

For Immediate Release



**SHARJAH ART FOUNDATION  
Announces Sharjah Biennial 10 Program  
March 16 – May 16, 2011**

***Marking its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Sharjah Biennial is undertaking the most ambitious program to date with more artists participating and creating new work, commissioned films, music, performance, talks and publications***

***“Plot for a Biennial” is curated by Suzanne Cotter and Rasha Salti in association with Haig Aivazian***

**Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE), February 1, 2011** — The Sharjah Art Foundation announces the programs of Sharjah Biennial 10, ***Plot for a Biennial***. Co-curated by **Suzanne Cotter** (Curator, Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Project) and **Rasha Salti** (Creative Director ArteEast), with Associate Curator **Haig Aivazian** (Chicago-based independent curator, artist and writer), *Plot for a Biennial* will feature more than 65 **Sharjah Biennial Commissions** as well as a broad selection of existing works across the disciplines over the course of its two-month run. One of the oldest contemporary arts initiatives in the Middle East, Sharjah Biennial 10 will commence with an official opening 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.H. Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi**, President of the Sharjah Art Foundation, along with Sharjah Art Foundation Director **Jack Persekian**.

Over the course of eight weeks, *Plot for a Biennial* will unfold in a multivalent presentation of works and programs spanning the disciplines of visual art, film, choreography, music, video and publishing. The 2011 Sharjah Biennial will feature works by artists and participants from across the globe for an international gathering of “plot” makers and visionaries. Sharjah Biennial Commissions, film premieres, and other intriguing works will be presented in a variety of venues across Sharjah, from new spaces created specially for Sharjah Biennial 10, to historic venues, city streets and the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. It will unfold along narratives— itineraries— scripted by the curators, architects and exhibition designers.

**Sharjah Art Foundation President H.H. Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi states,** “This year will mark nearly two decades of the Sharjah Biennial’s work and, in many ways, will reflect the growing depth and diversity of Sharjah’s social and cultural landscape. A great number of artists have chosen to visit the city and produce new work that has been inspired or guided, on a variety of levels, by their experiences and interactions within the context of Sharjah.”

**Director of the Sharjah Art Foundation, Jack Persekian states,** “Since the first Sharjah Biennial in 1993, we have continued to experiment with ways to orchestrate an event that is capable of having reverberations on a variety of levels throughout the city of Sharjah and the international arts community. This year we have expanded on what has become a core feature of the Biennial, and now also that of the Sharjah Art Foundation, by commissioning and producing new work. Sharjah Biennial 10 will feature more commissions than any previous edition, many of which are ambitious in scale. We are now working with a much wider range of artists and practitioners including visual artists, as well as filmmakers, musicians, dancers, writers, editors and translators to create art works, short films, and publications that expand and elaborate on the 2011 biennial’s themes of treason, trade and translation.”

### **Sharjah Biennial 10 Program**

The programs of the Sharjah Biennial’s 10<sup>th</sup> edition extend through a range of artistic expression, and will include an extensive, multi-site exhibition, film screenings, live music, contemporary dance performances, public talks, as well as publications.

### **Exhibition**

Sharjah Biennial 10 will present an extensive, multi-site exhibition of visual art featuring works in various media including painting, drawing, etching, photography, sculpture, mixed media, installation, and site-specific work. Drawing inspiration from the curators’ conceptual framework *Plot for a Biennial*, the exhibition will unfold in intriguing venues across the heart of Sharjah, including notable landmarks of Emirati architecture, Sharjah’s historic Cricket Stadium, traditional houses once abandoned and later converted into contemporary art spaces, as well as new temporary structures designed especially for Sharjah Biennial 10. Newly designed spaces will host works by **Alfredo Jaar, Emily Jacir, and Ramin Haerizadeh**; while publicly sited works by artists such as **Jumana Emil Abboud, Judith Barry, and Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige**, will be presented in the vicinity of the Sharjah Art Museum and the Heritage Area. Many site-specific commissions will be located in other traditional structures including work by **Rosalind Nashashibi, Walid Sadek**, and a series of new paintings by **Imran Qureshi**.

