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SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION

Announces Winners of Sharjah Biennial 10 Prize: *Trisha Donnelly, Imran Qureshi, Rania Stephan, Rayyane Tabet, and Jalal Toufic*

Sharjah Biennial's 10th Edition, Plot for a Biennial, Continues With Eight Weeks of Cutting-Edge Visual Art, Film, Music, Performance, and Publications

March 16 - May 16, 2011

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE), March 17, 2011 —The **Sharjah Art Foundation** announces recipients of the 2011 **Sharjah Biennial Prize** as the 10th edition of the **Sharjah Biennial, *Plot for a Biennial***, continues with eight weeks of cutting-edge exhibitions, film, performance, music and publications, **March 16 – May 16, 2011**. Honorees of this year's award totaling \$30,000 include **Trisha Donnelly, Imran Qureshi, Rania Stephan, Rayyane Tabet, and Jalal Toufic** as selected by a jury of distinguished members including Director of MoMA PS1 **Klaus Biesenbach**, Director of Lebanon's Ashkal Alwan, **Christine Tohme**, and art critic, media theorist, and Andrew Mellon Professor at the Courtauld Art Institute in London **Boris Groys**. The awards were presented over a celebratory gala dinner hosted by **H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi**, Member of the UAE Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and members of the Sharjah Art Foundation on the occasion of the Biennial's opening on Wednesday, March 16. The 2011 Sharjah Biennial, curated by **Suzanne Cotter** (Curator, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Project) and **Rasha Salti** (Creative Director ArteEast), in association with **Haig Aivazian** (Chicago-based independent curator, artist and writer), continues with more than 65 Sharjah Biennial Commissions. For more information on the Sharjah Art Foundation and its programs including the Sharjah Biennial, please visit www.sharjahart.org.

Preceding the announcement of this year's Sharjah Biennial Prize, *Plot for a Biennial* commenced with a public ceremony in the presence of **H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi**, Member of the UAE Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and **H.E. Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi**, President of the Sharjah Art Foundation, along with Sharjah Art Foundation Director **Jack Persekian** and Sharjah Biennial 10 Curators. Cultural leaders, curators, art professionals, artists, members of the local and international media, and visitors gathered from across the globe for the official inauguration of the Biennial's 10th edition. Visitors enjoyed the Biennial's offerings of visual art from exhibitions in the Sharjah Art Museum to site-specific installations in Sharjah's Arts and Heritage Areas. Attendees also experienced a range of highlights across the disciplines from screenings of the Biennial's **Cinema Program**, to a live performance of a new commission by acclaimed Lebanese choreographer **Omar Rajeh** performed by **Maqamat Dance Theatre**. From live music performances of ***Score for a Biennial***, to extensive exhibitions of visual art, the Sharjah Biennial continues with exciting presentations of new work.

Sharjah Art Foundation President H.E. Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi states, "The Sharjah Biennial Prize has served as a fundamental component of the Biennial's 20-year history of highlighting the contributions of artists who have influenced the cultural landscape of Sharjah and the Middle East. The long list of recipients serves as a reflection of not only each edition of the Biennial but of artistic movements over time."

Director of the Sharjah Art Foundation, Jack Persekian states, "Since 1993, the Sharjah Biennial Prize has remained one of the most culturally significant awards granted to artists in the MENASA region. With virtually no restrictions placed upon the awards' selection committee, the Prize strives to recognize artists based solely upon their artistic practice. Through this freedom of selection, the Sharjah Biennial Prize has served as a valuable tool in raising awareness of the themes and issues addressed by some of the region's most progressive minds."

Sharjah Biennial Prize 2011

The 2011 Sharjah Biennial Prize, totaling \$30,000, was awarded in varying amounts to **Trisha Donnelly**, **Imran Qureshi**, **Rania Stephan**, **Rayyane Tabet** and **Jalal Toufic** in celebration of the opening of *Plot for a Biennial*. The artists were selected by jury members **Klaus Biesenbach**, Director of MoMA PS1, New York; **Christine Tohme**, Director of Ashkal Alwan (the Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts); and **Boris Groys**, art critic, media theorist, and currently Andrew Mellon Professor at the Courtauld Art Institute, London, each invited to a private preview of the Biennial.

For a site-specific work conversing with the culture, history, and political realities of the region, the Sharjah Biennial Prize was awarded to **Imran Qureshi** for his presentation of ***Blessings Upon the Land of my Love (2011)***, a powerful site-specific installation in the courtyard of Bait Al Serkal. The second primary prize was awarded to filmmaker **Rania Stephan** for her subjective and compassionate reading of one of the leading figures of Egyptian cinema, Souad Husni. The evening's final primary prize was awarded to **Trisha Donnelly** for her new work. Additional prizes were awarded to artists **Jalal Toufic** and **Rayanne Tabet**. Jalal Toufic received special mention as "a philosopher, artist, and

thinker” of note, while Rayyane Tabet received special mention as best “Emerging Artist” for his 3-part installation *Home on Neutral Ground* (2011).

