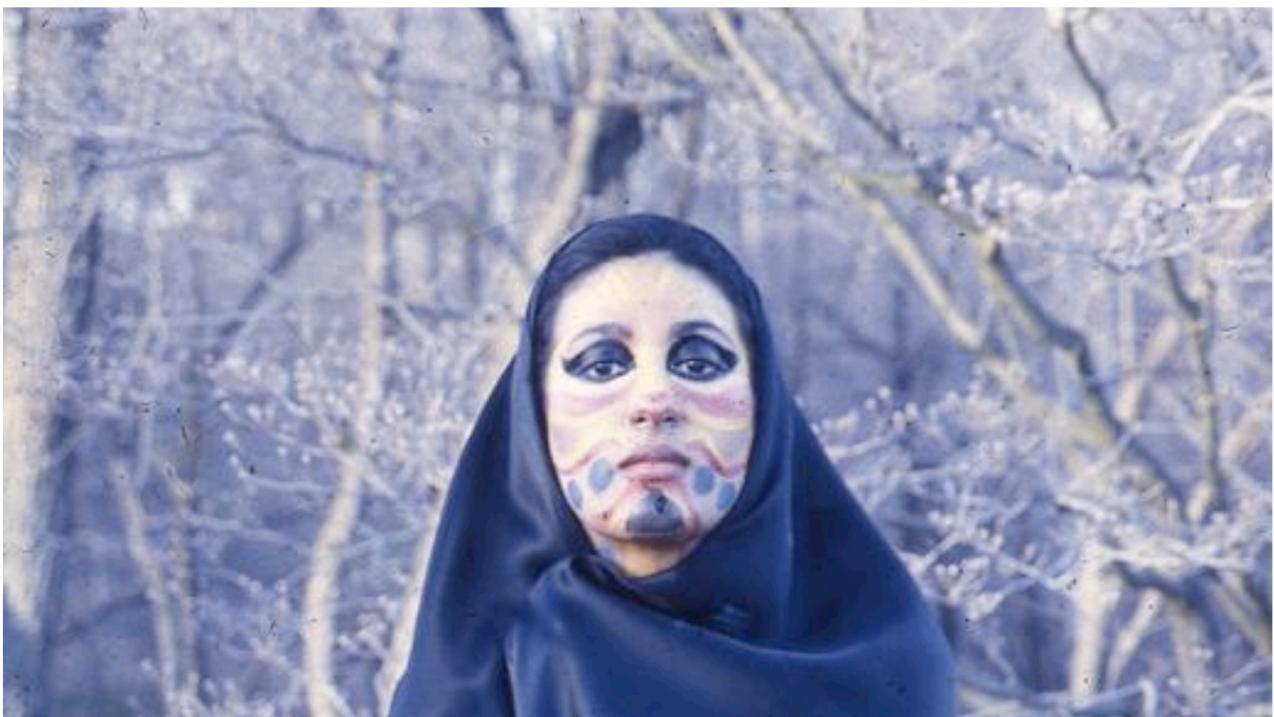


Revealed: Artworks to be displayed in National Pavilion of the UAE at 2017 Venice Biennale

The artworks consist of a mix of newly commissioned pieces as well as existing works and new iterations of old projects.



Nujoom Alghanem's *Between Heaven and Earth, the Body I Borrowed*. Courtesy Nujoom Alghanem

The artworks that will be displayed in the National Pavilion of the UAE at the Venice Biennale have been announced.

They consist of a mix of newly commissioned pieces as well as existing works and new iterations of old projects.

Vikram Divecha's *Degenerative Disarrangement* is a piece made in 2013 when the artist persuaded the RTA to allow him to take bricks from an existing bus stop and were then rearranged by the same workers who laid them in random patterns.

These bricks will be re-laid in for the art event, bringing another dimension to the work. He will also show a new work called *Bathing Boulders*, which is a commissioned video piece showing the process of washing large rocks that were part of a 2014 project.

Nujoom Alghanem will present *Between Heaven and Earth, the Body I Borrowed*, a sound installation based on a poetry performance, *Space*, a visual poem, and a reproduction of *Silsilat Al Ramad, Volume 1*, a self-published journal produced by the artist and other members of the Aqwas collective in 1985.

Sara Al Haddad will contribute three crocheted textile installations, including one existing work titled *As you try to forget me* and two new commissions: a hanging screen called *Don't you ever leave me alone* and *Can't you see how I feel* for which Haddad sheaths one of the black steel pillars supporting the pavilion in different sized crocheted layers of pink yarn.

Lantian Xie's work is a collection of small objects such as a used ashtray, half a cup of tea and a stuffed peacock. There will also be an evolving work that develops over the course of the six-month event.

Lastly Mohamed Yousif has refabricated two previous works which were no longer in existence. *Al insiyabiyya bil majadeef that al MAA*, is a large-scale installation of wooden oars, and Al Shawahid, an assemblage of spoons placed above a burial mound, with a small mirror affixed in its centre.

In addition to the primary artworks Dubai-based artists Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh and Hesam Rahmanian have been commissioned to contribute a 30-page series of paintings and collages for the exhibition's publication.

The book, which aims to be more than a simply catalogue and to be another exploration of the pavilion's theme of playfulness, also contains a series of fables written by Deepak Unnikrishnan and a map of informal spaces of play in the UAE compiled by *WTD* magazine.

These creative responses to the exhibition's themes will sit alongside a series of essays. Murtaza Vali, an art historian and curator has explored the artistic genealogy of play in the UAE in his essay with a focus on the works of Hassan Sharif and Abdullah Al Saadi.

Uzma Rizvi has written about fluidity and spaces of belonging and Osman Samiuddin, a sports writer at *The National* has contributed a piece on cricket, its history and stories within the UAE.

Finally Aisha Bilkhair, an ethnomusicologist analysed Afro-Emirati music and folkloric games, and Reem Fadda and Maissa Al Qassimi wrote about the research on Abu Dhabi's social clubs.

It is a large and thorough project that brings in contributors from across several disciplines and with varying levels of experience.

"Play and playfulness are vehicles through which we as children learn to understand the world around us and navigate our place in it," explains Hammad Nasar, the curator of this year's pavilion. "This exhibition foregrounds a selection of artists whose practice takes this process of understanding and navigation as a source of inspiration and vitality."

"With more than half a million visitors attending each edition, the International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale is one of the world's most prominent cultural events.

"The UAE is proud to be participating for the fifth time with an exhibition that captures a snapshot of the diverse cultural and creative conversations to which our nation is home," says Khulood Al Atiyat, Manager of Arts, Culture and Heritage at the Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation.

The Venice Biennale opens to the public on May 13 and runs until November 26.

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