

Three's company

by Muhammad Yusuf

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SIKKA Art Fair, an artist-led fair of fully commissioned works, by the Dubai Culture & Arts Authority (Dubai Culture) is hosting an impressive line-up of 50 Emirati and UAE-based artists, in addition to three collectives and two arts initiatives, for its fifth edition (Mar. 14-24). It brings arts to the public through city-wide programmes that include visual arts projects, music, live performances, video art and workshops.

With Al Fahidi Historical Neighbourhood as the vibrant hub of SIKKA, this year's fair once again puts the spotlight on the UAE talent by showcasing contemporary art initiatives.

This year, SIKKA is curated by Jamal Luqman, an Emirati mixed media artist, with over two decades of experience and credited with introducing digital art to the UAE in 1996. His contribution to the Emirati art scene has expanded from producing pioneering art to advocating the progression of Emirati artists.

The artists who have been commissioned to create exclusive works of art for SIKKA include Dr Najat Mekki, a renowned Emirati artist who derives inspiration from the Gulf region and reflects it in her abstract paintings; Abdul Qader Al Rais, one of the UAE's most celebrated artists who, since the age of fourteen, has defined his distinct identity and individuality in the world of fine arts; and Mattar Bin Lahej, well-known Emirati sculptor.

Also at SIKKA are commissioned works by Ammar Kalo, Balqees Sabir, Buthaina Mattar Bin Lahej, Carl-Henry Cadet, Cristiano Luchetti, Farah Al Balooshi, Fatma Saeed, Flounder Lee, Hamdan Al Shamsi, Hatem Hatem, Hayah Taimur, Hazem Mahdy, Hessa Al Awadhi, Jalal Bin Thaneya, Jonathan Asangna, Kasia Dzikowska, Khulood Al Jabri, Laura McNabb, Maram Alkhachroum, Michael Conduit, Musab Al Rais, Nahel Selo, Nourah Abdullah, Qing Zhu, Rashid Al Mulla, Reem Al Rawi, Saif Mhaisen, Salama Mohammed, Sumaya Al Rais, Wael Hatter, Waleed Al Wawi and Zaahirah Muthy.

SIKKA also features collectives by Design House, Sarah Alagroobi & Noor Jarrah, and Farah Al Amin & Nada Waleed, which explore multidisciplinary art forms including design and installations.

Further, two landmark initiatives are being showcased – 'Engaging Territories' by Zayed University and The Animation Chamber, which celebrates Arabian folktales.

A wide range of community oriented activities are being held as part of SIKKA, including art workshops, calligraphy shows, poetry evenings, discussions on animation, filmmaking workshops, gypsum carving, drama workshop and box painting installation, among others. Majlis Gallery, Al Majlis, Tashkeel, XVA and Mawaheb are joining SIKKA this year with special events.

Additionally, Artists-in-Residence (A.i.R) Dubai, a dedicated contemporary art programme that includes emphasis on visual arts, provides open studios during SIKKA for artists to display their works.

SIKKA draws its name from the alleyways between the historic houses of Dubai, and serves as a metaphor that befits the young and upcoming artists who seek to establish their creative and professional paths through their participation in the fair. All sessions are open to the public.

Alserkal Avenue, one of Dubai's established art hubs, has announced the launch of a new homegrown programme dedicated to support dialogue and the production of performance, public art and social practice with special consideration and programmatic support for artists living and working in the MENASA region. The new programme that includes fresh commissions to premiere during Dubai Art Week this month, comes on the heels of a \$14 million expansion project.

The Avenue's new creative direction that includes the homegrown programme and a new Programming Committee — an international assembly of curators, historians, patrons and art-world professionals to advise it — embraces international projects in Venice and London later this year.

Art Jameel and the Crossway Foundation have announced their partnership on the Jameel Journey to Andalucía 2015. Continuing the two organisations' long-standing collaboration, six young photographers from Saudi Arabia have been selected to explore the Islamic heritage of Andalucía on the journey of a lifetime in April 2015.

A total of 15 promising young photographers from Saudi Arabia were shortlisted from hundreds of applicants to the Art Jameel Photography Award and interviewed by Art Jameel and the Crossway Foundation. Six participants were selected for their photographic talent and creative potential.

In Spain, the group will practice cutting-edge photographic techniques in the magnificent settings of Córdoba, Seville, Granada and Madrid. The majority of the participants are self-taught photographers who will benefit enormously from working with innovative photography collectives and professional photographers.

The Spanish organisation, Casa Árabe, has been closely involved in the project from its inception and its Madrid and Córdoba headquarters will serve as a base for the participants during their time in Spain.

Art Jameel, one of Abdul Latif Jameel Community Initiatives, fosters and promotes contemporary art and creative entrepreneurship across the MENAT region. Art Jameel Photography Award (AJPA) is one of Art Jameel's initiatives.

Crossway Foundation is a UK-based charitable foundation delivering arts and education initiatives for young people in the Middle East and the UK. Casa Árabe is a Spanish public consortium headed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. It operates as a strategic centre for Spain's relations with the Arab world.