

PRESS RELEASE

## Abu Dhabi Art announces it will return this year as a virtual fair

### Guest curators draw on diverse perspectives for the most global iteration of the fair to date

*12<sup>th</sup> edition of Abu Dhabi Art to run as a virtual fair from 19-26 November 2020, with a strong public programme hosted on an interactive platform*

Abu Dhabi, UAE, 15 October 2020: The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi has announced that the 12th edition Abu Dhabi Art will take place from 19 – 26 November 2020 as a virtual fair. An interactive digital edition of Abu Dhabi Art will bring together galleries and artists from across the world in a number of curated gallery exhibitions and sectors. For the first time ever, 6 guest curators will work with galleries and artists to present work online, each with a different geographic focus. Integrating live-stream video interviews with artists, curators and gallerists, the 2020 digital fair will also host a public Performing Arts Programme, presented alongside a number of engaging projects for the public.

Commenting on the 2020 digital version of the fair, **HE Saood Al Hosani, Acting Undersecretary of the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi** said: “Abu Dhabi Art has always been a notable player in our Emirate’s growing cultural landscape. It has and continues to play a significant role in fulfilling Abu Dhabi’s ambition to become an artistically conscious city of global relevance. For the fair to take place at this time is more important than ever and a testament to our commitment to developing the art scene. Abu Dhabi Art is adapting to the new reality that the world is facing and will play an instrumental role in supporting the culture sector at this critical period by offering a platform of encounters for galleries, artists, curators and collectors and by continuing to provide rich content and interactive experiences to the wider community.

For each of the new gallery sectors at the fair, Abu Dhabi Art has invited an internationally renowned curator to highlight works from a number of different geographies. Looking at different contemporary art scenes from around the world, the sectors will encompass ‘The Day After’, a sector dedicated to contemporary art from across the African continent curated by **Simon Njami**; ‘Contemporary Korean Art’, looking at contemporary art from South Korea, curated by **Sung woo Kim**; the ‘India Today’ section, looking at the Indian subcontinent, curated by gallerist **Ashwin Thadani**; as well as ‘A Picture Held Us Captive’, a section on contemporary artists represented by UAE galleries, curated by **Nada Raza**. With a return to Performance Art being integrated in the Fair, **Rose Lejeune**, Associate Curator for the Delfina Foundation’s Collecting as Practice programme in London, will curate this year’s Performing Arts programme adapting to this year’s digital format.

**Dyala Nusseibeh, Director of Abu Dhabi Art** added: “This year we have invited numerous leading curators to work with galleries and their artists across existing and new gallery sectors for the fair, enabling diverse and compelling curatorial frameworks to emerge. After what has been an exceptionally difficult year for the global art world, we are committed to supporting galleries that have been exhibiting with Abu Dhabi Art for years while continuing to develop new markets for the Emirates. In line with our capacity to invest in and provide meaningful curatorial content for every iteration of Abu Dhabi Art, this

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year will continue to see exhibition formats for our galleries brought together through the insights of guest curators.”

The fair will also feature, ‘Beyond: Emerging Artists’ by **Maya El Khalil**, a curated selection of new work by emerging artists from across the UAE, highlighting Abu Dhabi Art’s commitment to supporting emerging artists in the development of their work.

A Talks Programme will also be available online, offering a series of stimulating cultural talks featuring some of the art world’s leading figures, which aim to engage audiences in discussions related to the complex history of the UAE and contemporary art practice in the country and around the world.

The fair’s upcoming edition will be live from Thursday 19 November to Thursday 26 November 2020.

For more information on Abu Dhabi Art 2020 and its year-round programmes, visit [abudhabiart.ae](http://abudhabiart.ae) and follow Abu Dhabi Art on social media: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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**For press enquiries please contact:**

Angela Borkhoche / Katie Campbell  
Brunswick Arts  
[ABUDHABIART@brunswickgroup.com](mailto:ABUDHABIART@brunswickgroup.com)

**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 conserves and promotes the heritage and culture of Abu Dhabi emirate and leverages them in the development of a world-class, sustainable destination of distinction that enriches the lives of visitors and residents alike. The Department manages the emirate’s tourism sector and markets the destination internationally through a wide range of activities aimed at attracting visitors and investment. Its policies, plans and programmes relate to the preservation of heritage and culture, including protecting archaeological and historical sites and to developing museums, including the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Zayed National Museum and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. The Department of Culture and Tourism supports intellectual and artistic activities and cultural events to nurture a rich cultural environment and honour the emirate’s heritage. A key role played by the Department is to create synergy in the destination’s development through close co-ordination with its wide-ranging stakeholder base.

**About Simon Njami**

Simon Njami is a Paris-based independent curator, lecturer, art critic and novelist. Njami was the co-founder and Editor-in-Chief of *Revue Noire*, a journal of contemporary African and extra-occidental art. He has served as the Artistic Director of the first Johannesburg art fair in 2008, the Bamako photography biennale for 10 years, and the Dak’art Biennale (2018/2018). He also co-curated the first African pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007.

Njami has curated numerous exhibitions of contemporary art and photography, including *Africa Remix* (2004/2007) and the first African Art Fair, held in Johannesburg in 2008; *The Divine Comedy* (2013), at the MMK (Museum fur Moderne Kunst) in Frankfurt; *SCAD, Savannah* (2014) and *The Smithsonian* in Washington DC (2015); *Xenopolis* in Berlin (2015); *Afriques Capitales* in Paris and Lille (2017); and *Metropolis Maxxi* (2018).

