with the artist, several poems by Alghanem, and a selection of imagery from the film. The publication will be available for purchase at Manarat Al Saadiyat for the duration of Abu Dhabi Art Fair 2021. It is also available on [Art Book](#), [Amazon](#) and [Silvana Editoriale](#).

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

Following the Abu Dhabi Emergency, Crisis and Disasters Committee’s latest regulations and requirements for attending events and exhibitions, visitors will need to have a ‘green’ status on the COVID-19 tracking app, AlHosn, and a negative PCR test taken within 96 hours.

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](#).

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Notes to Editors:

ABU DHABI ART

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.

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 Gateway

An annual art exhibition, in Manarat Al Saadiyat, that highlights local and international artists through a unique curatorial perspective. Each year a guest curator is invited to curate the exhibition.

About Nujoom Alghanem

Nujoom Alghanem (b. 1962) is an award-winning poet, filmmaker, and artist from the UAE. Over the course of her career in the arts, Nujoom has published eight poetry collections which have been translated to eight different languages, she has directed and produced more than 20 films including short art and fiction films in addition to feature documentaries. She is also a film, media and cultural consultant to educational and professional institutes and organizations in the UAE. Nujoom is also one of the founding members of the Emirates Writers Union (1984).

In 2021, Nujoom presented "Malamih - Faces, Phantoms, Expressions" which is a comprehensive body of work that was shown for the first time in Maraya Art Center in Sharjah, UAE. In addition to her well-received commissioned work, *Passage*, for the National Pavilion UAE's exhibition at the 58th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2019, her work was previously featured at the National Pavilion UAE in the 2017 group exhibition 'Rock, Paper, Scissors: Positions in Play'.

Some of her recent films were *Rain on my Skin* (2018), *Writer's Room* (2018), *Sharp Tools* (2017) which won around ten regional and International awards, *Honey, Rain and Dust* (2016), *Nearby Sky* (2014), which won Best Non-Fiction Prize in the Muhr Feature Competition at the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) and Best Documentary from GCC Film Festival, 2016, Abu Dhabi, *Sound of the Sea* (2014), which was awarded a Special Jury Prize at the Alexandria Mediterranean Countries Film Festival and *Amal* (2011), which won several awards including a Special Jury Prize from the Beirut International Film Festival. In addition, some of Alghanem's other documentary films include *Hamama* (2010), *Between Two Banks* (1999), and *Al Mureed* (2008), winner of the Best Documentary in the Gulf from the Abu Dhabi Film Festival.

Also a poet, Alghanem has written eight poetry collections including *Asqoto Fi Nafsi [I Fall Into Myself]* (2012), *Layloun Thakilon Alla Allayle [Heavy Night on the Night]* (2010), *Malaikat Al-Ashwaaq Al-Baeeda [Angels of Distant Longing]* (2008), *La Wasf Lima Ana Feeh [No Describing What I Am In]* (2005), *Manazel Al-Jilnaar [Homes of Pomegranate Blossoms]* (2000), *Rawahel [Journeys]* (1996), *Al-Jarair [The Sins]* (1991), and *Masaa Al-Janah [Evening of Heaven]* (1989).

Nujoom holds a Master's degree in Film Production from Griffith University School of Film in Australia, and a Bachelor's degree in Video Production from Ohio University, USA.

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.

National Pavilion UAE – La Biennale di Venezia

The National Pavilion UAE – La Biennale di Venezia is an award-winning pavilion which curates untold stories about the UAE's arts and architecture through its participation at the Venice Biennale, and provides a high-profile platform for curatorial concepts that address critical international conversations from a distinctive local perspective.

For each annual edition of the Biennale, one of the world's most significant and rigorous cultural platforms, the National Pavilion UAE appoints and works with curators, artists, and contributors to conceive, research and develop an exhibition and accompanying publication that advance and preserve understanding of the UAE's cultural landscape.