About the Prize:

The Sharjah Biennial Prize was established by the Sharjah Biennial in 1993 and is now awarded by Sharjah Art Foundation. The honored recipients are selected by a jury of distinguished members appointed by the Foundation. The Sharjah Biennial Prize is given in amounts totaling \$30,000 upon the jury’s sole discretion and can be granted to any number of artists.

In 2009, First Prize of the Sharjah Biennial Prize was awarded to the Mumbai-based collective *CAMP* (Shaina Anand, Nida Ghouse, Hakimuddin Lilyawala, Ashok Sukumaran) for its two-fold project *WHARFAGE (leaving Sharjah)* (2009) featuring radio transmission and publication. Second Prize recipients included artist Basma Al Sharif for her video work *We Began By Measuring Distance* (2009); Haris Epaminonda for her photographic series, *Polaroids* (2008 2009) and video *Zebra* (2006); and Cairo-based visual artist Maha Maamoun for her film *Domestic Tourism II* (2008). Jury members of the 2009 Sharjah Biennial Prize included Paolo Colombo, Salah Hassan, and Ute Meta Bauer.

For bios and more information on the recipients of the 2011 Sharjah Biennial Prize, please visit www.sharjahart.org.

More About the Sharjah Biennial:

One of the oldest contemporary arts initiatives in the Middle East, the Sharjah Biennial has formed cultural bridges between artists, art institutions and organizations locally, regionally and internationally. The eight-week biennial, established in 1993, consists of various components from its primary exhibition to film, music, performance, lectures and workshops for students and families. In 2009, the 9th edition of the Sharjah Biennial received nearly 75,000 visitors including curators, art critics, artists, arts organizations, museum groups, students, collectors and art aficionados from both the UAE and abroad.

Support for Sharjah Biennial 10:

The Sharjah Art Foundation would like to acknowledge the generous support of our sponsors and partners. Lead funding for Sharjah Biennial 10 has been provided by Crescent Petroleum, with additional funding provided by Al Batha Group, Bukhatir Group, and the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Sharjah Art Foundation would also like to thank the generous support of The British Council, Bee’ah, Sharjah Media Corporation, Sharjah Transport Authority, Expo Centre Sharjah, Universes in Universe, Al Qasba, Sharjah Police, Department of Public Works, and Art in the City.

About the Sharjah Art Foundation:

Sharjah Art Foundation supports the flourishing arts environment in the Gulf by nurturing artistic opportunities and actively pursuing both a regional and international program of cultural collaboration and exchange.

Sharjah Art Foundation builds on the pioneering role the Emirate of Sharjah has played in the artistic and cultural development of the Gulf region. Inspired by the cross-fertilization and rich cultural diversity of the Emirates, the Foundation provides both

national and international leadership in the production and presentation of contemporary visual arts. Recognizing the central and distinctive contribution that art makes to society, the Sharjah Art Foundation cultivates a spirit of research, experimentation and excellence while acting as a catalyst for collaboration and exchange within the Middle East and beyond.

Established in 2009 to carry forth the mission of the Sharjah Biennial, the Sharjah Art Foundation continues to provide support to the Sharjah Biennial alongside various initiatives and programs for continuous, year-round support of arts and culture in the MENASA region and beyond. The many programs of the Sharjah Art Foundation include: the **March Meeting**, an annual gathering of institutions, art professionals and global artists involved in the production and dissemination of art in the MENASA region (March 13 - 15); **Sharjah Biennial**, an eight-week presentation of visual art, film, performance, video, publication, and special programs; **Sharjah Biennial Prize**, award granted to artist(s)/participant(s) selected by a jury of distinguished members; **Production Program**, established to provide direct support to artists for the production of art as well as funding to art practitioners for projects, research, publications and film; **Artists' Residencies**, dedicated programs designed to encourage artists to explore their relationships with the UAE and the region; and various initiatives in **Education and Participation**, designed to broaden local audiences and to foster various ongoing collaborations with regional educational and cultural institutions.

For more information on the **Sharjah Art Foundation** and the **Sharjah Biennial**, please visit www.sharjahart.org.

Image credit: Sharjah Biennial 10 gala dinner. Photo by Gerardo Martinez /Courtesy Sharjah Art Foundation

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