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He was member of the scientific boards of numerous museums and a visiting professor at the University of California San Diego (UCSD).

In 1998, he created the Pan-African master classes in photography, with the Goethe Institut, which he then directed for more than 12 years. Njami also set up the collection of contemporary art for the Memorial Acte museum in Guadeloupe. He has published and edited numerous books, with the latest being *Stories Histories: The Story of Revue Noire* (2020).

Njami studied literature, law and philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris.

Simon Njami is Curator of the gallery sector “The Day After” at Abu Dhabi Art 2020

### **About Sung woo Kim**

Sung woo Kim is an independent curator and writer. He is interested in curatorial methodologies that produce and pose questions relating to time and space, and investigates how to reflect individuals' subjectivities in the form of exhibition. Kim directed the curatorial programme and management of Amado Art Space, Seoul (2015-2019), and was appointed as an artistic director in the curatorial collective formed for the Gwangju Biennale (2018). This year, he was appointed as a curatorial advisor for the Busan Biennale.

The exhibitions and projects he has curated include *Glider* (Gallery2, Seoul, 2020); *Anamorphose* : depict but blurry, distant but vivid (WESS, Seoul, 2020); *MINUS HOURS* (Wumin Art Center, Cheongju, 2019); *Tracing, Detouring, Piercing* (Hakgojae Gallery, Seoul, 2020); *Remembrance has a rear and front* (publishing project, Hejuk Press, 2019); *The 12th Gwangju Biennale: Imagined Borders* (Gwangju Biennale Exhibition Hall, Asia Culture Center, 2018); *Different Kinds of White* (P21, 2018); *Black Night, Video Night* (d/p, 2018); *sunday is monday, monday is sunday* (Space Willing n Dealing, 2018); *Blank Shot* (Art Sonje Center, Seoul, 2017); *Nobody's Space* (Amado Art Space, 2016); *Platform. B* (Amado Art Space, 2015).

Sung woo Kim is Curator of the gallery sector “Korean Contemporary Art”, Abu Dhabi Art 2020

### **About Ashwin Thadani**

Ashwin Thadani founded Galerie Isa in 2011, and has since established the gallery as a leading proponent of international contemporary art on the Indian subcontinent. He has been deeply committed to the growth of the gallery since its inception and has played an integral role in exhibiting works of several critically acclaimed International artists, such as Diana Al-Hadid, Ali Banisadr, Adrian Ghenie, Olafur Eliasson and Idris Khan among others.

Ashwin Thadani is Curator for the second year of the gallery sector “India Today”, Abu Dhabi Art 2020

### **About Nada Raza**

Nada Raza is Curatorial Advisor for Alserkal Arts Foundation. She was the founding Artistic Director of the Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai, where she curated *Altered Inheritance: Home is a Foreign Place* with Shilpa Gupta and Zarina Hashmi, and *Body Building*, a thematic exhibition of lens-based work, both in 2019. Prior to this, Raza was Research Curator at Tate Research Centre: Asia, with a particular focus on South Asia. Raza co-curated *Bhupen Khakhar: You Can't Please All* (2016), and organised displays of work by international artists including Meshac Gaba, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Zarina Hashmi, Sheela Gowda, Amar Kanwar and Mrinalini Mukherjee. Raza was guest curator of the *Abraaj Capital Art Prize* (2014) and curated a thematic exhibition, *The Missing One*, for the Dhaka Art Summit in Bangladesh and the Office for Contemporary Art in Norway (2016). She has also worked on international art at the Institute for International Visual Art (Iniva) and at Green Cardamom in London. She holds an MA from the Chelsea College of Art and Design and is a doctoral candidate at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

Nada Raza is Curator of the gallery sector “A Picture Held Us Captive”, Abu Dhabi Art 2020

### **About Maya El Khalil**

Born in Beirut, currently lives in Oxford, UK.

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Maya El-Khalil is an independent curator, who for the last decade has been working locally, regionally and internationally with artists, collectors and institutions to develop the identity and ideas that have defined the contemporary art scene in Saudi Arabia. From its inception in 2009 until 2016, she was the Founding Director of Athr, a leading contemporary art gallery based in Jeddah. She is the curator of the 7th Edition of 21,39 Jeddah Arts.

El Khalil holds a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering and an MBA from the American University of Beirut. She is currently enrolled in an MA Program in Art and Politics at Goldsmiths University.

Maya El-Khalil is Curator of the programme "Beyond: Emerging Artists", Abu Dhabi Art 2020

#### **About Rose Lejeune**

Rose Lejeune is a London-based curator and researcher focused on creating sustainable, cross-sector mechanisms to support the production and collection of contemporary art across the whole range of materials and mediums that artists today use.

In addition to regular writing and public speaking on these topics, she is currently working towards Performance Exchange, a UK-wide project working to embed performance within collections, and highlight the work commercial galleries do to support artists across the spectrum of contemporary art materials and practices. Rose is also the Associate Curator for the Delfina Foundation's Collecting as Practice programme where she developed the groundbreaking programme that looks at the politics and economics of global collections.

Rose's current curatorial activities have developed following a decade of experience working with public organisations throughout the UK and in particular working closely with artists to commission for non-gallery situations. This includes as Curator for Art on the Underground, and Education Projects Curator at the Serpentine Gallery. Rose holds a BA in Philosophy and Art History, and an MA in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art. Finally, Rose is currently a PhD candidate in Curating at Goldsmiths College, University of London, where her research focuses on curatorial frameworks for performance art in, and out, of the art market.

Rose Lejeune is Curator of Performance, Abu Dhabi Art 2020