



The Sovereign Middle East & North Africa Art Prize

Presented At

ART NOMADS – MADE IN THE EMIRATES

9 – 22 December 2016

@ MOMENTUM, The Bethanien Art Center, Berlin

Following 12 successful years of Art Prize events in Asia, most notably Hong Kong, The Sovereign Art Foundation (SAF) arrived in the UAE in October 2016 with the inaugural Sovereign Middle East & North Africa Art Prize (MENA).

Now recognised as the biggest and most prestigious contemporary art prize in its region, SAF's Sovereign Asian Art Prize is designed to showcase the most important mid-career artists working within Asia Pacific, while raising money to help disadvantaged children. The migration of this prize to the UAE and MENA region has been met with great anticipation.

To date, The Sovereign Art Foundation has raised over US\$5 million for charities and artists worldwide and has used art to transform the lives of thousands of children around the world. By presenting the inaugural MENA event in partnership with START - a non-profit organisation which runs art-based workshops for orphans, refugees and special needs children across the MENA region - the Foundation aims to raise funds to sustain existing START projects, in addition to helping in their mission to expand their reach to more vulnerable children.

To determine the Top 30 finalists of the Prize, an independent board of nominators made up of over 20 of the region's independent art professionals including curators, art historians and art writers from top museums, galleries and universities, nominated over 200 mid-career artists to feature in the competition. Through a rigorous selection process, that talented pool of artists was then narrowed down to 30 finalists by a panel of world class art professionals - among them, Tim

Marlow from the Royal Academy, collector Fati Maleki, Alserkal Avenue's Abdelmonem Alserkal, and noted curators David Elliot and Simon Njami.

The finalists' works were publically exhibited at Alserkal Avenue in Dubai, where the public were invited to cast a vote for their favourite piece. The judging panel named Alfred Tarazi of Lebanon as Grand Prize Winner of the 2016 Prize edition and recipient of US\$30,000 for his work *LEFT/RIGHT: scheme for a temporary memorial*. Mayasa Al Sowaidi of Bahrain was crowned winner of the Public Vote Prize and awarded US\$1,000 for her piece *Tea Whisper*.

The finalists' works are auctioned, with 40% of the sale price going to the artist, and the other 60% going to further charity work with disadvantaged children around the region.

For ***Art Nomads – Made in The Emirates***, MOMENTUM is proud to present, in partnership with **the Sovereign MENA Art Prize**, their finalists from the UAE: **Hazem Harb, Nadia Kaabi-Linke, and Walid Al Wawi**.

Art Nomads – Made in the Emirates: From Abu Dhabi comes an exhibition of art from the United Arab Emirates. A young art, new to figuration, it is unsullied by the overbearing preconceptions of western art history, in the most exciting stages of finding its own voice. Showcasing the work of 20 artists, 60% of whom are women, it is a co-curation by Zsuzsanna Petró of the Etihad Modern Art Gallery, David Szauder, and Rachel Rits-Volloch of MOMENTUM, who is responsible for the Sovereign MENA Art Prize program and the symposium accompanying the exhibition, taking place at Berlin's Bethanien Art Center on 9-22 December 2016, in cooperation with the Etihad Modern Art Gallery and The Sovereign Art Foundation.

The Sovereign MENA Art Prize program presents work by artists based in the UAE who were selected as finalists in this year's inaugural Sovereign MENA Art Prize. The exhibition is accompanied by a symposium on cultural capital: Abu Dhabi builds the Louvre and the Guggenheim with the world's top architects, while Berlin rebuilds its Stadtschloss, re-homes its museums, and brings famous museum directors from London to run its theaters. Is this a parallel trajectory? Is Abu Dhabi going for the "Berlin Effect" of cultural capital? We invite art professionals working in and with the UAE to discuss this and other questions linking the two cities.

Art Nomads – Made in the Emirates and ***Made in Berlin*** are two sister exhibitions bridging two capitol cities redefining themselves through art; two radically different cultures following parallel

trajectories; two places which voraciously ingest influences from abroad, yet produce cultural outputs inextricably linked to the identity of each city.

Art Nomads – Made in Berlin: From Berlin, the city of art nomads, comes an exhibition of art from elsewhere, about otherness, on the move to somewhere else. Showcasing the work of approximately 30 Berlin-based artists, it is a co-curation by 3 Berlin-based curators – David Szauder, Rachel Rits-Volloch, and Constanze Kleiner. The exhibition will take place at the Etihad Modern Art Gallery in Abu Dhabi in February - March 2017.

Howard Bilton, Chairman and Founder of The Sovereign Art Foundation, said of the inaugural Sovereign MENA Art Prize:

“This was our first prize in the Middle East region. Creating the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Prize was something that was very much in our minds for several years now so we are pleased that we managed to get this away so well. Our judges Tim Marlow, David Elliott, Simon Njami, Fati Maleki and Abdelmonem Bin Eisa Alserkal were all extremely impressed and pleased with the quality of the finalists, as indeed were we. Interestingly 14 of the 30 finalists were women.

The prize builds on the 12 successful prizes we run in the Asia region. And, of course, we hope and expect this will be an annual event from now on, which will grow in strength and importance. We believe that it is an exciting time for art in the MENA region. As in Asia, we hope that we can contribute to the growing success of the talented artists in the region whilst raising money which we will plough back into the art community assisting disadvantaged children in the MENA region.”

About The Sovereign Art Foundation (SAF)

The Sovereign Art Foundation is a charity founded in 2003 in Hong Kong, which is now also registered in the UK, Singapore, Guernsey and South Africa. SAF runs the annual Sovereign Asian Art Prize with the purpose of raising money to help disadvantaged children. Since its inception, SAF has raised over US\$5 million for charities and artists worldwide, funding projects using art as education, rehabilitation and therapy for disadvantaged children. The Sovereign Asian Art Prize is now in its 13th year and is the biggest, best known and most prestigious arts prize in the Asia region. In 2016, SAF launched the inaugural MENA Art Prize, for the Middle East & North Africa region.

www.sovereignartfoundation.com



About MOMENTUM

MOMENTUM is a non-profit platform for time-based art, active worldwide since 2010, with headquarters in Berlin at the Kunstquartier Bethanien Art Center. MOMENTUM's program is composed of local and international Exhibitions, Artist and Curator Residencies, Video Art in Public Space Initiatives, a Performance Program and Archive, an Education Initiative and Archive, and a growing Collection. Positioned as both a local and global platform, MOMENTUM serves as a bridge joining professional art communities, irrespective of institutional and national borders. Working on a model of international partnerships and co-operations, MOMENTUM supports artists and artistic innovation, bringing to Berlin work by international artists that would not otherwise have been seen here, and ensuring an international audience for exceptional local artists. By enabling Exhibition, Discussion, Research, Creation, Collection, and Exchange, MOMENTUM is a platform which challenges the notion of time-based art in the context of both historical and technological development, continuously seeking innovative answers to the question 'What is time-based art?'

<http://momentumworldwide.org/about-us/mission/>