Artists presenting work in the Exhibition are: **Jumana Emil Abboud, Youssef Abdelké, Ebtisam Abdulaziz, Adel Abidin, Atfal Ahdath, Hala Al-Ani, Abdullah Al Saadi, Ziad Antar, Doug Ashford, Mouna Atassi, Vartan Avakian, Yto Barrada, Judith Barry, Shumon Basar and Eyal Weizman and Jane and Louise Wilson, Bahar Behbahani, Mustapha Benfodil, Alexis Bhagat and Lize Mogel, Anna Boghigian, Ammar Bouras, Dan Brault, Camp (Shaina Anand and Ashok Sukumaran), Guillaume Cassar, Marie-Hélène Cauvin, Jem Cohen (with Luc Sante), Ziad Dalloul, Raffie Davtian, Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency, Trisha Donnelly, Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică, Simone Fattal, Mariam Ghani, Ahmed Ghossein, Hans Haacke, Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Ramin Haerizadeh, Rokni Haerizadeh, Gilbert Hage, Khalid Hourani,**

**Richard Ibghy and Marilou Lemmens, Hatem Imam, Alfredo Jaar, Emily Jacir, Amar Kanwar, Aisha Khalid, Bouchra Khalili, Mark Lombardi, Alexander Markov, Josephine Meckseper, Shohreh Mehran, Julia Meltzer and David Thorne, Almagul Menlibayeva, Naeem Mohaiemen, Bahman Mohassess, Tom Molloy, Hومان Mortazavi, Fateh Moudarres, Jean-Luc Moulène, Rosalind Nashashibi, Melik Ohanian, Imran Qureshi, Walid Raad, Khalil Rabah, Walid Sadek, Hrair Sarkissian, Matt Saunders, Samir Sayegh, Kamran Shirdel, Slavs and Tatars, Rania Stephan, Rayyane Tabet, Jorge Tacla, Jalal Toufic, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Raed Yassin, Elias Zayat, Artur Żmijewski.**

## **Film**

### **Commissioned Film Program**

*Plot for a Biennial* will also present seven short fiction and non-fiction films commissioned by the Sharjah Biennial, inspired from the keywords outlined in the conceptual framework. Participants include: filmmaker and visual artist **Karim Ainouz** (Brazil); filmmakers and visual artists **Rania Attiah** (Lebanon) and **Daniel Garcia** (US); filmmaker **Hicham Ayouch** (Morocco); filmmaker **Ali Essafi** (Morocco); writer, actor and filmmaker, **Sean Gullette** (US); filmmaker, cinematographer and editor **Bahman Kiarostami** (Iran); and filmmaker, writer, director and actor **Caveh Zahedi** (US).

The commissioned film program will also include the screening of a non-fiction feature-length narrative by Lebanese producer and filmmaker **Rania Stephan**, co-produced by the Biennial, and host the screening of Lebanese artist and filmmaker **Akram Zaatari's** new short film.

### **Curated Film Program**

*Plot for a Biennial* will present a series of curated programs of short films, screened in the cinema of the Institute for Theatrical Arts throughout the Biennial. Internationally acclaimed curators and programmers were each invited to propose a screening program that comprised works inspired by the biennial's themes, each mapping a geographical focus.

Curators of the screening program include: **Solange Farkas**, Founder and Director of the Associação Cultural Videobrasil, São Paulo; **Steve Reinke**, Canadian video artist and writer; **Marcel Schwierin**, Berlin-based curator, filmmaker, and editor of *cinovid.org*; **Keith Shiri**, founder and director of Africa at the Pictures and the London African Film Festival; and, **What, How and for Whom (WHW)**, a curators' collective based in Croatia.

## **Music**

Carrying forth the idea of a script guiding the Biennial's unravelling across sites and artistic fields, this tenth edition will feature a series of musical evenings titled ***A Score for a Biennial***. The program unfolds around complex collaborations where artists and musicians will engage in unique and in-depth dialogues in Sharjah across griot traditions, free jazz, alt rock, Gnawa devotional music and layered samplings of field recordings.

*A Score for a Biennial* will span across three evenings during the Biennial's opening week in the open courtyard of Bait Al Shamsi, Sharjah's Arts Area. The series will

feature **Alan Bishop and Sam Shalabi**, a creative, experimental duo, acclaimed for highly textured and atmospheric lengthy sound-scapes; and, **Yusef Lateef and Ma'alem Abdelkbir Merchane**. Yusef Lateef is a Grammy award-winning reed virtuoso and innovator in the African American tradition of autophysiopsychic music, and Ma'alem Abdelkbir is regarded as one of the purest voices in Gnawa, the spiritual music of the descendants of black African slaves in Morocco. The program will conclude with **Dimi Mint Abba and Amino Belyamani**. Dimi Mint Abba is perhaps Mauritania's most iconic and powerful singer, while Amino Belyamani is an acclaimed New York pianist known for blending African rhythms, Arabic melodies, classical structures and experimental jazz. An additional musical evening will feature a performance by critically acclaimed Syrian soprano **Noma Omran** with a host of musicians from Syria, Iran and Canada.