Since 2009, its exhibitions have explored the nation's cultural evolution from 20th century experimental artists to the diverse contemporary scene. In 2021, National Pavilion UAE's exhibition titled *Wetland* was curated by architects Wael Al Awar and Kenichi Teramoto, who presented research into an innovative sustainable cement alternative inspired from salt minerals found in the UAE's Sabkha heritage sites, was awarded the Golden Lion for best National Participation at La Biennale Architettura 2021, marking the National Pavilion's 10th participation in the Venice Biennale. In the coming year, the National Pavilion UAE's exhibition will showcase works by ground-breaking painter, sculptor, and land artist Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim at the 2022 edition of la Biennale di Venezia (Venice Biennale).

Passage, the National Pavilion UAE's well-received exhibition at the 58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, created by Nujoom Alghanem and curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, will return to the UAE. The installation will be exhibited at Abu Dhabi Art 2021 in Manarat Al Saadiyat, from 17-21 November, and will be presented as part of Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Festival exhibition *Portrait of a Nation*, from January 2022 - April 2022. The return of *Passage* to the UAE was made possible by our partners Abu Dhabi Art and Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Festival.

In parallel with its exhibitions in Venice, the National Pavilion UAE engages with communities in the UAE to support the growth of the local cultural and creative industries, through public programming and professional opportunities. Alongside an extensive pool of artists, curators, researchers and partners who have contributed to its exhibitions over the years, the UAE's Venice Internship program has provided training and hands-on experience to more than 200 interns, many of whom are now working successfully in cultural fields.

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.

National Pavilion UAE Commissioner: The Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation

The Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation (SHF) is a private not-for-profit foundation committed to the cultivation of a more creative, connected and thriving UAE community. Based in Abu Dhabi, SHF oversees a diverse portfolio of not-for-profit programs and initiatives spanning the arts, culture, heritage, human development and early childhood development in the UAE and internationally. Underpinning SHF's activities is a common ambition to invest in the knowledge and capabilities of the UAE people in order to support them to unlock their full potential.

National Pavilion UAE Supporter: Ministry of Culture and Youth

The Ministry of Culture and Youth works to enrich the cultural ecosystem in the UAE through initiatives and policies that stimulate the development of the cultural and creative industries and its contribution to the country's GDP, developing new legislation and policies that promote integrated media growth in the country and creating avenues for the youth to invest their capabilities in the aforementioned fields.

The Ministry of Culture and Youth is responsible for empowering and engaging the youth in the UAE by enhancing their leadership skills, involving them in decision-making process and programs, and giving them opportunities to contribute to the creative development of the country.

La Biennale di Venezia

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DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE
AND TOURISM

La Biennale di Venezia was established in 1895 and is today acknowledged as one of the most prestigious cultural institutions. La Biennale di Venezia stands at the forefront of research and promotion of new contemporary art trends, and organizes events in all its specific sectors: Arts (1895), Architecture (1980), Cinema (1932), Dance (1999), Music (1930), and Theatre (1934), alongside research and training activities. The history of La Biennale di Venezia is documented in its Historical Archives located at Marghera Venice and in its Library at the Giardini's Central Pavilion. The International Art and Architecture Exhibitions have had a new structure since 1998. In recent years, La Biennale promoted new Educational activities, training programmes (Biennale College), conferences and panels in its headquarters at Ca' Giustinian, close to San Marco square.

Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation

Founded in 1996, ADMAF is one of the oldest not-for-profit cultural organisations in the Arabian Gulf. Pioneering new artistic practices, it seeks to deepen global cross-cultural dialogue and inspire a renewed interest in the creativity of the UAE and Arab world. Often in partnership with leading national and international institutions, it delivers multidisciplinary initiatives for people of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities through the Abu Dhabi Festival, year-round youth platforms and community programmes.

For more information, please visit www.admaf.org

About Abu Dhabi Festival

Founded in 2004, Abu Dhabi Festival was initially a small arts and culture platform that soon graduated to one of the world's premiere annual events. Held in the UAE, it celebrates artistic and creative excellence, and promotes the role of music and the arts in bringing nations closer. It also promotes Abu Dhabi as a leading global hub for creativity and as an Emirati beacon for respect and tolerance.

Strengthened by a growing network of 30 international partners, the festival brings audiences together each year to enjoy world premieres and exclusive commissions in the UAE and around the world.

For more information, please visit www.abudhabifestival.ae