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Sharjah Biennial 12 artists Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme receive an award from HH Sheikh Dr Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member of the UAE Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah for their work *The Incidental Insurgents* (2012–2015). Image courtesy of Sharjah Media Office.

## Sharjah Biennial 2015 Prize winners announced

Artists Eric Baudelaire, Asunción Molinos Gordo, Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, Adrián Villar Rojas, Fahrelnissa Zeid are honoured for their thought-provoking contributions to Sharjah Biennial 12 (SB12).

Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) announced the recipients of the 2015 Sharjah Biennial Prize on 5 March at the opening night of [Sharjah Biennial 12: The past, the present, the possible](#), which runs from 5 March through 5 June, 2015. The three recipients of this year's prize were **Eric Baudelaire**, **Asunción Molinos Gordo** and **Basel Abbas** and **Ruanne Abou-Rahme**. Two honorary mentions were awarded to **Adrián Villar Rojas** and **Fahrelnissa Zeid**.

The 2015 Sharjah Biennial prize jurors were **Suha Shoman**, Founder and Chair of Darat al Funun – The Khalid Shoman Foundation, a pioneering home for the arts in the region dedicated to the support of Arab artists in Amman, Jordan; **Koyo Kouoh**, founding artistic director of RAW Material Company, a center for art, knowledge and society in Dakar, Senegal; and **Park Chang-Kyong**, artist, filmmaker and artistic director of 'MediaCity Seoul 2014', International Media Art Biennale in Seoul, Korea.

Awarded for his interrogation of statehood, **Eric Baudelaire's** multipart *Secession Sessions* began with seventy-four letters sent to Maxim Gvinjia, former Foreign Minister of the mostly unrecognised state of Abkhazia on the Black Sea in the Caucasus region, and continues for SB12 with public office hours at the Anembassy of Abkhazia, staffed by Gvinjia; daily screenings of Baudelaire's film *Letters to Max*; and The Sharjah Sessions, a discursive programme of public events with scholars and artists, which takes place in May as part of March Meeting 2015.

**Asunción Molinos Gordo** was awarded for her critique of the authority of representation and current concern about food production in her work *WAM (World Agriculture Museum)* (2010/2015). The work recreates the atmosphere and colonial aesthetic of the eclectic Agricultural Museum of Cairo. Molinos Gordo displays a symbolic arrangement of images, raw data and opinion in an attempt to construct an incomplete scenario that reveals inconsistencies in the hegemonic narrative around food production and introduces the issues of today's food crisis.

Citing their political imagination in the face of current configurations of power and capital, **Basel Abbas** and **Ruanne Abou-Rahme** were awarded for their work *The Incidental Insurgents* (2012–15), a three-part mixed-media installation that spatialises a contemporary search for a new political language and imaginary. *The Part about the Bandits* (Part 1) (2012) and *Unforgiving Years* (Part 2) (2014) are presented along with *When the fall of the dictionary leaves all words lying in the streets* (Part 3) (2015), commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation for SB12.

**Adrián Villar Rojas** was honoured for *Planetarium* (2015), a large-scale site-specific intervention in the former ice factory of Kalba on the East Coast of Sharjah, which the jury described as a work that truly translates the curatorial framework of the exhibition *The past, the present, the possible*. Continuing recent experiments with organic matter, colour, suspension and cultivation, the artist and his team also deployed tons of freshly produced compost, demonstrating how increased consumption and demographic expansion can be transformed into living parts of the environment.

A honorary mention for the beauty and power of the late **Fahrelnissa Zeid's** work was accepted by HRH Prince Ra'ad bin Zeid in memory of his mother. A member of the avant-garde D-group in Istanbul before entering the Paris arts scene in the 1940s, Fahrelnissa Zeid was part of the École de Paris. Her practice is marked by monumental abstract works from the late 1940s–60s influenced by stained glass and mosaic design, at once conglomeration and defiance of geometric and perspectival logic. Her rarely seen series 'Paleocristálos' is also presented at SB12.

Sharjah Biennial 12 invites more than fifty artists and cultural practitioners from over twenty-five countries to introduce their ideas of the possible through their art and work. The exhibition opened on March 5, with a public ceremony in the presence of **HH Sheikh Dr Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi**, Member of the UAE Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and Sharjah Art Foundation President and Director **Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi**, and **Sharjah Biennial 12 Curator Eungie Joo**. An international gathering of artists, curators, museum directors, press and local audiences attended opening events that took place March 5–7, including a series of performances, actions, film screenings and excursions to the biennial's venues across the emirate.

Additional information about the ongoing SB12 Film Programme (including screenings every Saturday through the end of May), SB12 Education Programme (including a range of workshops, conversations and artist talks tailored to adults, children, schools and youth centers), and SB12 Monthly Talks (a series of artist talks, workshops and conversations with SB12 artists) will be available online. SAF's annual March Meeting, a symposium featuring presentations, thematic sessions, and panels that extend the dialogue created by SB12, will take place May 11-15, 2015.

### **About the Prize**

The Sharjah Biennial Prize was established by Sharjah Biennial in 1993 and is now awarded by Sharjah Art Foundation. The honoured recipients are selected by a distinguished jury appointed by SAF. The Sharjah Biennial Prize is given upon the jury's sole discretion and can be granted to any number of artists.

Recipients from 2013 included Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Chai Siri, Tiffany Chung, Wael Shawky, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Magdi Mostafa and Fumito Urabe, selected by Bassam El Baroni, curator and art critic based in Alexandria, Egypt; Hu Fang, the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Vitamin

Creative Space and the Pavilion in Beijing, China; and Sarat Maharaj, Professor of Visual Art & Knowledge Systems, Lund University & the Malmö Art Academies, Sweden. In 2011 awardees included Trisha Donnelly, Imran Qureshi, Rania Stephan, Rayyane Tabet and Jalal Toufic, selected by Klaus Biesenbach, Director of MoMA PS1, New York; Christine Tohme, Director of Ashkal Alwan in Beirut; and Boris Groys, art critic, media theorist and Andrew Mellon Professor at the Courtauld Art Institute, London. 2009 honourees included the collective CAMP (Shaina Anand, Nida Ghouse, Hakimuddin Lilyawala, Ashok Sukumaran), Basma Al Sharif, Haris Epaminonda and Maha Maamoun, as selected by curators Paolo Colombo, Salah Hassan, and Ute Meta Bauer.

#### **About Sharjah Biennial**

Sharjah Biennial is organised by Sharjah Art Foundation, which brings a broad range of contemporary art and cultural programmes to the communities of Sharjah, the UAE, and the region. Since 1993, Sharjah Biennial has commissioned, produced, and presented large-scale public installations, performances, and films, offering artists from the region and beyond an internationally recognised platform for exhibition and experimentation.

#### **About Sharjah Art Foundation**

Since 2009 SAF has built on the history of cultural collaboration and exchange that began with the first Sharjah Biennial in 1993. Working with local and international partners, Sharjah Art Foundation creates opportunities for artists and artistic production through core initiatives that include Sharjah Biennial, the annual March Meeting, residencies, production grants, commissions, exhibitions, research, publications and a growing collection. Our education and public programmes focus on building recognition of the central role art can play in the life of a community by promoting public learning and a participatory approach to art. All our events are free and open to the public. Sharjah Art Foundation is funded by the Department of Culture and Information, Government of Sharjah.

For more information, please visit: [www.sharjahart.org](http://www.sharjahart.org)

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