### **Performance**

The Biennial's opening week will also feature ***Mushrooms and Fig Leaves***, a Sharjah Biennial 10 commissioned work by choreographer **Omar Rajeh**. This dance will be performed by the Beirut-based **Maqamat Dance Theatre**, and accompanied by music composed by the innovative guitarist, composer and oud player Mahmoud Turkmani. The composition will be interpreted live by **Contralto Fadia Tomb El-Hage**.

### **Publications**

Complimenting the 10<sup>th</sup> edition's offerings of performance, visual art and film, the Biennial has commissioned a range of publications in addition to the **Sharjah Biennial 10 catalogue**.

Playing on eclectic parallels and contrasts between the literary sense of the word "plot" and the Biennial's overarching themes, ***Manual for Treason*** will feature a series of editions in which the guest editor is asked to take on the role of curator, editing and producing the content and design of his or her own version in this one-of-a-kind compilation of texts and images. Bi-lingual writers, translators, legal scholars, curators, art historians, critics, filmmakers, artists and theorists were invited to guest edit their version of the manual, eloquent suggestion of conspiracy, in one or more of the languages they possess in addition to English.

Guest editors include: **Omar Berrada and Érik Bulloz** (French and English), **Başak Ertür** (Turkish and English), **Angela Harutyunyan and Aras Özgun** (Armenian, Turkish, Arabic and English), **Maha Maamoun and Haytham El-Wardany** (Arabic and English), **Murtaza Vali** (Bengali, Urdu and English), and **Ashkan Sepahvand** (Farsi and English).

Artists **Lynn Love** and **Ann Sappenfield** have collaborated on ***The New Emirati Britannica, Third Edition***, while New York-based **Cabinet** has created a collector's trading cards regalia, replete with an album and cards, titled ***An Album of Traders, Traitors, Translators and Experientialists***.

### **Talks, Lectures, and Additional Events**

Among the additional opening week events will be **79.89.09**, a lecture by Eurasia-based collective **Slavs and Tatars** that focuses on the 1979 Iranian Revolution and Poland's Solidarnosc of the 1980s, also the subject of their large-scale multi-media installation. Also offered will be ***Untimely Collaboration***, a seminar with **Jalal Toufic, Walid Raad** and **Omar Berrada**. Artist **Rayyane Tabet** will guide a visit to the historic Sharjah

Cricket Stadium to view the one-night installation of a cricket pitch protector as part of a three-part project, ***Home on Neutral Ground***. Also included is a panel on **Translation and Treason** organized by the **Department of Arabic & Translation Studies, American University of Sharjah**.

### **Sharjah Biennial Prize 2011**

The Sharjah Biennial Prize of \$30,000 will be awarded by a jury of three members including **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. The awards will be presented at a by-invitation gala event on the opening day of the Biennial by **H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi**, Ruler of Sharjah.

**Sharjah Biennial 10** is supported by the Department of Culture and Information, Government of Sharjah.

### **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 9<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **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-fertilisation and rich cultural diversity of the Emirates, the Foundation provides both national and international leadership in the production and presentation of contemporary visual arts. Recognising 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.

### **March Meeting 2011**

The fourth annual March Meeting will take place in Sharjah from March 13 to March 15, 2011. Nearly 50 presentations focused on future and ongoing projects in arts and culture will be given by artists, art practitioners, organizations and institutions from more than 20 countries including Azerbaijan, Egypt, France, India, Jordan, Palestine, the UAE, the UK and the USA. The presentations were chosen from applications submitted in answer to an open call in November 2010. The selected presenters include: Palestinian writer **Adania Shibli**, Lebanese operatic soprano, composer and academic **Hiba Kawas**, **Munira Mirza**, Director of Policy, Arts, Culture and Creative Industries from the office of the Mayor of London, the **Emirates Foundation**, **TATE**, the **Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO)**, and the **Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation – Azerbaijan**.

For more information on the **Sharjah Art Foundation**, the **Sharjah Biennial** and the **March Meeting** please visit [www.sharjahart.org](http://www.sharjahart.org).

Image credit: Almagul Menlibayeva and Bahar Behbahani, Video still from *Ride the Caspian*, 2011, 2-channel HD Video, color, surround sound, 13:00 minutes, sound artists: OMFO and Negar Behbahani / Courtesy Sharjah Art Foundation.

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